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The Journey of Selected Latina Transnational Educational Leaders: Transforming Their Lives Through Educational Achievements and Successful Careers

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THE JOURNEY OF SELECTED LATINA TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL LEADERS:
TRANSFORMING THEIR LIVES THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND
SUCCESSFUL CAREERS

A Dissertation

by

RAQUEL GARCIA

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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December 2021

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine the journeys of selected Latina transnationals and how they transformed their lives through educational achievements and successful careers in the Borderlands of Texas. The researcher utilized a phenomenological collective case study approach that investigated how the selected Latina transnationals overcame challenges via a series of semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2013). Despite Latinas being seen as the other, the object, the minority, many are able to tell their own stories and liberate themselves from the shared experiences of oppression and inequality in the United States (Silva-Martinez, 2017). Through the data analysis, the five themes that emerged and bestowed the researcher with a perspective lens and generalizations for the interviews conducted were language barriers, influencers, mentorship, bicultural, and family pride (Creswell, 2013). The study explored the needs for educational leaders to acknowledge the student's cultural and familial capital which add value to use it for the transformation of their schooling experience

DEDICATION

Con Dios, mi familia, y mis amigos-Lo logramos! This work is dedicated to Mario, *mi gran amor* y mi apoyo incondicional-SIEMPRE! Gracias por impulsarme a empezar y terminar tan anhelada meta-Lo logramos! Mario, Mariana, y Marquel *mis tres grandes razones para nunca darme por vencida y llegar al final*-the possibilities for you three are endless-as it is the love I have for you-We made it! Lo logramos!

*Papá y mamá-sus sacrificios por nosotros, sus lágrimas por tener que separarnos cuando niñas, y largas jornadas de trabajo desde El ejido La Carreta, hasta San Juan, Texas-retando las montañas de Colorado y los interminables surcos en Wyoming-no fueron en vano. Su amor, sus sabios consejos, y su dedicación a nosotros me formaron a ser quien soy. Susana, Lupe, Chuy, Noé, Celia, y Marlen-siempre los llevo en mi corazón. Susana-nuestra líder incansable-siempre dando todo por nosotros. Lupe, tu amor a nosotros y nuestros hijos-para que no sufrieramos. Chuy, el puente internacional y la casita azul de madera como testigos de dos largos años llenos de lágrimas. Noé, llegaste alegrar nuestra familia con tu presencia. Celia, your strength and unique demonstration of cariño-always kept us going. Marlen, our official family Language Broker-direct translation with the *rancheros*, as needed!! *Mi Gran Familia-Lo logramos!**

To my suegra y Alicia-muchas gracias por su paciencia y amor-Lo logramos!

To all my friends and family-you have inspired, encouraged, and supported me along this journey-your love, patience, and understanding made this possible-Lo logramos.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to estimates by the United Nations, more than 232 million people live outside the nation in which they were born, creating transnational families (Mahler, Chaudhuri, & Patil, 2015). Transnational families are ones in which familial relationships are maintained across one or more national borders, and after leaving family members behind, individuals in this situation frequently encounter conflicting feelings about living life in another country (Mahler, Chaudhuri, & Patil, 2015). Gandara (2015) states that Latinos make up the largest ethnic minority in the United States, with 54 million currently living in the country. Migration has a great impact on the ethnic identity formation of first-generation Mexican immigrant females. Consequently, their ethnic identity is born out of pain and loss across a myriad of national contexts, including cultural practices and racial boundaries (Soto 2012; Bondy, 2014). Because of this, they begin to develop a personal sense of what it means to be marginalized and racialized as immigrants, all while navigating the pressures and challenges of living life in a different country (Soto, 2012).

For some women, ethnic identity instills resilience while, for others, it imprints resistance (Isom Scott, 2018). More often than not, identity for Latinas appears to be formed in the in-between spaces of origin/destination as they struggle in binary worlds (Bondy, 2014). According

to Isom Scott (2018) ethnic identity provides a framework for navigating a society with bias, prejudice, and stereotypical beliefs. Transnationals are immigrants who cross real and metaphorical borders, bridging countries to be with family and community in meaningful ways through constant, in-person visits, during which they bond by reliving memories, as well as through social media communication (Kasun, 2013). It's as if they were together and apart. They occasionally or frequently visit and/or stay in touch with their countries of origin through various social, cultural, and economic networks (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; 2006). Latinas strive for change with their strength and courage leading them to their own personal success by acknowledging factors that confirm oppression (Silva-Martinez, 2017). Despite Latinas being seen as the other, the object, the minority, many are able to tell their own stories and liberate themselves from the shared experiences of oppression and inequality in the United States (Silva-Martinez, 2017).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2018), in 2018, 34.2% Latinas earned an Associate degree, 23.2% a Bachelors' degree, 3.8% a Masters' degree or higher, which is an increase in college degree attainment of about one percentage point each year. In the decade between 2008 and 2018, Latinas increased their rate of associate degree completion by more than 11 percentage points and bachelor's degree completion by more than 7 percentage points, which is slightly higher than the gains made by other females. Even though Latinas are increasing college enrollment, they continue to lag behind in educational achievements, and they are the least likely of all women to complete a college degree at only 23% compared to 26% of African American women, 48% of White women, and 72 % of Asian women in the United States between the ages of 25-29 (NCES, 2018; Goldsmith & Kurplus, 2018). Latinas in the United States currently make up 20% of the female population, and by

2060, will compose one third of our total female population (Gandara, 2015). As the largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority group in schools, Latinas continue to seek educational opportunities that will make their sacrifices worthwhile, despite the many challenges they have to overcome on their search for a brighter future (Delgado Bernal & Aleman, 2017). Through their journeys, they are forced to negotiate multiple systems that could possibly impact their educational trajectories (Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018).

As educational opportunities expand to all, it's critical to remember to invest in Latinas to ensure the country's economic robustness and global competitiveness. Nearly 11.5 million children under the age of 18 live in a foreign-born household, one in which the parents are born outside the United States (Han, 2008). Zhang and Han (2017) explain that low socio-economic hardship can be a serious obstacle to children's academic success in the United States. In addition, a number of studies demonstrate that immigrant children with at least one foreign parent experience economic hardships, causing them to develop the largest gaps in school readiness. Therefore, it is important to identify, as early on as possible, the factors that help prepare the children of immigrants for success. The main skills needed for global citizenship include personal, social and emotional skills for community participation in addition to citizenship and learning skills (Standish, 2014). Even though globalization offers an array of possibilities for becoming a citizen in the country to which someone has immigrated, the reality is that immigrants become stuck, lacking opportunities because of their color and other factors forcing them to live in the divisive worlds of citizens and immigrants in messy, conflicting conditions (Bondy, 2015). They are often seen as unwanted and undesirable citizens simply because they were born in another country (Bondy, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

According to Standish (2014), globalization presents the need for multicultural communities, corporations, and government and non-government organizations to take a global approach in this uncertain and fluid environment. Even though global migration is not a recent occurrence, transnational movement of people, ideas, and goods have increased significantly during the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Bondy, 2014). Bondy (2015) states that approximately 13% of the United States' total population is born outside the country. Recent research states that one in five students in U.S. schools currently has at least one immigrant parent and by 2040 this ratio will likely increase to one in three (Kasun, 2015). With the number of immigrants increasing in the United States, it is important to understand transnationalism within the frame of social identity (Bradatan, Popan, & Melton, 2010).

The way in which a transnational individual interacts with others is dependent upon the situation and would result in that person acting either according to the rules and behaviors from the country of origin or from the host country (Bradatan, et al., 2010). It is no longer expected that they behave the same in all situations, but rather to be able to act and interact with others in a fluid manner, adapting to individual encounters. Moreover, the deficit thinking continues to permeate in the United States and unfortunately society continues to mirror those beliefs (Valencia, 2010). Kasun (2015) explains how transnationals use their historically accumulated cultural knowledge, sometimes referred to as “cultural wealth”, to thrive within whitestream practices (p. 277). In addition, Social Capital known as “networks of people and community resources” is employed by transnationals to help them thrive in their pursued journey in a society powered by deficit thinkers (Yosso, 2005, p.79). Furthermore, they continue to maintain ties with their place of origin, which helps them observe lessons of caring and coping, which

eventually fosters emotional, moral, and educational consciousness and their understanding of belonging to two nations and two cultures simultaneously (Sanchez, 2007; Yosso, 2005).

Shifting demographics, due in part to transnational migration, is a reality in almost all states in the nation (Bondy, 2015). *Familismo*, a cultural construct attributed to Latino families, is a multi-dimensional idea marked by family loyalty, interdependence, and responsibility toward family members (Petroni, 2016). Transnationalism makes it much more difficult for Mexican origin transnational families to reconnect and rebuild relationships with their families outside of the U. S. (Ybarra & Pena, 2017). For Latino immigrants, one's family is the main source of one's identity and not being with them at a younger age consequently affects their achievements in life (Hernandez, Widaman, Robins, & Conger, 2019). According to Ramirez and Jimenez-Silva (2016) immigrant Latinas must continue to seek out and substitute the powerful forms of support that would otherwise be provided by their families. Moreover, Isom Scott (2018) concludes how females are more likely to search for family support in the middle of faced adversity as a coping strategy in life.

Mexican origin transnational Latina immigrants maintain nurturing relationships with family and friends (Sanchez, 2007). Immigration is, of course, among transnational practices. Bradatan, Popan, and Melton (2010) explain how a social identity is developed and sustained by interacting with others that belong to the same social unit. This type of communication plays a major role in further understanding one's place in a new social environment. Mexican origin transnational Latina immigrants are forced to navigate through broader structural processes of citizen-subject formation within the state and within the nation (Bondy, 2015). According to Bradatan, et al., (2010) an immigrant who has little or no knowledge of the new country, and who makes few attempts to communicate with others, will experience little change in his or her

national identity. A transnational identity can be developed among individuals who are rich in human capital and master both languages (host and origin) (Bradatan, et al., 2010). Mexican

American transnational women are able to navigate through their United States based reality by maintaining transnational ties that help them acquire social and cultural resources which in the future are also used in creating a transnational space to raise their children (Viruell-Fuentes, 2006). Being taught how to manage their cultural and educational intersectionality could aid in positively developing an immigrants' transnational identity that could help them function in settings of employment and educational opportunities while they experience separation and loss of family support from those left behind in their place of origin (Bondy, 2015). Intersectionality, the concept that each individual has several socially constructed identities that are inherently linked and simultaneously experienced, continues to be one of the core fundamentals in learning about social inequality, power, social context and social justice and it is an important part of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016, Isom Scott, 2018).

Need for the Study

Latinas use a variety of strategies to help them, not only survive, but thrive in a different country with a different culture and language as they try to form their identity and continue to be stereotyped leaving them with no ambition to attain higher levels of education (Delgado Bernal, 2018; Soto, 2012; Wootton 2013). The disparity between the educational attainment of Mexican heritage and Whites and with the Latino population continuing to be the fastest growing, the Mexican American achievement gap is enough to continue with research studies on factors that have helped Mexican-descent immigrant Latinas (Easley, et al., 2012 Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018). Furthermore, Gandara (2015) explains Latinas continue to have minimal high school

graduation and college completion rates among all women (Gandara, 2015). Latino parents are willing to help change and support their children to change their educational trajectory to eventually have generational prosperity, but there must be changes in the educational system (Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018). Researchers have examined several aspects of female educational leaders throughout the years, such as the underrepresentation in leadership positions in school districts however, there is a need for more research for transnational Latina educational leaders specifically (Garn & Brown, 2008). Women have made significant advancements in the workplace, but even through the years and policy changes, the number of female Latina leaders continue to remain stagnant at a low level (Ballakrishnen, Fielding-Singh, & Magliozzi, 2019). Latinas, specifically, continue to stay behind in leadership positions in comparison to White and Black women (Isom Scott, 2017; Vasquez, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the journeys of the selected Latina transnationals through phenomenological collective case studies of selected transnational Latinas, who formed their journeys through educational achievements and highly successful careers in the Borderlands of Texas (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of the study was achieved by closely examining the cases of each of the selected participants to determine how these selected Mexican origin transnational Latinas earned their educational and/or professional success for others to recognize the factors and experiences that create barriers for minority groups. The selected transnational Latinas were studied by using relevant case study methods to help show how the different aspects of their lives are related to each other and how their trajectories led them to their success. Their experiences were described from their own point of view. Furthermore, they discussed the barriers they encountered on their educational journeys,

the influencers and supports outside their home that helped them achieve a successful career, and their experiences balancing two cultures in two different nations. I conducted in-depth interviews with each of the selected participants.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the researcher for the study:

1. What challenges do selected transnational Latinas report encountering in their leadership positions?
2. What do selected transnational Latinas report to be influencers in achieving their career goals?
3. What supports outside of the home do selected transnational Latinas report to be key in achieving their career goals?
4. How do selected transnational Latinas experience balancing two cultures?

Methodology

Qualitative methodology with Phenomenological Collective Case Studies was implemented to gain new knowledge from the experiences of the participants to help Mexican origin Transnational Latinas attain a successful career and/or professional achievements (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). These particular case studies were heuristic. The researcher and the reader of the case study gained new insights of the experiences of the participants, and these insights enabled the reader to make connections to her own experiences and grow from there (Mills & Gay, 2014). I used Phenomenological Collective Case Study Design to inform my questions in a richer way, framing the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives by describing a complex social phenomenon with the integration of case study,

combining these methods to explore a contemporary situation (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1970; Yin, 2003).

Phenomenological Collective Case Study is conducted to provide a general understanding using a number of case studies that either occur on the same site or come from multiple sites of the human experience as well as the underlying base of the phenomenon (Yin, 2003).

Phenomenology provides a lens through which to view all human phenomena as meaningful because of the experiences, feelings, and the commitment to reflect about the phenomenon, which influences the participants' actions and behaviors (Peterson, 1997). Phenomenological approaches use interviews to understand the intersubjective nature of the issue (Yin, 2003).

Phenomenology also describes how one adjusts to lived experiences and real world-actions of everyday life and attempt to understand the essence of Latinas, specifically of Mexican descent (Creswell, 2013). Detailed description of each case is also provided. That discussion is followed by a thematic analysis across cases. Lessons learned from the analysis are reported (Yin, 2003).

Case Study Design leads to new knowledge based on the reader's experiences, knowledge, and understandings, and they can contribute both theoretically and pragmatically to research because of the holistic approach (Mills & Gay, 2016; Stake, 1995). According to Merriam (1998), the case study examines an object, program, person, organization or phenomenon, that is, anything that can be considered an entity. The new learning depends on the comparing and contrasting of the case study to the reader's prior knowledge and experiences (Mills & Gay, 2016). The researcher used purposeful sampling to identify the participants from which the most relevant information can be obtained (Creswell, 2013). Initially, five participants are selected using purposeful criterion sampling (Creswell, 2013). Since it is important all participants represent people who have experienced the phenomenon, they can "purposefully

inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2013, p.156). Three interviews, each consisting of sixty-minutes, focusing on the life history of the participant, details of the lived experiences, and reflections of the meaning of the experiences were recorded within a one-month period (Seidman, 2013). Furthermore, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed through coding and thematic development (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

The researcher used a within-case analysis to help identify issues within each case and provide a detailed description of each case and themes within it (Creswell, 2013). Then, a cross-case analysis was conducted to analyze the themes across the cases and the meanings of the assertions apparent in those cases (Creswell, 2013). They were analyzed for shared meaning and understanding.

Significance of the Study

Latinas in the United States face the challenge of finding a balance between their two cultures- one in which they possibly acculturate and the other in which they maintain relationships to their place of origin (Sanchez, 2007). In the assimilation process, also known as a melting-pot model, an immigrant removes all ties from the nation he/she is immigrating. The process of removing these parts of their identity results in the transnational individual mainstreaming with the American culture, causing them to deliberately disconnect from their national identity as well as the customs, culture, and language of their birth (Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1995). On the contrary, there is also a central aspect of multicultural illustrations of America in which immigrant groups are encouraged to preserve their culture, custom, and identity, to be rooted in an American mosaic (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970). This combining of cultural experiences, though, has always generated tension among those who feel that the idea of

an American nationality is threatened by immigrants who continue to have such strong ties to what they still consider their homeland (Schiller et al., 1995).

The complex transnational processes that shape the Latino immigrants' identity continue to not be accounted for (Bondy, 2015). According to Pina-Watson, Lopez, Ojeda, and Rodriguez (2015) 16 % of the U. S. population are Latinos, and of that group, 63% are of Mexican descent. Background characteristics, experiences, and social integration make up a huge part of the influence of ethnic identity (Vasquez, 2012). Portes and Rumbaut (2014) argue that on one end globalization portrays the United States as the symbol of freedom, justice, and opportunity for immigrants that desire to come to the country, but on the other end, immigrant communities continue to experience discrimination and unjust treatment because of their race, gender, or class at a wide range of institutions.

It is of utmost importance to not just consider the ways immigrants have lived traditionally in their country of origin, but to also identify the ways they acculturate and to what extent that acculturation affects their ability to maintain relationships with their homeland counterparts which is important in helping them develop an understanding of belonging to two places at the same time (Sanchez, 2007). These transitory stages come with challenges and sacrifices (Soto, 2012). Kasun (2015) highlights that Mexican-origin females and their families bring strengths such as historically accumulated cultural knowledges, or cultural wealth that is intergenerationally transmitted to help them manifest themselves in action in the world. By learning how Mexican origin transnational Latinas earned their successful careers, as well as educational and/or professional achievements, others will recognize their privilege and use it to lessen or remove some barriers faced by their transnational peers.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations are important in interpreting the findings of the study and with regards to comparisons that might be made to other situations:

1. The study was limited to Mexican origin transnational Latinas in Texas that lived or were born in Mexico.
2. The study was limited to Mexican origin transnational Latinas because no attempt was made to include males.
3. Conducting interviews through video conferencing but using audio only may have limited the use of qualitative interview protocols recommended for this type of study.

Assumptions

One assumption is that the five school district leaders answered all of the interview questions with honesty. A second assumption is that the leaders had a sincere interest in participating in the research without any other reasons.

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations explain the boundary of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The study addressed school district Latina leaders' experiences. Since there are a larger number of Latina school district leaders in the Borderlands of South Texas than in other regions of the state and country, the research was conducted in this area.

Definition of Terms

1. Borderlands of Texas are physical realities of delineated control over lands as well as psychological and social spaces (Anzaldúa, 1987).
2. Conocimientos are ways of knowing (Tellez & Manthey, 2015).

3. Critical Feminista Theory offers ways in which to use the mind, body, and soul as needed to confront and affirm an understanding of how society is structured, the effects of using pedagogies of the home, communication and learning from the home, as well as cultural and language capital to help transnational Latinas and other feminists of color negotiate and not silence the inevitable daily experiences of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and dominant perceptions in their personal, professional, and even transnational spaces (Delgado Bernal, 2018).
4. Familismo is a cultural construct attributed to Latino families, and a multi-dimensional idea marked by family loyalty, interdependence and responsibility toward family members (Petrone, 2016).
5. Latina is a female who comes from Latin America or descend from individuals from Latin America, where the spoken language is Spanish (Soto, 2012).
6. Immigrant is one who immigrates to live in another country (Standish, 2014).
7. Transnationals are a group which has dispersed from the homeland to another nation, and it can be occupations, activities, ideas, and/or concepts which require contacts over time across national borders (Kasun, 2015).

Summary

This phenomenological collective case study examined the perspectives and journeys of five selected Mexican origin transnational Latinas who formed their journeys through educational achievements and highly successful careers in the Borderlands of Texas. The researcher collected data in the forms of interviews and field notes and attempted to find common themes and unique perceptions of these five transnational Latina leaders (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2011). The research intended to provide insights for the rationale of the transnational Latina leaders who decided to form their successful journeys in the Borderlands of Texas.

The second chapter of this dissertation includes a review of the literature researched for this study on transnational Latina leaders. The researcher explored a historical perspective of immigration patterns of transnational Latinas in the United States, the definitions and characteristics of transnational Latinas. The researcher also included the Transnationalism theoretical framework which focuses on social, cultural, economic and political processes fostered by globalization as they intersect with gender, sexuality, and race was used for this study (Bondy, 2014, 2015, 2016; Delgado-Bernal, 2012; Mustasaari, 2015; Yosso, 2005).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide the reader with particular literature detailing research previously conducted in relation to Mexican origin transnational immigrant Latinas. The areas of focus are Mexican immigration patterns in the United States, transnational theoretical framework, transnational identity, transnational theory, transnational *feminista* theory, acculturation vs. assimilation, Latina women and successful careers, critical race *feminista* theory, and Latinas in Educational Leadership Positions. Most of the literature cited in this chapter emphasizes the struggles Latina immigrants have gone through on their journey, from their experiences in Mexico to the hardships faced within the United States. It's important to know how Mexican transnational immigrant Latinas can pinpoint a solid identity that will help them navigate their environment and be adequately prepared to act as global citizens based on an ethical framework that is culturally grounded. By learning how Mexican origin transnational Latinas earned their successful careers, as well as educational and/or professional achievements, other females will recognize that their same experiences and factors have additional barriers for transnational Latinas.

Mexican Immigration Patterns in the United States

Latinos have been present in the United States, specifically in the Southwest area, for more than 400 years with Mexico being one of the key sources of immigration to the United States, until the late 1920s when more immigration restrictions were created (Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015; Young 2017). Mexican migration to the United States has contributed substantially to the construction of the railroad system, agriculture development, manufacturing, and even to the urban service economy with the railroad construction dotted along the frontier territory from Brownsville to Roma, Texas (Bacha Garza, 2010; Roberts, Frank, & Lozano-Ascencio, 2000). Mexican immigrants continued arriving, in masses, to the United States during the 1940s and 1950s, with 60 % of all Mexican-origin immigrants being employed as farm laborers, semiskilled railroad, factory or mine workers, earning lower incomes than the ones with experience and living in the area (Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015; Young, 2017). The discrepancies in wages were evident as much as 2 to 1 between the two countries, leading them to continue with their employment in the United States (Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015).

In the late nineteenth century, a massive amount of land and resources belonging to individuals of Mexican origin were expropriated from them, forcing a decline in their political and civic power in the area (de Leon, 1982; Gomez, 2007; Gutierrez, 1995; Montejano, 1987; Weber, 1973; as cited in Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015). Martinez Brawley and Zorita (2017) state that, surprisingly, after being native in the aforementioned territory, Mexicans have been historically mistreated and discriminated against by individuals that settled after them. Early in the twentieth century, it became evident that Americans did not care for the Hispanic population and that even after the Mexican origin population were guaranteed American citizenship under the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, they were not afforded that

guarantee and treated very differently than how they treated the indigenous citizens (Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015). More permanent settlement by Mexican origin citizens started taking place in the 1920s, and with this, the increase of arrival of women was evident (Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015). By 1930, it was clear that women preferred living in urban areas with places that offered their children better schools and employment opportunities for women, mostly at factories (Ruiz 1987 as cited in Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015). The year 1930 was the beginning of the halt of fruitful wages and abundant jobs due to the harsh Great Depression, and consequently one of the major reasons for the decline of the influx of immigration into the United States (Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015; Young 2012). As the stock markets crashed and unemployment jumped exponentially, native-born United States Citizens focused on Mexican immigrants, deporting hundreds of thousands of them back to Mexico under unofficial repatriation policies (Gratton & Klancher Merchant, 2015; Young 2012, 2017).

The willingness of the Mexican origin immigrants to work for low wages, ability to put up with unhealthy demands on their physical strength, and their diligence and motivation are a few of the things that keep the doors open from the American employers, requesting that the policymakers modify policy to attract them to the United States (Portes, 2010). Consequently, the Bracero program agreement was created and signed in 1942 for the recruitment of legal, temporary agricultural guest workers, and as part of the agreement 4.6 million contracts were issued between 1943 and 1965 for agricultural workers and 69,000 for railroad maintenance (Alarcon, 2011 as cited in Martinez Brawley & Zorita, 2017). Even though Mexican workers were key in the economy of the United States, in 1947 Mexican undocumented immigrants from California and Texas were spotlighted for deportation and in 1954 through what is known as

Operation Wetback, more than one million workers were apprehended and deported (Martinez Brawley & Zorita ,2017). Martinez Brawley and Zorita (2017) explain that racist removal policies were enacted during WWII, (1939-1945) and although the Mexican immigrants were not the only ones targeted, the proximity of Mexico to the United States, made it harsher for them.

The *Immigration and Nationality Act* of 1965, which provides foreigners priority to immigrate based on family reunification reasons and occupational qualification has been associated with a heightened increase in immigration from Mexico to the United States (Portes, 1990). It established a cap on immigration from the Western Hemisphere, leading to a rise in undocumented migration as well (Young 2017). Martin and Midgley (2003) add how major policy changes in 1965, made a significant difference in who was admitted into the United States prioritizing the entry of immigrants who had special skills and ones with family in the United States, giving about 80% of the awarded slots to immigrants reuniting with family members or relatives in the United States. Moreover, Martin and Midgley (2003) explain that there was not a lot of migration between the 1960s and 1970s, leading to an increase of Mexican immigrants pushed by Mexico's economic crash in the 1980s. In 1995, Mexico had one of the worst recessions, and even though the United States assisted to stabilize the Mexican economy, Mexico-United States migration continued, even accelerated, towards the latter part of the 1990s (Martin & Midgley, 2003).

The influx of Mexican migration to the United States has existed since the nineteenth century, yet negativity toward immigrants still persists (Valencia & Black, 2002). Martin and Midgley (2003) explain that public opinion surveyed between 1965 and 1993 consistently demonstrated the wish for the reduction of both legal and illegal immigration to go into effect, but it was not until the 1980s (roughly between 1980 and 1996) that, as consequence of the

accelerating pace of global change, migration patterns were affected with major changes. When the influx of illegal migrants, mostly Mexicans, began to adversely affect unskilled American workers, the *Immigration Reform and Control Act* of 1986 (IRCA) was passed, legalizing 2.7 million unauthorized undocumented immigrants (Martin & Migdly, 2003). With the increasing number of immigrants, a diverse immigrant population arrived in the United States, predominantly low skilled individuals (Roberts, et. al, 2000). Moreover, the negative perception of the foreign population in the United States by the native born is due more to the threat they present to political and economic control when they grow in number and are visibly concentrated (Portes, 2010).

At the beginning of 1990, legislators approved temporary entry visas known as H1-B that authorized legal residence for three years in the United States, with the possibility of extending it for another three for high ability foreigners (Portes, 2020). Furthermore, with the few limits placed on immigration entry, the numbers grew exponentially, admitting more than 9 million immigrants legally to the United States between 1991 and 2000 (Martin & Midgley, 2003). In 2000, when Mexico elected its first president from the opposition party after 70 years, Vicente Fox, they attempted to reach an agreement for immigrants in the United States with President George W. Bush, unfortunately, it fell through after the terrorists' attack of September 11, 2001 (Martin & Midgley, 2003). After the recession of 2008, the flow of Mexican workers to the United States came to a halt in great part due to the lack of job opportunities (Massey & Pren, 2012). This led to farmers and ranchers pressuring lobbyists with great urgency to encourage the federal government to respond to the need, consequently creating H-2A, a temporary program for agricultural workers, allowing for the number of these types of visas to triple between 2006

and 2010 from 46,000 to 139,000 and by 2017 it expanded to 412,800 with 393,849 from Mexico alone (Portes, 2020).

Mexico continues to be the most important contributor of immigration to the United States, but due to a lack of unified path to citizenship or legal status the most vulnerable are affected: undocumented immigrants (Portes, 2020; US Congress, 1986, Valdez 2016). Young (2017), explains undocumented immigration to the United States remains a persistent political, social, and human rights challenge. Furthermore, one of the unique factors when comparing Mexican migration to other immigrant groups, is that the extensive difficulty to control the land border with the United States allows more immigrants from Mexico to be present in the United States (Roberts et al., 2000). Additionally, while immigrants continue to face a lack of economic opportunities, they will continue to be pulled to countries such as the United States to secure more stable employment (Roberts, et al., 2000). The United States continues to be quite receptive to new immigration, approving more than one million immigrants in 2017 for legal permanent residence, with 25 percent of the total accepted being Mexican (Portes, 2020).

Waves of high immigration of Mexicans are considered a threat to the national culture integrity (Portes, 2010). As immigrants experience acts of racism and discrimination in the United States, and as they try to make meaning of their immigrant experiences, instead of disconnecting from their national ethnic identity, they develop a stronger sense of being Mexican and confront the challenges as part of their transnationalism journey (Bradatan et al., 2010). The overall pattern of migration is shaped by Mexican immigrant adjustments and United States migrant characteristics and the choices they make to find a balance in both (Roberts et. al., 2000). Even though policy makers try to use racially neutral language in the laws, in the process, they make immigrants feel as outsiders and less worthy. One of the examples is in the

development of the laws such as *The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act*, as it clearly singles out Latinas as the undocumented source of wasteful welfare spending (Smith, 2007; Valdez & Fujiwara, 2016; 2006).

Furthermore, since September 11, 2001, politicians and the United States media have portrayed undocumented immigration as a national security threat (Young, 2017). The constant deportations of Mexican immigrants have not only traumatized them and their families, but there has been no positive difference on wages for the native-born, which is something they claim the Mexican immigrants are responsible for (Clemens, Lewis & Postel, 2017). Although nativists continue to drive national policy and legislation, immigrants and opponents of nativism must continue to promote principles of a more comprehensive immigration reform, a reform that would meet the needs of the labor market in the United States (Young, 2017). One of the two dimensions within immigration is the dimension of immigrants who come with a positive socio-economic and education status, and the second dimension includes the ones who come in search of a better life, desperately looking for safety, an education, and/or a job (Portes, 2010).

Transnational Theoretical Framework

Transnationalism is an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that focuses on social, cultural, economic and political processes fostered by globalization as they intersect with gender, sexuality, and race (Bondy, 2014, 2015, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Mustasaari, 2015; Yosso, 2005). Women have contributed considerably to the development in an array of areas such as labor, gender, economy, and social change, but unfortunately their contributions have been some of the most ignored in the literature development (Vasquez, 2011). In addition, they have participated on a number of existential liberation movements throughout history in order to be free and receive equal treatment (Wootton, 2013). Through a system of thought, Latinas center

their concrete experiences, sources of knowledge, and survival strategies at the core of it (Vasquez, 2017).

Transnational scholars explain that as globalization and immigrants move across nations, so do gender, sex, and national race debates about citizenship (Bondy, 2016). As the United States continues to grow and diversify, the dominant nationalists paint People of Color and immigrants as unwanted and White citizens as wanted, polarizing beliefs and building unnecessary gaps (Anzaldua, 2007; Kim-Puri, 2005). While encouraging cross-cultural understanding and different ways to think about education and citizenship in others, transnationalism has led to increased xenophobia and hate crimes toward immigrants in the United States and other countries (Urrieta, 2016). It's critical to include the needed element of research on lived experiences that shape social relations and identities (Bondy, 2015; 2016). Furthermore, the integration of feminist transnational and cultural citizenship assists with the explanation of how citizenship permeates political dimensions within transnational spaces and the always shifting relations of power (Bondy, 2016).

There have been significant gains in middle class women's advancement in the workplace, but they still remain low in white-collar, top level managerial and supervisory positions (Ballakrishnen, Fielding-Singh, & Magliozzi, 2019). Vasquez (2017) explains that females have made significant advancements in career achievement and leadership roles in the last few decades, but there is still low representation of women and Women of Color in certain leadership positions. Latinas, in particular, continue to lag behind White and often Black women (Isom Scott, 2018). Immigrant women in the United States are amongst the most vulnerable who encounter heightened and explicit subordination by laws and policies in existence; thus, in response to adversity, females are more likely to seek support of family and friends (Isom Scott

2018; Olivares, 2014). Lechuga-Pena and Lechuga (2018) explain familism is an essential and most impactful factor in the educational success of Latinas, especially for Mexican Americans. In the past years, it has become more of a trend to examine how a transnational immigrant Latina remains connected through shared memories, social practices, and mutual sharing of resources with her transnational family (Mustasaari, 2015). Lechuga-Pena and Lechuga (2018) add familism (sense of family identification, obligation, and support) is critical for academic success as is an important source of strength, encouragement, and advantage.

Transnational Identity

It is no longer expected to be the same in all situations, but to be able to act and interact with others depending on the situation in a fluid rather than rigid manner to develop one's identity (Bondy, 2014). There has been controversy in regard to whether or not immigration changes the identity of people (Pedraza, 2014). Fraga and Segura (2006) explain whether this is true or not depends on both the immigrants and the ones in the receiving country.

A transnational identity could be developed if immigrants learn how to manage their cultural and educational intersectionalities from a space of marginalization or privilege (Bondy, 2015).

Bondy (2015) explains Latinas construct their citizenship identities by embracing education as a way to endure their marginalization. For Mexicans migrating between Mexico and the United States, immigration and citizenship are significantly important in identity formation (Dejaeghere & McCleary, 2010). Blitvich (2018) states that no matter how globalization is defined, the idea of trans-border relations, an increment of mobility of goods, capital, people and ideas, increase rapidly. Globalization has led the meaning of citizenship to an immediate labeling of all People of Color and immigrants as "unwanted and undesirable citizens" (Bondy, 2015, p. 353). Bondy (2015) explores how transnationalism scholars emphasize the notable differences between citizen

and immigrant. Unfortunately, the complex transnational processes that shape the immigrants are never accounted for (Bondy, 2015). The lack of a unified and consistent language has been a key reason for politics of language to create resentment of special treatment for minority groups (Ovando, 2013). This is in part because of the dilemma in growing up as a transnational, simultaneously living in two different nations, and deciding to stay quiet because of the racism that has existed throughout United States history (Ovando, 2013). Gonzalez (2001) states for transnational Latinas to experience a holistic education, economic prosperity, and an abundant quality of life, favorable immigration laws and policy must exist.

Approximately 13% of the total United States population is foreign born (Bondy, 2015). Within the Latina population in the United States, about 40% are first generation (Bondy, 2016). According to Pina-Watson, et al., (2015), 16% of the U.S. population are Hispanic and, of those, 63% are of Mexican descent. Latina identity can become part of an identity range that people embrace depending on the context and the purpose because Latinas are mainly judged by what is different between them and the non-transnational population, a few of those differences being national origin, history, and racial and class background (Lugo-Lugo, 2008). Bondy (2014, 2015, and 2016) adds Latinas live at the intersections of transnational constructions of gender, race, class, language, and nation, forging their identities in the in-between spaces as strengths and not deficits.

Although there are similarities in the experiences, values, and histories of racial and ethnic groups, there are still many differences within them (Vasquez, 2017). Soto (2012) explains that Latina immigrants struggle since their identities are not clear transitions in sequence, but rather contradictory, messy, and conflicting. Delgado Bernal (2018) emphasizes how pedagogies of the home contribute to transformative ruptures of the permanent,

indestructible racism, and institutional inequities that exist through *testimonio* pedagogy. In addition, in their attempt to try to pursue justice and liberation, Latinas use their daily strategies for getting educated, feeding their families, finding work, earning respect, paying bills, etc., as survival sources (Wootton, 2013). Historically, Latinas have been stereotyped and treated differently in various ways such as by making them feel like outcasts with no guidance for aspirations to attain higher levels of education (Delgado Bernal, 2018). Latina immigrants and their families must be at the center of the learning communities by valuing and employing their *conocimientos* (ways of knowing) as their strengths (Tellez & Manthey, 2015).

Urrieta (2016) reports often transnational Mexican families are not seen positively in the United States schools because of their return trips home which cause the students' absenteeism. Yosso (2005) adds deficit thinkers tend to view these trips as a negative, but contrary to that negative mindset, educators should focus on the potential of the community cultural wealth to use it for the transformation of their schooling experiences. There are strategies in existence that can make a difference on transnational Latina achievement, but it should start with young people understanding "ways of knowing" and the importance of familial support. They can utilize the knowledge of the home to remain hopeful during moments of oppression and marginalization (Kasun, 2015; Delgado Bernal, 2018). "Just as there is no hope without struggle, the struggle is not without hope" (Wootton, 2013, p. 44).

Latinas are able to navigate and negotiate aspects of citizenship, oppression, and marginalization in a different country (Stewart, 2014). Citizenship must be something that is constructed transnationally within a framework that includes immigrant structures and practices and understanding of citizenship from their daily encounters and experiences in a country with a society provoking and causing countless stressors around immigration (Bondy, 2015). Kasun

(2015) differentiates between knowledge and “ways of knowing” to shift away from a deficit thinking that marginalizes transnational Latinas. The position deficit thinkers take is that minority population do not rise in society because of their own fault due to the general assumption that the cultural knowledge accepted as valuable by the dominant society is effective and equitable (Yosso, 2005). Moreover, Urrieta (2016) emphasizes how educators in the United States fail to acknowledge the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual importance of a student’s return trips to Mexico, which add value because the children socialize and acquire knowledge in different knowledge systems. Assumptions and a lack of knowledge and understanding have resulted in ignorance which, at its most hurtful, has been used to silence and marginalize People of Color to the point of almost becoming invisible, and it is through acknowledging and valuing the capital and voices of People of Color, and by using the marginal spaces as places of resistance and power, that transformation can occur (Yosso, 2005).

Based on what Gandara (2015) as stated in Isom Scott (2018) reports, Latinas have made significant strides in educational attainment and business ownership. Nonetheless, professional Latinas in the United States face the challenge of finding a balance between their two cultures because they have the need to feel validated and to have a strong sense of belonging in both (origin and host) (Cavazos, 2016). Even though, in many instances, opportunities are created for individuals to succeed, this particular population is faced with obstacles associated with negative experiences in their upbringing (Cavazos, 2016). Schools are known to be key institutions of assimilation and incorporation and generally involve the processes in which immigrant children learn the meaning and practices of citizenship (Bondy, 2016). Lugo-Lugo (2008) explains that the construction of identity is so complex and problematic that even as females try to defend and articulate who they are, they are simultaneously described by others as something they are not.

Transnational Theory

The term transnationalism has been explored in different contexts for quite few years. Research shows an increase in the search for the term transnationalism, and it has been employed in differing areas from migration to social movements and globalization (Bradatan et al., 2010). Kasun (2015) explains that transnationalism has been used broadly in describing political alliances and finance to a description in anthropology as “movements of people and ideas across borders”. (p. 278). Sanchez (2007) adds transnationalism is defined as the continuous social, cultural, political, and economic flow between two countries often including people, foods, resources, information, knowledge, and other material and symbolic goods and in order for integration to occur, the respect for preservation of language and culture is also necessary. In addition, Kasun (2015) explains transnationalism is the innately borderless social practices, happening across countries, and the awareness which overpowers these types of practices. A transnational system based on the interrelationship between opportunities in countries of origin and places of destination exists and will continue to persist as it has during the last decades while transnational families continue to emerge (Mustasaari, 2015).

In more recent literature, the transnationalism concept has been explored in an array of ways and one of them is as a concept of migration in which a transnational interacts with others, depending on the situation, according to the rules and behaviors from the country of origin and in a different manner with the ones from the host country (Bradatan et. al., 2010). Within the transnationalism context, home, identity and belonging extend beyond the boundaries of sending and receiving countries, consequently having Latino immigrant families encounter daily push/pull experiences (Bondy, 2015). Moreover, participation in two different worlds provides transnational immigrants with experiences, knowledge, and a greater understanding of what it

means to be a global learner and citizen and, in many instances, the ability to empathize with insights about membership in communities that go further than local, state, and national boundaries thus, becoming successful citizens and the central elements in the future globalization era (Sanchez, 2007).

Since immigrants maintain ties with their place of origin, their understanding of belonging to two nations simultaneously is critical (Sanchez, 2001). This raises some controversial issues when immigrants try to integrate themselves in an unknown, oppressive, racial society and cannot identify themselves fully within a broader society (Bradatan et al., 2010). Assimilation is a scary thought for many immigrants who live in two nations interchangeably and, historically, since they assimilate in a new subtractive world that erases the histories and realities replacing them with new experiences, that fear becomes a strength (Lugo-Lugo, 2008). Soto (2012) explains how Latinas experience messy and contradictory transitions without any sense of order or orientation when they are in another country, but at the same time they gain their strength from those experiences to create their identities. Additionally, being separated from their own place of origin, but knowing that the family love and support exists, regardless of the situation the individual experiences, enables the person to be able to use pedagogies learned at home to create their unique identity and stronger ties with the family. Morgan Consoli, Llamas, and Consoli (2015) conclude that Mexican origin immigrants desire to maintain close familial relationships and support, on which they heavily rely, thus making it an unmistakably critical part of what drives these immigrants to succeed, particularly in a new country. Their findings are consistent with previous research that connects familial support and thriving, showing those variables are strongly related to positive outcomes in a variety of studies

with Latina success, despite adversity and challenges in their journey (Morgan Consoli, Llamas, & Consoli, 2016).

Kasun (2015) further argues that transnationalism describes the “inherently un-bordered social practices in the world and their situatedness among the structures which have governing power over those practices” (p. 278). The powerful governing force uses theories to silence the oppressed, subordinated, and racially discriminated against People of Color (Yosso, 2005). Transnational immigrants not permanently situated, either physically or metaphysically, continuously search for terminology to help them describe their existence based on their daily and cumulatively unique experiences (Sanchez, 2001). Transnational Latinas must be able to negotiate new identities in a new country and always remember that as they begin defining categories in ways that confirm who they are and who they are not, in which groups they belong to, and their experiences living in new communities, their sense of belonging and solidarity with other groups should never be erased (Lugo-Lugo, 2008). Researchers suggest that notions of citizenship and belonging must move beyond assimilation to a national identity, toward a transnational understanding for immigrants to begin forming their own unique identity (Bondy, 2015).

Researchers and practitioners are still trying to identify the necessary tools and analyze the challenges that impact individuals whose race and social background, within the context of social inequality, leaves them lacking the necessary social skills, knowledge, and cultural capital required for social mobility (Yosso, 2005). According to Bourdieu’s theoretical insight, the academic and social outcomes for People of Color or “disadvantaged” are far less desirable than that of Whites (Yosso, 2005). In the context of transnationalism, it is critical to understand the broad and societal inequalities and oppressions that limit the Latinas as it relates to necessary

qualities for success (Bondy, 2015). Yosso and Delgado Bernal (2005; 2018) delineate a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework that can be used to theorize, analyze, and challenge the ways race and racism have historically impacted social structures, minorities, and even the underrepresented minorities in the United States such as the transnational Latinas. The application of CRT highlights how racism operates and contributes to inequity and how race continues to be a significant determining factor in the United States and provides a lens to interpret the experiences of racism and discrimination (Ladson-Billings & Tati, 1995).

Transnational Feminista Theory

A feminist transnational approach emphasizes how Latina immigration, discourses and images on Latinas, and citizens create the conditions in which Latinas negotiate their citizenship identities (Bondy, 2016). Bourdieu explains that cultural capital refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged society groups, and that it could only be attained by one's family or through formal schooling resulting in the dominant groups within a society to be able to maintain power (Yosso, 2005). Deficit thinkers in educational institutions ignore the immigrant students' heritage culture capital, removing the opportunity to cultivate their own knowledge causing their resource bases to be invalidated (Cervantes-Soon, & Carrillo, 2016). Bondy (2016) explains how in schools, citizenship education usually emphasizes civic responsibility to one's community, allegiance to the nation, and a patriotic identity, however, in the United States, potential divisive questions over the meaning and practices of citizenship education have been provoked, especially when it entails the diversity of young peoples' experiences. Researchers describe how Latinas create identities, lives, and communities amidst their unresolved positions in nations, challenging traditional assimilation and incorporation methods while highlighting the forged identities in the spaces as

strengths and not deficits (Bondy, 2016). Consequently, researchers are now using a transnational lens with adolescents whose citizenship identities are developed between national borders. This feminist transnational and cultural citizenship focus direct attention on complex ways Latinas reframe their citizenship and belonging within myriad shifts of power (Bondy, 2016).

They must not let go of the hope and remember to use a learned racial identity within a society that devalues their history, work, culture, and customs (Bondy, 2015). These strategies learned at their homes are successfully employed by Latinas when confronted with challenges and obstacles that attempt to impede them from achieving their goals (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Furthermore, the exploration of practices regarding race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality through cultural, spiritual, and educational lenses of transnational Latinas through a Critical Race Feminist Theory can help in the development of a strong transnational Latina that will be able to succeed (Delgado Bernal, 2018). It is important to continue sharing pedagogies of the home and the *conocimientos* in order to thrive and reject damaging lessons imposed by a society that continues to be led and shaped by white supremacists (Delgado Bernal, 2018). Eventually the teaching and learning of the home, such as the encouragement to confront oppressive conditions, enhances Latinas' ability to resist domination by drawing upon their own cultures and sense of self through negotiating, struggling, or holding onto their bilingualism and bi-culturism as they acquire the language to become 'someone in life' (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Furthermore, as the transformation occurs, transnational Latinas should be in the center providing valuable insight into their experiences in order to cultivate a more just and inclusive society (Sanchez, 2007).

In their crucial pursuit of justice and liberation for Latinas in the United States, women empower other minorities to unite to be agents of change (Medina, 2011). People of Color

continue to experience racism and even other forms of oppression such as sexism, subordination based on immigration status and gender, which includes transnational Latinas experiencing two or more levels of permanent, indestructible intersectionality oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2018). In addition, the traditional role of a Latina, just like others less affiliated with the dominant culture, are subject to experience the worst effects of sexual harassment because they are historically acculturated to stay loyal (Pompper, 2007).

Critical Race *Feminista* theory emerged as an extension of the Critical Race Theory as they intended to stop the oppression and abuse of Women and People of Color, who have an awareness of their challenges such as the silencing of their language and immigration experiences (Yosso, 2005). Since the introduction of white supremacy in the United States, the cruelty of racism has emerged in different shapes and forms (Delgado Bernal, 2018). Domestic workers have been disproportionately Women of Color since historically working as slaves until recently, Latinas continue performing domestic service at the houses of the dominant race (Nilliasca, 2011). Yosso (2005) explains how Gloria Anzaldua points out that just as People of Color have been disempowered by theories, they can also be strengthened and empowered by them. Critical race feminist theory offers ways in which to use the mind, body, and soul as needed to confront and affirm an understanding of how society is structured, the effects of using pedagogies of the home, communication and learning from the home, as well as cultural and language capital to help transnational Latinas and other feminists of color negotiate and not silence the inevitable daily experiences of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and dominant perceptions in their personal, professional, and even transnational spaces (Delgado Bernal, 2018). Scholars delineate how Females of Color experience layers of subordination in addition to racism, sexism and classism creating beliefs that legitimize women's subordinate social status

(Green & Radford Cury, 1991, Vasquez, 2017; Yosso, 2005). Green and Radford Curry (1991) state that prominent voices of feminist theory have emphasized the importance of significant recognition of the differences in power structure as it affects racial, cultural, regional, familial, and religious relationships instead of trying to make those facets invisible. By recognizing the differences, the relative likenesses such as age, class, personality and character type, gives light to the creation of the cultural feminist theory (Green & Radford Curry, 1991).

Medina (2011) states that telling their own stories leads to their knowledge creating a communal impact, as it is not only important to fully understand social justice attitudes, and behaviors, but to influence the awareness of others as well. Systems of oppression continue affecting immigrants, migration flows, and immigration status (Golash-Boza, Duenas, & Xiong, 2019). In addition, as Isasi-Diaz (2004) explains in Medina (2011), transnational Latinas provide knowledge of their own interests so consequently, the individuals in power gain understanding of needs, concerns, and experiences which enables “new consciousness and creativity” for making transformative changes. Vasquez (2017) states that leaders who are Women of Color have the ability to promote positive changes as social agents in institutions and organizations through the practice of applying unique skills, values, and perspectives to their leadership activities.

Acculturation Vs Assimilation

Assimilation as a melting-pot model: becoming an American by cutting off all ties from the nation from which you are immigrating, including language, culture, meaning of life and the practice of mainstreaming with the American culture is more possible when there is no opportunity of returning or having frequent interaction with any natives from the nation the immigrant is from (Alvarez Julia Appendix in Gloria Anzaldua Borderlands, 2012) and deliberately disconnecting from their national identity as well as the customs and language of

their birth becomes a necessity for some (Schiller et al., (1995). On the contrary, there is also a central aspect of multicultural illustrations of America in which immigrant groups are encouraged to preserve their culture, custom, and identity, to be rooted in an American mosaic (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970). Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003) explain how the assimilation hypothesis delineates how the longer immigrants live and socialize in the new country with the host society, the higher the possibility they will assimilate. Furthermore, as a transnational the belief is that the longer periods an immigrant resides in the United States, the greater disengagement from the country of origin (Guarnizo, et al., 2003). Whether the illustration has been one of assimilation into an American Culture or blending into a culturally diverse America, the creation of an American nationality has been and continues to be the main concern about immigration, likely because of the fact that immigrants continue to have ties to what they still consider their homeland (Schiller et. al., 1995). The assimilation could be easier when immigrants are disconnected from their homeland in all senses like many years ago, but for the new wave of immigrants, and in some cases, long-term Mexican American natives of the Southwest, this model does not apply because of the proximity with Mexico (Anzaldua, 2012). It is easier for many Mexican Americans to maintain the connection to the native culture and language, therefore; their old homelands continue to be part of their new selves (Anzaldua, 2012).

Latina Women and Successful Careers

One of the most consistent predictors of social mobility in the United States is educational attainment and although there is evidence that family background and socioeconomic status are indicators of educational attainment, there is little evidence of variables that contribute to Mexican heritage students' own educational success (Easley, Bianco, & Leech,

2012). Many U.S.-born and immigrant Latinos/as have successfully navigated the American education system, thus, *ganas*, a strong desire to achieve academically strengthened by parental sacrifices has surfaced in the literature as a strong factor for Mexican descent immigrants' success (Easley, et al., 2012). Moreover, Latino population graduating from college is only 8% compared to the White population with a 71% completion (Fry & Lopez, 2012; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Latinas in the United States currently make up 20% of the female population, and by 2060, will compose one third of our total female population (Gandara, 2015). As the largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority group in schools, Latinas continue to seek educational opportunities that will be worth their sacrifices, despite the many challenges they have to overcome in their search for a brighter future (Delgado Bernal & Aleman, 2017). Through their journeys, they are forced to negotiate multiple systems that could possibly impact their educational trajectories (Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018).

The significant difference between the educational attainment of Mexican heritage and Whites calls for research studies on factors that have helped Mexican-descent immigrants and first-generation students (Easley, et al., 2012). Of all Latina/o subgroups, Mexican Americans are the most educationally disadvantaged and, in addition, they are mainly taught by teachers who have little, if any, knowledge and understanding of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds (Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018). With the Latino/a population being the fastest growing, the Mexican American achievement gap is a serious concern (Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018). Latinas have some of the lowest high school graduation rates and college completion rates among all women (Gandara, 2015). To combat this, educators must know and understand students' backgrounds and use their family stories as strengths to begin shaping their lives and helping these students realize their potential (Easley, et al., 2012). Parents are, most of the time,

willing to break educational barriers they encounter to help their children change their educational paths and educational trajectories to attain positive educational achievement, but they can't do it alone (Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018). As factors that contribute to the lowest performance levels attained are researched, it's important to note that students must feel connected to their culture by including their experiences and bodies of knowledge and, in addition, teachers must move away from deficit perspectives of their Latino students (Burciaga, Perez Huber, & Solorzano, 2010; Delgado Bernal & Aleman, 2017; Easley, et al., 2012; Valencia, 2010). In addition, Latinas' education and inequality experiences must be used to inform scholarship and enhance the work of educators to continue helping Latinas break down barriers and prepare them for the future educational pipeline and workforce (Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018).

Despite the current growth of the Latina student population, schools have not proclaimed the cultural capital or funds of knowledge that Latinas bring to schools (Yosso, 2005). Chavez-Moreno (2020) explains that it might be due in part to U.S. schooling being under White supremacists' norms, consequently providing an inequitable education to students from marginalized groups, even with the efforts of implementation of programs like bilingual and dual language education that intend to level the field for many. Moreover, Perez Huber, Solorzano and Velez (2018) argue how Latinas attain degrees at each major attainment benchmark at a lower rate than any other major ethno-racial group. There is a vast amount of literature on reasons why Latinas don't succeed in education at higher rates, but one of the reasons is being the first in their families to attend college and more than likely experiencing isolation from the dominant culture, encountering forms of discrimination such as racism, and sexism, and feeling self-doubt about their ability to succeed in college (Villalpando, 2003; Yosso, 2006; as stated in

Marrun, 2018). Despite these challenges, college enrollment at two- and four-year colleges tripled among Latinas ages 18-24 (Krogstad & Fry, 2014 as cited in Marrun, 2018), though they are still severely underrepresented in higher education (Carrillo & Dean, 2020). High School dropout rates have decreased for Hispanics from 32% to 12%, but there was little increase in college enrollment and, more specifically, only 10% of Latinas between the ages of 18-29 earned a bachelor's degree (Krogstad, 2016); U. S. Census Bureau, 2017). Latinas remain the most uneducated of all ethnic groups and continue to have the lowest representation in college degree attainment at all levels (Espinoza, 2010; Kompare, 2014). Espinoza (2010) emphasizes that even though Latinas are enrolling in higher education at the same rate as other non-Latinas, they are less likely to graduate. In addition, the Latina student population is also often absent from higher education research, even though there is evidence supporting the need for it for further knowledge and understanding of this population (Carrillo & Dean, 2020).

Furthermore, identity formation theorists, which directly impact how higher education professionals understand Latina students and their development, rarely consider Women of Color and even if they do, they fail to critically analyze and consider the effects of intersectionality of Latinas with "classism, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression" (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 559). Much has been documented on the lack of Latina educational accomplishments based on a deficit model, but it is also important to document the strength and resilience of Latinas to understand the factors for their success in higher education and after (Espino, 2016). One of the primary factors leading to Latina success is often family support, and other factors that have been identified as being predictors of persistence for Latina educational attainment include being female, responsibility towards others, and the value placed on education (Carrillo & Dean, 2020; Martinez, 2013). Familismo, which stresses loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity as the cultural set

of values held by many Latinas, is more likely to be central to Latina education and career decisions (Carrillo & Dean, 2020). Hernandez (2015) identified that high-achieving Latinas are forced to continuously balance individual and family expectations when they select their university of choice to further their studies, making it a challenge for them. Furthermore, it is important for higher education professionals and administrators to consider all opportunities to support Latinas in their commitment to higher education and be more intentional about including them in studies so that administrators better support these students and promote their success.

Critical Race Feminista Theory

Some refer to themselves as transmigrants, as individuals who immigrate from country to country, but this still lacks some of the unique lived experiences of immigrants (Sanchez, 2001). Others think of themselves as bi-nationals, making it seem like the person has two-nation state identities which still does not fully describe who they are and mutates their unique experiences (Sanchez, 2001). The lack of listening and understanding, and in some instances oppression, regarding to testimonial journeys has led to the addition of the Critical Race Feminista Theory (CRFT) (Yosso, 2005). CRFT is a framework that can be used to examine and challenge the ways race, racism, and gender impact social practices for females (Yosso, 2005). Transnational identities are formed through lived experiences, particularly experiences stemming from vulnerability to nation-state immigration policies and practices (Dejaeghere & McCleary, 2010). Mexican origin immigrants experience the hardships and stress of living in two opposite worlds (Bradatan et al., 2010). They immigrate to the United States for an array of reasons, but Mexican parents who bring their children with them, do it in hopes of securing their children's future (Bondy, 2016). Little do they know that once they arrive to the United States, the dominant group will try to force them to assimilate and Americanize as if it was something that could

happen magically (Portes, 2010). Immigrant policies based on these assimilationists' ideologies, tend to subtract the language and culture of immigrant parents (Portes, 2010).

Assimilationists have always tried to make immigrants forget about who they are, their origins, their culture, their language, their memories, knowing that forced assimilationism will bring consequences that are mostly negative (Portes, 2010). Systems of oppression have historically shaped the lives of immigrants and their children, yet not many pay close attention to the larger system of inequality (Golash-Boza, Duenas, & Xiong, 2019). This becomes more of a concern when policies are created from this standpoint, consequently instilling in immigrants' children the idea that their culture and language are inferior and must be abandoned, leading them to rebel against the authority and efforts of their parents (Portes 2010). We must note and be cautious of second-generation offspring of undocumented immigrants because they do assimilate to American values and aspirations, but they are afforded little material and social resources (Portes, 2010). With the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform (CIR) recommending that the federal government do more to "Americanize immigrants", grants have been provided to local governments to ensure the support is given to immigrants through English classes, naturalization, and civic education (Martin & Midgley, 2003). Consequently, restrictive immigration policies will serve to widen the gap and the ethnic and racial inequalities of the always-marginalized population will persist.

Furthermore, if the United States wants to compete globally, policy makers must decide to create policy with the understanding that American citizens learning a second language is not a representation of a threat to cultural integration, but a resource to the country in creating an interdependent global system (Portes, 2010). Assimilationists wish the present and the future would mirror the last century, but the United States must continuously promote and increase

citizens' competency in different foreign languages (Portes 2010). Instead of viewing immigrants and their families as culturally deficient, one can have greater appreciation of transnational strengths, especially the ability to navigate and interact among various languages and cultural contexts, by viewing immigrants with a transnationalism lens, (Kasun, 2015). Martin and Migdely (2003) explain how documented citizens are given the opportunity to become citizens of the United States through naturalization, but Mexican citizens have always had low rates of naturalization, likely due to the proximity to their origin country and their hopes of one day making a permanent return, though low literacy levels may also play a role. Mexican immigrants try to preserve as much of their culture as possible and use their values, language, and customs as a platform to aid them in success in a novel social environment (Portes, 2010). When settlers from south of the border immigrated to Texas in search of a better life, they brought many customs from their homeland and managed to maintain their traditions from the past while building a brighter future (Bacha Garza, 2010). Scholars state that Mexican professionals retain strong communication with Mexico even when they become U.S. citizens (Alarcon, 1997). Since Mexicans are never willing to assimilate into instant Americans, forceful integration has not been successful (Portes, 2011).

In past years, it has become more of a trend to examine how a transnational immigrant Latina remains connected through shared memories, social practices, and mutual sharing of resources with her transnational family (Mustasaari, 2015). Moreover, pedagogies of the home influences Latinas as they begin to develop their identities, establish values, and adjust to the demands of their bilingual and bicultural environments (Delgado Bernal, 2006). In the development of Mexican origin females, family support and *conocimiento* (*knowledge*) are of great importance because they provide them with a source of strong identity and self-worth,

which are critical when transitioning from one country to another (Pina-Watson, Lopez, Ojeda, & Rodriguez, 2014). Within the context of transnationalism, Mexican immigrants' experiences extend beyond familiar boundaries, challenging them with unfamiliar systems and processes of acculturation and incorporation (Bondy, 2016). Critical Race Feminista Theory (CRFT) is a possible framework through which transnational Latinas may challenge the inequalities, intersectionalities, and forms of oppression so they may experience a better future. (Yosso, 2005).

National and state legislation, regarding, immigration suggest that Latinas are regarded as undesirable and unwanted individuals in the United States (Bondy, 2016). Portes (2010) explores prominent immigration scholar Douglas Massey's claims that laws and regulations have heightened the difficulty and cost of border crossing despite the implication that these laws were supposed to, in fact, improve immigration. The building of the famous wall, the distressing deportations, and the continuous discourse that paint Mexicans as dangerous, all are examples of ignoring what must be in the core of the moral and legal principles of the United States as a country of, and for, immigrants (Martinez Brawley & Zorita, 2017). Martin and Midgley (2003) delineate how George Washington expected America to be open to all types of immigrants, not only to the rich, but also the oppressed and those persecuted in their countries, as well as allow their participation in all the rights and privileges of the United States.

Latinas in Educational Leadership Positions

Despite a significant increase in the number of women advancing in careers in educational administration in the last 30 years, women continue to occupy lower-level administrative positions in school districts nationwide (Campbell & Campbell-Whately, 2020). The percentage of female principal positions in public schools in the United States has increased,

between 1988 and 2012, from 25% to 52% but unfortunately for top level positions, such as a superintendent, this is not the case (Hill, Ottem, & De Roche, 2016). In the year 2000, only 13% of women were superintendents, and almost 20 years later, only 24% of females (Robinson, Shackshaft, Grogan, & Newcomb, 2017) are employed in these positions. Even though there have been some strides in females attaining some of the executive leadership positions, the number of women is still far below that of men in educational administration (Campbell & Campbell-Whatley, 2020). Even though K-12 systems have more females than males in the United States, males still dominate the chief executive positions in about 14,000 districts (Campbell & Campbell-Whatley, 2020). Because women make up a larger percentage in the field of education, they must use their voices to provide contributions and perspectives relating to their experiences so they may bring better clarity and depth of understanding to the practice of leadership in order to help open greater opportunities for women (Lemasters & Roach, 2012).

Latina school district leaders' intersectionality of race and gender impact their identity development as professionals as they try to use the Latina cultural familial values and linguistic abilities as strengths in forming a sense of community among those they serve (Murakami, Hernandez, Valle, & Almaguer, 2018). In Texas, 52.4% of public-school students are Hispanic (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Despite this, only 16.6% (or 1,342) of all public-school principals in Texas are Latinas (Texas Education Agency PEIMS data, 2018). Latina school leaders struggle with the complexities that arise when they consider and strive for school district leadership positions (Murakami, et al., 2018). When confronting traditional gender roles, as well as the inclusion of cultural and societal expectations, Latina school leaders encounter difficulty with self-imposed and external career obstacles to the point that, in some instances, they opt for leaving the pursuit of leadership positions if they do not find a compatibility between their own

identities and the role of a professional leader (Martinez, Rivera, & Marquez, 2020). Latinas do not identify racial identity as immobile, but as a fluid intersectionality of experiences that constantly changes depending on contextual social experiences and their identity development as professionals (Martinez et al., 2020). Psychological, sociological, and organizational barriers imposed on American females significantly impacts the occupational role expectations of educational leaders.

Even though Latinas have always valued education historically, poverty is also one of the factors that has halted their dreams and goals to achieve their ultimate educational reality and prevented many of them from following their journey to college (Gandara & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015). The opportunities for Latinas to attain a college degree, or otherwise further their education, did not emerge until the 1960s with the rise of the civil rights movement (U. S. Department of Education, 2013). Teaching became one of the most popular professions because of the accessibility of the workforce for Latinas and the potential to work their way through the ranks of public leadership in school districts, although many have had to pay a high price for upward professional mobility (Menchaca, Mills, & Leo, 2017).

How far has society advanced in providing equality in the workplace compared to decades ago? Now, the number of managerial positions occupied by women is significantly higher and continues to grow since the 1950s (Latu, Stewart, Myers, Lisco, Estes, & Donahue, 2011). According to Ramarajan and Reid (2016) one of the ways they are able to resolve the competition of work and nonwork expectations is by accepting the organizational demands and passing as someone they are not. Systematic organizational structure barriers continue to block women from advancing in positions, leading them to become almost invisible as a strategy to be

able to navigate the professional world (Ballakrishnen, Fielding-Singh, & Magliozzi, 2019). As women continue operating in biased organizations, they realized gender is a constant in shaping the systemic processes, beliefs, and organizational designs (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

Although women are aware that the implementation of intentional invisibility could hinder their professional advancement, they use it to avoid conflict, demonstrate an authentic self, and feel a sense of stability as well as authentic and feminist feelings (Ballakrishned et al, 2019). King, Bergstrom, Correll, Jacquet, and West, (2017) found in research that these women remain professionally ambitious, but never seek visibility as a way for personal satisfaction and a professional strategic option.

Latinas use their inner strengths to continue moving forward in their professional careers as they have to pay a high price when trying to find a balance between their families and their professional lives (Menchaca, Mills, & Leo, 2017). Some experience detrimental effects as they try to succeed in the intersectionality of wife, mother, daughter, and professional leader at the same time to the point that their marital conflicts many times end in divorce (Livingston, 2015). In addition, Latinas often continue to experience guilt for not being the ideal reflection of the Latina woman as they are not able to be as present with their families and fulfill all expected family obligations (Menchaca, Mills, & Leo, 2017). Despite the losses encountered, in every ethnic group, females earn more doctoral degrees in education than men, they earn more bachelor's and master's degrees in education in proportion to their representation in the field, and women have more years of teaching experience than men (Allred, Maxwell, & Skrla, 2017). Yet, females are not advancing in proportion to their representation in the education profession (Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007). A vast number of female educators are

reluctant to acknowledge gender imbalances in relation to their jobs, even when presented with evidence of gender discriminations (Moreau, Osgood, & Halsall, 2007).

Furthermore, while much is documented on the challenges women encounter in professional settings, less is known about the strategies that help them arrive and thrive (Ballakrishnen et al, 2019). Bondy (2015) explores how Latinas form their identities transnationally through daily lived experiences that are affected by dominant stereotypical expectations on Latina immigrants, marginalizing them to force them to negotiate several aspects of citizenship and belonging. Soto (2012) examines the impact of migration on ethnic identity formation of first-generation Mexican immigrant adolescents, and it quickly becomes evident that the discovery of their ethnic identity comes through pain and loss since they are consistently challenged by citizens in their new country and by the ones in Mexico, their native country. Customs, language, religion, and dress are, in many instances, used to fuel the idea that a particular group doesn't fit into a specific society (Martinez Brawley & Zorita, 2017). Even though, geographically, they do not live in Mexico anymore, through their conversations and memories, Mexico remains alive as they encounter safety in the transnational social spaces often filled with social media networks (Sanchez & Kasun, 2012). At home, in the United States, their parents expect them to maintain their culture, and they are also pressured to maintain the homeland traditions, which they must temporarily abandon when they attend school (Soto, 2012). This abandonment and hiding of their own culture and traditions causes them to go through processes of disintegration and disidentification (Sanchez, 2001).

Latinas have been marginalized, yet resilient, and oppressed, but successful in spite of all the inequities they have encountered throughout their lives (Delgado Bernal, 2006; Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). Scribner and Crow (2012) indicate that the intersectionality of school district

administrators, between professional identity, gender, and race, is crucial since it relates to role development beyond technical skills. Furthermore, professional identity is an amalgamation of the multiple identities that shape these leaders and informs the nature of their leadership skills in relation to the type of populations they serve (Murakami, Hernandez, Valle, & Almaguer, 2018). Therefore, the experiences of Latina educational administrators must continue to be examined to capture the knowledge acquired during their formative years as school district administrators to inform how to capitalize on their experiences and use them to assist others in the development of their professional identity.

Summary

The literature review has provided an overview of transnational Latinas and how they achieve their success. The study provided an insight into historical background perspective on transnationalism and the factors social scientists discuss help transnational Latinas succeed in another country. The theoretical framework provides the researcher with a better understanding for the study. Transnationalism theoretical framework that focuses on social, cultural, economic and political processes fostered by globalization as they intersect with gender, sexuality, and race was used for this study (Bondy, 2014, 2015, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 2018; Mustasaari, 2015; Yosso, 2005;). Women have contributed considerably to the development in an array of areas such as labor, gender, economy, and social change, but unfortunately their contributions have been some of the most ignored in the literature development (Vasquez, 2011). Through a system of thought, Latinas center their concrete experiences, sources of knowledge, and survival strategies at the core of it (Vasquez, 2017).

The theory supported the study as transnational Critical Race Feminista theories help to transform their lives while living in two different nations simultaneously and how they identify

the factors that contribute to influencing them to set goals and attain them successfully in a different country. Critical Race Feminista Theory (CRFT) is a possible framework through which transnational Latinas may challenge the inequalities, intersectionalities, and forms of oppression so they may experience a better future (Yosso, 2005).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the research design of the study and the research questions used in the study. In addition, the site and participant selection are delineated, for example, how the participants were selected, the criteria, and sampling technique used. The data collection instruments, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis procedures are explained in detail to best paint a picture of the process.

Research Design

The researcher used Phenomenological Collective Case Study Design (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2003). By utilizing phenomenology, the study about five Latinas and their experiences as Women of Color in educational institutions and how Latinas negotiated an array of identities as they try to align values and ideas with opposing cultural lessons they experience in their home and community was explored (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Garcia, 2017; Yosso, 2005). This qualitative approach informed my questions for this study in a richer way by bringing in the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and by describing a complex social phenomenon while integrating additional case study and other methods to explore a contemporary situation (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1970; Yin, 2003;). Creswell (2013) notes that qualitative research is a method of inquiry that explores

a social or human problem. Additionally, a qualitative research approach is appropriate when intending to interpret and portray the experiences of human participants. (Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, qualitative studies are often employed to investigate, explore, and examine patterns of meaning based on the participant's description in their own words (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research employed a premise that real life experiences can be valuable when applied to a particular study and examined in the setting where it occurred. Merriam (2009) states that "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning participants have constructed, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p.6). A qualitative approach enables the researcher to construct a holistic account of the participants' actions in specific context settings, leading to authentic analysis (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenological Collective Case Study is done to provide a general understanding of human experiences pertaining to the underlying base of the phenomenon using a number of case studies that either occur on the same site or come from multiple sites (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2003). Phenomenology provides a lens through which to view all human phenomena as meaningful because of the experiences, feelings, and the commitment to reflect on the phenomenon, which influences the participants' actions and behaviors (Peterson, 1997). Moreover, it is a framework that presumes "human experience makes sense to those who live it, prior to all interpretation and theorizing" (Creswell, 1998, p. 86). Phenomenology also describes how one adjusts to lived experiences and real world-actions of everyday life to understand the essence of Latinas, specifically of Mexican descent (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological approaches use interviews to understand the intersubjective nature of the issue (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, detailed description of each case is provided to then present the themes within

cases which is followed by a thematic analysis across cases. In addition, lessons learned from the analysis are reported (Yin, 2003).

Case Study Design leads to new knowledge based on the reader's experiences, knowledge, and understandings, and they can contribute both theoretically and pragmatically to research because of the holistic approach (Mills & Gay, 2016; Stake, 1995). According to Merriam (1998), the case study examines an object, program, person, organization or phenomenon, that is, anything that can be considered an entity. The new learning depends on the comparing and contrasting of the case study to the reader's prior knowledge and experiences (Mills & Gay, 2016). This particular case study is heuristic. The researcher and the reader of the multiple case studies gained new insights about the experiences of the participants, and these insights will enable the reader to make connections to her own experiences and grow from there (Mills & Gay, 2016). In this regard, I examined the phenomenon of Mexican origin Latinas who lived or whose parents lived in Mexico, and these case studies explore the perceptions of the individuals who had these experiences that guided them into success, allowing others to learn from the participants' lived experiences perspectives (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the researcher for the study:

1. What do the selected transnational Latinas report to be challenges they have encountered in their leadership positions?
2. What do the selected transnational Latinas report to be influencers in achieving their career goals?
3. What supports outside of the home do the selected transnational Latinas report to be key in achieving their career goals?

4. How do the selected transnational Latinas experience balancing two cultures?

Site and Participant Selection

This study explored the lives of Latina immigrants who are residents in the Borderlands of South Texas through systematic reflection to determine the structures of the experience. The Borderlands of South Texas are “an arid geographical area that begins in Brownsville, Texas, the south-most tip of the United States and runs up from the mouth of the Rio Grande to Roma, Texas” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 90). The name “Magic Valley” was utilized by early 20th century developers, attempting to rebrand the area and attract settlers, knowing that it is not a true valley, but a flood plain (Brannstorm & Neuman, 2009). This particular site was selected because it is a primarily Latino/a community. It is a true frontier that remains a unique landscape in the world because of its physical and cultural diversity, its inability to be encompassed by any general description, and the fact that “a constant state of transition, defines the places that are safe and unsafe, distinguish *us* from *them*” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25). The area is generally bilingual, English and Spanish, but citizens also speak a fair amount of what is known as Spanglish due to a mixture of both languages.

To select participants, the researcher established the selection criteria that had to be met (Mills & Gay, 2016). The participants were to be Latina, of Mexican descent, a UTRGV/UTPA alumni, between 30-60 years old, and meet the definition of being transnational, and have experience for five years or more as a school district educational leader in a South Texas Borderland school district. The participants were identified via a university alumni relations office who sent a link to potential participants. This process began with the researcher sending an initial email to the office of alumni relations at UTRGV (Appendix A) to explain the selection criteria. Then, the researcher emailed potential participants a survey (Appendix B) through the

university alumni relations office, where they could self-nominate or recommend others to become participants. After names of the females in leadership positions were received, 10 of the possible participants were contacted via email with an invitation briefly describing the purpose of the study and requesting their participation in the study. I decided to set up a meeting with the first five possible participants who responded to the invitation. Out of the 10 possible participants, three never responded and two were too busy to participate in the study according to their explanation.

After responses were received indicating interest in participating in the study, I set up a Zoom meeting with the first five to explain the study in more detail and informed them of the number of hours the interviews were going to require in order for them to share the experiences of the phenomena in depth. Questionnaires were provided. After the questionnaires were received, participants were contacted by e-mail and phone to explain the study and to request their participation. (Participant letter, Appendix B). The consent form was sent to them as a follow up, indicating their agreement to participate in the study (Appendix C). Once a verbal consent had been secured, the consent form was sent via email to them for review and signing. After the informed consent form was received, the first interview date was scheduled via Zoom to explain the study and the interview process with more detail.

Instrumentation

The instrument of data collection was the researcher, as is often the case in qualitative research and for this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher developed and used interview protocol and semi-structured interview questions as the key instrument for collecting data by interviewing the five participants (Appendix D) (Mills & Gay, 2016). Audio interviews were conducted using video conference software without camera and a back-up recorder was

also used. The interviews were transcribed using word processing software. Credibility and transferability are perspectives added to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, alternative terms that adhere more to the naturalistic research were added (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose techniques such as longer engagement in the field and the triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigation to establish credibility.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers incorporate particular strategies to establish the trustworthiness of their research. I attempted to establish trustworthiness with the credibility of the work, dependability of the findings, confirmability of the data and analysis, and the transferability of the work to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The trustworthiness of results in a qualitative study is of high importance and must be of high quality. Trustworthiness addresses how the researcher persuades herself and her audience that her research findings are credible, dependable, and worthy of consideration through several techniques such as persistent observation, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, member-checking, and rich and thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Some of the methods I used to establish credibility included triangulation, which entailed collecting data from more than one source, and gathering detailed descriptions, also known as rich description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Noteworthy themes and statements were used to write a lengthy description of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, specific quotes from the participants were incorporated into the narrative supporting each theme.

In addition, one of the main techniques to establish dependability is member checking, also known as participant validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks were exercised by

taking data and tentative interpretation back to the participants to ask if the results were credible. In addition, one of the advantages of member checking is that it can be done continuously throughout the study. Creswell (2007) states that participation or collaborative modes of research involve the participants who are participants in the study in all phases of research as part of the member checking process. Some of the methods used to establish confirmability include recording procedures, data collection, steps in analysis of data, and development of the interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of this is to ensure that the results are an accurate reflection of what they intended to convey. At that time, any other pertinent information they were willing to share was collected. Finally, one of the methods to establish transferability is to focus on careful, detailed description of the sample, setting, and the ability of the results of the research conducted to transfer to a new setting with a different set of participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for protection of human subjects granted permission to proceed with the research study. Five participants were selected purposively and participated in a series of interviews that consisted of questions to gather perceptions and experiences. Preceding the research study, the researcher emailed a letter, which included the details of the study and asked whether the participants wanted to be part of the study. Closer to the scheduled interview dates, a reminder email and phone call was sent to each individual that agreed to participate in the study.

Next, three-interview series, of sixty-minutes per interview, focused on the life history of the participant(s), details of the lived experiences, and reflections of the meaning of the experiences was recorded within a one-month period (Seidman, 2013). The semi-structured

interview (employing open-ended questions) was the primary data collection strategy used (Seidman, 2013). Furthermore, Mayan (2009) adds that unstructured interviews allow participants to share their stories through few broader questions. The researcher ensured the audio recording equipment was properly working prior to the interviews.

The researcher established interview protocol. Creswell (2007) states that “Interview protocol enables a person to take notes during the interview about the responses of the interviewee. In addition, it also helps a researcher organize thoughts on items such as heading, information about starting the interview, concluding ideas, information on ending the interview, and thanking the respondent” (p. 135). Before the interviews took place, the researcher secured authorization from the participant and reviewed the purpose of the study. Additional, clear details were provided to the participants and the researcher reiterated to the participants in the study that their participation was voluntary. During the first interview, dates for the two pending interviews were scheduled and the participant had the opportunity to ask any other clarifying questions.

Participants were contacted via phone calls, when necessary, to clarify questions previously answered. If some brief clarification was needed or additional questions were to be asked, e-mail was also used. The data was collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews, allowing the participants to provide information about their background, place of origin, family background, perceptions about the important educational factors and individuals in their lives that helped them reach their goals, and the family experiences that they believe help them develop as successful individuals. The data were collected via Zoom.

Data Analysis Procedures

After the data was collected, the data analysis process started. The researcher deconstructed the data collected and then organized it in a way that had meaning based on the participants' viewpoints and their congruence to the research questions.

Knowing how long it takes to transcribe, I began to transcribe the interviews using Microsoft Word, as the digital recordings of the interviews were completed. Steps taken to ensure confidentiality included the removal of all identifiable information from participant responses to secure all interview transcripts and recordings. In addition, coding information and participants' identifiable information were maintained in separate files. All data collected throughout the process was saved on a password-protected desktop computer. All physical data stayed in a secured place where I, the researcher, was the only one with access to it, and electronic data was protected with a password for confidentiality. The collected data were analyzed through coding and thematic development. Once data were no longer needed, these were deleted from the system. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, codes were used to identify which participant belongs to which identifier using the alphabet letters (e.g., A, B, C, etc.). After providing full disclosure about the study and obtaining consent, participants were assigned pseudonyms such as Participant A, B, C, etc. for reference to the interview data. For making the report of the findings, participants received pseudonyms. Participant A became known as Susana, Participant B, became known as, Leticia Participant C became known as Maria de Jesus, Participant D became known as Celia, and Participant E became known as Marlen. The coding process was a hands-on approach that incorporated a color-coding system involving highlighting to organize and analyze prompts for repetitive themes (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011b). Transcriptions and other data files collected throughout the study were

compiled in a USB drive requiring a password to access them. After transcribing the interviews, the codes were organized and tagged and the collected data were further analyzed for meaningful statements, sentences, or quotes that provided understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Guest et al., 2011a; Creswell, 2013). These experiences were transcribed and analyzed through coding and thematic development by grouping the responses, descriptions, and/or explanations that were similar, with repetition as the most common way of grouping textual context (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Focus on objectives informed the need to prioritize the themes that were analyzed thoroughly (Guest et al., 2012).

The codes and text were organized into a document to be able to view the text by code before analyzing the text for thematic links (Guest et al., 2011a). Moustakas (1994) states that the phenomenal experience becomes more clarified and expanded in meaning through repeated reflection. This data analysis procedure is known as horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). I used a within-case analysis to help me identify issues within each case and provided a detailed description of each case and themes within them (Creswell, 2013). Then, cross-case analysis was conducted to analyze the themes across the cases and the meanings of the assertions that were apparent in those cases (Creswell, 2013). They were analyzed for shared meaning and understanding and for common themes and statements that led to comparable conclusions.

This analysis revealed strategies and skills employed by the successful transnational Latina educational leaders to overcome personal, familial, and institutional challenges, barriers, and obstacles to their promotions, as well as provided descriptive explanations to the guiding research questions. My analysis revealed commonalities as well as differences in their perceptions.

Summary

This chapter provided the methodology in this study. Phenomenological collective case study allows for the experiences and perspectives of Latina transnationals and how they transformed their lives through educational achievements and successful careers. Research questions and methods of collecting and analyzing data were delineated effectively.

The setting of the study was inevitably done through Zoom because of the pandemic. Sampling was purposive and criterion sampling (Creswell, 2015). The study included participants selected with specific criteria.

The researcher was the primary instrument (Gay et al., 2012). Individual interviews were used to acquire information about the transnational Latina's experiences and perceptions with the phenomena. Data collection was obtained by interviewing the participants and questions were developed to attempt to gather understanding of the participants experiences.

Data was analyzed by using a case study approach, selected for this study. These experiences were recorded, transcribed and analyzed through coding conducted by hand coding. Thematic development and perceptions of the participants interviewed were stated.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The researcher examined the collective experiences of Latina transnationals who immigrated from Mexico to the Borderlands of Texas and formed their journeys through educational achievements and highly successful careers. Collective case studies were used and provided a tool for in-depth understanding of the specific phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Five female participants of Mexican descent participated in this study. Furthermore, all participants held educational leadership positions in school districts in the Borderlands of Texas at the time of the study. This chapter was divided into sections, the participants' perspective themes, and the summary of findings, and the study was led by four overarching questions that were the center of the research.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the researcher for the study:

1. What do the selected transnational Latinas report to be challenges they have encountered in their leadership positions?
2. What do the selected transnational Latinas report to be influencers in achieving their career goals?
3. What supports outside of the home do the selected transnational Latinas report to be key in achieving their career goals?

4. How do the selected transnational Latinas experience balancing two cultures?

The four-guiding questions that anchored the study focused on the lived experiences of each participant and examined how each participant viewed their story as to how they were able to overcome obstacles to succeed in their careers as transnational Latina immigrants. The findings in this chapter attempt to reveal what the participants explicate and through the development of themes and connections narrate what was not directly stated by them. The readers will find the lived journeys and experiences of the five participants within the data collected. Their experiences were delineated and include their achievements and barriers they confronted along the way. The following themes surfaced as they navigated in a different world with a different culture: Language barriers, influencers, mentorship, bicultural, and family pride.

The Participants

Due to the nature of the study, all of the participants were selected utilizing purposeful criterion sampling. The experience in education for the five participants ranged from 11 to 27 years, and in their leadership job role from two to 17 years. The participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities and privacy however, all demographic and other information is precise. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographics of the participants as well as displays pertinent information that relates to the study and the themes. Participant A became known as Susana, Participant B became known as Leticia, Participant C became known as Maria de Jesus, Participant D became known as Celia, and Participant E became known as Marlen.

Table 1*Participant Profiles*

Participants	Susana	Leticia	Maria de Jesus	Celia	Marlen
Age	42	46	43	44	38
Ethnicity	Hisp/Latina	Hisp/Latina	Hisp/Latina	Hisp/Latina	Hisp/Latina
Birth Place	US	US	Mexico	US	Mexico
Raised	Mexico	Mexico	US/Mexico	Mexico	Mexico
University	Educational Leadership	Educational Leadership	Educational Leadership	Educational Leadership	Educational Leadership
Position/Occupation	AP	HR Admin	Principal	Dean of Inst	Principal
Years of Experience	11	23	27	17	12
How often they communicated with relatives in Mexico	daily	weekly	often	monthly	weekly
Birth Place (Parents)	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico
Raised (Parents)	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico

Table 1 portrays the selected pseudonyms for each participant as well as their current age as of the end of the interview process. The table also includes the participants' ethnicity and as a requirement to participate in the study they had to be Hispanic or Latina of Mexican descent. In addition, the table depicts their place of birth and the country where they were raised as well as their parents. The participants met criteria to be part of the study if either they or their parents

were born or raised in Mexico. Another requirement was for the participants to be college graduates and be district administrators in a school district in the Borderlands of Texas and have five years or more of experience in the field of education. In addition to the requirements specified above, the table includes how often the participants communicate with relatives in Mexico.

The five participants currently reside in the Borderlands of Texas where they have lived most of their lives after they immigrated from Mexico. Three of them are currently married and two of them are divorced. They all have children. One of them has a medical doctor degree in addition to the teaching and educational leadership degrees. Two of them are pursuing a doctoral degree in education and one of them is an entrepreneur in addition to her job at the school district. Finally, regardless of the job title and situations they are currently experiencing they all have the *ganas*-the desire to succeed, the willingness to continue improving professionally and helping others in similar circumstances.

Susana

Susana is a 42-year-old high school Latina administrator who was interviewed via Zoom (as were all the other four participants due to the COVID-19 guidelines). She was born in a Borderland town in Texas, but she was taken back to Mexico as soon as she was born because of family circumstances. While in Mexico, she was abandoned by her biological mom at very early stages of her life and never communicated with her since. Consequently, she was raised by her grandparents, which for obvious reasons, I refer to them as her parents. Nonetheless, keeping the original family goal of living in the United States, she immigrated to the United States at the age of eight with her parents. Susana earned her bachelor's degree in Science Teacher Education and a master's degree in Educational Leadership. She is not married and has three children. Further,

her two oldest daughters are Science teachers in the same district where she is currently employed, and her son is currently enrolled in middle school. Her educational professional experience in the Borderlands of Texas amounts to 11 years. Previous to her administrative position, she served as a middle school teacher for seven years, a biology high school teacher for one year and a CLL (Collaborative Learning Leader) for one year at the same school district. Currently, she is an Assistant Principal/Dean of Instruction in a comprehensive public high school in the Borderlands of Texas. This will be her second year working in this capacity.

Susana did not originally intend to go into education.

I got married at 17, and I didn't graduate from high school. I got a GED. Even though I got that certification, that just kind of gave me the edge to continue working towards an associate degree. I continued towards getting an Associate's in Nursing. By this point, I already had my second child, and from there, it was just nonstop.

She earned her bachelor's and master's degree in education from a university in the Borderlands of Texas. Even though she originally went into the healthcare pathway, she decided to go into education

Because there are many students that I thought, if they were to hear my story, maybe I could make a difference in their lives. Maybe they're in a bad place and think they cannot break the cycle, but it's doable.

As a first-generation college graduate in her family, she has paved the path for others in her family. In addition, she has inspired her two daughters, who graduated as teachers and are currently teaching in the same school district, where she is currently employed. Susana, is very proud to have her daughters be teachers,

It's very rewarding to me, that after all my struggles as a first-generation transnational immigrant Latina, two divorces, and as a single parent, my two oldest daughters have attained an education, and are inspiring and helping others that lived my own similar experiences.

Not only is Susana proud of herself, but also explained how rewarding it was for her to inspire her own daughters as others had inspired her to attain her own education, "Seeing how hard my parents worked, and then, of course, seeing other women around me being successful, that just encouraged me a lot more to continue working towards that goal that I had." In contrast to others that care immensely about having a title, for her is about helping and inspiring others that are going through similar experiences as hers.

Leticia

Leticia is a 46-year-old Latina, is married and has two children. She was born in a Borderland town in Texas and raised in Mexico. Pulled by the "*ganas*" to attain an education and to change her family's lifestyle, at the age of 16, she convinced her parents to allow her to attend school in the United States and live with one of her aunts. Despite the future obstacles that she must have thought she could have, she immigrated to the United States by herself to attend a high school in a Borderland town. Soon her willingness to attend school in the United States dissipated after the first few challenging weeks. Like many others who immigrate from another country, she missed her family dearly, especially her parents, as she recalls, "I would cry every single day." Moreover, initially was a weekly commute to Mexico, but then it became a daily commute after she realized the conditions at her aunt's house, were clearly not the best ones for her. "I would cry every single day and would call my mom every single after noon." Leticia states with emphasis these words that she recalls with pain, and that she would

desperately and frequently would tell her mom. “I want to go back!” “My mom said, ‘well, you already made the decision, because school started already over here, and you already started over there’, ‘You’re going to have to stay.’” Conversely to what she expected, she discloses she was treated differently because it wasn’t her house, and they weren’t her parents. For instance, they would separate her food from theirs, and they would make her feel like an outsider and unwelcomed. “I wanted to go back home, but my parents, did not allow me to give up on my dreams.”

Discrimination and mistreatment by her own relatives did not stop her from reaching her goals. Consequently, she adds, “My dad bought me a car, and I would drive every day to attend high school in the United States and drive back to Mexico every evening until I graduated from high school.” She continued her education at a local university, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in education; in addition, attained a master’s degree in counseling and a second master’s degree in educational leadership. She has been in education for 23 years, employed in different school districts and in different capacities. She is currently employed at a school district in the Borderlands of Texas as a Human Resources Director, and this would be her 8th year in this current position. She has served as an elementary teacher for six years and an assistant principal for nine years at different school districts in the Borderlands of Texas.

Undoubtedly, she has inspired many others in her career as she has served as a mentor throughout the years and has built capacity through a variety of trainings. Additionally, to serving as a mentor and helping others, outside her close circle, she also inspired her own husband, who teaches in the same school district as a high school Career and Technical Education teacher. She has two children, one of them is currently attending high school and her second child is attending middle school. Not only has she been able to maintain her full-time job

as a Human Resources Director, but also has reached out to other avenues in the business world. Evidently, she is a testament that the possibilities of succeeding in a different country are endless, as she currently owns a jewelry business in which she sells, models and encourages other Latinas to continue pursuing their goals in the land of opportunities.

Maria de Jesus

Maria de Jesus is a 43-year-old Latina, is married and has 2 children. She was born in a town in Mexico and was raised in Texas. At the age of three-years old she was crossed to the United States by her Godmother using another child's passport, while her parents risked their lives by crossing the Rio Grande River. "I always think, what would have happened if my parents hadn't decided to risk their lives crossing the river?", where her mother almost drowned so she could have a better life. She believes she still could have been a teacher in Mexico because she always wanted to be a teacher, nevertheless, she doesn't think she would have the quality of life she has now here in the United States after attaining an education. "My life would have been very different if I would've stopped going to school and because my parents always instilled an education in me, and because of all their sacrifices, I wanted to make my parents proud." Further, as a result of all the challenges transnational Latinas have to overcome, Maria de Jesus explains that no Latina forgets where they come from because "all of us have a story. Just being a Latina, being a first-generation college graduate, it hasn't been easy."

After several years of sacrificed stay in a city in north Texas as undocumented immigrants, the summer after her 5th grade year, her family received their documents to legally reside in the United States. Consequently, this opened up the opportunity and flexibility to live anywhere they wanted in the United States without the fear of being deported to Mexico. Following the receival of their permanent documents, at the age of 13, her parents decided to

move to the Borderlands of Texas to be closer to their relatives in Mexico and situated themselves in a small town in the Borderlands of Texas, consequently, they had the opportunity to travel to Mexico every week to visit relatives.

Maria de Jesus fondly remembers her parents opted to move to a city in the Borderlands of Texas. The picturesque palm trees in this new living site were a reminder of her favorite television childhood show *Saved by the Bell*, her escape from her miserable immigrant elementary student experiences. As if those years of suffering had not been enough, tragedy came to her family once they established themselves in the Borderlands of Texas. The money her father obtained from selling his mechanic shop built with so many sacrifices in north Texas, was used to re-open a new one in the Borderlands of Texas, but unfortunately was lost due to fire.

When I was 19 and I took my first job at the school district, gosh, it brings me tears to my eyes. Here I am, 19, started a job, was very excited. Then at 20, my dad's business burns down so we went from literally having everything to not having a dollar sometimes for even milk.

This forced them to start from ground zero with no money and worse than when they originally immigrated from Mexico. Consequently, this led for both parents due to losing everything they worked so hard for to fall in a depression. Since Maria de Jesus was the oldest of the family, she needed to help out to make ends meet. "I needed two jobs. I needed to start working because my dad and mom were going through a depression. Then after that, my parents went through a temporary separation. So, it was a lot."

Maria de Jesus enrolled and attended school until graduation at the same school district, where she has worked for the last 26 years ever since she graduated from high school. She started her employment as a tutor and worked her way up to now where she serves as an

elementary principal for the second consecutive year, where she has led the school to multiple recognitions, with one of them being the National Blue-Ribbon Award. She earned her bachelor's and master's from a local university. Inspired by her, her husband also serves as a middle school administrator in the same school district. Moreover, their two daughters have the privilege to attend middle school and high school at the same school district, where she has dedicated her years of service as an educator. She communicates with her extended family in Mexico not as often as she wishes, but still manages to communicate with them through different virtual avenues at least twice a month.

Celia

Celia is a 44-year-old Latina, who is married, and has two children. She was born in the U.S. and raised in a northeastern state in Mexico. She immigrated at the age of 14 years old to the United States with her family to a town in the Borderlands of Texas, where she started and completed high school. In spite of challenges, she always excelled at school and has been able to overcome any obstacle in her journey of success. For instance, while in high school in the United States, she was selected as one of the one hundred Texas scholars and earned the opportunity to attend a leadership academy in Lamar University for one summer. Since her goal was to get a medical degree, she and her parents designed a strategic academic plan that entailed attaining high school diplomas in Mexico and the United States simultaneously to continue with the goal of becoming a medical doctor in Mexico. "I would travel every Friday evening to Mexico and attend high school and return to the United States to continue my high school classes like any other student." One of the reasons for enduring this sacrifice was to be able to be admitted to the school of medicine in the state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico without having to wait one whole year as a foreign student. After her sophomore year, and because of her father's job, she had to decide

between being the valedictorian of her class or skipping a year to graduate from high school and relocate back to the northeastern metropolitan city and be united with her whole family. She proudly remembers, “My senior year, I had English III Honors and English IV AP, and even though I didn’t graduate as a valedictorian, I was in the top 10 of 560 graduates.”

After obtaining her two high school diplomas from Mexico and the United States, she continued attending *La Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León* in Mexico, where she earned her degree in medicine after six years of course work and one of social service. While attending medical school, she had the privilege of being selected for prestigious summer camps, one in the Natural Institute of Respiratory Diseases in Mexico City and another one in the University of California in San Diego for lung transplants. “I worked in the area of smoking cessation and helped the American Lung Association with the smoking cessation in Spanish.” In addition to this, she had the opportunity to teach courses from introduction to medicine, phlebotomy, internal medicine to statistics courses, as a professor assistant, which now she believes was her stepping-stone to be the successful educational leader with a medical degree and debt free. “I became a professor assistant, and that’s how I earned my scholarships. That paid for my tuition and my medical textbooks.”

To add to her plethora of successes, as an instructor assistant, she studied and became fluent in German and French at the university of medicine where she was enrolled in Mexico, consequently she was asked by her professors to present in conferences with them. “I’ve always been interested in research, so I enjoyed working with them.” After seven years of learning and numerous unique experiences acquired, she earned her medical doctor degree in Mexico.

I did practice medicine. But then it got to a point that I felt that I didn’t want to charge.

Because there’s some people that, can’t pay. It was really hard but, you do have a job and

you do what you need, consequently, I decided to do my medical practice more altruistic.

I continued teaching Sunday classes at church, and applying my medical experience and knowledge as needed through different initiatives through my church as well.

After completing her degree in medicine as a Medical Doctor in Mexico and working several years, she returned to the United States, where she completed her alternative teaching certification and started teaching science and medical related courses at a high school in the Borderlands of Texas for 2 ½ years. While teaching, she was recruited to a State Service Center as a Science Specialist in the Borderlands of Texas, where she served for 4 ½ years and was encouraged to work as a school district science coordinator. “Then, I went to the district level, and I made it happen.” “The scores in the science area in middle schools in the school district went from a forty percent to a point shy to the state average.” Moreover, during her 7 years as a Curriculum and Instruction District Science Coordinator, in addition to leading the increment of the district’s science state scores, she had the opportunity of being part of the nation’s STEM committee and travel to Washington DC, which is when she realized she was different. “At that point is when I realized that as Latinos, we are People of Color.” It was a shock for her, but she employed the opportunity of being part of different educational organizations at a national level to strengthen and expand the horizon of opportunities for the students she serves as the Dean of Instruction for the last three years. “Thinking about Latinos and especially females, we need to continue being transformational and opening opportunities for them and next generations that we never had”. The organizations she is part of include the Rio Grande Science Teacher Association, RGVSA, where she served as the president of the organization, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, where she had the opportunity to be a mentor for other professionals, Rural Leadership Academy, amongst others.

Her mom was born and raised in Mexico, and her father was born in Mexico and raised at a later age in a Borderland town in the United States. Contrary to most of the other participants, both of her parents had an opportunity to receive a higher-level education after high school, and she adds that without a doubt, college degree completion was not an option but the expectation for her and her siblings. “We knew the expectations, not going to school was never an option at my house”.

Despite her mom coming from a traditional family in Mexico, her grandparents encouraged her mom to further her education, and she was able to serve as an elementary teacher in Mexico for three years until she got married. Her father had an opportunity to attend a prestigious university in the United States where he earned a degree in business, and he worked most of his life in different industrial businesses in Mexico and in different towns in the Borderland area. Subsequently, all her four siblings acquired a minimum of one university degree.

Celia explains that although her story is clearly not a story about suffering economically like other immigrants, nonetheless, she experienced other kinds of suffering as a result of social and cultural expectations in the United States. She emphasizes that immigrants seeking for success, regardless of their pathway, must work hard and practice skills strategically from morning to afternoon always influenced by their own knowledge, rich and practiced culture. Finally, she encourages transnational immigrant Latinas to never give up, and to always remember to use the past and present to help them shape their future.

Marlen

Marlen is a 38-year-old Latina, who is not married and has two children. She was born and raised in Mexico as well as both of her parents. Marlen grew up in a humble but loving home

with caring and supportive parents as she recalls. At the age of 12 years, her parents took the initiative to withdraw her and her brother from the school they were enrolled in Mexico and immigrated to the Borderlands of Texas, where she realized it was not as picturesque or magazine like, as she had seen in magazines previously.

We would rent out a home, a very small humble home, it was so humble that it didn't even had a sewer system. Is this the U.S.? I would ask myself. I was so confused and distressed because we were better off in Mexico. Now we had to eat rice and beans every day because even though my brother and my dad qualified for welfare, my parents refused to get welfare because they didn't want for it to hurt the immigration process for my mom and I.

There were many things Marlen couldn't understand at that age, but she has vivid memories such as the time when her mom was losing so much weight and she mistakenly thought it was due to an illness. Until years later, she found out it was because they didn't have enough groceries for the whole family, and her mom would sacrifice her hunger, for the rest of the family to have enough to eat. In spite of all the economic, academic, and social challenges she and her family encountered after immigrating to the United States, she proudly shares she was the first to graduate from high school on both sides of her family. Additionally, not only is she the first to obtain a high school diploma, but most importantly, she graduated as the salutatorian of her class.

I wanted to stop the cycle of non-educated people in my family and start a new cycle of prosperity. I remember how hard it was with classmates and people making fun of us at school; it was tough.

Marlen shares a story that led her to promise herself she would be one of the top 10 students of her class.

So, when I was in 8th grade, I saw some teachers together and they were talking about students. Which is something we recommend not to do, but still they do, right. They left the door open. I was in elective class and, my teacher asked me to go drop off something, a paper to a teacher that was in that classroom and, when I was walking in, I don't know why I stopped before going in. I remember that the teachers were talking about who...it was towards this time of the year, the end of the year and they were discussing who they felt was going to be the top 10 in high school. And one teacher, my math teacher said, 'I think Marlen is going to be top 10.' And, you know what another teacher said? 'No! She can't! Look at her language barrier. Look at her accent.' I heard that and felt terrible as I walked back to my class. So, throughout my high school years, I could not forget that.

When I graduated high school, I was salutatorian, and I went back to my middle school, and I took graduation invitations to my teachers. Then, all my teachers were all still there and I gave one to everyone except her. She's like, 'Marlen, where's mine?' I said, Why do you want to go? You didn't think I was going to be top 10. Why do you want to-And she was looking at me like I ... You don't think I heard you the day you said I couldn't be top 10 because of my language barrier? And here, for you, it meant nothing, but for me, it stayed in my mind forever.

Now as the principal of her school she has systems in place to ensure this doesn't happen to her students. "I take bullying and discrimination very seriously, and my students and parents know it." She wants to keep making a difference with her students and keep everyone believing

that nothing and no one can stop them. “Language barrier means nothing, it’s your *ganas*, your willingness to want to succeed.”

Marlen did not originally intend to go into education.

I graduated from college real young. I was 20, but I went into the private sector for seven years. I really liked that, but I, started having my children, and I was like you know, I need to shift gears. What, do I have a passion for? And I have a passion for math. So, I said I want to be a math teacher and that’s how it all started.

Marlen has served as a principal in her first principalship for two years. Previous to this, she was an assistant principal for three years, district math coordinator for two years and a math teacher for five years. She initially started her university journey at the University of Houston, but she had to continue at the local university, where she earned her Bachelor’s in Math and a Master’s in Educational Leadership.

When I got my bachelor’s, I was single, and I didn’t have any children so, my parents were fully supporting me. When I got my master’s, it was very different because I had two children, both under 10 years old. And, well, I’m divorced. I literally depended on my mom helping me and taking care of them and it was very tough. It took a lot of people to help me. God blessed me with the right people at the right time. I was very fortunate that it wasn’t just my parents or my siblings.

She explained that even the head custodian from her children’s school would supervise them early in the day so she could go teach across the street.

She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at a local university. She now is able to support her parents economically, and her parents continue supporting her with anything she or her children need for her to achieve her maximum goals.

I had already made an agreement with my children that we would not go out on vacations this summer because of my doctoral classes, but I felt bad so I ended up buying tickets to Disney World for them and my mom so she could take them and take care of them while I attend school.

Marlen is goal oriented and has been able to follow her dreams and the goals she sets herself to accomplish. She knows and understands it will be tough for the next few years, but she has her parents and children's approval and support to achieve her goal of completing her Ph.D.

All five participants are from different school districts in the Borderlands of Texas and have served in an array of capacities in educational roles successfully. According to Yin (2003), collective case studies provide a tool for obtaining a deep understanding of a specific phenomenon which, in this study, is how transnational Latinas navigate through their journey to transform their lives through educational achievements and successful careers. In addition, the case study method can be utilized successfully to probe into a situation in great depth to provide rich context for understanding the phenomena within the study. Furthermore, consistent patterns of behavior and divergent ones were identified (Yin, 2003). Demographic and background information was provided to give insight into the differences they experienced in their trajectories from Mexico to the United States. Moreover, the readers were provided with the participants' journeys, as they shared interesting and helpful experiences. Finally, a profound understanding of these transnational Latina leaders' journeys was evident, and a rich context for understanding how they overcame barriers was displayed through consistent patterns of behavior.

The four-guiding questions were the foundation for the study, which centered on the experiences of each immigrant transnational Latina, their challenges, perspectives and how they transformed their lives through educational achievements and successful careers. The researcher was able to identify a total of 14 themes, nine sub-themes and five prominent themes. Regardless of the unique barriers they encountered along their transnational journeys, the variety of their experiences allowed the researcher to make meaning and establish connections of the shared experiences. Moreover, the participants reported the language barrier continued to be one of the most prominent inhibitors in their careers, although not as significantly as when they arrived in the United States, but the scars have remained with them forever. Furthermore, they continued to excel in life with the influence and support of key individuals such as their parents and mentors to ensure they completed school and forged a successful career. In addition, they maintained their Mexican culture as they acquired the American and have been able to proudly continue conveying and celebrating their values, traditions, and beliefs with their own children. The immigrant transnational Latina's pride embraces the ability to successfully overcome intersectionality of obstacles and barriers with family's unconditional support and their rich experiences that include sacrifices for a successful career with a vision of a brighter future.

Themes

The themes that emerged from all the participants of the study during coding and analyzing varied, but they however were full of similar circumstances that led to the success of these five immigrant transnational Latina leaders in their careers. Each participant checked her transcripts at the conclusion of all the interview series. After the member checking to ensure validity, the researcher continued with the evaluating of the data and the connection of main themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). With the use of NVIVO, the researcher was able to analyze the

data collected from coding to more precise overarching themes that permitted the researcher to examine each participant's transnational journeys while identifying the commonalities and transferability in the shared experience of the phenomenon of succeeding in their careers in the United States as transnational Latina immigrants. Further, their circumstances prompted them with their desire to succeed, despite the obstacles and challenges they encountered and had to overcome. Through the data analysis, themes emerged and bestowed the researcher with a perspective lens and generalizations for the interviews conducted (Creswell, 2013).

Furthermore, the data collection approach taken by the researcher allowed to have rich data that transformed a thick description of the phenomena by promoting authentic connections with the account by providing specific details about the interactions, relationships, and characteristics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The interviews allowed for the emerging of participants' data to have commonalities and specific experiences of the phenomenon. Their immigrant journeys from Mexico to the United States were painted with a variety of shades, some dull and some bright, but in the end the blending of the colors of their experiences created five successful educational immigrant transnational Latina leaders.

For example, their immigrant journeys were detrimental at different stages of their lives because of lack of resources and other negative encounters with individuals that treated them with derogatory remarks and didn't believe in them. Furthermore, sub-themes of evolving and disadvantageous experiences were some of the elements that were triumphally over-counteracted by the positive ones. Fortunately, they were able to overcome that negativity with the positivity of influencers and mentors that helped them and supported them along the way. Family members and friends were instrumental in the achievement of their successful educational goals and

careers. The most prominent shared themes found in the data from the study were language barriers, influencers, mentorship, bicultural, and family pride.

Language Barriers

After analyzing the participants' data, the overarching theme that emerged specifically addressed challenges most of them encountered during their immigration journey to their leadership positions: language barriers. All participants faced adversities to get to the positions to where they are at. Even though Latinas have always valued education historically, poverty is a constant factor that has halted their dreams and goals and prevented many of them from following their journey to college (Gandara & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015).

While some of the shared experiences and backgrounds were positive, some were marked with difficulties such as abandonment since an early age in life, to being ridiculed because of their language barrier or accent, to encountering inequalities for being females and facing deportation within their families, but they opted to utilize those challenges as a bridge to strength and perseverance to the success in their leadership positions. Menchaca, Mills, and Leo (2017) add that Latinas use their inner strengths to continue moving forward in their professional careers as they have to pay a high price when trying to find a balance between their families and their professional lives. Some experience detrimental effects as they try to succeed in the intersectionality of wife, mother, daughter, and professional leader at the same time to the point that their marital conflicts many times end in divorce (Livingston, 2015). In addition, Latinas often continue to experience guilt for not being the ideal reflection of the Latina woman as they are not able to be as present with their families and fulfill all expected family obligations (Menchaca, Mills, & Leo, 2017). For Celia, after her dad unfortunately passed away recently

from COVID-19, she continues to believe how Latinas, especially females, have it difficult because of family obligations.

We are seeing as caregivers, you know or supporters, and right now I still continue as an educational leader and with the responsibility of taking care of my mom, who is now a widow and lives a block away from me and because I'm the only one from my siblings that lives in this area.

She adds that in cases like hers, it's imperative to learn how to balance the goals and the family, because in the Mexican culture, family is first and in addition being a wife, a mother, and even sometimes a student is a real struggle.

Susana had an array of difficulties and challenges that she was able to overcome and used them as a springboard to success rather than allowing them to halt her progress. Susana detailed her experiences of difficulties and challenges since her beginnings as a newborn. She narrates that she was born out of wedlock in a small town in Mexico. As if this was not seen as negative enough in a traditional culture in Mexico, she was abandoned by her biological mother. After suffering abandonment by her biological mother in Mexico, her biological father lived in the same house, and it remained a secret. Susana knew him only as her brother, until years later in her life before immigrating into the United States, she learned her parents were her grandparents and the one she thought was her brother, was actually her father. In spite of this abandonment by her mother, she has the fondest childhood memories built in a caring and loving environment, which she attributes to who she is today.

The language barrier became an obstacle since Susana's initial arrival to the United States, and even now, it sometimes still challenges Susana's insecurities. "At a very early age, I became my mother's translator, not just in school, but when we would go to different offices and

sometimes, I would help her even with phone calls.” This empowered her at an early age but, recalls she felt disempowered when in school other classmates “would make fun of me because I didn’t know the language”. Through the years, she became competent in the language but being her second language, she recognizes that even as an adult and with college degrees, she sometimes needs assistance and re-assurance in her place of her work. When in doubt she searches for the best answer, and ensures she prepares well before presentations because she knows those could get the best of her. “We all have our own story and stories of limitations are sometimes not the best to share, but I have learned that not because there’s people that don’t want to help, you should give up.” She encourages to always ask when in need because “there are many that are very willing to go the extra mile to help out others”.

Unfortunately, as a Latina, Susana has experienced the intersectionality of the language barrier and gender inequalities. She acknowledges that humble beginnings are nothing to be ashamed of, but also might not lead you to the best access to opportunities. This is when she emphasizes, “You have to work twice as hard and make sure you educate yourself”. In addition, she is a proven example that “education will open doors and grant you access to many opportunities that you didn’t even know were out there”. When asked about some of the challenges she had to overcome to achieve a leadership position as a Latina, and how she has been able to overcome them, Susana adds that “sometimes because you are a lady or a woman, others see you as being weak”. She also adds that females must work extra hard and be “strong minded and strong willed with a strong foundation and a designed plan to achieve the set goals”.

Leticia as Susana has had her share of challenges as she started her journey in the United States to arrive to the success she is experiencing now. She is a firm believer that childhood experiences could significantly affect someone’s future. Overwhelmed by the experience of

having to present in a previous job as a campus administrator, she recalls crying and feeling incompetent, consequently she only lasted one year. She attributes that to her language barrier and her fear of public speaking since she arrived from Mexico to the United States. The language barrier she experienced since she immigrated from Mexico created a negative impact on her professional career.

Since I came to this country, I always tried to hide because of my language barrier. I never volunteered to speak, and I would always sit in the back. It was that fear. That fear of saying things wrong. The fear of standing up and somebody laughing because of the mispronunciation of any words. The fear of criticism. It's just a whole bunch of emotions all in one that lead to the fear of public speaking. When I was older and even as a professional, I never got over that fear. That was an inhibiting factor for me to excel the way I wanted to. I wasn't able to articulate my thoughts. That was my biggest challenge for me as I was growing up and as a leader when I started my career.

"I've always been fearful of public speaking because when I came from Mexico, and I was in high school, I always tried to hide because of the language barrier." She adds that she would sit in the back of the classroom. She also explains how sometimes individuals of all ages might hurt you and mark you forever without even knowing or done intentionally.

I will never forget being ridiculed in front of others in the classroom while trying to speak the language. I will feel so incompetent not being able to say the words correctly. I would go home and repeat them many times, until I would learn the correct pronunciation. That was painful.

She remembers calling her mom since the first month of her arrival in the United States and telling her she wanted to go back home to Mexico.

I want to go back. I would tell her crying. Now she shares with me that it was hurtful for her, but back then she knew it was a sacrifice that we had to pay, and she would tell me, ‘Well, you already made the decision, School started over here and you already started over there. You’re going to have to stay.’

Even though she earned two masters’ degrees, one in counseling and one in education administration, at an early stage in her education career, she initially would not apply for the jobs because she didn’t feel she was knowledgeable enough. Leticia states she knows she was equipped for the job positions she applied for, but in some instances, she would hesitate in applying because of the previous experiences she had with others making her feel less than them because of the language barrier. Even as a professional, when others do not acknowledge her hard work or treat her unfairly as if she didn’t belong to that organization, she admits that it’s not because of her gender, but that it has more to do with herself and not having the sense of belonging and her deficits in the language.

I’ve never seen or at least I’ve never been in a position where I’ve been treated unequal because of my gender, I do know I have been overlooked for positions, but I’ve always thought that it has to do with my language barrier. Insecurities are your worst enemy. Sometimes I would discourage myself from applying and going to an interview.

She explains she would set those barriers to herself because of the lack of confidence because of her language barrier and her accent. Now, after so many years she understands an accent is part of who she proudly is.

Maria de Jesus ponders upon the question:

What would my life have been if my parents would have never attempted to risk their lives to cross over through the Rio Grande River? I wouldn’t have been that little girl

being crossed over with another little girl's papers. My parents sacrificed their lives by crossing the river, and my mom not just once but twice as she was deported as she exited her place of work. And, the second time my dad was not with her and she almost drowned because she didn't know how to swim. I always go back and wonder how would it have been for me? My life would have been very different. But I'll tell you one thing that I still think that maybe I wouldn't have been a principal, but I still would have been a teacher. I knew that I was going to be a teacher since I was a little kid.

Maria de Jesus immigrated to the United States at an early age, and since then she has struggled with her second language competency. Unfortunately, her second language has been a barrier that has impacted her journey. She explains she is not embarrassed to let others know that as a principal, she relies heavily in a variety of resources to help her become a better communicator. "I've never been a good writer. I can speak. I'm good with the speaking, but writing, I'm horrible. I uploaded a Grammarly App to help with my emails." She wishes she read more because even though she graduated with an AP diploma, she knows that language barrier and lack of exposure affected her, and practice at home could have helped her to be a better educational leader, or at least not to struggle as much as she does now.

Her experiences as a student had an impact on her role as an educational leader. As a student in grade school, she was not placed in the correct classes. She was a member of the Honor Society in a school district in the north area in Texas, but when they moved to the Borderlands of Texas, she was mistakenly placed with the Recent Immigrants from Mexico. This was not a concern for her because she enthusiastically interacted with them.

During lunch and PE, I connected with all those kids that were Recent Immigrants. I remembered them saying I had an accent speaking Spanish, but I guess the counselors

assumed I was a Recent Immigrant like the rest of my classmates, which I was but I had attended school only in the United States. I'm coming from over there with Honors Society and they put me in a limited English class. My parents trusted the educational system.

Now as a principal, she ensures that her staff are well versed so students are placed in the right classes and that she provides the parents with the proper information so they can make informed decisions about their children. She doesn't want for others to experience what she went through as a child.

I did end up passing and I ended up graduating with my AP Diploma, but that's why I say that we need to be careful with our kids, and not assume, really look after them. We are their parents at school.

These experiences led her to be insecure and ask many questions. She explains there is nothing wrong with this, but she could be more confident while submitting job applications and not be with the doubt if she is ready or not.

I know I really need to prepare myself with curriculum. I still have a lot to learn with data. I do lack a lot of confidence, believe it or not. People don't see that I lack confidence, but even as a principal I still do.

She knows these are not positive experiences and does not wish them to others, especially when these are at the intersectionality of being a female. When she started applying for administrative positions, she explains she wasn't completely ready, but her husband helped her face and overcome her insecurities. Her *ganas* of helping others like her and being involved with curriculum encouraged her to apply for the administrators' positions at a young age.

One of her other reasons for these insecurities of becoming an administrator was that through her years as a student, she remembers most of her administrators were males. Therefore, she found it difficult for her to be hired as one. In addition, she states that “since the beginning, just being a female is a hard enough barrier”. “I would always know that males would get the administrative positions.” She explains that males in her experiences would doubt that a female was capable of addressing or handling particular situations, but through the years, females have shown their qualities as leaders, and they can also have administrative positions and be successful like the males or even better than some of them. Furthermore, she emphasizes how in the district where she is employed a male leads the school district, and there has not been a female school superintendent in the history of the district. She also adds that after many years the district’s school board has a female in the board, and in the superintendent’s cabinet, out of seven members only one is a female.

As many know, the job of a school principal comes with long hours of dedication and hard work. Maria de Jesus is fully committed to her job as a principal and continues going above and beyond to ensure she meets the needs of all her students at her school. She explains that it is difficult because

You still want to be that mom, you still want to cook, you still want to be present with your family as normal as can be, but sometimes our work limits because of the long hours. This is when you really need a supportive family to understand you because it makes it easier when they are involved.

She states she would have stopped her administrative career as an assistant principal or principal if it wasn’t for them and their support. In her case, she has had the support of her family

that has benefitted her as an educational leader, which unfortunately, is not the case for all Latina leaders.

Celia remembers how scared she was upon arrival to the United States, and how fearful she was about the unknown.

I felt fear because I had not had any English classes. I only knew the basic social language that I learned in Mexico in a few classes. I only knew words such *ventana/window, piso/floor*.

She explains how difficult it can be arriving to a different country, and how arriving at an older age, gives immigrants a different perspective.

Celia is now competent in four languages, but it has not always been easy. She shares that the fear of the unknown and more than anything not knowing the system has made it difficult for her with the language barrier. She grew up between two nations, two languages, two cultures, since high school on, so that in itself was a challenge learning English in addition to the Spanish language. Having the opportunity to study simultaneously in two different countries and be able to graduate from both it's rewarding, but it is not always easy because "when you start from zero again, being older, gives you a different perspective, and that was definitely a challenge and a transformational time for me".

When she applies for professional positions, Celia is not fearful of the unknown as she was when she initially immigrated from Mexico. The attitude that she takes when she applies at different positions is a confident attitude because her knowledge gives the power to demonstrate what she is capable of doing. She is a believer that one must create the opportunities for others for them to continue moving forward and create multigenerational prosperity. Her accent does not stop her from sharing and helping others and more so the People of Color. Celia

acknowledges that her immigrant experiences are not of suffering economically, but in the social aspect she has had to overcome challenges. She adds she has experienced belittled remarks about Mexican immigrants in her presence and even though she does not allow others to make her feel inferior because of her roots, she explains that is for that reason that she strives in her job as an educational leader to create better opportunities for all students.

As a Latina you fight the fight because there's no other way. You are the influencer now. And if you don't want for the next generations to go through what you went through, you fight the fight and it will make you stronger, and then you open the doors and provide those opportunities.

Celia is very grateful that her grandfather valued education for females because she has been a witness to gender inequality in her profession as educational leader.

My grandpa allowing my mom to study tells me that he valued females and valued education, and I don't think this is just my personal belief because I know it came from them. Back then that was a role that was given by gender, like directed by society and they would see females not ready to pursue education.

She adds that even within her grandfather and grandmother, there were disagreements because of her mom being a female and the oldest of the family, her grandmother was upset at her grandfather for allowing her to attend a university and supporting her. Moreover, since her mother was the oldest, he did the same with the rest of the females in the family. Celia shares that starting with females in grade school is important for Latina leaders to be of influence, and it is a responsibility to become their advocates because the statistics of females earning a bachelor's degree continue to remain low.

In leadership positions, not just in education but overall, Celia states they continue to be minimum. She also adds that there are other discrepancies “through the years, we’ve made a lot of advances, but there’s still a huge discrepancy between males and females in wages and in general”. Celia explains that Latinas are raised and taught to be passive, not give their opinion, and take care of others. As a teacher she recalls certain experiences and shares the following:

As a health science teacher, my students would earn their license to be nurse assistants, but I had a female student that was almost done, but she started being absent and when I asked her mom, she stated she was going to withdraw her from school because she needed to take care of her grandmother, and besides she was going to get married and have children.

She adds that in a position of leadership one must create the opportunities for females to advance because not everyone has the same opportunities, and we must level the field because education is a key factor for advancement in life and hopefully can diminish the discrepancies.

Like with the other participants, regarding all the obstacles, Marlen has had to overcome, the language barrier is the one that has been the most challenging since she arrived in the United States and even as an educational leader. “The language barrier and the accent have made it very difficult, and with people making fun, I won’t lie, it’s tough.” Marlen, still remembers the day she wrote her first essay accompanied by a dictionary she bought at a Dollar Store.

I remember the first time I wrote an essay. I wrote it everything in Spanish and back then, there was no computers or wi-fi or all this fancy stuff so, I got a dictionary that I bought at the Dollar Store, and I translated every single word. That was my essay. I remember my teacher comes up to me the next day and she’s like Marlen, what did you try.... Can you explain to me what you tried to write? When I explained to her and she

says, Did you write it in Spanish? I explained to her what I had done, she gave me a hundred because she said, I don't think anyone would have tried so hard to just translate word by word.

Even though it's been difficult, Marlen shares that she has learned to ignore others and just take what's important and learn from it. Marlen explains how people judge you, especially when one has the Latina features and is dark complected.

People treat you the way you look, as a leader, me being dark complected and having the Mexican features like I've shared with you before, it matters and you have to find the positive to counteract their judgment about your looks-when we don't look American, it matters.

Moreover, Marlen states the gender inequalities between males and females are still evident in our society, especially in the leadership world.

I think we still live in a society where males have more opportunities than females. That's definite. There are more males in leadership positions than females. It is becoming a little bit more common to have female leaders, to have female district leaders, but the higher positions are still assigned to males.

If the majority of the positions are occupied by males, the decisions are going to be to benefit the males, Marlen explains.

It was so difficult as a board member. I was the only woman. It was so difficult because I thought different. I was the nurturing, and they were like 'No. No. No.' and I'm like 'Yes. Yes. Yes.' So, it was difficult working with too many men because I couldn't influence them.

Celia explains how fortunate she is to a certain extent to have a light complected skin and green eyes because she has an advantage to avoid mistreatment as a Person of Color if she was to be of a darker color.

One of the challenges I've faced is how sometimes people are attracted to me for my phenotype, than for what I have to contribute. Even though I'm from Mexico, I'm white and I have color eyes. I like to arrive early to my meetings and in a state conference, people arrived to my table, and once I started providing input about the topic discussed, of course, I have an accent and they started asking me if I was from countries such as Switzerland, Germany, and others except Mexico. When I told them I was from Mexico, they were in disbelief. They didn't recognize me as Hispanic or Latina because of my complexion. They kept insisting that I couldn't be from Mexico. There was one lady that at the end she told me- 'the thing is that you cannot be Mexican because you are intelligent!

At this time, Celia shares that she didn't know how to respond of how upset she was because she took it as an offense. This led her to think of how dark complected people might be treated.

Celia's concern has been one of the negative experiences for Marlen because of her skin color. She explains how critical the level of education for everyone is but especially when you have a dark complexion.

The level of education is important because people judge. They see the *nopal* and they judge. So, I was a board member not too long ago, in another district, and I would get judged because of my dark complexion, having the Mexican features and not dressing

properly. Unfortunately, that's how people treat you. It improves once they know your level of education and what you know.

She states she wishes she could tell her students the color of the skin doesn't matter, but she will not be there to defend them when if at some time they get mistreated because of it. What she can tell and encourage them is for them to get an education to have a brighter future because the education no one will be able to take it away from them. Marlen continues educating herself and setting goals that will continue opening doors for her, and for many generations to come.

Influencers

All participants reported their greatest influencers were family members. Influenced by who raised them made significant differences in their lives, made them who they are, and how successful they continue to be in their careers. The five participants shared their lived experiences, and similarly all were influenced by their parents and impacted their success.

Even though Susana attributes her career goals to several people, she acknowledges her greatest influencers in achieving her career goals were her grandparents, who raised her since a very early age. She considers them her greatest influence because they always encouraged her to be better than them.

If they hadn't taken the challenge to raise me when my biological mother abandoned me, I probably wouldn't even be here. I also appreciate them for bringing me with them when they immigrated to the United States. They could have just left me over in Mexico with my biological father, but they took the risk of bringing me over to a different country so I could also have a better future.

Susana states she was able to achieve her success by crediting several family members but the main ones that influenced who she is today personally and professionally are her

grandparents who became her parents when she was abandoned by her biological mom. “Being raised by hardworking parents and parents that encourage you to do better than they did, was my greatest influence.” She remembers the sacrifices they did not just for their biological children, but for her as well. Their sacrifices encouraged her to work extra hard.

I wanted to make sure I make them proud, and the only way to repay all their hard work that they had invested in me was to get educated. That was like the motor that really got me going.

The fact they left their own country, their relatives, their home, was more than enough for Susana to understand her parents wanted for her to have a better life than the one they had. They arrived to the unknown, a different country with laws and policies they didn’t understand, and in addition to that, a different language that up to now her parents never learned. “They were here, but they really never left Mexico, because we were always going back and forth.” This made it a little difficult for Susana, “because we didn’t really belong here, but we didn’t belong over there either”. In the end, she understood that it was an easier way for making ends meet because the cost of living was cheaper in Mexico than in the United States.

Leticia just like Susana has her parents as her greatest influencers, but in addition to them, she also knows her sister is one of her other biggest influencers for her success and to who she has become.

My mom, my dad and my sister are my biggest role influencers. We have the same characteristics. The only difference is that I was able to attend college and get a degree, and they didn’t. One of the things I learned from my dad is, if you’re going to start something, you are going to finish it. You are not going to leave it halfway. So, everything that I’ve started, thank God, I’ve finished.

Leticia also considers her parents her biggest influencers.

The support of my parents and my mom always pushing me. She would always tell me, 'Don't worry about the house. Don't worry about us. We are fine.' She always helped me through the process and encourage me to finish what I started, first with my bachelor's then with my two masters. And I know that if I were to tell her right now that I want to go for a Doctorate, she would tell me, 'Go'. And my dad, indirectly he has because he doesn't tell me, but I know that with his actions, he does.

Leticia adds that because of all her parents did for her, she always wanted to be successful and for her parents to be proud of her.

I've always wanted for my parents to be proud especially when I walked during my graduations to get my diplomas. I wanted them there. I wanted to walk down the aisle and I wanted them to be proud of me.

Maria de Jesus like Susana and Leticia shares her greatest influencers are her parents and in addition to her parents, her husband has been a greatest influence on her success ever since they started dating.

Being Latinos, first of all, your primary positive impact is from home. My mom has been my greatest influence in being an educator, even though education wasn't a priority in her family, and she only attended up to 3rd grade because she was one of the oldest and in the *rancho*, education wasn't a top priority. She has taught me not to leave people behind and to always think of others.

As a transnational school leader, she uses unity to bring her staff together and pursue goals such as their latest accomplishment as the recognition of a National Blue-Ribbon campus. In addition to her mom, she explains how her father is one of the other greatest influencers, "on

the other side, I have my dad, that didn't go and get a degree in the United States, but he continues encouraging me.” Her father was able to attain a degree in Mexico, but he did not learn English and that was already a setback for him not to continue his education in the United States. In addition, he could never practice his career in the United States because the degree was not valid in this country. Moreover, her father always influenced her and encourage her to go to college, and even though he wanted for her to become an attorney, he is proud of her for following her dreams and get a degree in education. Her father was already coming with the goal of having his family succeed, regardless of what he and his wife had to go through. “I wanted to make my parents proud because my dad always instilled education. He planted that seed of going to school, to get a career.”

In addition to her mom and dad, the other person that she refers to ‘her rock’ and greatest influencer is her husband. Her father always instilled for her to get an education so she wouldn't have to depend on a male to support her. Thankfully, her husband like her father is one of the ones that has influenced her and supported her goals significantly.

I originally wanted to be a counselor. But then I had my husband asking me ‘You know what? You don't want to go with me to school to be an administrator?’ That's when I changed my mind and embarked in the leadership journey with him. We already had our first baby, but my parents, supportive as always, offered to take care of her. It was super hard because I was still giving all my 100% at school. I still sponsored clubs. I still tutored. I still continued doing everything at school. And then at nights, I would go to college. So, during the week, there were days that I wouldn't see my baby, but now that I reflect, it was all worth it.

One of her reasons for her success as a campus principal is the manner in which she leads her staff to work united towards a common goal. This specifically she attributes it to the way her parents raised her.

I see that a lot in my colleagues that are Latinas that are principals, we bring that family oriented, that spice. We build genuine relationships with our staff, and they connect with us. That's what makes us to be great leaders.

Celia also had both parents that influenced her.

My mom is a teacher. So, you can imagine. She graduated and she taught for 3 years in a rural area in Mexico, then she got married and her job became to support my siblings and I with our education. She was first generation college graduate in her family. As you might know females were expected to learn only trades like for them to be able to sew, to cook, and stay home, but my grandfather supported her. My dad completed high school in the United States and then attended a university in San Antonio, Texas. Education was not an option for us; it was an expectation but then we received all the support from our parents who were also leading us by example.

Celia adds that one of the examples as to how his father supported them it was by providing what was necessary for them to succeed.

I've always had a passion for books. Since there was not any in house libraries in our public schools in Mexico, my dad started building our own in-house library when I was in elementary. He began by buying books.

Celia, by contrast, to the other four participants, mentioned community members as her influencers in addition to her parents. She states they influenced her because they had the traits of a transnational leader because they wouldn't just help the community with transformational

initiatives but would provide support needed for community members and students to be successful.

Carmen Anaya and Graciela Garcia were community members that influenced me as they always were trying to do what was best for the community without expecting anything in return. Carmen Anaya and Graciela Garcia worked tirelessly to ensure the students had the resources and the basic needs such as water systems in their community so they could learn and succeed in schools.

Celia explains that her initial influencers were her parents, her mom being a teacher, who taught for three years in a rural area in Mexico, and after she got married her job was to raise and support Celia and her siblings. Her father completed high school in the United States in the Borderlands of Texas and graduated with a college degree from a prestigious university in Texas. Education was not an option for her and her siblings, and there was no excuse for them not to attain a degree because they had an in-house reading teacher, their mom, who in addition to the house chores would ensure they knew how to read by the time they started school. Even though her father was away working for long periods of time in another country, he would ensure that they had what they needed to succeed in school.

Marlen like the other participants, shares how her parents have influenced her to be as successful as she is.

My parents wanted a better education for my siblings and I, and we transitioned to the United States with that objective. My parents have been key. I also think the fact that my mom had a very clear mindset that she wanted my life to be different than hers. She wanted for me to have more opportunities. She wanted for me to do what she was not able to do. Her mom passed away when she was five and my grandpa abandoned her, and

she lived with grandparents who died real young. She wanted for not just me but my siblings to have those opportunities that she didn't have.

Marlen continues praising her parents and admiring all the sacrifices they did for her and siblings. It is with that objective the family transitioned to the United States, to have a better future. "My success is due to my parents. They have been key." She knows that her mom had a unique way of influencing her and supporting her.

The fact that my mom had a very clear mindset and that she wanted for my life to be different, than hers. She wanted for me to have more opportunities. She wanted for me to have what she didn't have due to her being an orphan.

All actions that Marlen takes she wants to ensure she makes her parents are proud knowing how hard they worked.

I couldn't give up. Learning at a very young age that that you had to ignore, to keep going, really shaped who I am right now. My parents had tried so hard, I just couldn't give up.

Her internal emotional scars are proof of how much it would hurt her for other classmates to make fun of her and her friends for their accent and the types of clothes they would wear. She had to try harder and not disappoint her parents after all their sacrifices. She reflects and admits that now as a principal, it is her childhood immigrant negative experiences, that have helped her take bullying at her school very seriously. "Those experiences are so vivid, and they stay with you forever, and I am not going to allow that in my campus and for no one to go through what I went through." This has also helped her build better relationships with her parents at her school because they know she is sincere and will help them.

All five transnational Latinas spoke about the importance of having their families in their lives inspiring them and influencing them not just with their encouraging words, but also with their actions. In addition to the, sometimes, unspoken expectations these Latinas knew the reason for the family sacrifices and the goals they had in this new country. This was key for them to persist and succeed, regardless of their hardships or circumstances.

Mentorship

After analyzing the participants' data, the overarching theme that emerged and that specifically addressed to achieving their career goals was mentoring. The transnational Latina leaders shared how they benefitted from mentoring, and how they utilized their support systems to help them continue being successful. All study participants credited mentorship and a network of supports for their success.

Informal and formal assignment of mentors helped each transnational Latina leader be successful. The mentors for these immigrant transnational Latina leaders, included supervisors at different levels in their careers. Each mentor encouraged and supported the pathways each transnational Latina leader took to achieve the adequate levels of experience and ultimately their leadership in education. Regardless of how the mentorship started, if formally or informally mentors were assigned to them, all five participants credited their success to their assistance and encouragement at different stages in their lives.

Susana explains in addition to her parents, outside her home she had a very special person whom she refers to as her mentor that encouraged her and supported her and has been key in her success as a Latina leader. At the time when she met her, she was working at a middle school as a biology teacher, and she admires and appreciates her because it was that special person that encouraged her to get her master's degree in Educational Leadership. Susana had different

assigned mentors at the beginning of her teaching career that helped her get a head start in education. Through the years and because of her lack of confidence from her childhood, continuing her education, was not in her plans. It was not until a female campus administrator noticed and acknowledged she had the heart, the willingness to work hard, and the perseverance to help reluctant students when it sparked an interest in her. When she found out she and her mentor were immigrants and came from the same region in Mexico, she realized it was also possible for her to help others by being a Latina educational leader.

I was working in a middle school, I had one person I had a mentor that I really, truly looked up to her. She has the same background that I do. Very similar. And she was the one who pushed me to get a master's degree to continue pursuing my education and it took that one person to kind of give me that push and believe in me and see a quality that maybe I didn't see at that point or time. She encouraged me to apply at the university, and it's incredible that it only takes one person to identify some of your strengths and qualities to make a difference in someone else's life. Seeing her and other women that had the same background as I did succeed, made me want to do the same.

Through the years, she continued the communication with her and now they even work in the same place and became best friends. She shares her mentor always told her she would be a good administrator because she didn't mind working hard, giving her time, and doing whatever needed to be done for students to be successful.

Susana provides insight into their relationship:

She is my mentor and I admire her a great deal. She doesn't say much, but she does tell me what she needs to tell me when I'm about to make a mistake if she's near me or talks to me after on how I could have avoided certain situations. She explains to me that it all

depends on the situation, and it's better to be a listener than to be the one always talking. My mentor says that sometimes there is no need to say much. It's important to observe the others and then provide the feedback. I have learned to think and reflect.

Susana states that she knows she is very proud of her because she has told her how many hours she dedicates into her work, and the relationships that she has developed with students and staff. Knowing that she doesn't want to disappoint her and being that it was her first year as an administrator, she shares that she doesn't mind working twice as hard to be successful. Susana shares that her strong work ethic, being persistent and the *ganas* to succeed have also been key.

For Leticia, just like for Susana, it was another female primarily that encouraged her to apply for a leadership position. By the time she met her she already had the qualifications to get hired, but she still believed she wasn't ready. The years had gone by and even though she had been very successful after overcoming many different obstacles, her insecurities of the language barrier and language accent were still overshadowing her capabilities.

Ms. Crisantema had a big influence on me because of a conversation because they sent me to help her at the high school where she was working at. I had never seen her before and that's because it was a small district. I didn't even know she existed. I helped her for a couple of weeks, and she encouraged me to apply. Seeing her do the job as a Dean of Instruction and guiding me with respect and dignity helped wanted to someday to try it myself. I'm a believer that everything happens for a reason and soon after that she became a principal of a school, and I had the opportunity to work with her as one of her assistant principals. Those eight years I worked with her were the best years of my professional life. I really enjoyed it because I had so much fun at the same time that I

learned from her. She created opportunities for me to learn and always guided me with respect and dignity.

Leticia has never been afraid of working long hours and building relationships with others because that opens doors to opportunities. That was her case when she met her mentor who within a few months became her principal. They developed a successful relationship funded on trust. She allowed her to take risks and make decisions during the eight years they worked together. Leticia states she guided her and provided suggestions on how she would like for her to do some of the tasks, but in the end, she would add her personal leadership touch and the results were successful.

We would meet, and I would present my plans during the administrators' meetings, if she had anything to add, she would suggest it but will never impose. That's why I respected her all the time because for one she would never judge me, she would provide suggestions based on her knowledge and experience, but always in a respectful way.

The reasons mentioned above are some of her mentor actions Leticia admired, and she explains those eight years have been the happiest ones in her leadership career. If it had not been because her mentor accepted a higher position at central office, she believes she would have stayed there. Further, she states that it's important for transnational Latinas to never stop believing in themselves, but to always remember to continue helping others. "If the purpose of you moving up to a leadership position is to help others, then everything you go through, it's very worth it." Leticia also believes being hard working, persistent, and to have the *ganas*-that desire to succeed, regardless of the obstacles, are characteristics that definitely have helped her achieve her success in the United States.

Maria de Jesus attributes her success as a transnational Latina leader to supervisors, who saw qualities she didn't see in herself. She started her educational career as a paraprofessional at a very young age, right after she graduated from high school. While working as a paraprofessional, her immediate supervisors encouraged her to pursue a teaching career. She recognizes she always wanted to be a teacher and explains sometimes those goals might become dormant, and it takes someone such as mentors and supervisors to remind of what one is capable of. Those seeds had been planted at an early age, but were crushed by negative experiences in life.

It starts off at home with the kind of parents that you have and then the others come along the way in your career. You have those great leaders that see how hard you work and that you are willing to put in the time to help others. When I started at 19, my boss, as a para, she always encouraged me, helped me. I had that support and guidance from great principals I had because they saw something in me, qualities I had that I didn't see in me then. I came across a lot of people throughout that pushed me because they must have seen something in me. That's why being placed as a principal at the elementary, it just brings a lot of joy to me with the little ones, with the kids because I want to do for them and encourage teachers to do what others did for me, especially to teach them to believe in themselves.

Maria de Jesus wants to continue inspiring others as the principal of her campus.

I want to inspire others-people and kids so that all these Latino kids that we have in our schools especially the Recent Immigrants, have a better life. And they could share a story later on and say somebody helped me.

As a leader one should always think as ‘we’ and not ‘I’. This is what her previous supervisors and principals would model for her, Maria de Jesus explains. Maria de Jesus believes there are many factors that contribute to a Latina success, and in addition to working hard, being persistent, and having lots of *ganas*, it’s important to always think as WE-never I, always be inclusive because as a Latina leader, “I embrace others, focus on building the staff and I instill what my beliefs are with the goal of always improving student achievement.” She admits she learned the best from each one of them, but the ones that she considered her mentors and guided her by example were the ones that always brought staff members together. These special mentors worked towards a common goal and strived to do their best for the rest. Something that she learned from them is to give credit where credit was due. Maria de Jesus explains that she values them very much because they saw some leadership qualities in her that no one had ever seen or at least they never told her. Her negative experiences as an immigrant child led to her insecurities, and it’s important for others to encourage specially the ones that do not believe they can do the job of a leader.

I did have a lot of people, and specially my mentors, throughout my career that saw the *ganas*, that I’ve mentioned to you before. That willingness to want to learn. The willingness to be involved and to want to move up. They really encouraged me ‘Maria de Jesus, you do have the qualities. You do have what it takes.’ Even to this day, those mentors are already at central office, and they tell me now that I am a principal, ‘You are doing such a great job’, and I still think sometimes that I am not, but those encouraging words from someone that you value and admire are critical for a Latina leader.

In addition to the mentors, she is very grateful she had in her professional career, she also credits some of her teachers that she remembers fondly because they believed in her and would

encourage her to try and do better by getting out of her comfort zone. At the beginning she was hesitant, but in some cases is easier to be a risk taker as a child then sometimes it is as an adult, especially, when one already has been dealing with insecurities, that built through negative experiences.

It takes several people to contribute for others to start believing in themselves, especially when one is a teenager that recently arrived in another country. In Celia's experience, her high school counselor was key in her success. She credits him for guiding her in detailed steps by informing her, helping her analyze, and reflecting upon her options before making decisions for her future.

Because of her unique situation, of wanting to become a medical doctor and pursue her career in a northeastern state in Mexico, her counselor helped her arrive at the best decision. She didn't have the opportunity to become the valedictorian of her class, but graduated as the salutatorian, to soon accomplish one of her goals to graduate as a medical doctor in Mexico.

I had a great counselor that always guided me in high school. He was amazing. He always showed me different opportunities that I had. I believe he is the one that influenced me for me to always strive to search for those opportunities for our students. He is the one that guided me and encouraged me to apply for the Texas Scholars at Lamar University. I was able to attend the leadership academy because of him. I graduated as salutatorian because of his guidance and support. I had the experience to go through the education systems in Mexico and in the U.S. and because of him I got the best from both.

Celia also attributes her success as a professional to her mentors and role models in her professional life, but also shares how she also learned what not to do and be able to balance the personal and professional life.

My mentors were able to show me that, everything is possible. I have had great role models, great mentors, and they were really successful Latinas, but they were divorced. At some point they were consumed by work and work became a priority for them and unfortunately that imbalance also carried to their children and their children had issues so it's important to find a balance between the professional and personal life.

In Celia's experience, her mentors who she also refers to as her role models were key people that up to this day continue to encourage her with their actions and words. She has had many mentors throughout her different careers, as a medical doctor and the one as an educational leader, but the traits that all her mentors have in common is the willingness to help others, provide support, and do altruistic work in addition to their regular paying jobs. Celia like the rest of the participants shares the characteristics of a Latina leader mentor are having a strong work ethic, being perseverant, and having those *ganas* that are second to none. She adds that all goals for Latinas are with purpose and the never giving up is the force that drives while one helps others in collaboration.

I was really blessed to have great mentors that were transnationals and had Latina blood in them. My mentors were able to show me that if you work hard enough, you will be achieving your goals and pave you the way by providing you those skills that are needed to be successful.

Marlen had a negative experience that she turned into a positive when she overheard one of her teachers in middle school saying she would never be one of the top 10 students of her

class because of her language barrier. To her teacher's surprise and proving her determination, she also just like Celia graduated as salutatorian of her class. She recognizes how hard it was to overcome the language barrier and the harassment she and her friends received for not knowing the English language and for having an accent. Just like Celia in addition to her mentors that have helped her along the way to continue believing in her, she also attributes her success to her high school counselor and her Recent Immigrant teacher.

God blessed me with the right people at the right time. I was very fortunate it wasn't just my parents and siblings that helped me along the way. I've always had mentors and supervisors who have guided me and most importantly believed in me. It's been tough but I'm very fortunate. I've met nice people and people that believed in me and saw in me past the language barrier. They saw the potential and one of those people also was my counselor in high school. She believed in me. She would meet with me often, and also helped me develop my plan for success. She would even take the time to meet with my mom and even though she knew my mom didn't have an education, she would still explain to her making her feel valued and that meant a lot to me.

Marlen reflects and explains how much her recent immigrant teacher helped her and her friends to feel welcomed and that they were eventually going to succeed. She also remembers how maybe that particular teacher didn't have the same background as her or her classmates, but she had a special heart and understanding for her students. Marlen adds how she applies the concept of placing the right teacher with the right students in order to meet their needs because she is realistic and knows that not all teachers have the heart, patience, and the willingness to teach Recent Immigrants, who sometimes come with lots of baggage because of all their different situations.

Our teacher was very thoughtful. The teacher they placed in the Recent Immigrant classroom with us, not only was she a motivator and very good at teaching, but she was always there for us. She was a *gringa* but she understood us and saw the potential in us. She was key in making us fit into the new culture and adapting both and making us understand that it was okay to have our own culture. She made us realize that our culture defined us, but it didn't mean that could not adapt to a new culture.

Since Marlen arrived in the United States, she knew her life was going to be different.

For her, her life in Mexico was somewhat better than the one she arrived to in the Borderlands of Texas. Her parents provided all the love and support they could to her and her siblings, but she soon realized she would need the support from others to be able to succeed in a different country. As she stated before, her language barrier made it difficult for her to the point she wanted to return to live in Mexico, but she could not disappoint her parents as they were already struggling with other issues in the new country.

I was born and raised in Mexico, and I was used to having straight As. Straight As! So for me getting 70s and 80s was not good enough. In addition to this, the other classmates would make it so difficult by making fun of us. I would cry every single day.

If it hadn't been for her Recent Immigrant teacher, she doesn't know what would have happen to her and her classmates' future.

To begin, we were segregated, but they were very thoughtful of the teacher they placed in the classroom. Not only was she a motivator and very good at teaching, but she was always there for us. After every outside activity, we would go back crying to her and she would tell us to ignore them and not to worry about it. But it bothered us, it would hurt us.

Marlen explains their teacher was Anglo, but her husband was of Mexican descent, so she knew both cultures very well that she was key to help them fit into the new culture and their new life, despite the challenges they had to overcome.

Another instrumental person who Marlen is grateful for her success as a leader and who she considers one of her mentors is her high school counselor because she had a special way of getting her to perform out of her comfort zone and saw in her something past her language barrier.

She believed in me, and she would tell me. ‘No, you are going to do this. You are going to do well, and you need to learn to ignore people and you need to learn to just keep going, and you need to learn to try your best’.

She explains how hard this was, but she had no other option, therefore, she just kept going and following her advice. In addition to encouraging her not to give up and continue going, her counselor would meet with her and her mom periodically to strategically plan her future to eventually helped her graduate as the salutatorian of her class. Marlen adds that as a principal and even when she was an assistant principal, she ensures the students’ needs are met and they are challenged to hopefully one day they see their goals achieved.

Bicultural and Family Pride

After analyzing the participants’ responses, the two overarching themes that surfaced are bicultural and family pride. All five participants are bicultural and celebrate both cultures, the American and the Mexican culture. It’s important for all the participants as Latinas to continue instilling these practices to their own children just the way their own parents and families did with them. It is with great pride and seamless transitions they are able to practice both regardless on which side of the border they might be. They teach their children by example, and they

continue with automaticity speaking both languages, code switching, and even translating for others. The following section offers the ways in which the themes of bicultural and family pride found across the data.

All of the participants celebrate the cultural events and practice customs from both countries in a somewhat automatic manner. Even though for some it was more difficult than for others to acculturate, now they are all able to practice both with automaticity. What matters is that they never acculturated at the expense of the second culture, and they continued with the Mexican traditions as they acquired the American ones. They all credit their parents for emphasizing the importance of their culture and never forgetting their roots at the same time they acquired the second culture. Acquiring another culture is not always easy, but it is indeed rewarding according to what the participants experienced. They had to overcome derogatory comments that offended them in their journey to success, but the reward of being bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate would not be changed for anything in the world. It brings them family pride they share with now their own children and the rest of the family, and they hope that continues and prevails for multigenerational prosperity.

Susana's proximity to the border of Mexico, the long stays, and the frequent trips helped her stay connected to her roots and to her family. She shares her perspective of leaving her happy life behind in the ranch in Mexico where she grew up, and the pain she felt as she would arrive to the United States. It was not easy to leave behind what and who she loved the most to come and endure discriminatory experiences. She understood it was for her to have a better future, thus it was painful.

We would leave the entire family behind. Only my mom and I would come over because I was going to school and of course my mom needed to be with me. My dad would stay

behind in Mexico because he would take care of the land and the ranch, that's how we would make ends meet. Then I would arrive over here, and it was difficult because I had already started school over there and so that was what I knew. That was my culture. My language. The schools were very different. I remember coming back and being the oddball because I was the tallest and oldest and the biggest in my class. The students would make fun of me. The language was difficult and my accent horrible. I wanted to go back to Mexico to what I knew, the language that I knew and who I knew, my siblings, my cousins, my aunts, and uncles, my grandparents, my friends. In Mexico, I felt secured and happy. In Texas, I even had to be like an adult helping my mom translating for her. Susana shares she learned to proudly embrace both cultures. Even though it was difficult to acculturate and overcome challenges along her transnational journey, she will not change it because that's what makes her who she is and how she can be empathetic with others that go through the same or similar experiences.

For Susana, it was a challenge to acculturate to the American culture. She was born in the Borderlands of Texas and raised in Mexico. During all her school years, in addition to the festive days such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, she would spend all her weekends and all her summers in the ranch where she was raised back in Mexico. She remembers these were some of her happiest moments of her life. Now she realizes, she was poor and might have been missing some essentials but living without running water or electricity did not affect her happiness. "We were not poor, or at least I was not aware I was poor." She explains the joy of being together with her siblings and her cousins playing for most of the day, would make up for anything else they might have been lacking. The difficulty began when she would arrive to the United States.

Even though she was not competent in the English language, she became her mother's translator at a very early age while in elementary.

I became my mother's translator not just in school, but in government offices when we would go ask for assistance and, even sometimes, I would help her with phone calls. It was difficult and painful sometimes because I did not know all the words yet, but it was rewarding because I felt empowered knowing that I had been able to help her.

Susana adds that even up to now after so many years, she continues translating for her mom and for some of the family members since most of them never acquired the second language. The rewards of becoming competent in both languages paved the way to a successful future for her and now her own children.

Susana states she is one of the proudest Latinas of Mexican descent regarding her culture. Mexican or American celebrations in her family, "It's kind of like hybrid", Susana States. "When we would go to Mexico during Thanksgiving days, we would take a turkey and the trimmings and celebrate over there. If it's 16 de *septiembre*, and it's during the week, we celebrate here." More than the importance of celebration, what matters in her family is for them to be together and united. She explains that after living between two cultures and acquiring the best of the two, through her experiences, she values who she is. "Balancing for me is now easy because now I'm older and I understand." Susana adds that being competent in both languages really changes her perspective and allow her to enjoy what really matters, her family. "I really value who I am and the journey I went through to arrive at who I have become." More than balancing her two cultures, Susana states she embraces her two cultures because living so close to the border and having family that doesn't speak but a couple of words in English to her it's

important and additionally for her children to continue to know their cultural roots and be proud of who they are.

Out of the five participants, Leticia's bicultural experiences were somewhat different than the rest. Leticia arrived in the United States and struggled with her sense of belonging and language barrier. In order to thrive, she acculturated as soon as she could. She shares that her goal was to become like the popular ones at the school she was enrolled at and that made her practice the English language until she would learn it. Her goal of becoming like them and belonging to the popular group encouraged her to dress like them, act like them, and do everything like them while she was with them.

I needed to hang out with people that knew English so that way they could help me how to write an essay. Consequently, I thought, in order for me to be part of that group or for them to accept me, I need to talk like them, I need to act like them, I need to dress like them. I would practice, and I would practice, and I would practice. I would remember the girls saying this phrase and I would go home and repeat the phrase until I learned it, and that's how I learned because I wanted to be accepted by them. I would try so hard to practice the language because I just wanted to be part of their group, until my senior year, I finally could tell that I was part of their group.

By being close to them, she started acquiring the language just by listening to them, but she still didn't know how to write the words. Finally, her senior year, she was part of the group, and participated in all senior events with them as part of their group which she was proud of not only because she now belonged to the popular group, but because she acculturated in the United States.

Leticia achieved her goal of belonging to the desired group and acculturated at the same time, but she remains proud that even though she acculturated in the United States, she never lost her Mexican culture, in essence, she never lost her identity. During her high school years, she continued going to Mexico practically on a daily basis. While in 9th grade, she would go every week, but once she became a sophomore, her father bought her a car, and she would drive from Mexico to a high school in a border town in Texas every single day. This gave her the opportunity of maintaining her first language and her Mexican culture as she acquired the American one.

I always saw the balancing of cultures as a positive because I was able to do that and a lot of people that I know, or knew back then, they couldn't. When I was in Reynosa with my friends, I behaved in a different way, and I was a different way. It was a different Leticia. It was the Leticia that grew up in Reynosa, that had the friends over there. Everything was Mexican Leticia. Then, when I would come over here, it was American Leticia. I would behave and act like my friends over here. I always saw that as a positive because I was able to dominate both populations very well.

On the Mexico side, the same thing would happen, "I would forget about American Leticia and would start my life as Mexican Leticia." She states that her life in Mexico would be as normal as usual, getting together with the family and friends, eating out on the streets in the famous *Calle del Taco*.

Now in her place of work, it's even a better advantage knowing both cultures and both languages.

Now if there are presentations in Spanish, they pick me. I'm the one that does the Spanish presentations, I have the connection with people, that work in the auxiliary department.

Like the bus drivers and the custodians. People that don't speak the English language because they see me like, 'Oh, she's like, one of us.' or, 'She talks like we do.'

Leticia adds that as immigrants, they develop a skill. "It's a very special skill that you're able to adjust and you become very flexible, and you adapt to whatever situation."

Maria de Jesus grew up in a close family circle where they knew no discrimination within them, once they were there, they felt protected within their own family and their cultural practices. Similar to the other four participants, Maria de Jesus struggled acquiring the second language, and remembers hurtful remarks her teachers would say to her and the rest of the students. Different than Susana and Marlen, Maria de Jesus was not able to return to Mexico as often and as many times as the family would have liked. Her parents were undocumented and crossed the river when they immigrated from Mexico to the United States. They had to figure out practices to feel safe from the outside discrimination and be happy with their family. Thus, just like Susana and Marlen, Maria de Jesus enjoyed being together with her family and practice similar Mexican cultural practices. For them, being together as a family and with friends from Mexico was important. Maria de Jesus shares they would have the best times during the weekend playing Mexican *Loteria* as they use to play in Mexico and would have her parents and her uncles share stories from their childhood, which became lessons of life.

At home Maria de Jesus explains their lives continued as normal as possible. "Our Friday nights were *Loteria*, Saturday night barbecues, and all the other holidays we celebrated like we celebrate here in the Borderlands of Texas." She explains that throughout the years, they're just celebrations that have meshed together, and for her it's important for her daughters to celebrate and learn both cultures, both languages. In her family, the pride of being Mexican American has always existed, and continues to be their star of triumph.

I want for my daughters to continue with our traditions and to be proud of their Mexican descent and proud to speak the Spanish language. I want for the community to know that we are Latinas and that we are strong. Our culture and the traditions that made us who we are, and it is our responsibility as parents to transfer them over to our kids.

Celia like the rest of the four participants struggled learning the language and more with the derogatory way others would refer to the Mexican immigrants. “They would discriminate because of the phenotype, you know.” Celia is white complected and didn’t really experience direct discrimination, but it would bother her when they would tell her that she wasn’t Mexican because she was smart. Celia shares that she doesn’t understand how someone could discriminate based on race just because of the language, culture, or color.

There are statements that are hurtful and stay in people’s minds forever. This is the case with Celia when others have told her “You cannot be Mexican because you are intelligent”. Up to now she shares that she doesn’t understand how some can be so cruel and stigmatize based on race, and not accept someone based on their language or culture. It is understandable for children to sometimes say offensive remarks when they do not know the difference regarding the culture about a specific group, but from adults it’s completely unacceptable to her.

Celia and her family embrace both cultures and languages with pride. She had the opportunity to attend school in Mexico and the United States from high school to graduate level, and she tried to learn the best from both. Moreover, the dual language development is of utmost importance to her that as an educational leader she adds, “I work really closely with the Dual Language Director from the school district because we are always searching for opportunities for our dual language students to participate in at the state and at the national level”. Culture and

language are two key components in opportunities that can be transformational for Celia's students and generations to come.

Regarding her own children, Celia always takes the opportunities with her husband to expose and immerse their children in culture and language. She explains that every year, they take turns with their traveling plans in an effort for them to have a better understanding of where they come from.

We decided for my kids, for us to have that experience. What we do is that one year, we go to Mexico for vacations and then another year, we go here in the United States. One year we are in Guadalajara and the following year we are in Kansas, Missouri.

Celia is very proud of both cultures and of who she has become. She states that for her is crucial for her children as Mexican Americans to be proud of who they are and where they come from.

Similar to Susana, Marlen struggled, significantly trying to get used to the culture, to the way of living in the United States, and to the language. There were times they would go and come back often to try to make it somewhat easier for them.

The first few years, we would go and come back every single day to Reynosa. We could not cut the umbilical cord. We missed having fun in the afternoons interacting with the friends on the streets. When we arrived over to the United States, I would be like where's the *elotero*? It was so sad and hard. No family, no friends, no one selling food on the streets. We really missed everything and everyone.

Leaving family and friends was already a challenge and then coming to be unwelcomed and ridiculed for their way of speaking and the way of living, made matters worse for them.

Even though Marlen struggled learning the English language and getting acculturated, she is proud of who she has become in the United States. The language barrier was a struggle for her, and others made it more difficult by laughing at her inability to speak it and pronounce it.

When I started college, I just had to learn. I had to do a lot of research and really understand people around me. I had to room with classmates from all over the place, and I had to learn their culture because what might have been fine for me, could have offended others.

Nonetheless, with her perseverance and determination, she was able to acquire both languages and both cultures, never one at the expense of the other one. Her frequent trips to Mexico made it easier for her to continue with both. She also credits her mom for instilling their roots and the importance of never forgetting their first language or their culture. “My mom never assimilated, and she never allowed us or our kids to forget about our first language and our culture. She keeps us aligned with the Spanish and the Mexican culture.”

It was out of necessity that Marlen got used to the food here in the United States, but as a child back then, it was difficult for her to understand.

It was very confusing trying to understand the music, the food, the taste. The taste of food at schools was horrible. I’m like, what is this? This is plastic. But then I realized there was nothing else to eat at home, so you learn to like the food.

Marlen shared that adapting to the culture and learning the language was difficult, but it’s what it took for her and her siblings to what this new country was going to provide for them. The reward of seeing her brother and sister as successful as her is priceless.

Marlen indicates just like Maria de Jesus that in addition to having lots of *ganas*, working hard and persevere, a Latina leader embraces and collaborates with others to build capacity.

“We know how hard it is to get there and we want to motivate each other, and we want to make sure others reach their highest potential.” It motivates Marlen to inspire others and is very proud to lead her own children by example and for them to know that anything is possible, regardless of their background.

Summary of Findings

Even though all five of the participants interviewed experienced a specific journey as successful immigrant transnational Latinas, all of them shared common areas of obstacles and factors that contributed to their success. All five participants are successful Latina leaders and allowed the examination of their journeys to investigate the factors that contributed to their success in spite of their challenges encountered as they formed their lives in their journeys as transnational Latinas from Mexico to the United States. The data analysis provided insight into their challenging journeys but rewarding experiences. Even though they individually had their number of obstacles, collectively with their families, the number of successes throughout their transnational journeys helped them overcome them triumphantly. Moreover, their experiences were framed by answering the research questions that were about each in a detailed and rich way. The participants had the opportunity to ponder upon the recollection of memories of their transnational experiences that made them who they are today. They shared these transnational leader interviews afforded them with the opportunities to reflect how they were able to successfully arrive at a professional destination that their parents and families had set as collective goals for them. In their families, if one of the family members succeeds, it becomes collective success since each family member worked for that common goal. The identified themes from the cross-case analysis were language barriers, influencers, mentorship, bicultural, and family pride. All themes are interrelated as they define the participants as to who they have

become. Some subthemes were specific to each participant and portrayed some level of interconnectedness to the main topics.

Table 2*Subthemes*

Name	Susana	Leticia	Maria de Jesus	Celia	Marlen
Language Barriers	*	*	*	*	*
Lack of Support	*				
Unequal Access to Opportunities	*				
Gender Inequality	*		*	*	*
Public Speaking		*			
Lack of Sense of Belonging		*			
Insecurities		*	*		
Family Obligations			*	*	
People of Color				*	*
Employee Excuses					*
Influencers	*	*	*	*	*
Mentorship	*	*	*	*	*
Bi-cultural	*	*	*	*	*
Family Pride	*	*	*	*	*

As noted in Table 2, the subthemes revealed that the participants encountered challenging barriers, but were also able to overcome them with the support of family members. Even though all participants experienced the hardships of the language barriers and caused some unforgettable scars in them, the number of positive subthemes counteracted the negative ones. It is important to note that the family members together with others that cared for the participants were key in the success of these successful Latina leaders in school districts in the Borderlands of Texas. Moreover, they created such an impact in their lives since an early age that up to now they continue to use them as resources if they need them and even for them to be part of their celebrations when the times are pertinent.

Finally, all of the participants, despite the current challenges they might encounter, are able to get up and continue knowing they have the love, assistance, and unconditional support from their family and friends.

As depicted in Table 2, the subthemes portray that these participants dealt with linguistic barriers, gender inequalities, People of Color, family obligations, lack of support, unequal access to opportunities, employee excuses-difficult to understand public speaking, lack of sense of belonging, and insecurities. All of the participants noted they struggled with linguistic barriers that led to some of the participants insecurities in their careers, but were counteracted by the support of influencers, mentors, family members, and friends they met along their journeys. Immigrant women in the United States are amongst the most vulnerable who encounter heightened and explicit subordination by laws and policies in existence; thus, in response to adversity, females are more likely to seek support of family and friends (Isom Scott 2018; Olivares, 2014). Lechuga-Pena and Lechuga (2018) add familism (sense of family identification, obligation, and support) is critical for academic success as is an important source

of strength, encouragement, and advantage. In the past years, it has become more of a trend to examine how a transnational immigrant Latina remains connected through shared memories, social practices, and mutual sharing of resources with her transnational family (Mustasaari, 2015).

Summary

The chapter examined the participants' perspectives and factors that influenced their success as transnational Latina school district leaders in the Borderlands of Texas. The overarching themes of language barriers, influencers, mentorship, bicultural and family pride encountered in their journeys as transnational Latinas by each participant led them to a successful career. In addition, the chapter outlined the participants' subthemes, including gender inequality, family obligations, lack of support amongst others that were crucial in the journey of the transnational Latinas from immigrants to successful leaders.

Chapter Five contains the summary and discussion of the findings of the collected data in the study. The chapter will restate the problem statement, research questions, and will provide a summary of the theoretical framework of the research. Conclusions, implications and recommendations for practice in education and further research also appear in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous chapter examined the participants' perspectives and factors that influenced their success as transnational Latina school district leaders in the Borderlands of Texas. Chapter five presents a summary and conclusions. This chapter also included a review of the purpose statement, and research questions. Additionally, Chapter 5 connects the findings of the study with the study's theoretical framework along with the findings relevant to research studies are included in the conclusions and interpretation of the research findings. The chapter also included implications and recommendations for future research and improved practice.

Research Questions

The research examined the phenomenon of selected transnational Latinas who formed their journeys from Mexico to the United States. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences, through phenomenological collective case studies, of the selected transnational Latinas who formed their journeys through educational achievements and highly successful careers in the Borderlands of Texas. The researcher analyzed and interpreted the narrative to find common themes of the shared experiences of the participants.

The following questions guided the researcher during the study of the shared phenomena of the journeys of the selected transnational Latinas.

1. What do the selected transnational Latinas report as challenges they have encountered in their leadership positions? What do the selected transnational Latinas report to be influencers in achieving their career goals?
2. What supports outside of the home do the selected transnational Latinas report to be key in achieving their career goals?
3. How do the selected transnational Latinas experience balancing two cultures?

Summary of Within and Cross-Case Findings

All of the five participants in this study are Latinas of Mexican descent who live and are employed in school districts in the Borderlands of Texas, where they have lived most of their lives since they immigrated from Mexico. The ages when they immigrated from Mexico range from 3 years old to 17 years old, and they all came via different means to the United States. Fortunately, none of them had to risk their lives while crossing to the United States like some of their parents and relatives did. According to Bondy (2015) approximately 13% of the United States' total population is not born in the United States. The United States Census Bureau (2012) provides that more than 95% of the residents in the Rio Grande Valley are Hispanic of Mexican descent. Global migration is not novel thus, transnational movement of people, ideas, and goods have increased significantly during the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Bondy, 2014). More than 92% of all children enrolled in the Borderlands of South Texas were Mexican American students in comparison to less than 7% of White and Black student enrollment combined. With these amounts of students increasing, it is critical to understand transnationalism within the frame of social identity (Bradatan, et.al, 2010). As detailed in the second chapter, Latino population graduating from college is only 8% compared to the White population with a 71% completion (Fry & Lopez, 2012; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Furthermore, Latinas in the United

States currently make up 20% of the female population, and by 2060, will compose one third of our total female population (Gandara, 2015). As the largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority group in schools, Latinas continue to seek educational opportunities that will be worth their sacrifices, despite the many challenges they have to overcome in their search for a brighter future (Delgado Bernal & Aleman, 2017). Through their journeys, they are forced to negotiate multiple systems that could possibly impact their educational trajectories (Lechuga-Pena & Lechuga, 2018).

Furthermore, every participant's family are part of the development of themes and support the connections that surfaced and are detailed in this chapter. Their transnational experiences as a family as they formed their immigrant journeys from Mexico to the United States are accounted in detail and were critical in their formation from childhood, to adolescence, and to the success of their current careers as transnational Latina leaders.

According to Yin (2003), multiple case studies provide a tool for achieving a deep understanding of a specific phenomenon, which is how these transnational Latinas attained their goals of success overcoming challenges in a different country. Moreover, case study method can be utilized to successfully explore underneath the surface of a situation to provide rich context for understanding the phenomena within the study (Yin, 2003). Therefore, I identified the consistency of patterns and new themes. I provided demographic information for each participant to illuminate the context for their specific immigrant transnational Latina journeys.

This chapter explored the common themes and shared experiences of selected transnational Latinas who formed their journeys through educational achievements and highly successful careers in the Borderlands of Texas. While the data from the five participants explored the collective phenomena of being transnational Latinas leaders of Mexican descent,

their individual journeys varied. Nonetheless, the researcher identified overarching themes through sentence lines that connected experiences of these participants that were foundations of the following: language barriers, influencers, mentorship, bicultural, and family pride. All of the five participants provided a detailed account of their specific experiences with relationship to their success. The selected transnational Latinas were studied by using case study methods to help show how the different aspects of their lives are related to each other and how their trajectories led them to their success.

Their experiences were described from their own point of view, detailing the barriers they encountered on their educational journeys. In addition, the immigrant transnational Latina leaders explicate how their family members influenced their success and how the supports outside their home helped them achieve a successful career. In their account of their experiences, it is evident the participants were able to join forces as a group to overcome obstacles, experience success and balance two cultures in two different nations collectively in their families. For those reasons, they pride themselves as family for the successes of their members. Even though they encountered some of the themes as obstacles such as the language barriers, they were able to counteract them with the influencers and mentors in their lives to help them succeed in their journeys through educational achievements and highly successful careers. Although their lives and family dynamics are somewhat different, their backgrounds, factors of support, and self-perceptions commonly placed them on the high end of a successful career through their educational achievements. The selected transnational Latinas were studied by using case study methods to help show how the different aspects of their lives are related to each other and how their trajectories led them to their success.

In this chapter, I discussed the themes from the qualitative multiple case study and how the literature review related to the themes. Five themes were described and discussed with the thread woven into discovery of life experiences and careers paths of the participants as it is related to the literature review.

Theoretical Framework Summary

Transnationalism theoretical framework that focuses on social, cultural, economic and political processes fostered by globalization as they intersect with gender, sexuality, and race was used for this study (Bondy, 2014, 2015, 2016; Mustasaari, 2015; Yosso, 2005; Delgado-Bernal, 2012). The study examined the perceptions and experiences of selected transnational Latinas who formed their journeys through educational achievements and highly successful careers in the Borderlands of Texas. It is the development of these women and the Transnational Theoretical Framework that solidify the foundation for this study. According to the Transnational Theory, the transnationalism concept has been explored as a concept of migration in which a transnational interacts with others, depending on the situation, according to the rules and behaviors from the country of origin and in a different manner with the ones from the host country (Bradatan et. al., 2010). Within the transnationalism context, home, identity and belonging extend beyond the boundaries of sending and receiving countries, consequently having Latino immigrant families encounter daily push/pull experiences (Bondy, 2015). Marlen states she always had a passion for education and the conditions in Mexico were not the best educational wise, therefore, her parents decided to immigrate to the United States.

I just love school. My parents felt it was time. They wanted a better education for my siblings and I, and we transitioned. It was tough because we loved Mexico, but the opportunities were better in the United States.

As Latino immigrants encounter obstacles, in their pursuit of their goals, they identify ways, which lead them to a successful future, despite the odds. These include the assistance and support of family, and in addition, friends, and mentors who they meet along their journey and eventually become part of their successful lives. Leticia stated she is very grateful for all the ones that helped her along the way that contributed to her success, but even like that it was hard.

You know you meet people that really want to help you, maybe because they went through the same experiences or because they have a good heart, but they can only help you so much. They can't be with you all the time when others make fun of what you wear and how you speak. But those people made a big impact in my life that I was able to succeed.

The Transnational Theory supported the Transnational Critical Race Feminista Theory that helps transform Latina's lives while living in two different nations simultaneously and how they identify the factors that contribute to influencing them to set goals and attain them successfully in a different country. Critical Race Feminista Theory (CRFT) is a framework through which transnational Latinas may challenge the inequalities, intersectionalities, and forms of oppression so they may experience a better future (Yosso, 2005). Evidently, immigrant women in the United States are amongst the most vulnerable who encounter heightened and explicit subordination by laws and policies in existence; thus, in response to adversity, females are more likely to seek support of family and friends (Isom Scott 2018; Olivares, 2014). Susana explained how in her experience being a female it's been hard and adding more challenging factors makes it much more difficult for women to succeed.

Let me tell you, as you might already know, being a female it's hard, in a different country, a lot harder, and more so when you don't have the competency in the language.

To this add the lack of resources, single parent, and abandoned by your mother at an early age! It is only with the Grace of God and the help of my family and friends that I was able to make it.

Susana has definitely inspired her own children as they have been able to successfully overcome obstacles and challenges as she experienced the hardship of two divorces. With one of her ex-husbands being a school administrator, it did not help as he would often tell her that administrator positions were for males and not for females. After suffering mistreatment from this particular second husband and being able to succeed regardless of circumstances, Susana is confident that females are strong and are able to have successful careers, without having to depend and expect anything from their partners in life. Susana states that “as a female you have to work twice as hard because women sometimes are perceived as being weak”. She adds that one of her best advises is for females to work hard to get the qualifications needed in order to be able to compete with the opposite sex since the beginning. Systematic organizational structure barriers continue to block women from advancing in positions, leading them to become almost invisible as a strategy to be able to navigate the professional world (Ballakrishnen, Fielding-Singh, and Magliozzi, 2019). As women continue operating in biased organizations, they realized gender is a constant in shaping the systemic processes, beliefs, and organizational designs (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Finally, Susana believes having a leadership role based on service, heart, and treating everyone the same regardless of titles and gender it’s just the right thing to do.

Participants agreed to participate in the study to share their experiences to hopefully have other immigrant transnational Latinas with similar backgrounds and in similar situations learn how to succeed in the midst of all odds.

Emerging themes were apparent within and across the five cases. Five emerging themes were produced for this study. Themes were the same across the five participants, consequently confirming a pattern. The findings are stronger when there is a pattern from one case to another, as were the findings of the same themes across the five participants in the study, consequently confirming a pattern (Yin, 2014).

The first theme that was prevalent in the study was the language barrier. Each participant detailed the language barrier was a challenging factor in the educational lives as recent immigrants in the United States. Moreover, the language barrier continued to be an inhibited factor as they attempted to transform their lives into successful immigrant transnational Latinas in the United States. Bondy (2015) explains Latinas construct their citizenship identities by embracing education as a way to endure their marginalization. Participants each shared the negative impact the language barrier made in their lives, and enduring consequences even many years later. The participants' initial struggle as they arrived in the United States was the language barrier which inhibited their initial start and hindered their progress as it intersected with being a female. Assumptions, a lack of knowledge and understanding have resulted in ignorance which, at its most hurtful, has been used to silence and marginalize People of Color to the point of almost becoming invisible (Yosso, 2005). Leticia shares how at some time in her life she wished she was invisible as she struggled with the lack of competency in the English language. "I've always had fear of public speaking because when I came from Mexico, and I was in high school I always tried to hide because of the language barrier." She adds that she would sit in the back because of the fear of standing up and have somebody laughing because of the mispronunciation of any words was too much.

People of Color continue to experience racism and even other forms of oppression such as sexism, subordination based on immigration status and gender, which includes transnational Latinas experiencing two or more levels of permanent, indestructible intersectionality oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2018). Susana explains that as a transnational Latina leader one must get prepared and work twice as hard because females frequently are perceived as weak to which Celia has experienced that as People of Color, and especially one of Mexican descent one is considered not intelligent. Scribner and Crow (2012) indicate that the intersectionality of school district administrators, between professional identity, gender, and race, is crucial since it relates to role development beyond technical skills. Marlen explains that now as a school principal she turned her weaknesses as strengths that she applies as the leader of the campus. “I take bullying and discrimination very seriously, and my students and parents know it.” Tears and sadness were a constant caused by others making fun of her language accent and the way she dressed. Those are some of the reasons why she has zero tolerance for that type of behavior at her campus. Through the years, she has realized that “Language barrier means nothing, it’s your *ganas*, your willingness to want to succeed”.

Customs, language, religion, and dress are, in many instances, used to fuel the idea that a particular group doesn’t fit into a specific society (Martinez Brawley & Zorita, 2017). Marlen remembers clearly as she arrived in the United States how others would make fun of her, and even as a professional and as an ex-school board member she ponders upon the memories as to how others would judge her because of her physical appearance. She adds one of the reasons why it’s important to achieve an education is to prove that Latinas of Mexican descent are intelligent and have what it takes to be successful leaders. Celia can’t forget the time at a conference when she realized Mexicans were referred to as People of Color, and that Mexicans

were seen as not as smart because of their skin color. Because of her light complected skin and her academic remarks, she remembers clearly, she was told “You cannot be Mexican because you are intelligent”. After so many years, this still troubles her pondering upon the idea that others might think the color of skin determines the level of intelligence of the person. Bondy (2014; 2015; 2016) adds Latinas live at the intersections of transnational constructions of gender, race, class, language, and nation, forging their identities in the in-between spaces as strengths and not deficits. Latina immigrants struggle since their identities are not clear transitions in sequence, but rather contradictory, messy, and conflicting (Soto, 2012). Experiences in a new country are challenging and that is one of the reasons for not forgetting where the person is from. One of the participants, Maria de Jesus, explains that no Latina forgets where they come from because of the challenges they have to overcome. “All of us have a story. Just being a Latina, being a first-generation college graduate, it hasn’t been easy.”

The second theme that emerged was influencers. Latino parents immigrate to the United States for an array of reasons, but Mexican parents who bring their children with them, do it in hopes of securing their children’s future (Bondy, 2016). This becomes a transformational moment that marks parents as key influencers for their own children as this was the case with my participants. All five immigrant transnational Latina participants give credit to their parents as their biggest influencers for being the successful Latina leaders they have become. For instance, Susana acknowledges her greatest influencers in achieving her successful career goals were her grandparents, who raised her since a very early age, and who she considers her parents. They were her greatest influence because they always encouraged her to be better than them. She wanted to make sure she made them proud and knew the only way to repay them for their sacrifices for leaving everything and everyone they cared for in Mexico was to get educated.

Leticia's parents were always there for her to provide the basic needs and the economic, emotional, and moral support that she always needed to thrive in her education in a different country as she tried to adjust. These are some of the reasons she always aspired to make them proud. Similarly, Maria de Jesus like Susana and Leticia shares her greatest influencers are her parents as she always has known the primary positive impact is from home, and she is fortunate to have been raised by loving caring parents that always taught her to think of others and never leave anyone behind. As a transnational Latina school leader, she uses unity to bring her staff together and pursue goals such as their latest accomplishment as the recognition of a National Blue-Ribbon campus. Celia also had both parents that influenced her. Her mom as a teacher in Mexico was her first teacher as a mother and academically at home. She had the skills and strategies necessary to teach her and her siblings even before they enrolled at public schools. It was as if they had their official head start teacher at home. Celia adds that one of the examples as to how his father supported them it was by providing what was necessary for them to succeed. For instance, by bringing books home since there was no public library in existence as he knew the importance of reading at an early age was key for his children to succeed. Marlen like the other participants, shares how her parents have influenced her to be as successful as she is. She remembers keenly how her parents modeled for her never to lose focus of her objectives in life, regardless of the obstacles one might have to encounter and overcome. All five transnational Latinas spoke about the importance of having their families in their lives inspiring them and influencing them not just with their encouraging words, but also with their actions. In addition to the, sometimes, unspoken expectations these Latinas knew the reason for the family sacrifices and the goals they had in this new country.

Immigrant women in the United States are amongst the most vulnerable who encounter heightened and explicit subordination by laws and policies in existence; thus, in response to adversity, females are more likely to seek support of family and friends (Isom Scott 2018; Olivares, 2014). Bondy (2015) explores how transnationalism scholars emphasize the notable differences between citizen and immigrant, but she emphasizes that unfortunately, the complex transnational processes that shape the immigrants are never accounted for. Latina immigrants encounter many challenges that at the end of their successful journey, they focus on the positive only, as was the case with my participants and were grateful for prompting their memories as I asked the research questions that brought emotional events to surface. Marlen remembers clearly the pain she had to endure through her transnational Latina experiences. “It’s been so many years ago, but I still remember like if it was yesterday, it still hurts.” She emphasizes that these interviews helped her remember that “maybe I changed my car, or I changed my house, right, or I change even the way I dress, but I don’t change my heart and I don’t change my mind.” Additionally, being separated from their own place of origin, but knowing that the family love and support exists, regardless of the situation the individual experiences, enables the person to be able to use pedagogies learned at home to create their unique identity and stronger ties with the family. The findings are consistent with previous research that connects familial support and thriving, showing those variables are strongly related to positive outcomes in a variety of studies with Latina success, despite adversity and challenges in their journey (Consoli, Llamas, & Consoli, 2016). Morgan Consoli, Llamas, and Consoli (2015) conclude that Mexican origin immigrants desire to maintain close familial relationships and support, on which they heavily rely, thus making it an unmistakably critical part of what drives these immigrants to succeed, particularly in a new country. One of the primary factors leading to Latina success is often

family support, and other factors that have been identified as being predictors of persistence for Latina educational attainment include being female, responsibility towards others, and the value placed on education (Carrillo & Dean, 2020; Martinez, 2013).

A third theme that emerged was mentorship. In their crucial pursuit of justice and liberation for Latinas in the United States, women empower other minorities to unite to be agents of change (Medina, 2011). This was the case with all the participants in the study. Latina daughters were able to acquire the inner strength to face adversity from their mothers to help them thrive. Even though all participants had their parents to turn to for advice and mentorship, lacking the education and the language, their families were not able to offer mentorship to thrive in their professions as they had not experienced college or professional employment in the United States. The study found that the research on the empowerment women provide to other Latinas was consistent with the literature on how Latina educational leaders mentors who were primarily from nonprofessional areas of the women's lives, but significant role models and mentors mitigated the absence of a formal traditional mentoring relationship (Mendez-Morse, 2004). Participants acknowledged mentoring for Latina school leaders is important and mentors who shared the same experiences and culture were significant in their mentoring experiences. Latina school leaders should be provided with formal mentors to help future Latina school leaders as school administrators or for central office positions (Menchaca, Mills, & Leo, 2017). The participants shed light to their positive experiences with their mentors in their journeys, and they credited most of the success to them since most of them state that if their mentors had not seen the leadership qualities in them and guided them through, they probably would never have succeeded.

A Fourth theme that emerged was bicultural. The assimilation could be easier when immigrants are disconnected from their homeland in all senses like many years ago, but for the new wave of immigrants, and in some cases, long-term Mexican American natives of the Southwest, this model does not apply because of the proximity with Mexico (Anzaldúa, 2012). It is easier for Mexican Americans to maintain the connection to the native culture and language; therefore, their old homelands continue to be part of their new selves (Anzaldúa, 2012). It is important to continue sharing pedagogies of the home and the *conocimientos* (knowledge) in order to thrive and reject damaging lessons imposed by a society that continues to be led and shaped by white supremacists (Delgado Bernal, 2018). Maria de Jesus emphasizes, through the conversations of the interview, that leading with a heart as a Latina with pride of who they are starts at home. At home, in the United States, their parents expect them to maintain their culture, and they are also pressured to maintain the homeland traditions, which they must temporarily abandon while they attend school (Soto, 2012).

Eventually the teaching and learning of the home, such as the encouragement to confront oppressive conditions, enhances Latinas' ability to resist domination by drawing upon their own cultures and sense of self through negotiating, struggling, or holding onto their bilingualism and bi-culturism as they acquire the language to become 'someone in life' (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Sanchez (2007) adds transnationalism is defined as the continuous social, cultural, political, and economic flow between two countries often including people, foods, resources, information, knowledge, and other material and symbolic goods and in order for integration to occur, the respect for preservation of language and culture is also necessary. Furthermore, if the United States wants to compete globally, policy makers must decide to create policy with the understanding that American citizens learning a second language is not a representation of a

threat to cultural integration, but a resource to the country in creating an interdependent global system (Portes, 2010). After enduring many sacrifices to achieve success in a different country, all participants shared how proud they, their parents and family members were of who they have become. They were able to maintain their own language, culture, and beliefs at the same time they were able to acquire a second language and culture. In more recent literature, the transnationalism concept has been explored in an array of ways and one of them is as a concept of migration in which a transnational interacts with others, depending on the situation, according to the rules and behaviors from the country of origin and in a different manner with the ones from the host country (Bradatan et. al., 2010). Leticia is a proud Latina of who she has become and more so as she has always been able to define interactions and act accordingly. She explicitly shares that in the United States she was American Leticia and in Mexico, she was Mexican Leticia. Transnational Latinas must be able to negotiate new identities in a new country and always remember that as they begin defining categories in ways that confirm who they are and who they are not, in which groups they belong to, and their experiences living in new communities, their sense of belonging and solidarity with other groups should never be erased (Lugo-Lugo, 2008).

A Fifth theme that emerged was family pride. Lastly, all of the participants discussed experiencing family pride as they overcame the challenges since they left their country until they met their goals and continue with their success as Latina transnational leaders. In the Latino families, the achievement of one of the family members is the success of all. This is also known in research as familism pride, when positive emotions surface when achieving on behalf of one's family (Sircar, Mejia, Stein, Plunkett, & Patel, 2021). This is reported to bring family cohesion and unite family more as they overcome obstacles and succeed. Familism pride at high levels

was particularly associated to family unity for Latinas (Sircar, Mejia, Stein, Plunkett, & Patel, 2021). Moreover, the contribution of familism values in Latino families such as family support, family obligation, decision making assistants, and respect for elders are associated with many benefits for positive family functioning from childhood to emerging adulthood (Cavanaugh, Castro-Schilo, Mejia, & Plunkett, 2019). Marlen has always valued her family's opinion in making her personal decisions. She explains that she doesn't necessarily asks them for their approval, but it's critical for her to know their opinion before making final decisions. For example, before starting her doctoral classes this last year, she shared with her children what this degree would entail regarding the number of hours she needed to dedicate to her studies. This summer she was not planning on taking them on a vacation as she has been mom and dad for them after being divorced for several years. Even though they had already agreed, she managed to buy tickets for Disneyworld for her two kids and her mom so she could take them to Florida and enjoyed their summer while she spent the summer taking doctoral classes. Susana, as the other participants is very proud of herself and her family's accomplishments.

The happiness and proudness are reciprocal between the participants and their families. Susana like the other four participants shares the common goal of making their families proud. Sircar, Mejia, Stein, Plunkett, and Patel, (2021) explain for Latinos in the United States family represents a central pillar with family behaviors and values that relate to positive psychosocial outcomes. Susana like the other four participants shares the common goal of making their families proud. "I wanted to make sure I make them proud, and the only way to repay all their hard work that they had invested in me was to get educated. That was like the motor that really got me going." Many U.S.-born and immigrant Latinos/as have successfully navigated the American education system, thus, *ganas*, a strong desire to achieve academically strengthened by

parental sacrifices has surfaced in the literature as a strong factor for Mexican descent immigrants' success (Easley, et al., 2012). Leticia shares her *ganas* to succeed and work hard never halted. Her desire to make her parents proud for all the sacrifices they made by leaving everything behind in Mexico to immigrate to the United States were more than enough reasons for her to see herself walking down the graduation lane, receiving her diploma and visualizing her parents and family cheering for her. This is the moment she portrayed in her mind every time others would make her feel not valued and unworthy of living in the United States. All these moments were worthwhile, the moment she received the earned diploma and felt that pride, that pleasurable emotion that eventually led to the development of her self-esteem. This familism pride has continued, as Latinas' success emerges even through adulthood. Maria de Jesus is married and no longer lives with her parents, but with her school recently being awarded as a National Blue-Ribbon campus, her parents and whole family were part of this unique award celebration. As a Latina leader together with her staff, Maria de Jesus has been able to lead the campus to this prestigious national recognition and be school seven in the history of her school district to receive this award. Even though this could be considered solely as a campus/district celebration, her family has been part of her cultivating experiences with her staff, and she ensures they are also part of the celebration since she believes their assistance and support played a major role in the achievement of this prestigious award (Sircar et. al. 2021). For Celia, like the other participants, the role of pride has been a central aspect embedded in her experience of familism. She has always acted in accordance to familial referents and has never brought shame to her family (Stein, 2019). Beginning with her years of schooling, she never followed the traditional educational path and even as an adult as she changed professions from medical doctor to teacher to school leader, she has always been applauded for her success at every career and at

every level. Family pride has been a constant as it has served as a motivator to bring honor and pride to the Latina leader families because of the happiness and satisfaction they feel as they bring happiness to the rest of their family members.

Conclusions

The exploration into the experiences of Latina transnational leaders provided the following five overarching themes: language barriers, influencers, mentorship, bicultural, and family pride. All five participants detailed each theme as important factors that influenced their success as Latina transnational school leaders. Even though they all immigrated at different ages and from different areas in Mexico, they all detailed their experiences as such. It's important to note they have all been successful and have contributed to their families and their communities as that has not been the case based on research.

By analyzing the experiences of the Latina transnational educational leaders, this study fills a gap in the literature.

I add that improved integration of females and support of immigrant Latinas and their families, particularly immigrant Latina transnationals hoping to achieve careers as educational leaders, will give rise to familism cultural values that have been related to greater family unity, family pride, and family success. This will consequently lead to healthy family functioning benefitting emerging female adulthood that together with the intersectionality of Latino values and cultural processes can predict prosocial outcomes and successful Latina transnational educational leaders. Furthermore, these leaders will serve as role models for minority students, their communities, and other aspiring Latina transnational immigrant leaders. This could be possible only if school districts establish systems with inclusive policies to address and mitigate disparities among staff and leadership. Based on specific Latina transnational immigrants from

this study, we must continue to create systems that empower Latina transnational leaders with knowledge to decrease obstacles for females during their professional careers.

Females have contributed considerably to the development of areas such as labor, gender, economy, and social change, but unfortunately their contributions have been some of the most ignored in the literature development (Vasquez, 2011). We must find ways to highlight their input in the transformational change of society. Together with their unique cultural experiences of transnational Latina leaders, they must not let go of the hope and remember to use a learned racial identity within a society that devalues their history, work, culture, and customs (Bondy, 2015).

Overlooking the results of this study will lead to the same results of under-representation for the transnational immigrant Latina leaders in school districts. The Latino population continues to grow within the United States in high-increasing numbers. Gandara (2015) adds that Latinas in the United States currently make up 20% of the female population, and by 2060, will compose one third of our total female population. Therefore, it is critical priority is given to integrate more transnational Latina immigrant leaders and identify factors that help them overcome obstacles to achieve success. Through a system of thought, school districts must integrate more Latina immigrant leaders, and acknowledge that Latinas center their concrete experiences, sources of knowledge, and survival strategies at the core of it (Vasquez, 2017). Within existing hiring practices in school districts, female leaders encounter challenges, creating a disproportion of leadership in school districts. By setting systems in place, that eliminate obstacles for females, will not only reduce the systemic inequities, but will also afford all qualified with equal opportunities to succeed. These strategies learned at their homes are

successfully employed by Latinas when confronted with challenges and obstacles that attempt to impede them from achieving their goals (Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Furthermore, the exploration of practices regarding race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality through cultural, spiritual, and educational lenses of transnational Latinas through a Critical Race Feminist Theory can help in the development of a strong transnational Latina that will be able to succeed (Delgado Bernal, 2018). There are strategies in existence that can make a difference on transnational Latina achievement, but it should start with young people understanding “ways of knowing” and the importance of familial support. They can utilize the knowledge of the home to remain hopeful during moments of oppression and marginalization (Kasun, 2015; Delgado Bernal, 2018). “Just as there is no hope without struggle, the struggle is not without hope” (Wooton, 2013, p. 44).

Implications

The patterns and themes of this study are associated to the concept of immigration and to the experiences of transnational Latina immigrant leaders in school districts in the Borderlands of Texas. By featuring the voices of these transnational immigrant Latina leaders in this study, all stakeholders will benefit. Through the participant’s descriptions of their experiences and perceptions of thriving in the midst of obstacles to become successful, these transnational immigrant Latina leaders provided awareness for existing inequities in school districts in the imbalance of access to opportunities within their school’s policies and school districts. I offer the following recommendations for school districts, hiring, and training for K-12 administrators and staff.

Urrieta (2016) reports that often transnational Mexican families are not seen positively in the United States schools because of their return trips home which cause the students’

absenteeism. Contrary to the negative mindset of how deficit thinkers tend to view these trips as a negative, educators should focus on the potential of the community cultural wealth to use it for the transformation of their schooling experiences (Yosso, 2005). Assimilationists have attempted to have immigrants forget about who they are, their origins, their culture, their language, their memories, knowing that forced assimilationism will bring mostly negative consequences (Portes, 2011). Furthermore, systems of oppression have historically shaped the lives of immigrants and their children, yet not many pay close attention to the larger system of inequality (Golash-Boza, Duenas, & Xiong, 2019). This becomes more of a concern when policies are created from this standpoint, consequently instilling in immigrants' children the idea that their culture and language are inferior and must be abandoned, leading them to rebel against the authority and efforts of their parents (Portes 2011). We must note and be cautious of second-generation offspring of undocumented immigrants because they do assimilate to American values and aspirations, but they are afforded little material and social resources (Portes, 2011).

School districts' administrators must begin to re-shift their thinking and planning over their policies and practices regarding the compelling benefits of having transnational Latina immigrant leaders lead more schools and district initiatives. The inclusion of these type of practices in hiring and promoting more female leaders in higher level positions within the school districts will enhance the alignment with the diversity of student female leaders within student populations. Consequently, this will exemplify the balancing of the staff's diversity with the ones of the students, by acknowledging and acting on the existence of systemic racism toward Latinas, both transnational and non-transnational, as well as other minorities. Furthermore, this study identified the data of the participants revealed the need of additional guidance that can be used by all stakeholders within the school districts. By acquiring more knowledge of

transnational Latina immigrants' experience, the human resources department within the school district system will be better prepared and equipped to modify their hiring protocols and be able to advocate for change by prioritizing on providing opportunities for everyone to be successful in their professional careers.

With the rapid and constant increase in Latina immigrant students in the classrooms, Latina leadership perspectives can help with the awareness and enhance the knowledge in the intent to solve complex educational issues related to specific student populations, such as the achievement gap and social inequities that exist between Latino and White students. Since Latinos have a specific and rich cultural knowledge and use the teachings of the home to succeed, it's of utmost importance, to continue sharing pedagogies of the home and the *conocimientos* (knowledge) in order to thrive and reject damaging lessons imposed by a society that continues to be led and shaped by white supremacists (Anzaldúa, 2000; Delgado Bernal, 2018). Once culturally responsive lessons start with knowing our students and unpacking ill assumptions about Latinos, we can identify gaps in teaching and confirm to students their valuable and rich cultures and backgrounds continue to be the foundation of their identities. Finally, policy makers create policy with the understanding that American citizens learning a second language is not a representation of a threat to cultural integration, but a resource to the country in creating an interdependent global system that would enhance the opportunity to compete globally (Portes, 2011).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is recommended to explore the areas of transnational Latina educational leaders who did not arrive with their parents as recent immigrants and were not living with their parents while attending school. This would provide experiences of transnational Latina

educational leaders who have experienced their transnationality and their journey to success without the constant care, love, and support of their parents. A future study examining the journey of transnational Latinas living in other areas in the United States or abroad would be beneficial. This would assist in gaining further knowledge about transnational immigrant Latinas who live further away from the closeness to extended family unity, assistance, and support naturally offered here in the Borderlands of Texas. In addition to them being assisted, this would also be an opportunity to identify if transnational Latina immigrants offer support and mentor others in the Borderlands of Texas or if they would assist them more if they were actually residing in the area. Mentorship could help diminish the structural and cultural barriers for Latinas who aspire to leadership roles.

This study was conducted during the Covid 19 pandemic. Conducting interviews through the video conferencing but using audio only may have limited the use of qualitative interview protocols as gestures and facial expressions could not be detected.

Recommendations for Educational Leaders

Pedagogies of the home influences Latinas as they begin to develop their identities, establish values, and adjust to the demands of their bilingual and bicultural environments (Delgado Bernal, 2006). In the development of Mexican origin females, family support and *conocimiento (knowledge)* are of great importance because they provide them with a source of strong identity and self-worth, which are critical when transitioning from one country to another (Anzaldúa, 2000; Pina-Watson, Lopez, Ojeda, and Rodriguez, 2014). Moreover, Urrieta (2016) emphasizes how educators in the United States fail to acknowledge the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual importance of a student's return trips to Mexico, which add value because the children socialize and acquire knowledge in different knowledge systems. Urrieta (2016) reports often

transnational Mexican families are not seen positively in the United States schools because of their return trips home which cause the students' absenteeism. Contrary to the negative deficit thinkers, who tend to view these constant trips to Mexico as negative, educators should focus on the potential of the community cultural wealth to use it for the transformation of their schooling experiences (Yosso, 2005). The strengths of the Latinas such as experiences, skills, and knowledge should be recognized and encouraged to identify them as early as possible as positive contributions for them to use them as assets and not deficits.

Finally, educators must have a growth mindset, be understanding, and create systems that will enhance our Latina students' education. They must understand that learning a second language or being of Mexican descent is not equivalent to lack of knowledge. Perhaps, the first step to start with the identification of transnational students could be by affording parents the opportunity to complete a home language survey and ask if families have transnational participation, such as if they visit families in other countries, whether they communicate with family members living in other countries, and if they identify with those other countries. It is of utmost importance for schools to connect to educate transnational students together with all students and their transnational students' families into the complicated systems and integrate them into the U.S. cultures by respecting and valuing their own. Their cultural experiences must be validated and valued and seen as an asset and not a deficit. The beginning of a successful future for immigrant transnational Latinas in the United States depends on the proper systems established by educators in schools. This will consequently lead to the avoidance of the negation of their own language and culture. In addition, Latinas must remain using their *conocimientos* (knowledge) from the home, their cultural capital, and their *ganas* (willingness) to be successful. Furthermore, they must be in close communication with their families as they persist to attain

their educational goals and continue to be successful in their careers. It is imperative for them to know they have their families for assistance and support, as this is reciprocal. Regardless of circumstances or leadership positions, Latina transnational leaders continue to be caretakers for their parents. Latina transnational leaders will never use this as an excuse or barrier to succeed, but their lives could be less stressful if their supervisors continue to be understanding. For Latinas in the United States, family is a central pillar of their lives and for the Latinas in this study family obligations and educational attainment were aligned to their family values and expectations. Therefore, regardless if their career supervisors understand them, they will continue to care for their parents and loved ones as this will continue strengthening their family pride that was once developed by their family cohesiveness, family values, and educational achievements.

Chapter Summary

The objective of the last chapter of the study was to interpret the findings of the narrative data shared by transnational Latina leaders. The researcher shared the influence of the language barriers, the influencers, mentors, bicultural, and family pride. This chapter explored the important factors and the impact of the participant's decisions in that of the research questions and the discussion of the summary of findings. The Qualitative Collective Case Study (Creswell, 2013) design of this study facilitated the study findings. The study examined the perceptions and experiences of selected transnational Latinas who formed their journeys through educational achievements and highly successful careers in the Borderlands of Texas. This was completed by interviewing selected Latina transnationals, who met the specified criteria and had experienced the phenomena. Participants agreed to participate in the study to share their experiences to

hopefully have other transnational Latinas with similar backgrounds and in similar situations learn how to succeed in the midst of all odds.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

EMAIL REQUEST FOR UTRGV ALUMNI FOR IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS

Dear Ms. Campirano,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in the College of Education conducting research for my dissertation, and I would like to ask the possibility about sending a survey to UTRGV female alumni on my behalf. I hope to be able to find Latina school district leaders that meet the set criteria and are willing to participate in my study to expand the knowledge base of the profession.

The research study focuses on transnational Latina leaders in school districts in the borderlands of South Texas. The different experiences in school districts, as transnational Latina Leaders, are relevant to this research as well as their life experiences in the United States through a Mexican cultural lens.

The alumni data criteria/information that I would need:

- females
- Graduates (Education Field)
- Birth years from 1960-1990 (30-60 years of age)
- UTRGV/UTPA Alumni
- Hispanic/Latin

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

SURVEY TO POSSIBLE PARTICIPANTS

If you are a transnational Latina leader in a school district in a South Texas borderland school district, or if you know of a leader who is, please complete the brief form linked below. The information that you provide will be used to identify possible participants for a research study.

Link to Google form (pictured below)



If you are a transnational Latina leader in a school district in a South Texas borderland school district, or if you know of a leader who is, please complete the brief form linked below. The information that you provide will be used to identify possible participants for a research study that has been approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and will not be used for any other purpose.

School District Leader's Name

Name of District

School District Leader's Email Address If Known

Transnational Latina Survey

(a) female

(b) self-identified as Latina

(c) participant and or parents were born or raised in Mexico

(d) possess experience with the phenomenon of transnationalism (transnational connection to Mexico, in terms of visiting or maintaining contact with relatives there as well with a high level of emotional attachment and memories

(e) five or more years of experience in the field of education

(f) Hold a leadership position in a South Texas borderland high poverty school district

(g) UTRGV/UTPA Alumni

(h) 30-60 years of age

Please respond to the following questions and email back to me one week from today.

My email address is raquel.garcia02@utrgv.edu

Transnational Latina Survey Questions

1. What is your ethnicity?
2. Where were you born?
3. Where were you raised?
4. Where were your parents born?
5. Where were your parents raised?
6. How often do you communicate and/or visit with relatives from Mexican descent who are also experiencing an emotional attachment to more than one culture?
7. Number of years of experience in the field of education?
8. Name of district you are employed at? What capacity/position?

9. Name of university you graduated from?

10. What is your age?

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: The Journey of Selected Latina Transnationals: Transforming Their Lives Through Educational Achievements and Successful Careers

Consent Name: _____

Principal Investigator: Raquel Garcia Telephone: (956) 789-5055

Emergency Contact: Hilda Silva Telephone: (956) 882-8869

Key points you should know

- We are inviting you to be in a research study we are conducting. Your participation is voluntary. This means it is up to you and only you to decide if you want to be in the study. Even if you decide to join the study, you are free to leave at any time if you change your mind.
- Take your time and ask to have any words or information that you do not understand explained to you.
- We are doing this study because we want to learn how Mexican origin transnational Latinas earned their successful careers and educational achievements for others to recognize that their same experiences and factors may be able to lessen or remove some barriers they may encounter throughout their career.
-

- Why are you being asked to be in this study?
 - Mexican origin Transnational Latinas in educational administration are needed to explain their experiences that helped them overcome challenges to achieve success.
- What will you do if you agree to be in the study?
 - Principal participants will participate in three one-hour interviews conducted over a 1-month period
- Can you be harmed by being in this study?
 - No harm will come to participants. All gathered information will be private and used for research purposes only.
 - Being in this study involves no greater risk than what you ordinarily encounter in daily life.
 - Risks to your personal privacy and confidentiality: Your participation in this research will be held strictly confidential and only a code number will be used to identify your stored data. However, because there will be a link between the code and your identity, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
 - Risks to your personal privacy and confidentiality: Your participation in this research will be held strictly confidential and will be factored in with data from the other participants. The researcher will develop a code book and themes depending on the data collected throughout the study.
 - If we learn something new and important while doing this study that would likely affect whether you would want to be in the study, we will contact you to let you know what we have learned.

- What are the costs of being in the study?
 - No cost on the participant's end.
- Will you get anything for being in this study?
 - The satisfaction of helping to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding Transnational Latinas of Mexican Origin.
- Could you be taken out of the study?
 - Only if you are not a Transnational Latina of Mexican Origin. Participants selected in the study must match the following criteria: Female, identify as transnational, and are Latina of Mexican Origin.

Can the information we collect be used for other studies?

We will not use or distribute information you gave us for any other research by us or other researchers in the future.

What happens if I say no or change my mind?

- You can say you do not want to be in the study now or if you change your mind later, you can stop participating at any time.
- No one will treat you differently. You will not be penalized.

How will my privacy be protected?

We will share your information with you as a participant to review and verify the phenomenon captured as part of my research process, but with no one else.

- Your information will be compiled with the rest of the participants to develop commonalities, trends, and other findings in shared experiences. Codes and themes will develop with your experiences. No name of participant will be disclosed.

- Your information will be stored with a code instead of identifiers (such as full name, email address, and phone number).
- Even though we will make efforts to keep your information private, we cannot guarantee confidentiality if you share notice or information in participating in this study. That is a personal decision.
- No published scientific reports will identify you directly.
- If it is possible that your participation in this study might reveal behavior that must be reported according to state law (e.g., abuse, intent to harm self or others); disclosure of such information will be reported to the extent required by law.

Who to contact for research related questions

For questions about this study or to report any problems you experience as a result of being in this study contact Dr. Hilda Silva at 956.882.8869 or at hilda.silva@utrgv.edu.

Who to contact regarding your rights as a participant

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protections (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or irb@utrgv.edu.

Signatures

By signing below, you indicate that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study and that the procedures involved have been described to your satisfaction. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your own reference. To participate, you must be at least 18 years of age. If you are under 18, please inform the researcher.

_____ / /
Participant's Signature Date

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewee: (Title and Name) _____

Interviewer: _____

Survey Section Used:

_____ A: Introductory Protocol Statement

_____ B: Introduction Statement of Interview Session

_____ C: Guiding Research Questions

_____ D: Interview Background

_____ E: Education

Other Topics Discussed:

Documents Obtained:

_____ Post

Interview Comments or Leads:

Transnational Latina Interviews

A. Introductory Protocol Statement:

To facilitate our note-taking, audio tapes will be used for our conversations today. For your information, only the researcher on the project will have access to the tapes which eventually will be destroyed after they are transcribed. (1). All information will be held confidential (2). Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

I have planned the interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

B. Introduction Statement of Interview Session:

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about experiences as a Latina leader. My research project as a whole, focuses on transnational Latina leaders and their different experiences in school districts in the borderlands of South Texas through a Mexican cultural lens. My study does not aim to evaluate your experiences. Rather, I'm trying to learn more about experiences that might help other Mexican origin Transnational Latinas attain a successful career and/or professional achievements. Let's begin to review guiding research questions.

C. Guiding Research Questions

1. What do selected transnational Latinas report to be challenges they have encountered in their leadership positions?
2. What do selected transnational Latinas report to be influencers in achieving their career goals?
3. What supports outside of the home do selected transnational Latinas report to be key in achieving their career goals?
4. How do selected transnational Latinas experience balancing two cultures?

D: Interview Background

How long have you been...

_____ in your current position?

_____ at this institution?

What are you originally from?

How often do you or your family visit?

How does your typical day look like?

How do you define success?

What are the characteristics of a Latina leader?

What are positive influences for Latina leaders?

What are some of the challenges you have overcome to achieve a leadership position as a Latina and how have you overcome these challenges?

What leadership styles and leadership qualities are unique to Latina leaders?

What are the factors that have contributed to or inhibited the advancement as a Latina leader?

E: Education

Discuss your educational experiences prior to enrolling at the university?

Elaborate on your education completion starting with elementary up to present.

How does a transnational Latina navigate through her educational goals?

What do you attribute your education to?

Please tell me about your family's perspective on education. How did your family's perspectives on education influence the way you viewed school?

Describe how you balanced two cultures during your grade school years in the United States?

During your college years?

What are some of the challenges you have overcome to achieve your educational goals and how did you overcome these challenges?

What is the profile of a successful transnational Latina in attaining education?

How does a transnational Latina counteract the unequal access to educational opportunities?

What motivates academically successful immigrant Latinas?

What impact does the level of education a transnational Latina attains have on her future in the United States?

What support systems does a transnational Latina need to succeed?

Consider family female members in your family who did not attend college. To what might they attribute your academic success and their choice not to attend college? In other words, what might they say the difference is between you and them?

What implications did it have in speaking Spanish at home, what, if any challenges did this create and how were you able to overcome those challenges to achieve a degree at a university?

In what ways did your experiences prior to attending the university shape how you view your place in the world, your values, your beliefs, and your identity?

Interview 2

Interviewee: (Title and Name) _____

Interviewer: _____

Survey Section Used:

_____ A: Introductory Protocol Statement

_____ B: Introduction Statement of Interview Session

_____ C: Guiding Research Questions

_____ D: Culture Questions

_____ E: Professions

Other Topics Discussed:

Documents Obtained:

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

Transnational Latina Interviews

A. Introductory Protocol Statement:

To facilitate our notetaking, audio tapes will be used for our conversations today. For your information, only the researcher on the project will have access to the tapes which eventually will be destroyed after they are transcribed. (1). All information will be held confidential (2). Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

I have planned the interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

B. Introduction Statement of Interview Session:

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about experiences as a Latina leader. My research project as a whole, focuses on transnational Latina leaders and their different experiences in school districts in the borderlands of South Texas through a Mexican cultural lens. My study does not aim to evaluate your experiences. Rather, I'm trying to learn more about experiences that might help other Mexican origin Transnational Latinas attain a successful career and/or professional achievements. Let's begin to review guiding research questions.

C. Guiding Research Questions:

1. What do selected transnational Latinas report to be challenges they have encountered in their leadership positions?
2. What do selected transnational Latinas report to be influencers in achieving their career goals?
3. What supports outside of the home do selected transnational Latinas report to be key in achieving their career goals?
4. How do selected transnational Latinas experience balancing two cultures?

D. Culture Questions:

When did you/parents immigrate?

At what age did you/parents immigrate?

Who did you immigrate with?

Who did you/parents leave behind?

Why and how did you feel?

What was the process like?

What were the conditions in Mexico that gave rise to family's decision to migrate to the United States?

Why did you/parents immigrate to the United States?

What did you expect the United States would be like?

What are some of the social circumstances faced by your family in the United States?

What were the economic circumstances faced by family in the United States?

What was your life before immigrating?

What was your life like after immigrating?

What were some of the family responses to the economic circumstances they faced in the United States?

What were some of the family responses to the cultural circumstances they faced in the United States?

How did the family overcome linguistic barriers when they arrived to the United States?

Describe experiences of you coming from Mexico to the United States?

What thoughts came to your mind when you were leaving your home in Mexico?

What thoughts came to your mind during the travel time?

What thoughts came to your mind when you were arriving to your home in the United States?

What factors to which your family attribute success in the United States?

What would you recommend for a family immigrating to the United States to succeed and overcome any obstacles they might face?

E: Profession:

What is the profile of highly successful Latina school leader?

How do transnational Latinas decide to take positions of leadership?

What are the barriers that transnational Latinas must navigate in their position of leadership?

What are some transformational events that made an impact in your life?

How have your experiences as a transnational Latina influenced or not influenced you in the decisions that you have made as a female instructional leader?

What do you consider important support systems that helped you along the way and why?

Describe how you balanced two cultures in your places of work?

What support do Latinas need to assume a successful school leadership career?

Interview 3

Interviewee: (Title and Name) _____

Interviewer: _____

Survey Section Used:

_____ A: Introductory Protocol Statement

_____ B: Introduction Statement of Interview Session

_____ C: Guiding Research Questions

_____ D: Family

Other Topics Discussed:

Documents Obtained:

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

Transnational Latina Interviews

A. Introductory Protocol Statement:

To facilitate our notetaking, audio tapes will be used for our conversations today. For your information, only the researcher on the project will have access to the tapes which eventually will be destroyed after they are transcribed. (1). All information will be held confidential (2). Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

I have planned the interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

B, Introduction Statement of Interview Session:

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about experiences as a Latina leader. My research project as a whole, focuses on transnational Latina leaders and their different experiences in school districts in the borderlands of South Texas through a Mexican cultural lens. My study does not aim to evaluate your experiences. Rather, I'm trying to learn more about experiences that might help other Mexican origin Transnational Latinas attain a successful career and/or professional achievements. Let's begin to review guiding research questions.

C. Guiding Research Questions:

1. What do selected transnational Latinas report to be challenges they have encountered in their leadership positions?
2. What do selected transnational Latinas report to be influencers in achieving their career goals?
3. What supports outside of the home do selected transnational Latinas report to be key in achieving their career goals?
4. How do selected transnational Latinas experience balancing two cultures?

D. Family:

How has your family supported you or inhibited you in achieving your success as a leader?

Describe how you balanced two cultures in your family?

How do you maintain nurturing relationships with family and friends?

Describe a typical trip to visit family in Mexico?

What are women's and men's respective roles in your family?

How does your family's culture mesh with the concept of "mainstream" American culture?

Tell me about the economic circumstances your family faced the first years in the United States?

How did those circumstances change through the years?

What do you attribute that to?

Describe the support your family provides to females in your family regarding promotions in the workplace.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Raquel García was born in Edcouch, Texas, and spent her first 10 years in a small ranch called *Ejido La Carreta* in Tamaulipas, Mexico. Her parents, Santiago and Maria Ana Garcia, had the greatest vision of having her children succeed through educational attainments and decided to do the best with the resources they had. The family transnational immigrant journey begins by traveling to San Juan, Texas and enrolling Raquel and her older sister, Chuy at the PSJA ISD. After completing her coursework and meeting graduation requirements at PSJA high school, Raquel enrolled at the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas. In 1997, Raquel received a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies. Raquel started her teaching career as an elementary teacher. In 1999, Raquel completed a Master of Elementary Bilingual/Bicultural Education degree. Raquel continued and pursued a goal to earn a second Master's Degree. In 2001 Raquel completed a Master's in Educational Administration degree at the University of Texas Pan-American. Raquel started pursuing her doctorate degree in Educational Leadership at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and completed this degree in 2021. Raquel continues to work in leadership roles in the Rio Grande Valley in the Borderlands of Texas and can be contacted at garciaRaquel72@yahoo.com or at 2908 Angelica Drive, San Juan, Texas.