

ABSTRACT

Latina Leaders: A Multiple Case Study of Successful Latina Administrators Who Have Been Recruited, Promoted, and Retained at Three Universities in South Central Texas

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Latinx students enroll in higher education in more significant numbers than most minorities. However, Latinx administrators in the United States comprised 14% of total administrators in 2021 (Zippia, 2023b). The Association of American Colleges & Universities (Dedman, 2019) explains the college presidency is 58.1% White and male. White women make up only 21% of college presidents. Still, women of color only represent 5.1% of the 21% of college presidents. Additionally, “students were more likely to encounter people of color in service roles than in faculty or leadership positions” (Dedman, 2019, p. 3).

With the continuous growth of Latinx students and the lack of increase in Latina leadership at the university level, it is appropriate to study the success stories of Latinas who have attained higher-education administrative positions. This explanatory multiple case study examined the experiences of Latinas recruited, promoted, and retained in administrator positions at three universities in South Central Texas. The research questions that guided this case study were:

RQ1: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today?

RQ2: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators?

The purpose of sharing these stories is to encourage more Latinas to become leaders in higher education, thereby giving voice to a minority group that is often underrepresented.

Utilizing the tenets of CRT and intersectionality and how they relate to these women's stories are imperative to this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study. Both promote systemic change. Latinx students do not see themselves in leadership within higher education today. Understanding and learning these stories will help make higher education more inclusive and normalize two underrepresented populations. It will make the system more robust, globally competitive, and reflect America's composition. There is a need for higher education institutions to diversify and better serve the growing population of minority students and administrators. Latinas can show them how to do this.

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Latina Leaders: A Case Study of Successful Latina Administrators in Who Have
Been Recruited, Promoted, and Retained at Three Universities in South Central Texas

by

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A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Education

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December 2023

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE: American Council on Education Leadership Programs

CRT: Critical Race Theory

Fem-Crit: Critical Race Feminism

HERS: Bryn Mawr's Higher Education Resources Services

Lat-Crit: Latino-Critical Theory

Latinx: Gender-Neutral of Latino/a

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have gone through this process without the direction, encouragement, and constant support of Julia Collier Earl, Ph.D. Thank you Dr. Earl for getting me to the end with work that I am extremely proud of. I would also like to acknowledge my defense committee made up of Dr. Franz, Dr. Ray, and Dr. Earl. You have all been so kind to me and helped me get this dissertation ready to be published. I am especially grateful I had three strong women that made up my dissertation committee. Thank you to the three Latina women who contributed to this case study. Your stories were not only enlightening and courageous, they were what gave me the strength to finish this dissertation. I would like to thank my family for your support always. Throughout this journey you have been a constant source of encouragement and celebrated even the little victories that have led up to what I consider my life's work. Lastly, I would like to thank the bestest friend a girl could ask for, Caden Ziegler. Thank you for understanding and empathizing with what a strenuous process this has been. Thank you for pushing me and reminding me constantly to get the work done. And thank you for the countless number of "study dates" you have sat through with me to just to be by my side. I knew you didn't have that much work to catch up on, but you would meet with me to keep me company. I will never forget us sitting across from each other in silence while I write and you sketch. Those dates were what got me to the finish line. Those dates are what showed me, in yet another way, what our friendship means.

DEDICATION

To my dad, Martin Barreiro. I'm so sorry you didn't live long enough to see me walk the stage and receive this distinction. I know you were proud of me. I love you, and I miss you every day. To the loves of my life, Elise Danielle Barreiro-Crouse and Sadie Camille Barreiro-Crouse. I hope your Tia made you proud, and along with your mom has shown you to be proud of your ethnicity. More importantly, I want you to be proud of becoming strong, brave, kind, and intelligent women. To my sister Maritza. There are not enough words. Just know that I could not have done anything with my life if it weren't for you.

You are my rock. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. I want to show academia that even while in treatment for cancer, one can achieve their goals.

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Needs Assessment

Introduction

The Latinx population in the United States continues to grow year after year. Census Bureau data shows that almost four out of 10 Americans are of a race or ethnicity other than White, and the 2010 and 2020 decades were the first that the White population declined (Frey, 2020). Young people are also becoming more diverse. For example, in 2019, according to Frey (2020), more than half of those under 16 identified as a racial or minority group. Along with Blacks, Latinx youth comprised 40% of the population (Frey, 2020).

The number of Latinx students enrolled in higher education was 3.27 million in 2017 (Quintana, 2020). That number is almost double the 1.4 million Latinxs that attended college in 2000. The Latinx undergraduate enrollment from 2016 to 2017 showed the most significant increase of all other minority groups at 3.1% (Quintana, 2020). However, according to Deborah Santiago, co-founder of Excelencia in Education, more than enrollment is needed. Deborah stresses the importance of service saying, “You can’t just enroll them if you’re not going to help them graduate. The only growth population is Hispanics. So we’re saying you have got to focus on what it means to serve” (Quintana, 2020, p. 3). Hernandez and McElrath noted in 2023, “The number of Hispanic people ages 18 to 24 enrolled in college increased to 2.4 million in 2021, up from 1.2 million in 2005” (p. 2). Latinx students enroll in higher education in more significant numbers than most minorities. It is up to the education system to ensure this

population receives all the resources possible to graduate prepared and ready to enter the workforce.

According to the Pew Research Center, in 2017, Latinxs made up 5% of faculty (Flaherty, 2019). According to the American Council on Education, in 2016, “4% of college or university presidents were Latinx” (Hazelrigg, 2019, para. 2). However, “there isn’t one Latinx president in the University of Texas system despite the larger population of Latinx students in this state over others” (Hazelrigg, 2019, para. 3). Latinx administrators in the United States made up 14% of total administrators in 2021 (Zippia, 2023b). These statistics emphasize the lack of representation and the need for more Latinx leaders at the university level.

In 2016, minority women comprised 5% of college and university presidencies. Men outnumbered women in obtaining positions as presidents, with 78% being male and 22% female (Johnson, 2017). According to Mora (2023), “Hispanic women and men each accounted for approximately four percent of the faculty in U.S. colleges and universities between 2016 and 2021” (p. 3). The annual report released by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources in 2020 reported that women and minorities held fewer leadership positions in most employment areas than White males (Whitford, 2020). Higher education executive roles are also underrepresented among women and minorities. In 2016, 17% of all college and university presidents in the United States were minorities. However, only 4% were Hispanic/Latino, and as noted previously, minority women only made up 5% of college and university presidencies (Johnson, 2017). Men outnumbered women in obtaining positions as presidents, with 78% being male and 22% female (Johnson, 2017).

Additionally, “between 2016 and 2021, 2.8% of college and university chief executive officers were Hispanic women, and 3.6% were Hispanic men. Since 2006–2011, this share had risen for Latinas (from 1.2%) but fell slightly for Hispanic men (from 3.8%)” (Mora, 2023, p. 4). The persistent underrepresentation of women and minorities in leadership positions within colleges and universities underscores the ongoing challenges and disparities in higher education, as highlighted by various studies and reports spanning the years 2016 to 2023.

Texas is unique because of its large population of Latinx and the almost 200 colleges and universities in the state. In addition, after California, Texas has the most Minority Serving Institutions (Boland, 2016). These qualifications make the state a great source of information on minority student populations and research on minority representation in higher education. However, the number of Latina administrators needs to be more consistent with the student population. With the continuous growth of Latinx students and the lack of increase in Latina leadership at the university level, it is appropriate to study the success stories of Latinas who have attained higher-education administrative positions. This multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study aimed to examine the experiences of Latinas who have been recruited, promoted, and retained in administrative positions at three universities in South Central Texas. The lived experiences in this dissertation provide a better understanding of how crucial Latina leaders are to the success of Latina students in higher education. These stories could create change and fill in the gaps, resulting in a more adequate representation of Latina administrators within higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Representation of Latinas in administrative positions lags in higher education. Predominately White colleges and universities report low numbers of minority faculty. Minorities are defined in this dissertation as “a culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group” (Britannica, 2019). The U.S. Department of Education in 2013 noted that 78% of full-time faculty and 84% of tenured professors were White (Supiano, 2015). Whites also represented 87% of university presidents. In 2021, Hispanics or Latinos comprised 10.2% of professors (Zippia, 2023c).

Minority representation in higher education administration has also been growing slowly. In 2016, minorities comprised 14% of higher education administrators (Seltzer, 2017). Historically, women have been absent in faculty and leadership positions within higher education itself. Despite earning most master’s and doctoral degrees for years, they remain underrepresented in leadership ranks (Flaherty, 2021). According to multiple studies, including the Eos Foundation’s Women’s Power Gap Initiative, the American Association of University Women, and the WAGE project, women represent 24% of the top earners in higher education (Silbert & Dubé, 2021). The data also show that women represent 10% of top faculty earners, 21% of Presidents, 26% of Deans, and 34% of Provosts and CFOs (Silbert & Dubé, 2021). While the number of women in traditionally underrepresented fields increases, leadership roles for Latinas in academia do not. The Association of American Colleges & Universities (Dedman, 2019) explains that the college presidency is 58.1% White and male. White women make up only 21% of college presidents. Still, women of color only represent 5.1% of the 21% of college presidents. Student Affairs offices have the most significant number of minority female employees.

Additionally, “students were more likely to encounter people of color in service roles than in faculty or leadership positions” (Dedman, 2019, p. 3). These statistics affirm that there is not only a lack of minority representation in higher education, but also a lack of female representation.

Evidence supports university leadership representing the demographics and cultural diversity of the United States. The Latinx population is the fastest-growing minority group in the United States. According to Statista Research Department (2021), in 2018, 59 million people of Latin origin lived in the United States. Projections are that by 2060, the Latinx population in the United States will reach 111.22 million. The Latinx population in Texas alone grew by 73.2% from 2000 to 2018 (Statista, 2021). Latinas need encouragement and guidance to pursue higher education, terminal degrees, and high-level positions in higher education. Systemically, there is a need to recognize that there is a problem with minority representation and create initiatives that increase the representation of Latinas in administrative positions.

More work must be done to address Latinas’ underrepresentation in higher education leadership positions. It is also necessary to have more information regarding what universities are doing to encourage the development of more diverse leaders. According to González (2007), it is possible for universities to develop a master plan for increasing the number of Latina leaders on campuses. It is also essential that Latina faculty and administrators raise the issue with the Latinx community of the lack of Latinas in leadership positions in higher education.

Universities, most notably Hispanic serving institutions and historically Black colleges and universities, have implemented initiatives that focus on recruiting and

promoting Latina and minority women in administrative positions. However, there needs to be a framework for growing diversity-balanced leadership that universities can model and implement to ensure more excellent representation of this population. For example, Middlebury College, a Vermont liberal arts college, unveiled a multi-year plan to foster equity and inclusion (Evenstar, 2021). The college expects full participation from the school's students, staff, and faculty to support its equity and inclusion plan. Earlham College used criticism from the student body and canceled classes for a day so they could listen to student demands for creating an inclusive college environment. The college encourages its admissions staff to discuss diversity issues with prospective students. Baylor University hosts webinars on diversity and inclusion for prospective students and is working on launching new initiatives to address diversity through faculty recruitment, student scholarship, and assessing campus climate. Additionally, Pacific University created a handbook on best practices for equity, diversity, and inclusion in marketing (Evenstar, 2021). Frameworks have been created and implemented at colleges throughout the United States proving that it is possible to build and model equity and inclusion. In this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study, I sought to examine the experiences of Latinas recruited, promoted, and retained in higher education administrator positions. The purpose of sharing these stories is to encourage more Latinas to become leaders in higher education, thereby giving voice to a minority group often underrepresented.

Literature Review

Higher education can create an environment conducive to change and more inclusive of Latina representation. The following literature review shows why few Latinas achieve administration roles in higher education and the outside influences that

continue to perpetuate the shortage. It concludes with examples of what can be done and implemented at the collegiate level to grow Latina representation. The ensuing argument for change unfolds in six steps. First, the literature review highlights Latina leaders' unique leadership traits and styles. Second, it addresses the barriers encountered on Latinas' paths to leadership. Third, I discuss critical race theory and its role in minority leadership. Fourth, intersectionality is defined through the tenets of LatCrit and FemCrit. Fifth, intersectionality and its implications on minority leadership is explained. Finally, I outline university culture, including recruitment and retention initiatives that some universities use in implementing change. Collectively, these steps provide a clear road map explaining why a systemic change is necessary at the university level to increase Latinas in administrative positions.

Leadership Traits and Styles of Latina Leaders

Considering Latina leaders' unique leadership traits and styles is essential in understanding why these unique traits and styles are a necessary component of higher education. The career paths of Latinxs in higher education have not been extensively documented (Ledesma-Rivera, 1987). Studies on Latinx leadership are scarce, outdated, and hard to find. Haro (2003) explained why there is a lack of Latinx leadership in higher education:

The level of attainment required of Latino faculty for advancement as a department head or academic dean tends to be different and more demanding than for non-Latinos. The regent of a major university was candid in commenting to me about this process. He said that Latinos (men and women) were newcomers to higher education. They did not have the "kinds" of training and experience in the academy to make him comfortable with them in a leadership role. "I will not vote for a person to lead my institution unless he has the qualities, the temperament, and style that reflect the performance of previous presidents," he said. As I looked at the pictures of the previous presidents of this university, they were all White males. (p. 184)

Not only was this information written 20 years ago, but it highlights the struggle Latinas face in breaking university tradition and finding higher-level positions within a culture that is not open to change.

Countless traits and styles come with Latinx faculty and leadership. Latinxs look at equity, culture, and society from multiple angles and experiences. Latinx presence alone brings positivity and increases academic achievement. Latinx leaders understand the needs of Latinx students like no other. They are great role models to Latinx youth and show them they can also achieve positions in higher education. As noted below, Latina leadership directly improves the quality of a global society leader:

Latinx faculty directly improve educational quality, better prepare students to live and work in an increasingly global society, expose students to a broader range of scholarly viewpoints, and advance the progress of Latinx students and community through their teaching and research. (León & Nevarez, 2007, p. 359)

Latinas bring collaboration and empowerment to leadership. Montas-Hunter (2012)

outlines four themes successful Latinas live by:

1. Recognize the strong sense of cultural values and their influence on survival in academia.
2. Support networks not only provide encouragement and advice but also support leadership development.
3. Self-awareness is necessary to create emotional intelligence, which is needed to be a leader.
4. Latina-women leaders prove that perseverance allows them to master experiences and overcome anything. (p. 327)

Passion, commitment, and self-confidence are three more traits Latinas bring to leadership in academia. A study published in the *International Journal of Leadership and Change* revealed what women specifically bring to academia (Dunn et al., 2014). It concludes, “Successful Leaders = Selfless Leaders” (p. 12). The three authors of this article used reflection research to find more effective mentors and leaders at their respective campuses. Dunn et al. (2014) defined success in terms of the accomplishments

of others. This approach to leadership is known as facilitative leadership. One of the most critical attributes of leadership is service mentality. The following are statements made by the authors of this study explaining facilitative leadership:

I believed that being an administrator meant facilitating the work of others, especially faculty, and these bureaucratic procedures were sapping their time and resulting in low morale. I want to help faculty and students. I want to say yes to their requests for time, dollars, doing something different. Saying yes takes time and working around the rules, creating new rules, doing things differently. (Dunn et al., 2014, p. 16)

The article ends by reiterating that successful women leaders build networks, are task-oriented, focus on success in the face of resistance and challenges, and make sure to overcome obstacles by the theme “lessons learned” (p. 17).

There are many leadership styles that Latinas bring to the administrative ranks of higher education. In the field of education, servant leadership is often associated with Latina leadership styles. Listening, healing, and empathy are all aspects of this type of leadership (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). According to Ibanez (2023), “Latinas will make the effort to listen to everyone’s needs and sympathize with them. They will engage in actions, such as attentive listening, that will let... people under their care know that they care for their success and well-being” (p. 10). As a double-minority population, these women have the capability and desire to make an actual difference in higher education. It is up to the system to recognize their impact and make the necessary changes and implementations to grow this minority population.

Barriers to Leadership

Research shows Latina leadership in higher education needs to be improved. Many factors create barriers to growth. Teague (2015) suggested barriers are often the result of gender bias in recruitment, hiring decisions, and work assignments. Stereotypes

of gender and leadership role expectations also cause barriers. For example, Latinas often encounter racial and sexist attitudes that limit their presence and ability to advance in academia (Sotello et al., 2009). Limited advancement opportunities also create barriers.

Hernández and Morales (1999) mentioned in their study that several participants

felt that because of their ethnicity, they had been selected for positions working exclusively with students of color in departments that were marginalized on the campus and where they might not gain the experience and visibility necessary to obtain promotions. (p. 51)

Cook (2012) suggested women tend to follow a traditional career path to leadership positions in higher education, while men are more likely to come from outside industries and be placed in those positions. According to Cook (2012), “The axiom is that women are hired based on what they’ve done, while men are hired based on their ‘potential,’ a sexist plot based on stereotypes” (p. 2). Unfortunately, the list of barriers for Latina leaders goes on. While some universities address the issue head-on, others lack interest in the topic and do not see a need for change.

Teaching has historically been a field dominated by women. However, in leadership, the opposite is true. While there are trends toward men in administrative positions decreasing, statistics show that it will take 20 years for women to hold as many leadership positions as classroom teacher positions (Macias & Stephens, 2019). Even though gender equality has increased in educational leadership, pay distribution is still an issue. Adding to gender and pay issues, minorities leading in education have also not seen an increase in quite some time. Macias and Stephens (2019) noted “while women overall have steadily increased in leadership positions, statistics do not reflect the same trajectory for educators of color” (p. 168). Latinx college students also encounter many issues in school due to “lack of knowledge of the process, lack of guidance and support,

institutional abuse, and standardized exams” (Ramirez, 2011, p. 210). All are barriers for Latinx students pursuing higher-level degrees like master’s and doctoral degrees. As a result of these barriers, knowledge of achieving higher positions within education is unfamiliar and thus not pursued by Latinxs.

Latinas entering the field of education have increased over the last several years. Utilizing intersectionality and understanding its role in race, class, and family origin helps explain that many did not initially choose this career path but were strongly encouraged to follow it through family obligations and financial circumstances. One commonly cited reason for the delay in career development is that Latinas “bear more of the responsibility for family caretaking than men do” (Martin Conley, 2005, p. 25). According to Leyva (2011), Latina students often find themselves in conflict when balancing their traditional familial roles to become successful professionals. Many wind up feeling as if they do not belong. Additionally, the majority of Latinas do not attend school to become leaders in higher education. Instead, family obligations and financial need choose their path for them. Because teaching is seen as a less competitive field to enter when students face economic issues, it becomes faster, easier, and less expensive as a career path. In addition, many Latinxs look at teaching to give back to their communities. The Latinx culture holds in high regard teaching, and many parents lead their daughters in that direction after college. Experience in teaching and moving up the education line to achieve a more elevated position is often the route Latinas take to become leaders. Unfortunately, many Latinas that earn administration roles in higher education encounter hurdles in their leadership journey (G. M. Flores & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014).

Latinas attaining administrative roles in higher education often experience high racial bias and barriers. Race and gender are synonymous with obstacles for Latinas striving for higher education leadership roles. Freire (1972) mentioned oppression is complex and inadvertently strengthened by all system members. Therefore, more than adding more Latinas to leadership positions in education is required. Since the industry is seeing a growth of Latinas in higher education, the university level needs to address intersectionality as quickly as possible. By looking at recruitment, hiring, training, and compensation from the perspective of intersectionality, university leaders can ensure a better work environment for future leaders.

The success of a diverse student body occurs in an institution of culture that focuses on recruiting a diverse staff. Because of the extreme growth in the Latinx community, “colleges and universities are challenged to manage environments that include students of diverse backgrounds, genders, social classes, and levels of academic preparation” (Torres, 2010, p. 59). Hurtado et al. (1999) offered five reasons for diversifying college campuses. First, faculty and administration of color can benefit students from their individual groups. “Students are likely to seek out faculty who are like them and understand their experiences” (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 22). Second, a diverse faculty and staff are essential representatives of an institution’s commitment to diversity issues. Third, a more diverse faculty and staff create a more comfortable environment for faculty and staff. Fourth, a more diverse faculty and staff bring more voices and diverse perspectives. Finally, a diverse faculty and staff reflect institutional success for an educational institution in a pluralistic society (Hurtado et al., 1999). The importance of a faculty rooted in diversity is detailed in countless articles and

dissertations. However, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), as of fall 2018, Latina females made up only 5% of full-time faculty in U.S. higher education. The reader must study why the numbers of Latina higher education leaders are so low. Change is hard in an antiquated system like education, and there are many barriers to increasing the number of Latina leaders in higher education. The explanation of three of them follows.

The glass ceiling and Latina leaders. Despite growth in the labor market, women remain underrepresented in higher-level and higher-earning jobs. The glass ceiling refers to “the evident but intangible hierarchical impediment that prevents minorities and women from achieving elevated professional success” (Reiners, 2021, p. 3). According to Jackson and O’Callaghan (2009), the glass ceiling effect restricts the number of women who reach leadership positions in higher education and limits the distinctive skill set that women and minorities can bring to an organization. Similarly, Reeves (2015) noted,

A disproportionate representation of women leaders in higher education, disparities in compensation, rank, and position of women leaders as compared to their male counterparts, and lack of support measures in place for leaders have all been attributed to the existence of the glass ceiling effect. (p. 1)

Advancement opportunities are one reason Latinas are not growing in higher education. Hernandez and Morales (1999) concluded many Latina women in leadership positions felt because they were Latinas, they were only granted positions in marginalized university departments working with students of color. Additionally, study participants said they were experiencing barriers to career advancement. According to the American Council on Education, chief diversity officer is the only senior leadership position representing the highest number of underrepresented minorities (King & Gomez, 2007). King and Gomez (2007) indicated Latinxs have the lowest representation in leading roles

in higher education. The glass ceiling and its effect cause the stagnant growth of Latinas in many positions in higher education. Growth is one of the many obstacles women experience when moving up in higher education. Cultural norms and family obligations are another.

The Latinx culture focuses on family. Nothing comes before family in Latin culture. Expectations like running the household and raising children often stop Latinas from pursuing higher education. As a result, Latinas' path in education moves to the wayside. Instilled at a young age is the traditional role of the caretaker. The assumption is that if one is a female, they will take over as the mother figure when and if needed. Anything else, including pursuing higher education, is considered something to do after all family obligations are taken care of (Almendarez-De Bello, 2019). One commonly cited reason for the delay in career development is Latinas "bear more of the responsibility for family caretaking than men do" (Martin Conley, 2005, p. 25). According to Leyva (2011), Latina students often find themselves in conflict when balancing their traditional familial roles to become successful professionals. Many wind up feeling as if they do not belong. Mateo (2010) mentioned Latinas constantly struggle to gain their family's acceptance and reach personal, professional goals. As mentioned earlier, the family connection directly links one's cultural identity to the Latin culture. Finding the balance between their familial obligations, acceptance, and career pursuit is a constant battle. Families play an important role in the success of Latinas. Domestic support is "by far the most influential force in a Latina's life is family. Latina's cultural values and family shape their complicated identity" (Mateo, 2010, p. 49). As a result of

strong family influence, Latina's values and identity shape their decision-making when choosing a career path.

Latina positions in higher education. Latinas achieving higher-level positions in higher education is often seen at the community college level. American Council on Education (2005) reported,

Regarding gender diversity, the proportion of presidencies held by women has more than doubled over the past decade, from 10% to 23%, but women are still most highly concentrated at community colleges and least likely to lead a doctorate-granting institution. (p. 2)

Latinas can achieve positions in higher education, including faculty, administrator, and executive. However, Latinos consistently outnumber them in academic positions. Latinas in lecture and instructor positions are 50%, versus Latinos, who are often full or associate professors at 66% to 79%. Latinas comprise 0.4% of full professors, while 1.2% are Latino (Arredondo & Castellanos, 2003). In leadership positions, the numbers are worse. Zippia (2023a) noted, women held 23% of presidential appointments. These statistics, unfortunately, prove that stereotypes, marginalization, and tokenism affect bridging the gap between Latina leaders in higher education.

Critical Race Theory and Its Role in Minority Leadership

CRT examines social, cultural, and legal matters related to race and racism. The description of CRT is a “deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9). CRT attempts to explain the challenge and impact of race, class, gender, and language on educational achievement in minority populations. CRT originated in the 1970s because of the lack of progress seen in civil

rights legislation from the previous decade. CRT looks at the beliefs and practices that allow racism to persist while looking for ways to remove people from it. Programs such as affirmative action, study abroad, and diversity initiatives are a step in the right direction. CRT provides a voice to oppressed people (Hiraldo, 2010). Figure 1.1 places CRT in the middle. The characteristics and background of CRT are in the first row of the figure. The third row outlines the sub-theories developed from each minority group due to CRT.

In addition, CRT can offer higher education institutions a reference to become more inclusive (Hiraldo, 2010). These institutions can make positive changes with diversity initiatives, infrastructure, and breaking apart hostile environments. The key is for the institution of academia and students themselves to work collaboratively. In addition, change must start at the top with leadership and administration.

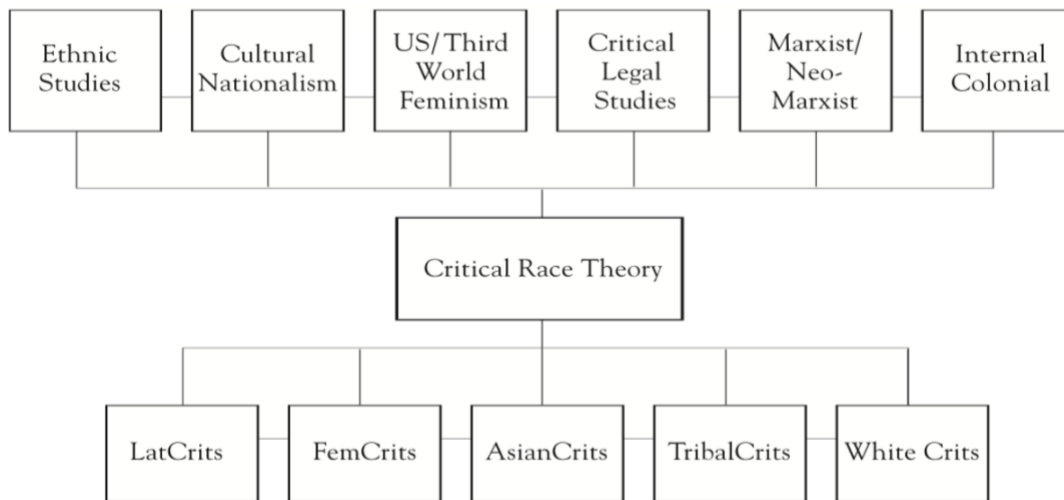


Figure 1.1. A genealogy of critical race theory.

Note. Tara Yosso, Octavio Villalpando, and Dolores Delgado Bernal, and Daniel G. Solórzano, “Critical Race Theory in Chicana/o Education” (2001). *NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings*. 9. <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/naccs/2001/Proceedings/9>, reprinted with permission.

Intersectionality Defined through LatCrit and FemCrit

According to Muñoz (2009), community college leadership has not undergone a great deal of change due to CRT. This study's focus was Latinas that have broken the glass ceiling and have "risen beyond the social and political structures that have served as gatekeepers" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 155). Muñoz addressed the experiences of Latina community college presidents who have succeeded in working within a reluctant-to-change system and have achieved the roles of president and CEO in higher education. Muñoz noted success has not happened for Latina representation in higher education. Although demographics show a more diverse student population, White men continuously hold higher levels of leadership. Systemic challenges persist in higher education, including "stereotypical perceptions, gender, racial discrimination, limited role models, and exclusion from networking opportunities" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 172). These experiences, as told by the women who lived them, add to the understanding of how hard it is to break through and overcome racism, gender bias, and resistance for Latina leaders. In another case study, Yosso et al. (2001) researched female administrators in higher education and used CRT as the theoretical framework. The study findings provided a deeper understanding of the experiences of females that worked for and achieved executive leadership positions in higher education. Women had less power than men in the university system. The researchers used CRT to detail the male-dominated hierarchical structure that showed men at the top and women at the bottom. The study explored women's leadership styles and strategies to overcome barriers and achieve executive leadership positions in higher education (Wood-Dear, 2016). According to Yosso et al. (2001), "Critical race theory helps to understand the epistemology, methodology, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy in Hispanic education and how they

work with each other” (p. 95). These traits explain CRT and show how this theory relates to and applies to several minority groups.

Within CRT is a movement called Latino critical theory (LatCrit). LatCrit is a “branch of critical race theory that considers issues of concern to Latinos, such as immigration, language rights, and multi-identity” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). LatCrit looks at Latinxs struggles because of their culture, resources, and circumstances. LatCrit brings to light stereotypes and imbalances Latinx face and the impact on their lives. LatCrit also advocates social justice for those living in these marginalized communities. LatCrit is a progressive theory for the Latinx community. It challenges race, gender, and class in the eyes of the education system to make improvements to it. LatCrit gives voice to a population often overlooked. The theory explains Latinas’ multi-dimensional identities and addresses the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

LatCrit consists of five themes defined by Solórzano and Yosso (2001). First, is the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination. CRT begins with the understanding that race and racism are endemic and permanent. While race and racism are at the center of CRT, they intersect with other subordination forms like gender and class discrimination. The second theme is the challenge to the dominant ideology. CRT in education challenges the education system and its take on objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. These factors mask dominant groups’ self-interest, power, and societal privilege. The third theme of LatCrit is the commitment to social justice. Social justice liberates and responds to racial, gender, and class oppression. It also changes education

and works toward eliminating racism, sexism, poverty, and the empowerment of underrepresented minority groups. Fourth, is the centrality of experiential knowledge. Knowledge of students of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about race. This knowledge should be considered a strength and draw on lived experiences through storytelling, family histories, biographies, and narratives. The fifth theme of LatCrit is the transdisciplinary perspective. CRT in education stands firm on drawing on the strengths and research methods of understanding and improving the educational experience of minority students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

LatCrit not only seeks to empower the Latinx community to be more vocal and conduct research to reduce the oppression they face, but it also aims to strengthen the Latinx identity by feeling pride in one's ethnic identity (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). There are very few studies for academic leaders to understand the experience of the Latinx student. Not understanding this specific student's experience "can lead to inappropriate and ineffective responses to volatile racial situations on campus" (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, p. 21). LatCrit tries to reduce issues of social justice in higher education today. If Latinx students can become more self-aware and define their identities, they can help reduce the prejudice and stereotypes they experience within the higher education system. For higher education to understand the Latinx student they must understand the "students' background and the critical role it plays in shaping their education decisions, actions, and resilience" (Eaton, 2004, as cited in Carter, 2005, p. 2). Latina leaders face the same issues as Latinx students and then some while working in a system that is underpopulated by their ethnicity. Those who have achieved administrator

positions can utilize LatCrit in their day-to-day work and grow more people like them in their jobs.

LatCrit focuses specifically on the experiences and stories of the Latinx population. The tenets of LatCrit utilized within this qualitative multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study are:

1. The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination.
2. The challenge to dominant ideology.
3. The commitment to social justice.
4. The centrality of experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, pp. 472–473).

Critical race feminism or FemCrit is one theory that has emerged from stories of inequality within race, gender, class, and gender-based experience. This theory explains that women's experiences and perspectives are different from men. Its goal is to focus on discrimination due to race, class, and gender within the White male patriarchal system and rethink the idea of the norm. According to Pratt-Clarke (2010), FemCrit “builds on critical race theory and focuses on the multiple identities of women and how their experiences are a product of those identities” (p. 24). FemCrit analyzes and focuses on the experiences of women. It extends CRT from a topic about race only to a topic that includes gender, ethnicity, and class.

Additionally, FemCrit explains that women's experiences and perspectives differ from men. Its focus is on discrimination due to race, class, and gender within the White male patriarchal system. FemCrit emphasizes the experiences of racial and ethnic minority females and how they differ from White women's experiences through other

forms of oppression and subordination (Flores & Garcia, 2009). The tenets of FemCrit mirror those of CRT:

1. Addressing essentialism, anti-essentialism, and intersectionality.
2. Normalization of race and racism.
3. Counter-storytelling.
4. Addressing the complexities of race and gender with multidimensionality (Berry, 2015, p. 428).

The tenets of LatCrit and FemCrit complement each other in several ways. They both address intersectionality to explain the theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Pratt-Clarke, 2010). They both acknowledge the importance of social justice and normalizing race and racism when finding solutions to minority issues. Additionally, both LatCrit and FemCrit focus on storytelling to explain this vital topic and breathe life into the lives of people who are directly involved in change.

Intersectionality and its Implications for Minority Leadership

Intersectionality describes where labels like gender and ethnicity collide with traditional power structures. According to Hiraldo (2010), “One cannot simply think about race, class, sexuality, or gender independent from one another” (p. 57). The term traditionally was used to address “the issues women of color felt were not being addressed within feminist theory” (Macias & Stephens, 2019, p. 164). Intersectionality “describes the complexity of systemic issues faced by marginalized groups that are simultaneously part of more than one minority” (Macias & Stephens, 2019, p. 164). Feminism did not acknowledge that women of color faced different degrees of oppression than White women. Thus, intersectionality was born out of the need for more understanding of feminist issues and to broaden the feminist movement. The term

intersectionality is rooted in Black feminist activism. It acknowledged the double discrimination of racism and sexism faced by Black women. Crenshaw (1989) coined and defined the term intersectionality as “a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149). Now, intersectionality includes gender, race, and other factors related to feminism.

Intersectionality is vital to this qualitative study because I focused on women who are leaders in higher education and their perspectives of how they achieved the positions they are in today. Intersectionality defines the many identities that a person represents themselves with (Hancock, 2007). LatCrit and FemCrit are components of both CRT and intersectionality. The Latinx culture brings another unique facet to the story and journey of these women. This qualitative study strives to utilize intersectionality, LatCrit, and FemCrit to show how Latinas have pushed past diversity issues in higher education and reached leadership positions.

Latinas in higher education face many obstacles that contribute to their lack of advancement. Intersectionality and its role in higher education helps one understand the plight Latinas face when reaching out for higher positions in education. Hancock’s (2007) work helps define intersectionality and its assumptions. Hancock (2007) defines intersectionality as a normative theory under six assumptions. First, more than one category of difference (e.g., race, gender, class) plays a role. Second, the relationship among the categories is an open empirical question. Thus, intersecting race and gender-equal to more than their sums and collectively cannot be analyzed without understanding

that both are necessary to understand their roles. Third, categories are products of both the individual and the institution. These categories are contested and enforced at both levels and demand attention to this fact. Fourth, each category of difference has diversity within its group. Fifth, intersectional research examines categories at multiple levels of analysis. Lastly, intersectionality requires attention to the research question's empirical and theoretical aspects. Intersectionality is unique because it focuses on all six assumptions and their roots in women of color. Intersectionality also provides more explicit understandings of discrimination and privilege by "pushing against hegemonic disciplinary, epistemological, theoretical, and conceptual boundaries" (Dhamoon, 2011, p. 230). It makes sure that one studies race, gender, and class together.

Leadership Development for Latinas in Education

Many academic organizations provide professional development and leadership opportunities to their employees. For Latinas, these opportunities are of particular importance. Therefore, it is needed for Latinas in education to become aware of these programs and recruit more women to participate in them. Leadership programs are essential ways to train the next generation of leaders in higher education. However, leadership training programs rank second behind quality as the most popular training area (Conger, 1996). Conger, Professor of Leadership Studies at Claremont McKenna College in California and an expert on management, leadership, and development, provides a multi-tiered approach to effective Leadership Programs. This approach combines "personal growth, skill-building, feedback, and conceptual awareness" (Conger, 1996, para. 2). Effective leadership allows participants to tap into their dreams, take risks, and use the tools learned in the workplace or their subsequent careers. A personal growth

approach involves “up ending emotional experiences and adventures that become the metaphors for risk-taking” (Conger, 1996, para. 16). Thinking out of the box and creating new experiences challenges leaders and allows them to think creatively and differently.

Skill-building involves leaders working with practical and applicable skills to their work lives. According to Conger (1996), “The attractiveness of the skill approach is that it turns leadership into a practical, teachable reality” (para. 34). Skills taught in leadership programs include public speaking, effective communication, and conflict management. In Conger’s model, skill-building depends on how teachable skills are and if there is the time taken to learn them. In addition, these skills must be practiced often in the workplace to have a long-term impact. Feedback measures the outcome of those participating in an activity. According to Conger, feedback “starts with an assumption that most of us cannot fully see ourselves” (para. 43). Allowing opportunities to critique our colleagues, we gain confidence and learn our strengths and weaknesses.

Conceptual awareness is the analytic approach to other training methods (Conger, 1996). Conceptual Awareness teaches through case studies, movies, films, lectures, and discussions. Conger (1996) continues, “The advantage of the conceptual awareness approach is that it helps participants to understand intellectually that there are important behaviors which distinguish leaders from managers” (para. 57). In addition, visual aids and speakers help teach leadership skills and are realistic to participants, allowing them the opportunity to learn by seeing and doing.

Conger’s (1996) leadership program approach looks at leaders as change masters. Training needs to “teach managers and executives how to anticipate what is on their industry horizon and how to mobilize their organization to shape the future” (Conger,

1996, para. 3). If a leadership program does not count on change, it will not succeed. Additionally, a training program should not be a weekly or monthly occurrence. Ideally, the program would work around leadership at all levels and update and change itself to keep up with the system (Conger, 1996). While Conger's leadership approach was created in 1996, it is still a progressive way of looking at training for minority leaders in higher education today. Leadership development and its benefit to higher education has not been studied across universities worldwide. Dopson et al. (2019) questions if higher education senior leaders "are being well-supported in addressing current developments by leadership development programmes that may need to consider issues raised by broader field-wide developments, and if necessary, refresh their content and approaches" (p. 220). The global attention of this subject indicates the lack of quality programs within higher education and proves the need of improvement worldwide.

A variety of organizations within the education sector currently provide opportunities for professional development and leadership development (HERS, 2021; McDade, 1987; White, 2012). For women, particularly Latinas, these opportunities are significant. For example, Harvard University, Columbia University, University of Michigan, and John Hopkins University all have organized programs to grow the number of Latinas in higher education (McDade, 1987). In addition, outside organizations conduct professional development programs for university employees. Latinos for Education is an example of an organization that works with Latinx education leaders in Massachusetts, Houston, and the Bay Area to achieve leadership in higher education and "to advance in their leadership journey and ultimately expand their sphere of influence in the education sector" (Montero, 2023, para. 1). These programs meet for a particular

number of days or weeks in a year, typically involve an application process, and usually require the university to nominate or endorse attendees (Montero, 2023). They divide into national institutes and internships, administrative conferences, conventions of national associations, and short seminars/workshops and meetings (McDade, 1987).

Bryn Mawr's Higher Education Resources Services (HERS, 2021) Institute started in 1976 and focuses on improving women's roles in middle and executive levels of higher education administration. HERS is a pioneer in professional development for women. The program continues to expand its curriculum to fill the needs of the populations it serves. HERS Institute focuses on "advancing women to senior leadership positions and developing administrative leadership throughout the ranks of the faculty and staff have been the goals of HERS since the first institute in 1976" (White, 2012, p. 12). Curriculum topics include understanding the higher education environment, planning and leading change in the academy, managing and investing strategic resources, engaging individual and institutional diversity, and mapping leadership development (HERS, 2021).

HERS program has five characteristics: focus on institutional leadership, time-sensitive commitments (4 weeks or 5 weekends), practitioner faculty rather than scholar presenters, diversity of personal and professional backgrounds among participants, and professional development for women leaders at different stages in their career (White, 2012). A survey was conducted among past participants. Many said HERS helped advance their careers. The year 2012 marked HERS 40th anniversary, and the organization is not slowing down its efforts to improve the lives of women leaders. Three new projects were announced for their anniversary: a project on presidential succession

for women in higher education, a more structured form of mentoring for women candidates for president and chancellor, and a piloted program with alumnae to offer HERS programming on college campuses. (White, 2012).

The American Council on Education Leadership Program is the largest higher education association in the industry (Sotello et al., 2009). The program offers services, resources, and support to current college and university presidents, senior leaders, and administrators. American Council on Education (2019) promotes greater diversity and inclusion. The Office of Women in Higher Education within the American Council on Education provides counsel and training concerning policies, issues, education, and research that impacts women's equity, diversity, and advancement. The Office of Women in Higher Education provides preparation and promotion to emerging and mid-level women administrators (Dowdall, 2009). The leadership programs offered by the American Council on Education include an executive leadership group, an emerging leader's group, an inclusive excellence group, and an institutional leadership group. Several issues affecting higher education are discussed by senior-level women administrators. In addition, search consultants are invited to participate in mock interviews about job opportunities with participants. The National Leadership Forum provides women leaders with the opportunity to interact with outstanding female leaders who share their experiences and serve as role models to help them understand the responsibilities and rewards that come with holding the office of president (American Council on Education, 2019). In addition, this program provides training to help women achieve more significant leadership positions, allowing them to meet and interact with role models in education.

Synthesis of Literature

In the literature review, I explained the need to grow Latina leaders in higher education. Systemically, the higher education community can create an environment conducive to change and more inclusive of Latina representation. The themes outlined throughout the literature review explain why few Latinas are achieving administrator roles in higher education and the outside influences that add to the shortage. The literature review concludes with proven examples of what can be done at the university level to grow Latina leaders.

The literature review examined the unique leadership traits and styles of Latina leaders. Passion, commitment, and self-confidence are three of the traits Latinas bring to leadership in higher education. They also bring collaboration and empowerment to leadership, showing other Latinas how they can also succeed. As a double-minority population, Latinas can make an actual change in higher education. Teaching has historically been a field dominated by women. Leadership, however, shows the opposite. Women's power struggles in achieving more significant roles in higher education leadership were discussed in the literature review relating to the glass ceiling phenomenon and cultural norms.

CRT, intersectionality, and how they relate to minority leadership followed. To further specify the struggles Latinas face within the higher education sector, LatCrit and FemCrit were specifically defined within the literature review. LatCrit seeks to empower the Latinx community to be more vocal and strengthen its identity by feeling pride in one's ethnicity. FemCrit examines the experiences of minority females and how their experiences differ from White women's experiences. LatCrit and FemCrit make up parts of CRT. The intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit created the theoretical framework

used throughout this dissertation to show how Latinas have conquered diversity in higher education and reached leadership positions. University culture was outlined, including recruitment and retention initiatives that some universities use to implement change. This literature review aimed to provide a clear understanding of why a systemic change is needed at the university level to increase Latinas in administrator positions.

Theoretical Framework

Inclusive leadership, specifically Latina leaders, is important to higher education today. The number of minority students attending college, including Latinx youth, is growing, but the diversity of academic leadership is not. Clearly defining and implementing a plan to recruit Latinas to leadership roles in higher education allows the university system to acknowledge this leadership deficit and make changes.

Understanding the path that successful Latinas in higher education have taken can provide a model for other Latinas interested in becoming leaders in higher education.

LatCrit and FemCrit comprise the theoretical frameworks used to conduct this study. Both are an extension of CRT and focus on Latinxs specifically, women's studies, ethnic studies, and feminist studies. LatCrit explains how many forms of persecution can affect Latinxs and display themselves in daily life (Pérez-Huber, 2010). LatCrit resulted from a gap in the literature about the Latinx culture itself. Crespo (2013) explained what makes the Latinx population unique:

The Latino population did not seem to fit in a Black or White paradigm but rather carry other characteristics and experiences that are unique to the Latino culture and, as such, is not a replacement for critical race theory but rather an extension that specifically addresses Latino race issues. (p. 31)

LatCrit addresses the “intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 312). Four functions encompass

LatCrit: the production of knowledge, a commitment to social relevance and anti-subordination, the ability to commit to social transformation through knowledge production, and the cultivation of community and coalition (Bender & Valdes, 2011). These functions guide this study's framework in learning and understanding the stories of successful Latina leaders in higher education.

Critical race feminism also branches off from CRT. According to Pratt-Clarke (2010), critical race feminism builds on CRT by focusing on women's multiple identities and how their experiences are the product of those identities. This theory focuses specifically on the experiences of women of color. Critical race feminism emerged to analyze the experiences of minority women (Pratt-Clarke, 2010). Critical race feminism addresses essentialism, anti-essentialism, and intersectionality. The topic encompasses the normalization of race and racism, with a focus on using counter-storytelling.

Critical race feminism addresses the complexities of race and gender with multidimensionality. Studying successful Latinas' stories and career paths in higher education can better understand "the why" and show "the how." FemCrit, as critical race feminism, focuses on the experiences of women themselves and extends CRT beyond race to include gender, ethnicity, and class. Speaking on the impact of women in leadership, Schiffecker and McNaughtan (2022) noted, "Rather than merely count the women in leadership positions, critical feminist perspectives dive deeper in the analysis and understanding of how women lead, providing valuable insights not only into women's leadership, but leadership in general" (p. 4). While FemCrit is part of understanding what leadership is, it is also helpful to analyze leadership as a social practice from a feminist perspective. The growth of Latina leadership in education can be

greatly enhanced by greater awareness of LatCrit and FemCrit issues. Figure 1.2 shows the tenets of both LatCrit and FemCrit and their intersectionality.

There has been a consistent increase in the diversity of young people in the United States as well as Latinxs, which is the fastest-growing minority group in the country. Every year, Latinx students attend higher education institutions in greater numbers. More Latinx students are entering college than any other minority group. The stories of successful Latina administrators in higher education are the focus of this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study. Stories of success help the institution and those following in the same path understand the value of identity. While researching this topic in the literature, I attempted to find counter arguments to FemCrit, LatCrit, and intersectionality and their roles in Latina leadership in higher education. I found little to no counter arguments in using FemCrit, LatCrit, and intersectionality as the theoretical framework used throughout this multiple explanatory case study.

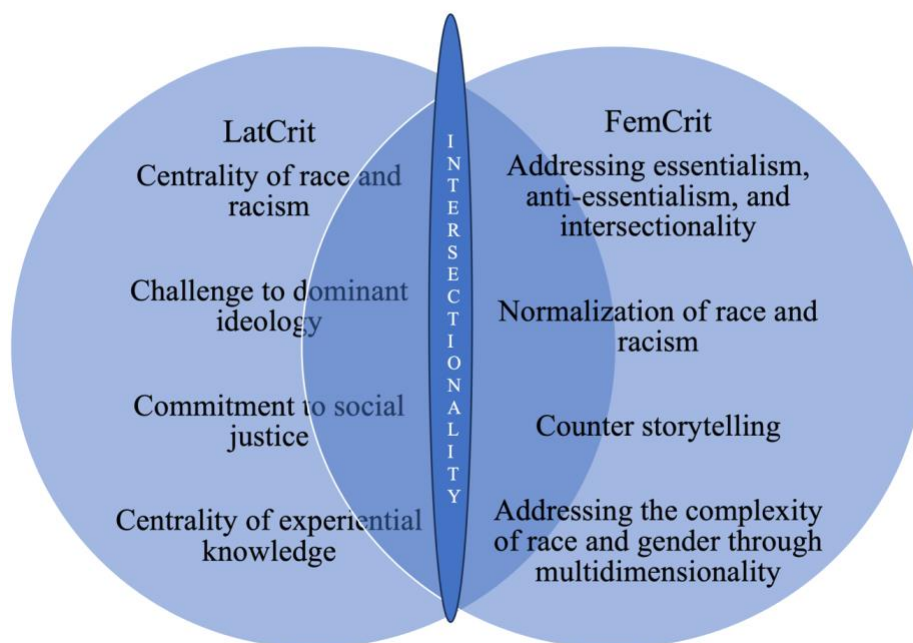


Figure 1.2. Tenets of LatCrit, FemCrit, and their intersectionality.

Utilizing the tenets of CRT and intersectionality and how they relate to these women's stories are imperative to this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study. Both promote systemic change. Latinx students do not see themselves in leadership within higher education today. Understanding and learning these stories will help make higher education more inclusive and normalize two underrepresented populations. It will make the system more robust, globally competitive, and reflect America's composition. There is a need for higher education institutions to diversify and better serve the growing population of minority students and administrators. Latinas can show them how to do this. These stories also provide a model for other Latinas to follow while attempting to move up in higher education.

Conclusion: Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Considering the continuous growth of Latinx students and the lack of Latina leadership at the university level, it is appropriate to examine the successes of Latinas in higher education administration. The purpose of this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study was to examine the experiences of Latinas who have been recruited, promoted, and retained in administrators positions at three universities in South Central Texas. It is through the lived experiences of the study participants that one can better appreciate how important Latina leaders are to the success of Latina students in higher education.

The literature review highlighted Latinas' unique leadership traits and styles. Additionally, the literature review addressed Latina leaders' obstacles on their leadership journey. It discussed the glass ceiling phenomenon, cultural norms, and Latinas' personal family obligations when achieving leadership roles in higher education. The concept of CRT and intersectionality was also examined in the context of Latinas seeking leadership

positions in higher education. The discussion concluded with a discussion of university culture and recruitment and retention initiatives implemented by some institutions. This road map provides a clear explanation of why systemic change is required at the university level to increase the number of Latinas in administrative positions.

This explanatory multiple case study examined the experiences of Latinas recruited, promoted, and retained in administrator positions at three universities in South Central Texas. The research questions that guided this case study were:

RQ1: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today?

RQ2: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators?

With this multiple case study, I sought to examine the experiences of Latinas recruited, promoted, and retained in higher education administrator positions. I share these stories to encourage more Latinas to become leaders in higher education as well as to give voice to those underrepresented in higher education.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Introduction: Research Questions

Connections between academic achievement and diversity reveal the importance of synthesis and creativity when considering Latina leadership at the collegiate level. Minority representation in higher education also fuels representation in traditionally underrepresented job fields. Berman (2018) described a transformative model for diversity in higher education. The model showed “exposure to new ideas, new cultures, and people from different backgrounds promotes creative thinking, enhances self-awareness, and better prepares students for a global economy” (p. 32). Growth in Latina leadership encourages academic achievement, prepares students for a global economy, and adds more diversity to the employment industry. From the literature review in Chapter One, this dissertation’s problem of practice focused on Latina administrators in higher education and their journeys to the positions they currently hold. A limited amount of research has been conducted on Latina leaders' perspectives, stories, and experiences in higher education. Society needs equal representation and inclusivity. However, information published on what universities are doing to recruit and promote Latina leaders is lacking. The actual stories of success have also not been told by women themselves. This explanatory multiple case study examined these stories to highlight this issue to help more minority women achieve more significant leadership roles in higher education. The research questions that guided this case study were:

RQ1: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today?

RQ2: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators?

Researcher Perspective and Positionality

As recently as the 1980s, researchers strongly believed race and gender did not contribute to how education leadership was conducted (Bass, 1982). However, universities that develop policy and training that supports Latina leaders create a more inclusive working environment as well as balanced leadership. Additionally, “having a more robust representation of Latinas at the top will directly reflect the student enrollment numbers and allow an increase in mentorship and student retention and decrease tokenism and invite a system that promotes equality” (Eiden-Dillow & Best, 2022, p. 11). Leadership practices that promote Latinas positively impact Latinx students themselves. Students learn directly from the experiences and perspectives of their own minority group. Statistically, the Latinx population consistently grows and makes up the largest minority group in the United States (Statista, 2021). An article featuring facts about United States Latinos for National Hispanic Heritage Month supports the role Latinas have played in growth over the past decade. It mentions, “The U.S. Population grew by 24.5 million from 2010 to 2022, and Hispanics accounted for 53% of this increase—a greater share than any other racial or ethnic group” (Krogstad et al., 2023, p. 2). The education system now has the chance to redefine what minority leadership entails. I believe that a change in racial preference and leadership in higher education can create an education system that matches the diversity of the people within it.

I was a business leader in fashion for 15 years before becoming an educator. Because I was in an exceptionally diverse industry, I did not see a distinct division of men and women in leadership roles. When I became an educator, that distinction became evident quite quickly. Racial and gender stereotypes allow men to continuously lead educational systems, while White women often fill the teacher roles. Unfortunately, Latinas' leadership abilities are unknown, overlooked, and considered inferior to many, mainly White male leaders. Latinas in administrative positions are not equal to those of other nationalities and races. They seem to fall into cultural norms that stifle their advancement. Giscombe (2007) explained, despite sociocultural barriers, women still face challenges in understanding gender congruency, developing organizational norms, and overcoming stereotypical behaviors. The higher education sector often celebrates its rich history and traditions but is also notorious for its resistance to change. Utilizing features of CRT, such as Latino CRT and feminist critical theory, can help uncover why Latinas are not readily achieving administrator positions in higher education institutions. Studying the cultural behavior and influence of the Latin ethnicity on its women and the themes in higher education that contribute to this lack of advancement brings greater understanding to the research about this minority group. Changes can increase the number of Latinas in higher education administration.

I am a Latina, educator, and professor. I have a vested interest in Latina leaders in higher education because I do not and have not seen "me" throughout my journey in higher education. I have had two Latina professors from my undergraduate through doctoral degrees. Two other women of color served as professors in my college experience. I have never encountered a Latina administrator at the five higher education

institutions I have attended. While I have attended two Hispanic serving institutions, the presidents of said institutions were White males. I have had the privilege of working with three Latinas. I have never worked with a Latina administrator, vice principal, or principal. My goal is to become an administrator or tenured professor in higher education and inspire more minority women to attain and strive for more significant roles in leadership at the collegiate level. Unfortunately, traditional values instilled at a young age by the Latinx culture can get in the way of encouraging women to strive for more. I am aware of the issue and want to help higher education institutions diversify their campuses to represent the global world.

This study allowed for more insight into the experiences of Latinas who have reached high-level positions in higher education. Their unique perspectives can and will grow leadership development opportunities for Latinas specifically. I live in a world of minorities. I am a Latina woman, a first-generation college graduate, and my parents did not encourage or pursue higher education. The education industry is now global. Latina leaders need to be seen and empowered. My research shows how a marginalized population is imperative to a progressive, global, and real-world education.

Theoretical Framework Application

In this explanatory multiple case study, I examined the real-life experiences of Latina administrators at three universities in South Central Texas using the core tenets of CRT, specifically Latcrit and FemCrit. Utilizing Latcrit and FemCrit within CRT helped inform data collection and explain the data collected to support this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study. The lived experiences of successful Latina administrators are important stories to tell because they reveal the authentic and transparent stories of

leaders who are often not seen. Learning about successful Latina administrators and their stories “expands the understanding of leadership in general and recognizes the importance of certain leadership abilities” (Méndez-Morse, 2004, p. 561). Latina administrators experiences and their stories of success also add to the research on Latinx and FemCrit.

The tenets of LatCrit and FemCrit provide a background to the stories of successful Latinas in higher education. They also give evidence of the barriers these women have faced in attaining their positions today. These Latina leaders provide an understanding of how the tenets of LatCrit and FemCrit apply to higher education and how they were able to combat the system and change the narrative. I incorporated LatCrit and FemCrit to tell the stories of successful Latina administrators. The interviews and storytelling of these women explain how they broke institutional barriers to become leaders in the education industry. The lived experiences of successful Latina administrators at each university provided illustrative snapshots of their specific experiences and the overall climates of universities promoting Latina leadership today. I asked the Latina leaders to detail their universities’ initiatives to recruit more Latinas like them into administrative positions. Additionally, each university’s practices and initiatives for recruiting Latina administrators provide the reader with a better understanding of what universities are doing to hire a more diverse workforce.

Furthermore, study participants explained how LatCrit and FemCrit contributed to their success. This study gives a voice to an underrepresented population in the higher education field and shows how they too are imperative to the world of education. LatCrit looks at the struggle of culture, stereotypes, and imbalances the Latinx community

always faces. FemCrit focuses on the multiple identities of women and what these identities produce in leadership positions. Intersectionality brings together gender and ethnicity and shows how more than one category of difference plays a role in a Latinx's life. Utilizing the intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit as the theoretical framework that guided this study proved that intersecting both race and gender cannot be analyzed without understanding both are necessary to understand their roles. Intersectionality allowed me to examine Latina administrators in education is not a topic only about gender or race. It is a multi-faceted theoretical framework that broadens the understanding of feminist issues and broadens the feminist movement.

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative research focuses on people's beliefs, values, and motives and why they behave as they do. It allows others to learn about the experiences of others who have experienced the phenomenon. Learning through people's own stories allows a unique understanding of the participants' worldview (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). With this explanatory multiple case study, I aimed to shed light on the stories of a sample of Latina administrators in higher education and discover the practices or initiatives the universities used to recruit them into the higher-level administrative positions they hold today. The goal was to show the path to leadership by interviewing at least one Latina administrator at each university studied. Understanding the stories of these women and what initiatives these universities employ to get and keep them was imperative to this case study because there is a lack of Latina-specific perspective in research today. This study allowed for further understanding of the experiences of Latina administrators in higher education from their perspectives to develop a program that universities can incorporate to increase

the number of Latina leaders. Therefore, the interview results detail each woman's case, setting, and findings. The research questions included:

RQ1: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today?

RQ2: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators?

According to Wilson (2012), qualitative studies are necessary when researching minority issues in higher education because the number of these types of studies is low, and the experiences vary per person. Thematic analysis allows for flexibility and interpretation of the data collected. The values and experiences of the participants shaped this study. The participants' lens provided specific feedback.

Qualitative research design allows researchers to observe participants' perspectives and experiences by telling their own stories. This approach recognizes that information lies within the data collected. This case study has the advantage of telling the stories of the women who participated in their own words. As a result, the data collected was valid. Additionally, questions that guided the interviews guided and even redirected the information given by each Latina leader. LatCrit and FemCrit connections occurred naturally, without coercion, resulting in detailed answers and rich concepts.

There were a few limitations to this study being qualitative in nature. The results of the interviews conducted with each Latina leader could not be verified. I relied on the stories of these women being accurate and told without bias or embellishment. In addition, I was only able to find three Latina leaders to participate in this case study. The total number of Latina leaders at universities in South Central Texas is greater than three,

so the sample size limited the information, collection, and stories told. It was also difficult to determine whether the research questions reflected quality research or subjective opinions. I was concerned about the accuracy of the answers provided by the study participants and my responsibility as the researcher to record and interpret these answers fairly.

Site Selection and Participant Sampling

The sampling process ensured that all Latina leaders participating contributed unique and rich perspectives on the need to increase Latina leadership in higher education. I conducted the study at three Hispanic-serving universities in South Central Texas. The focus of my research was on the hiring practices of each university that specifically hired Latina administrators. The next sections describe the sites and participants involved in the qualitative study.

Sites

The first university that agreed to participate is a private Catholic liberal arts college. It is a Hispanic-serving institution with an undergraduate student body made up of predominantly female students from Texas. Its Latinx population is its highest minority, representing 39.5% of the student body. I graduated from this university and had first-hand knowledge that the university focuses on minority recruitment and retention. I approached two other universities to participate in the research for this study. The second university reported a student body of nearly 39,000 students, of which 39% are Latinx and 41% are women (College Factual, 2021). The third university interviewed reports 53% of their students are Latinx and 51% are women (CollegeSimply, 2021). I also had professional contacts with Latina leaders at each university and felt comfortable

approaching said leaders to participate in the study. Table 2.1 shows the student demographic information for the three universities participating in this case study.

Table 2.1

Student Demographic Information

University	Student Population	Latinx Student Population
University South	3,591	1,646
University North	39,000	15,210
University West	34,742	18,413

Each university served minority students, so I contacted prospective administrators for participation in the study. I identified at least one administrator at each university willing to participate in this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study.

Participants

The goal of qualitative research was to understand the reality and experience of study participants. This case study included three Latina administrators at three Hispanic-serving institutions in South Central Texas. Even with few people, careful sampling can produce accurate and enlightening data that answers the research questions (Elmusharaf, 2015). According to Creswell (2007), purposive sampling is beneficial when looking for specific population traits. The focus of this study was the specific experiences of Latina administrators in higher education. As the researcher, I instituted a single-stage, purposive sampling of three Latina administrators and leaders from each institution to participate in this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study. After initial contact by email and telephone, I sent out a detailed email outlining the purpose of the study and the scope of participation for each administrator.

Three universities in South Central Texas agreed to participate in this multiple case study. I was able to interview one Latina leader at each university. The university and leader comprised a case. One administrator participated from University South (pseudonym). The administrator answered the questionnaire and participated in the personal interview in August 2022. One administrator participated from University North (pseudonym). The administrator answered the questionnaire and participated in the personal interview in August 2022. One administrator participated from University West (pseudonym). The administrator answered the questionnaire and participated in the personal interview in October 2022. To qualify for the interview, candidates needed to be Latinas who had served in university administration, they had to be willing to share their success stories, and finally, they had to describe how their university recruited and retained Latina administrators. Participants ranged from ages 31–60. They were all married. Two of the three participants were first generation college students. Their time in higher education ranged from 15–18 years, and they were all administrators.

Data Collection

For this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study, I collected data from three Latina administrators at three Hispanic-serving institutions in South Central Texas. I gathered data using a questionnaire of approximately 10 questions and a one-on-one, semi-structured, recorded interview. The questionnaire, located in Appendix A, allowed data to be gathered and interpreted for this specific population—Latina leaders in higher education. It also included demographic information to see how LatCrit and FemCrit tenets apply to Latina leaders specifically. The semi-structured, recorded interview included questions on the leaders' backgrounds, opinions on how to lead, and how to

move up in a traditionally unrepresented field. I also asked for the lived experiences of each Latina administrator and the practices and initiatives each university used to attract and retain them. The semi-structured interview questions are in Appendix B. Kvale (1994) suggested qualitative interviews attempt to “understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (p. 1). Interviews allow the researcher to see things that cannot be directly observed and “allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Yin (2017) suggested the strengths of interviews are they can focus directly on case study topics and provide explanations as well as personal views. The interviews for this multiple case study took place via Zoom, with a pre-determined set of 10 semi-structured questions. I listed on top of the interview form the time of the interview, date, place, interviewer, interviewee, and position. I attempted to re-focus the participant back to the semi-structured list of questions if the interview was interrupted with excess, non-essential information. Bias due to poorly articulated questions and responses, inaccuracies because of recall errors, and reflexivity were potential areas for improvement in the data collection process (Yin, 2017).

Data Collection—Questionnaire and Responses

To collect data for this case study, I sent a questionnaire to the three Latina administrators who agreed to participate. The questionnaire included 10 questions ranging from education to job satisfaction. The questionnaire also included questions about the university’s core mission and how its mission includes diversity. The questionnaire asked administrators to explain how they continued to work towards a diverse and inclusive university through their current position. The questionnaire is in

Appendix A. According to Cleave (2023), questionnaires are “viewed as a primary research tool for researchers to gather data from a target audience” (p. 2). By using questionnaires, researchers can structure their research, reach out quickly to potential participants, and gather accurate data. As a result, I chose to conduct this multiple explanatory case study using a questionnaire as a guide for the interview process.

Data Collection—Interview

I conducted informal, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with study participants. An example of the semi-structured, open-ended interview questions is in Appendix B. According to Creswell (2007), narrative methodology allows for insight to come from participants through their own words and experiences. Interviews were able to “capture the deep meaning of experience in the participants’ own words” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 93). Semi-structured, open-ended interviews allowed “flexibility in probing and in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated” (Patton, 2002, p. 347). Interviews took place in a real-world setting, allowing participants to talk freely, express their thoughts and feelings, and not feel judged. In addition, semi-structured and open-ended questions allowed participants to pace the interview and answer freely and openly. Table 2.2 shows the LatCrit and FemCrit tenets and how they relate to this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study. The table also shows how the interview questions and questionnaire used in this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study informed and utilized both LatCrit and FemCrit to guide data collection and data analysis.

Table 2.2

Interview and Questionnaire Utilization of LatCrit and FemCrit

Tenets		Questions that relate to theory	
LatCrit	FemCrit	Questionnaire	Interview
The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination	Addressing essentialism, anti-essentialism, and intersectionality	What ethnicity do you most identify with? Are you a first-generation college student?	How would you define the centrality of race and intersectionality at the university you work for?
The challenge of dominant ideology	Normalization of race and racism	How many years have you been in a leadership role?	How have you challenged the education system and its take on objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity?
The commitment to social justice	Counter-storytelling		Can you tell me about the story of your success? How did you achieve the position you are in today?
The centrality of experiential knowledge	Addressing the complexities of race and gender with multidimensionality	How many years have you worked in higher education?	What practices or initiatives, if any, did the university you work at conduct to recruit more Latinas in leadership positions?

Data Analysis Procedures

This qualitative case study utilized thematic analysis as a method of “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p. 808). I interpreted interviews and discussions with study participants that produced themes and patterns to provide more in-depth research and a better understanding of human experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Data analysis for qualitative case study research focuses on the participant’s story. Data analysis requires preparing and organizing data, putting the data into themes through coding, and representing collected data in figures, tables, or discussions

(Creswell, 2007). Yin (2017) suggested researchers play with the data to search for patterns, insights, or concepts that could help with analysis. The procedures used to analyze the data for this case study followed the data analysis spiral outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018).

The data analysis process began with reviewing the semi-structured, one-on-one interviews of all study participants at each university and pulling data that would tell the story of their leadership journey. I utilized the questionnaire to provide relevant demographic information and analyze the answers collected from the Zoom interviews conducted with each study participant. The process of analyzing the data included the following seven steps:

1. Thoroughly reading each transcribed interview to become familiar with each study participant and their unique stories and experiences.
2. Notating and creating emerging themes from interviews and connecting themes through clustering.
3. Reading each transcript with an apriori understanding of LatCrit, FemCrit, and intersectionality.
4. Open coding of text.
5. Creating a broad and linear summary from interview transcripts detailing each participant's leadership journey.
6. Ensuring each study participant's story had a beginning, middle, and end to follow narrative inquiry.
7. Creating a word list and categories of similar terms and repetitive words used by all survey participants.

I utilized comparative methods to ensure data consistency and interview transcription (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). First, I transcribed each Zoom interview. I created word lists and common phrasing trends to find similarities and differences between each study

participant. Second, I listed each phrasing trends and word lists within each transcribed interview. Phrasing trends and word lists created themes. Finally, I developed each theme. All three participants voiced the same phrasing trends and words throughout their interviews. Therefore, each theme was clear, concise, and developed quickly.

I transcribed all interview data collected and highlighted different perspectives in each. In addition, I created tables to draw connections between groups. Specifically, I used tables to compare the data collected from the three universities studied. I discussed patterns of behavior with the three women administrators that participated in the case study. I summarized and categorized initial thoughts from interviews and created memos for each. At this point, I coded the data according to the differentiation of thoughts. I collected data for this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study through interviews and questionnaires. I created a detailed description of each case study, setting, and findings during data collection. I analyzed and interpreted each university's data using naturalistic generalizations.

After collecting the initial data, I decided several case studies could result from the initial findings. Therefore, I intend to grow this case study into a mixed-methods study. I created a discussion of the themes that resulted from data collection. Themes were organized into categories. Quotes and detailed descriptions provided evidence of the themes found. Graphs and tables were utilized to show results. I created a summary of the significant findings after data analysis. I then interpreted the answers to the research questions. Past literature studied and theories helped analyze the data collected. Additionally, I mentioned the study's limitations and implications for future research.

I used multiple validation strategies for this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study. It is imperative to get rid of the “dark matter that is often omitted in qualitative research by commenting on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261). I was committed to the validity and reliability of the study data collected. By using a narrative method, bias was minimized and participants were able to express themselves freely. Interviews were conducted with participants to get a better understanding of their experiences. They were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in each participant’s success story. Real-world interviews allowed participants to express themselves freely without feeling judged. Also, open-ended and semi-structured questions allowed me to pace the interview and the participants to express themselves freely. Furthermore, I invited participants to participate in crucial research decisions, provide data analysis and interpretation, and collaborated with them on the research.

The narratives told by Latina administrators at three Hispanic-serving institutions in South Central Texas informed this qualitative case study. According to Dhunpath (2000), in narrative analysis, “the focus is not on the factual accuracy of the story constructed, but on the meaning it has for the respondent” (p. 545). For this study, I used thick and detailed descriptions and transcribed interviews with coding to catalog each step of the research process. Furthermore, validation strategies were viewed from three perspectives: the researcher’s, the participants’, and the readers’.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

It is necessary for a researcher to demonstrate credibility by triangulating multiple sources of data, uncovering disconfirming evidence, and clarifying biases or reflections

of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Information discovered through participant observation allowed me to prove trustworthiness and authenticity by (a) member checking or seeking participant feedback, (b) prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, and (c) collaborating with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 261–262). I also conducted member checks with participants to confirm the accuracy of transcribing data (Creswell, 2007). Member checks allowed for participants to ensure the data transcribed by me was accurate and detailed. Each participant was able to review their transcriptions and make any necessary changes. Yin (2017) suggested different types of validity take place during the data collection, data analysis, research design, and data collection phases. They included construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. I implemented validity tests throughout the case study and at each research phase. Lastly, I created and maintained a case study database for organizing and documenting all data collected during this qualitative study.

Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board reviewed the proposal for this multiple case study. Following the review, the determination made was this study was non-human subject research. I then emailed potential participants about the study. In all research studies, human subjects must be protected. Because this was a qualitative study, it was imperative to capture the accurate messages and stories of the participants. A total of three ethical issues were considered and re-assessed throughout the study. Participants were given informed consent, participants voluntarily took part, and data was protected (Arifin, 2018).

Following the Institutional Review Board of Baylor University's determination of this study as non-human subjects research, I obtained access through approval from each of the three universities asked to participate in this study. The Review Boards and individuals at each research site agreed to participate. I determined maximum variation criteria to differentiate the sites and individuals observed and interviewed. I provided a consent form to all participants who took part in the case study. An example of the consent form is in Appendix C. I recorded the interviews on video and audio. All notes and files were stored on a password-protected drive. The participants were given pseudonyms: Participant 1—Ms. M, Participant 2—Ms. E, and Participant 3—Ms. B. I will keep all materials relevant to this qualitative case study for a minimum of 7 years in accordance with the Institutional Review Board of Baylor University application.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study had three limitations. First, as a Latina woman and an educational leader, the research collected was subject to bias. To avoid bias, I kept interviews focused on one question at a time. I also gave each participant the questionnaire and asked them to answer in their own words. I documented the participants' answers so they could be referred to in the future. Second, to ensure accuracy and transparency at every step, I recorded and transcribed each interview. I also kept copies of completed questionnaires password saved on my personal computer. Lastly, the sample size of only three participants limits the validity and quality of the data collected. While the sample size was small, I was able to gather thick and rich descriptions from each study participant, ensuring data collected was accurate, honest, and true.

There were three delimitations to this study. First, the sample size led to the exclusion or inclusion of participants. A bigger sample size could provide more information for the research and create a smaller margin of error. Second, the research was conducted only in South Central Texas, so the findings could not be generalized to all Latina females in administrative positions in the United States. Lastly, because this research involves a topic that is rarely investigated and challenges conventional objectivity, it may go unnoticed. I chose to research Hispanic-serving institutions in South Central Texas with at least one Latina administrator. Latinxs make up most of the population in South Central Texas, so study participants were recruited from minority-serving schools. The findings in this case study do not reflect all Latina leaders' experiences in higher education.

Conclusion

Chapter Two outlined the methodology and design used in this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study on Latina administrators in higher education. I explained the reasons for using a multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study method and why they were appropriate for this dissertation research. To explain how the case study was designed, I used theoretical application. I then discussed the study site and participants. I used data collection and analysis to create behavior patterns and generalizations. Themes were categorized. The results were presented in the form of codes, models, and tables. I used multiple validation strategies to interpret all data collected. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations to protect human subjects were discussed and outlined. Finally, I presented limitations and delimitations to the case study to create a study that respects and honors its participants. Chapter Three presents the

findings and answers to the research questions presented at the beginning of this case study. Key themes from the data collected are explained. A cross-case analysis of the three interviews reveals common themes, similarities, and differences among the participants. The third chapter outlines Latina leadership in higher education, its implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE

Qualitative Data Findings

Introduction

In this study, I explored the experiences of three Latinas recruited, promoted, and retained in administrator positions at three universities in South Central Texas. Utilizing FemCrit and LatCrit and their intersectionality as the theoretical framework, I gathered and uncovered the complex and varied stories of three successful Latina leaders in education who agreed to participate in this case study. Participants were given the opportunity to tell their own unique story without being censored in gathering data. I only interrupted an interview to clarify a point and bring to life a richer description of the data collected. The women told their stories through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Data collected during interviews detailed what practices or initiatives each university used to recruit more Latinas into administrative positions. In addition, each study participant explained the path it took to attain the roles they are in today. To answer the research questions, I interviewed and gathered data from three Latina administrators at three different universities in South Central Texas:

RQ1: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today?

RQ2: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators?

Chapter Three presents the findings and answers to the research questions that guided this qualitative case study. First, this chapter focuses on each Latina administrator and briefly introduces them. Second, this chapter presents the data collected from each administrator and presents the results and findings for each research source. In addition, key themes from the data collected are explained. Third, this chapter conducts cross-case analysis with the findings from the three cases to uncover common themes, similarities, and differences among the study participants. Fourth, this chapter answers the research questions presented at the beginning of this case study based on the information collected from study participants. Lastly, this chapter outlines each Latina administrator's implications and recommendations on how Latina leadership can grow in higher education. The participants' stories, told in their own words, highlight the importance of storytelling in qualitative research. I focused on creating an environment of open dialogue for the participants to feel comfortable telling their stories of success. The data collection showed that while no two stories are the same, the struggles faced by the Latinx population are real and hard to break.

LatCrit looks at the Latinx population's struggles because of culture, resources, circumstances, stereotypes, and imbalances (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). It also brings a unique approach to the story and journey of minority women. LatCrit tenets guided this study. The tenets included challenging dominant ideology, the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, and a commitment to social justice. FemCrit focuses on women's multiple identities (Pratt-Clarke, 2010) and how their experiences are a product of these identities. Intersectionality brings together gender and ethnicity and shows how more than one category of difference plays a role in

a Latinxs life (Hancock, 2007). These stories challenge the system's view of race, gender, and class and give voice to a group that is often overlooked when achieving higher-level roles. All three participants met face-to-face with me via Zoom for the one-on-one interviews. During the interview, each participant answered questions that provided thick and rich data regarding their individual stories of success. The average one-on-one interview lasted 45 minutes.

Participant 1 (Ms. M)

Participant 1 was aged 51–60. She identified with the term Chicana. She was married and a first-generation college student. Her undergraduate degree was in child development, and she had attained a Ph.D. At the time of the interview, she had worked in higher education for 18 years. She had been in a leadership role in higher education for 5 years.

Participant 2 (Ms. E)

Participant 2 was aged 31–40. She identified with the term Hispanic. She was married and a first-generation college student. Her undergraduate degree was in psychology, and she had attained a Ph.D. At the time of the interview, she had worked in higher education for 4 years. She had been in a leadership role throughout her career of 18 years, 4 of those years in higher education.

Participant 3 (Ms. B)

Participant 3 was aged 31–40. She identified with the term Hispanic. She was married. She was not a first-generation college student. Her undergraduate degree was a Bachelor of Art in Communication, Advertising, and Public Relations. The highest

degree she completed was a Master of Education in Student Development and Leadership in Higher Education. At the time of the interview, she had worked in higher education for 15 years, 10 of those in a leadership role.

Findings

Throughout this section, I discuss the findings based on questionnaires and interviews with three Latinas in administration at three colleges in South Central Texas (see Appendices B and C). The research questions at the center of the research were:

RQ1: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today?

RQ2: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators?

Table 3.1 shows the answers to the first four questions given to each study participant. The key factors to take away from these questions are age range, what ethnicity each participant identified with, marriage status, and if the study participant was a first-generation college student.

Table 3.1

First Four Questions of Participant Questionnaire

Question	Participant		
	1	2	3
Age range	51-60	31-40	31-40
Ethnicity	Chicana	Hispanic	Hispanic
Marriage status	Married	Married	Married
First-generation college student?	Yes	Yes	No

The most interesting element of the questionnaire's first four questions is that all three women do not refer to themselves as Latina. When given the choice, they preferred

the terms Hispanic, followed by Chicana. The researcher herself also prefers the term Hispanic. It would be interesting to conduct further research as to whether this is a geographical term or a cultural familiarity one. The three participants' age range is wide, providing good sampling data. It also shows that age range is not necessarily a factor to Latinas attaining leadership positions in higher education. Two of the three study participants were first generation college students.

Table 3.2 shows the answers to the last six questions of the questionnaire. The key factors to take away are the degree each participant had attained and whether they had a Ph.D. or Ed.D., the number of years working in higher education, the number of years in leadership, if they had received leadership training at the university they worked at, and if so, what that training was called.

Table 3.2

Last Six Questions of Participant Questionnaire

Question	Participant		
	1	2	3
Undergraduate degree	Child development	Psychology	Communication, advertising, and public relations
Highest degree completed	Ph.D.	Ph.D.	Masters
Years worked in higher education	18	4	15
Years in leadership role	5	18	10
Received leadership training at university	Yes	No	Yes
If yes, name of training	New Leadership Academy–Rand Faculty Fellows Leadership Program	NA	Leadership 2017-18 and 2016 NASPA Region III/SACSA Mid-Manager Institute

All three study participants had at minimum a master's degree. Majors differed with one having a BA in Communication, Advertising, and Public Relations; one in psychology; and one in child development. Two study participants held Ph.D. degrees and the other a Master of Education in Student Development and Leadership in Higher Education. Collectively, the three participants worked an average of 12 years in higher education and 6 years in a leadership role. The number of years suggests it took about half the total time working in the education industry for the women to achieve leadership positions. The three participants were asked what type of leadership training they received and whether it was ongoing. At the time of the interview, two participants had received both leadership training and training offered by the university they worked at. One participant answered no to Question 9. The researcher was unable to determine if this was a factor to consider or if it was just additional data.

The questionnaire responses provide crucial demographic information for this qualitative study. There was no relationship between age, marriage status, and being a first-generation college student, but the information about how the participants identified themselves was quite interesting. Studying terminology and what Latina leaders prefer to be called can branch off from this research and provide more rich and thick data on Latina leaders. I can also see more research collected on education levels and their effect on higher-level positions in academia for Latinas. Lastly, the collective years of experience working in education and then achieving administrative positions were not surprising, nor did they add much to the data collection process for this case study.

The one-on-one interview responses showed many commonalities and many differences across participants. The Zoom interviews created a safe and private

environment for participants to share their experiences in achieving administrative positions in higher education while at the same time dealing with the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity within the traditional power structure of the institution of higher education. The following sections are the narratives of each participant, along with their answers to Research Questions 1 and 2. An analysis of their narratives follows.

Data Collection Findings—Case 1 (“Ms. M”)

Ms. M started her narrative by sharing information about her family and the cultural norms she grew up with within her community. Ms. M was always an overachieving Latina student. She grew up in a small rural farm town. Her parents were farm workers. At a young age, around first or second grade, she learned about racial discrimination against Mexican Americans and the educational system. She explained,

People didn’t like me because I was a Mexican. I was raised to be proud because my father was a Mexican immigrant, and my mom was Mexican American. My mother dropped out of school in sixth grade to take care of the family and my dad had an eighth-grade education.

Her parents were literate and “knew numbers,” which was a big deal because neither parent received a formal education. Growing up for Ms. M always involved education. She mentioned, “My dad told me I deserved to be there.” He would say in Spanish, “We work hard for you to get an education.” Ms. M noted that her father had a critical perspective on things. Her mother was more dismissive, telling her not to pay attention to the students that would make fun of her and tell her she did not belong. Her mother said, “They’re just dumb and uneducated. They don’t know what they’re talking about.” She would remind Ms. M, “Don’t worry about what the kids are telling you. You keep on studying.” Ms. M’s mother was very engaged and involved in her education.

Ms. M's family and the cultural norms of her community prepared her to become a leader and give a voice to a community that often does not have one. She was always aware of racial discrimination towards Mexicans and as she got older realized it was also happening to African Americans. She noted, "Whites were always seen as better than or more privileged." This critical consciousness motivated Ms. M to become a high achiever, especially in education. While Ms. M's mother worked at her cleaning job, women would tell her stories of their children going to college. Ms. M explained, "That is where mom was exposed to that institution—she didn't know what it was but knew it led to bigger and better places." Ms. M's mother assured her, "The people who went to college had a wonderful life." Then, Ms. M found out that all her father's family in Mexico were well-educated, so her father encouraged college as well. The university Ms. M went to had Chicano studies at the time she transferred, so she felt comfortable going there. She wanted to be mixed with other people doing multicultural work. For the first time, she had a Chicana professor from Stanford who told her she should go on and get a Ph.D. Ms. M asked her professor, "How do I do that?" The professor told her to do research and go into a specific discipline. The professor showed Ms. M the pathway to take because she understood Ms. M's experience. Ms. M continued, "We must explain it's not merely seeing ourselves. We need someone who understands us." This professor understood Ms. M in a way she still did not and was able to pose questions that Ms. M had not even considered. Ms. M knew her professor had the experience. To her, that defined representation.

Research question 1: Ms. M's response. Research Question 1 asked, using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three

universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today? In response, Ms. M attributed family, education, and the development of leadership to her experiences. The answers to her questions are highlighted below.

Ms. M grew up part of a proud Latinx community. Ms. M's family were part of the Farmworker Movement Union and were politically involved in organizations and protests. She grew up with that frame of mind and when she started college decided to become a sociologist. She was good at collecting data and at math and science. Ms. M first attended community college and then she transferred to university. Since only one recruiter showed up for college day at her community college, she attended that college. She took advantage of the one person that showed up and filled out an application. A team of mentors and leaders always surrounded Ms. M. She credited mentors as one of the main keys to her success. She explained, "The Latinas that had more experience than me were usually 10 years older and understood barriers and challenges. They may not have looked like me [light-skinned versus indigenous], but they understood my challenges and gave me advice." Ms. M credits mentors for her college leadership success.

Ms. M's father always framed things in the athletic frame of mind: teamwork, collaboration, and partnership. He would say those were the factors of great leadership. Ms. M noted, "He would say base hits are important. Whatever you do, get on base. Stay in the game and stay on base." Ms. M said one way she became a leader was by developing and discovering her own talents and strengths. She suggested,

Be honest with yourself and your weaknesses. Address them. Ask for help. We need to learn how to be good friends with people. I have friends who when I need something they will do what they can and give me advice. I do the same with them. I will drop everything I have for my friends.

However, in traditional Latinx fashion, it is very hard to ask for help. Ms. M suggested taking a negative situation and making it positive. She said,

Latinas have a lot of pride. As Latinas, we need to build our skills, understand what our weaknesses are, network and build friends that will build up our strengths and help us with our weaknesses. Go into everything with a team approach.

Many things helped Ms. M experience mobility in her path to administration. She believed in helping others, especially Latinas, succeed along with her. “I lift people up as I rise. My defense mechanism helps me with microaggressions and when I am stuck and need help.” Ms. M also suggested building a network. “Sharing is part of leadership. Building something for someone else is building yourself. I gain when someone else is successful. We need to have the philosophy to rise as ‘gente’ [people] and ‘la raza’ [the people]. Then, we’re successful, ‘nosotros todos’ [all of us].”

Ms. M said one of the barriers she had to conquer to grow in higher education was access. She suggested,

We need to unlock access for Latinas in higher education. We need representation by those who understand barriers and can communicate and engage with other Latinas. They are the ones that can help others face the barriers and challenges that will be experienced along the path.

In addition to learning about Latinas’ historical experiences, she recommended examining one’s self-confidence. Ms. M explained further, “How do we get past doubting ourselves? I’ve always sought out coaches that have understanding and are vulnerable and willing to share that information with me; so that I could learn from their mistakes and pathways.” Ms. M knew language and culture. She also knew how to bridge the cultural divide. She then explained, “Someone who doesn’t share my experiences won’t do that. We need coaches to help Latinas move up.”

Research question 2: Ms. M's response. Research Question 2 asked, using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators? In response, Ms. M discussed leadership training, the centrality of race, and the hiring practices of the university she worked for. Her answers are highlighted next.

At the time of the interview, Ms. M had attended leadership trainings in previous years. However, they were not put on by the university she worked for. Ms. M was not required to participate yearly in leadership training held by or paid for by the university where she worked. The university did advertise in job ads that they were seeking diversity, but they did not say they were looking specifically for Latina leaders and administrators. However, the university did say they were looking for diversity, including Latinas. There was also no policy or program mandating the university to create an environment of diversity specifically for Latinas. Ms. M was offered funding for leadership training conducted through a leadership academy and fellows program. Leadership training conducted through a leadership academy or fellows program was not offered at the university where she worked.

When asked about the definition of centrality of race and intersectionality at her university, Mrs. M answered, “The PC answer is yes. They advertise in job ads that they are seeking diversity, but they won’t say they are looking for Latinas specifically. They will say they are looking for diversity including Latinas.” There was no policy or program mandating them to create an environment of centrality of race and intersectionality at the university. When asked about the importance of CRT and intersectionality in relation to university practices that recruit and retain Latina

administrators Ms. M answered, “Latinas in positions of leadership will increase access, retention, graduation, and promotion into higher education.” Her strategy was to create a color-blind framework and implement it at the university she worked for. That was her goal.

Analysis of Ms. M’s case study. Ms. M’s story intertwined with LatCrit and FemCrit tenets throughout her interview for this case study. Her story of success described the struggles the Latina and Latinx population faces because of culture, circumstances, stereotypes, and imbalances. It was Ms. M’s family, friends, and mentors that helped her commit to social relevance and cultivate community. Ms. M grew up part of a proud Latinx community shown by her family taking part in the Farmworker Movement Union. As a family, they were all politically involved in organizations and protests. A team of mentors and leaders followed Ms. M. She credited mentors as one of the main keys to her success. Ms. M also always followed her father’s motto of teamwork, collaboration, and partnership. Those factors equaled great leadership. Lastly, Ms. M become a leader by developing and discovering her own talents and strengths and helping others, especially Latinas, succeed along with her.

FemCrit was part of Ms. M’s story because of the focus on her identity and experiences, and how they related to her being a minority woman. She served as an example to Latinas in the industry. As a Latina leader, Ms. M’s story showed how more than one factor played into the success of a minority woman. She also described the feeling of contentment and power she gained by challenging a White-centric industry to include more Latina leadership.

Data Collection Findings—Case 2 (“Ms. E”)

Ms. E grew up in a farming community. Her parents were hourly workers, and she was not exposed to higher education growing up. Ms. E also had a very difficult upbringing that she mentioned, “...prepared me to deal with very complicated things and people.” Ms. E. did not have educational support that connected her to pursue higher education. She explained, “Some people are set up with connections that happen from day one. I did not have any of those connections. I had to make them along the way myself.” Making the connections along the way sometimes worked and sometimes didn’t. Ms. E learned how difficult it was to be taken seriously as a Latina woman. She attributed hard work as the key to her success. Ms. E was self-made, meaning she created her path, which eventually led to higher education administration. At the time of the interview, Ms. E held a master’s degree in psychology and was a licensed professional counselor. She had also attained a Ph.D. Ms. E worked in the criminal justice system, which she credited as the place that helped her learn how to talk to people regardless of where they came from. Her next job was as a management consultant in insurance. There she learned more about how to work with people, manage difficult situations, and work with plenty of organizations and their people. She then went to work at an in-house corporation with industrial psychology. Ms. E noted, “I’ve always been in the people business—that’s the hard part.” When I interviewed Ms. E in 2023, she held the position of Associate Vice President, Human Resources, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at the university where she worked. She was also in the process of establishing an office of equity at the university with the backing of its first Latina president.

Research question 1: Ms. E's response. Research Question 1 asked, using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today? Ms. E stressed hard work, participating in any leadership opportunities you can, and empowerment as the keys to her success. Her answers are highlighted following.

Ms. E's skillset focuses on the people and administrator side. Rather than becoming a professor, she used her people skills to create policies, programs, and processes at the university level. All these jobs led her to create an office of equity at the university where she worked. According to Ms. E, "Some people are set up with connections that happen from day one. I did not have any of those connections. I had to make them along the way by myself." What saved her was hard work. She explained further,

I feel like I have had to put in more blood, sweat, and tears than the next person. That ultimately prevailed. I am self-made. All I had on my side was my work ethic. I've overworked myself up to this point in my life.

According to Ms. E, her success story had three key aspects. The first one was to keep up with education and gain the most from it. She assured me, "Credibility will be achieved once your education is complete. That is just the way it works." Second, Ms. E suggested taking on any opportunity that becomes available to further one's career. She explained, "Volunteering led me to gain connections. I took on projects nobody else wanted to do. I always raised my hand and assured my superiors that I would be successful at any work that came my way." Opportunities gave Ms. E the experience that she needed, and those opportunities led to greater things. Ms. E's third suggestion was to work hard at anything that came along. She continued, "I don't know if I have had to do this because I am a female, minority, or whatever. It has been a hard road. I've put a lot of time and energy

into my work. That work led to what society terms successful.” Ms. E emphasized people skills. She noted,

I have worked along very successful people, leadership and educated. I have also been in the position of firing people simply because they don’t know how to treat other people. It doesn’t matter where I grew up, who my parents were, where I got my education. At the end of the day, you work hard and know how to treat people. That has ultimately prevailed. My success comes from education, never passing up an opportunity, always working hard, regardless of the job, and always making sure I treat people right.

At the time of the interview, Ms. E held a senior position in Human Resources, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the university where she worked. She was also in the process of transferring over and creating an office of equity at the same university. While answering the question of how she attained the position she was in, Ms. E further explained,

The first thing I do is ask about an institution’s equity and justice program. Our school is talking the talk and walking the walk for diversity. I have chosen to have a voice and speak out. I purposely looked for a specific place like this to work. I’ve always been outspoken. To this day, I will be outspoken. Unless this is real, I don’t want any part of it. I am one of the unique people that is OK to walk away. That, in turn, has finally led me to great opportunities and led me to an organization reaping the benefit of my work.

The key for Ms. E was not only understanding racial and gender issues but empowering this population. This empowerment was imperative to Ms. E’s journey in higher education.

Research question 2: Ms. E’s response. Research Question 2 asked, using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators? In response, Ms. E discussed looking for a university that focused on diversity hiring, retention, and strategic planning. Her answers are highlighted below.

Ms. E worked for a university that was taking the lead in creating ways to hire and retain diverse employees. When asked RQ2, Ms. E was able to detail what the university she worked at was doing to recruit Latina administrators and other minorities into leadership positions. According to Ms. E, “Diversity hiring is looking at process and policy to see what needs to change for everyone to get an equal opportunity.” Her university trained every hiring manager and talked with them about bias in the selection process. The focus was on fixing the system to be as equitable as possible. Ms. E continued, “EEOC still says to hire the person that is most qualified. I want to even the playing field as much as possible for everyone. Hiring is done through a search committee and training. Our university hires 100% differently.” Retention also played a huge part in hiring and keeping a diverse population of employees. Ms. E noted, “We cannot hire diversity, equity, and forget the inclusion. We must create an inclusive community. Once the person is here, regardless of their background, they are going to feel like that are truly heard.” Ms. E developed a retention program on campus for different population groups. To her, the retention of employees was just as important as recruitment at the university.

Lastly, during her interview Ms. E made sure to mention that the new president of the university, its first Latina/Hispanic president, started her tenure by creating a 5-year strategic plan that included the following priorities: diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Going back to the basic foundations of education, this university was establishing itself as a destination and social-justice university. Their strategic plan was social justice. Therefore, the staffing, recruiting, and hiring practices were very specific at this university. Ms. E’s university was challenging the feminist movement and developing an

understanding of how important both race and gender were to understanding leadership roles. The university was challenging dominant ideology by its commitment to social justice and its determination to hire and promote a population that is often overlooked. And, not to be forgotten, they had just hired their first Latina/Hispanic president. Additionally, the diversity and retention hiring practices carried out by the university where Ms. E worked reinforced the many examples of leadership development for Latinas described in the literature review for this case study. These programs were training the next generation of leaders in higher education.

Analysis of Ms. E's case study. Ms. E's answers to the research questions focused on the tenets of LatCrit and FemCrit, specifically the centrality of race and gender as well as the commitment to social justice and gender equality through counter-storytelling. By answering Research Question 2, Ms. E was also able to give specific examples of practices and initiatives her university was then doing to recruit and hire Latina administrators. Ms. E worked for a university that was creating ways to hire and retain diverse employees. They actively recruited Latina administrators and other minorities into leadership positions. Diversity hiring studied their process and policy to provide everyone with an equal opportunity. The university trained every hiring manager and talked with them about bias in the selection process. It also focused on fixing the system to be as equitable as possible. Ms. E developed a retention program on campus for different population groups. Lastly, the new president of the university, its first Latina/Hispanic president, started her tenure by creating a 5-year strategic plan that included the following priorities: diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. This added to the research on intersectionality by addressing the complexities of race, nationality, and

gender with multi-dimensionality. Ms. E was a change master in her field and the university she worked for backed her 100% in diversity and retention practices.

Data Collection Findings—Case 3 (“Ms. B”)

Ms. B grew up in a small, border town between Mexico and Texas. The town was ethnically divided. In her own words, “I grew up in a town where if you saw a brown person, they were from Mexico.” Her ethnicity and culture were questioned and compared to the Latinx population often, especially at school. My peers would tell me “You’re not Mexican like them. You’re White like us.” Ms. B also grew up in a household that was educated and traditionally Hispanic. Her parents were married and educated. Ms. B was not a first-generation college student. She also attributed her success to being a young and educated Latina. However, when choosing a university to attend, she wanted to see Latinx people and wanted to be with Catholics. To her, that was all she knew.

When starting her interview, Ms. B mentioned it was not until she changed her master’s program that she was introduced to the many jobs and careers available in higher education. Ms. B ultimately decided to go into student development in higher education and almost immediately started saying yes to everything. Ms. B’s lack of understanding of what higher education could do for a person resulted from growing up in a small town. Once she was exposed to more and more things Ms. B says she “went all over the place.”

Ms. B escalated quickly in her career because of “being a young Latina.” But it was not the institution who saw her but two to three people who saw her and were White males. The university she worked for at the time of the interview prided itself on saying

they were a Hispanic-serving institution anytime they got the chance. This was a comfort to Ms. B., she felt at home. And at the time of the interview, she informed me there was nowhere else she could see herself.

Research question 1: Ms. B's response. Research Question 1 asked, using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today. Ms. B stressed getting your name out there and who you know, having a voice, and challenging dominant ideology. Her answers are highlighted below. After completing her master's degree, Ms. B went to work for a small, private university in rural, White America. She did experience issues with gender and ethnicity at that college. But "I stayed there a while, networked, and did my job well." Then, Ms. B got the opportunity to work for an adult completion program at a small, private university based out of the capital of Texas. Ms. B mentioned, "Working for a small, private university allowed me to stand out versus working for a large, public institution." Ms. B networked and found the job she was at during the interview. Ms. B always tells students, "It is not only about your skills. It is about who you know too, and who knows you for the right reason. That will help you in your profession a lot more than just your degree and resume." In her current position, Ms. B was able to sit at the table and give her voice. She said, "I put my name out there. I said yes. People recognized my skill set and stole me from other areas. I have been at this college 11 years and have had four different positions progressively moving up." According to Ms. B, her main barrier was exposure. Once she learned the opportunities that she had in front of her, she thrived and excelled. That led her to a high-level position she loved at a progressive minority-serving university. "I do have to prove that I'm not

dumb for them to take me seriously and as a woman who still looks fairly young, I have to prove myself to others often.” In her opinion, others in higher education did not have to do that.

Interestingly, Ms. B did not feel challenged by the dominant ideology or normalization of race as a staff member. She mentioned it happened more with working with students that do not identify as Latinx and with the policies and procedures of what she did. Her main job at the university was enrolling students in the Honors College. She explained further, “I think the policies and procedures, in the beginning, were not inclusive of students in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.” The Rio Grande Valley of Texas is predominately made up of Mexican-American people who have immigrated from Mexico and settled in the United States border towns of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Ms. B even felt the dominant ideology personally.

Faculty members at the university created a Latinx faculty group. Rather than being inclusive of all the Latinx employees of the institution, they told me I didn’t have a Ph.D. and was not in the classroom teaching, so I didn’t belong in their group. They suggested I start my own Latinx administrator group instead. Ms. B’s response was, you can’t blame someone for ignorance and not knowing. Let’s teach and talk versus challenging the system. Being diverse is who we are at this university. I think we have been more proactive than reactive on some things, but we are fortunate that we could be.

Ms. B truly believed the university she worked at was inclusive, its own entity, and student focused. Being their own entity was a massive benefit to them. The university was in the seventh largest city in the United States, and one of the country’s most diverse cities. People wanted their students because they spoke across cultures. Not only were the students and faculty members diverse. They were also given the ability to be their own individuals.

Research question 2: Ms. B's response. Research Question 2 asked, using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators? In response, Ms. B discussed looking for a university that focused on diversity, inclusivity, and identity. Her answers are highlighted below.

Ms. B knew her story was different. She worked in the seventh largest city in the United States and over half of the population of this city identified as being Latinx.

According to Ms. B,

Being diverse was at the core of who we were as a university. Over 60% identify as Latinx/Hispanic. Here, we say we are a Hispanic-serving institution anytime we get. I feel that students who identify as White or faculty that identify with being White have a much more difficult time with race issues and intersectionality than we do.

Ms. B even had students ask her, “Since you are a Hispanic-serving institution and I don’t identify as being Hispanic, can I still get in?” She continued, “When the president of the university started here, he created the position of vice president of inclusion and excellence. He made it actively known that he wanted a diverse cabinet so many more Latinas were seen in higher-level positions. Ms. B asked students, “Do you want to pick people to lead because of the skill set they bring to the job, or do you want to pick someone because of their color?” This was a conversation that happened often. Ms. B concluded her point by saying,

We have a commitment, we have a diversity office, we have diversity statements, but it’s not something we have to pull out all the time. It’s here and natural. It was created not because we had to, but because it is who we are as a university.

Ms. B mentioned the university was inclusive, its own entity, and student focused. It was a huge benefit that the university was in one of the most diverse cities in the United States. According to Ms. B,

People want our students because they want global citizens. They want people who speak across cultures. They say it's a salad bowl here because they want students to keep their individual identities. Students are drawn to this university because of its diversity. It is at the core of who we all are naturally. It is not forced in any way.

The university that Ms. B worked at wanted leadership to identify like their students identify. The Vice President of Business Affairs was Latina. The Vice President of Intercollegiate Athletics was Latina. The university cast a broad net so their pool of candidates included Latinas. Ms. B continued, "Human resources advertises a certain way and they have done a really good job of recruiting and hiring Latinas in administration leadership." However, it was difficult to recruit and retain Latina staff members. At the time of the interview, Ms. B got calls all the time trying to convince her to move to different universities across the country. She explained, "They are heavily going after Latinas in higher education, and they are taking them from all over the county. It is a very competitive market for Latinas right now." At the conclusion of the interview, I asked Ms. B advice on how to enter and progress in higher education as a career. She said, "Get your foot in the door. Once you get hired, volunteer for everything. Build your network. Once you get yourself in the door, stand out and say yes." Those words proved to be the key to her success.

Analysis of Ms. B's case study. Ms. B's interview was very different from the other two women interviewed because the university she worked for had a naturally developed culture of inclusivity and diversity. They prided themselves on being known in the community as a Hispanic-serving, progressive university. Ms. B achieved her leadership position because of hard work and determination. The university focused on making sure all candidates were diverse. This was shown through the many themes that

resulted from our interview: commitment to social justice, challenging dominant ideology, the glass ceiling, and the cultural norms of a university.

Cross-Case Analysis

The purpose of this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study was to examine the experiences of Latinas who have been recruited, promoted, and retained in administrators positions at three universities in South Central Texas. The two research questions that guided this case study were:

RQ1: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today?

RQ2: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators?

In this study, I used LatCrit and FemCrit as the theoretical lens through which to examine race, gender, and class in the eyes of the education system in hopes of making improvements and giving a voice to those who are often ignored.

Following an analysis of each individual case, I conducted a cross case analysis. The participants in this study emphasized their success stories were a direct result of having a voice, their background and family, and mentors paved their way to grow in leadership. These three themes are discussed in the following sections.

Theme 1: Having a Voice

LatCrit and FemCrit provide a voice to the oppressed. One of the most common themes that emerged from interviewing three Latina administrators in higher education was they had a voice and used it. The tenets in the intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit included challenging dominant ideology and taking on objectivity, meritocracy,

color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. The three participants throughout the interview process showed how they took on these challenges to achieve administrative positions in higher education. Ms. E noted,

The first thing I do is ask about an institution's equity and justice program. Our school is talking the talk and walking the walk for diversity. I have chosen to have a voice and speak out. I purposely looked for a specific place like this to work. I've always been outspoken. To this day, I will be outspoken. Unless this is real, I don't want any part of it. I am one of the unique people that is OK to walk away. That, in turn, has finally led me to great opportunities and led me to an organization reaping the benefit of my work.

The key for Ms. E was not only understanding racial and gender issues but empowering this population. This empowerment was imperative to Ms. E's journey in higher education.

In her current position, Ms. B was able to sit at the table and give her voice. She said, "I put my name out there. I said yes. People recognized my skill set and stole me from other areas. I have been at this college 11 years and have had four different positions progressively moving up." Ms. M believed in helping others, especially Latinas, succeed along with her. She explained, "I lift people up as I rise." Ms. M's voice was raised by living the philosophy of rising as "gente" (people) and "la raza" (the people). By raising her voice, she concluded, "Then, we're successful, 'nosotros todos' [all of us]."

As a result of having a voice, people who were traditionally oppressed by the system have also been able to challenge it. Therefore, one of the common themes of success for Latina leaders in administrative positions in South Central Texas is having a voice and using it.

Theme 2: Counter-Storytelling and the Importance of Family

Counter-storytelling and the importance of family was another common theme that resulted from the interviews in this case study. All three participants' parents were immigrants to this country. They all were very close to their families. Their mothers and fathers promoted education in the home and encouraged their daughters to pursue it. Their families also equated education to having a successful and lucrative life. While all three participants did experience discrimination, they also were encouraged by their parents to stand up for themselves and not let others get in the way of their futures. The following narrative is an example from Ms. E.

At a young age, I learned about racial discrimination against Mexican Americans and the educational system without having the language of what the problem was. People didn't like me because I was a Mexican. I was raised to be proud because my father was a Mexican immigrant, and my mom was a Mexican American. My dad told me I deserved to be there. In Spanish he told me, we work hard for you to get an education. He had a critical perspective. Mom was more dismissive... don't pay attention to them... they're just dumb and uneducated. They don't know what they're talking about. Don't worry about what the kids are telling you, you keep on studying.

Both parents were very engaged and involved in Ms. M's education. Ms. M said her family and the cultural norms of her community prepared her to become a leader as well as to give a voice to a community that often does not have one. She was also aware of racial discrimination towards Mexicans saying,

Latinas have a lot of pride. As Latinas, we need to build our skills, understand what our weaknesses are, network and build friends that will build up our strengths and help us with our weaknesses. Go into everything with a team approach.

For Ms. B, her peers would tell her while growing up, "You're not Mexican like them. You're White like us." However, Ms. B did grow up in a household that was educated and traditionally Hispanic. Her parents were married and were educated. Ms. B was not a

first-generation college student. She attributed her success to being a young and educated Latina. In her current leadership position, Ms. B was able to sit at the table and give her voice. She said, “I put my name out there. People recognized my skill set and stole me from other areas. I have been at this college 11 years and have had four different positions progressively moving up.”

Counter-storytelling was common with all three participants of this study. The difference for the three participants of this case study is all three were able to break free from their histories and become successful leaders in higher education. They all attributed their success to the importance of family.

Theme 3: The Need for Mentorship

In this case study, mentoring was heavily emphasized as a duty for Latina leaders. They all knew what it was like to not have a mentor that looked like them. Therefore, it was imperative for them to serve as mentors to other Latinas at their universities. Ms. M shared, “I’ve always sought out coaches that have that individual understanding and are vulnerable and willing to share that information with me. I was able to learn from their mistakes and their pathway.” Ms. E also commented, “They know how to code-switch; through language, culture, and bridging the cultural divide. Someone who doesn’t share my experience, won’t do that. We need Latina coaches to help Latinas move up.”

Ms. B’s idea of mentorship was a bit different from the rest. According to her, “It is not only about your skills. It is about who you know too, and who knows you for the right reason. That will help you in your profession a lot more than just your degree and resume.” A minority group of White men mentored her, but her goal was to mentor Latina students at the university where she worked. In her current position, Ms. B was

able to sit at the table and give her voice. She said, “I put my name out there. I said yes.” She mentored other Latinas to do the same.

The success stories of all three Latina leaders in this case study can be attributed to being heard, having a family background, and having mentors who helped them succeed. Even though their stories differed, these three themes were the key to all three Latinas’ success.

Discussion of Themes Related to the Literature Review

Three themes relate to the literature review in this study and mirror the intersectionality of the LatCrit and FemCrit tenets. First, the literature review discussed giving voice to an underrepresented population of people and focusing on the specific stories of the Latinx population. According to Hiraldo (2010), CRT provides a voice to oppressed people and offers more inclusivity to higher education institutions. FemCrit and LatCrit provide a voice for underrepresented groups. The Latina leaders that participated in this case study addressed Latinx’s varied identity and each of them demonstrated how giving a voice to an underrepresented population fights racism, classism, and other forms of oppression. Second, the literature review showed Latina students often find themselves balancing traditional family roles with becoming professionals. Latinas are taught from an early age to be caretakers. According to Almendarez-De Bello (2019), anything else, like pursuing higher education, is considered something to do once all family obligations are fulfilled. Latinas also link their cultural identities to the Latin culture. Mateo (2010) mentioned Latinas constantly struggle to gain their family’s acceptance while reaching a personal or professional goal. This mirrors the intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit tenets like the traditional role of the

caretaker, balancing traditional family roles in becoming a professional, success directly linked to family support, and Latinas' values and identities shaping their decision making. Lastly, the literature review mentioned that one of the barriers of Latinas' moving into leadership positions within higher education was the lack of mentorship and development programs for Latinas (Sotello et al., 2009). The following themes connect the literature review to the tenets within LatCrit, FemCrit, and their intersectionality.

Theme 1: Having a Voice

The literature review focused on themes of language, culture, and race that bring to life the experiences of Latina leaders in higher education. These themes give a voice to the Latinx community. LatCrit focuses specifically on the experiences and stories of the Latinx population (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). At the core of LatCrit is that it seeks to empower the Latinx community to be more vocal and conduct research to reduce the oppression they face, but it also aims to strengthen the Latinx identity by feeling pride in one's ethnic identity (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Helping Latinx students allows them to become more self-aware and define their identities. The three Latina leaders in this case study all took on a system that is underpopulated and showed Latin youth that they can also achieve leadership positions in higher education. They all mentioned how important having a voice was in their path to leadership. Ms. E said, "I have chosen to have a voice and speak out." Ms. B was able to sit at the table and say, "I put my name out there." Finally, Ms. M's voice was raised by living the philosophy of rising as 'gente' (people) and 'la raza' (the people). By raising her voice, she concluded, "Then, we're successful, 'nosotros todos' [all of us]."

Additionally, FemCrit explains women's experiences and perspectives are different from men. FemCrit also emphasizes the experiences of racial minority females and how their stories differ from White women's experiences. FemCrit also challenges the White male patriarch and forces the system to rethink the idea of the norm. Intersectionality was vital to this qualitative case study because it focused on Latinas in leadership positions in higher education and how they achieved the positions they are in today. The term intersectionality was traditionally used to address "the issues women of color felt were not being addressed within feminist theory" (Macias & Stephens, 2019, p. 164). As part of this qualitative study, intersectionality was critical, as it focused on women leaders and their perspectives on how they reached their current positions in higher education. It also focused on the stories of these same women who also happened to be Latina. The three Latina leaders in this case study had a voice challenged dominant ideology and pushed past diversity issues like objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.

Theme 2: Counter-Storytelling and the Importance of Family

The literature review showed Latina students often find themselves in conflict when balancing traditional family roles with becoming professionals. Family connection for Latinas directly links their cultural identity to Latin culture (Mateo, 2010). Finding a balance between family, acceptance, and pursuing a career is a constant struggle. The traditional role of caretaker, balancing traditional family roles to becoming successful professionals, and success are directly linked to family support. This is in stark contrast to other cultures that encourage independence, assertiveness, and competition. Traditionally Latinx families emphasize the opposite: co-dependence, commitment, reliance on each

other, and making life decisions as a family unit. The ingrained thinking that women “bear more of the responsibility for family caretaking than men do” delays career development and advancement for Latinas (Martin Conley, 2005, p. 25). According to Mateo (2010), families are “by far the most influential force in a Latinas life” (p. 49). As a result of strong family influence, Latinas have a hard time in their decision-making, especially when it involves independence.

All three Latina leaders that participated in this case study were very close to their families. All their mothers and fathers promoted education in the home and encouraged their daughters to pursue it. Their families also equated education to having a successful and lucrative life. While all three participants did experience discrimination, they also were encouraged by their parents to stand up for themselves and not let others get in the way of their futures. All three women credited their family and the cultural norms of their community to their success. They also said cultural norms and community prepared them to become leaders. The difference for the three participants of this case study is that all three were able to use counter-storytelling and importance of family in their path in becoming successful leaders in higher education.

Theme 3: Mentorship

Mentorship is a necessary component of Latina administrators’ success in higher education, as revealed by the literature review. Unfortunately, limited advancement opportunities create barriers. Additionally, how can Latina students take advantage of Latina mentors when they only make up 5% of full-time faculty in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023)? The importance of having mentors at a young age was considered imperative to the success of Latinas. The literature agrees.

Hurtado et al. (1999) mentioned, “Students are likely to seek out faculty who are like them and understand their experiences” (p. 22). Mentorship was at the top of responsibility and duty for Latina leaders in higher education. Latina mentoring programs at the university level have proven to be effective in helping Latinas navigate their way through higher education and find their way into management positions. The tenets of LatCrit and FemCrit focus on the importance of having mentors at a young age, specifically for Latinas. LatCrit specifically tries to strengthen the Latinx identity by feeling pride in one’s ethnicity (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). It also challenges dominant ideology and focuses on commitment to social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Latina mentors do the same. FemCrit emphasizes how important minority females’ experiences are compared to the White male patriarchal system. Berry (2015) mentioned FemCrit encourages counter-storytelling and how important it is to breathe life into the real-life stories of people who are directly involved in change. Latina mentors do the same. When it comes to the intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit, mentorship is at the top of responsibility and duty for Latina leaders in higher education.

An example of mentorship in the literature review of this case study was The National Leadership Forum. This program provides women leaders with the opportunity to interact with outstanding female leaders who share their experiences and serve as role models to help them understand the responsibilities and rewards that come with holding the office of president (American Council on Education, 2019). In addition, this program provides training to help women achieve more significant leadership positions, allowing them to meet and interact with role models in education. Mentorship programs at the university level help Latina students become aware of opportunities for their futures.

Without such programs, this population would not become aware of these opportunities and would simply not grow into leadership positions.

Like the themes related to the research questions, the themes that developed from the literature review focused on having a voice, counter-storytelling and the importance of family, and mentorship. These themes connect the literature review to the tenets of LatCrit, FemCrit, and their intersectionality. It was these themes that helped the three Latina leaders in this case study achieve success as college leaders.

Implications and Recommendations

The university system must acknowledge the lack of Latina leadership and make changes. For those interested in becoming leaders in higher education, understanding the paths taken by successful Latina administrators at universities in South Central Texas may prove to be useful. This case study helps raise awareness of the lack of Latina leaders in higher education today, specifically in administrative positions. The research focused on how three Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieved the positions they are in, and what practices or initiatives each university used to recruit them into these leadership positions. Specifically, the research data focused on the life stories of the three Latina leaders that agreed to participate in this study. These women's individual narratives highlighted the importance of having a clear and specific voice, counter-storytelling, and the importance of family in their stories of success. All three study participants also stressed the importance of mentorship throughout one's career.

LatCrit, FemCrit, and their intersectionality make up the theoretical framework that supports this research. Their tenets consider the many factors that influence Latinas'

advancement in higher education today. LatCrit in this study focused on the challenges Latinas face in the education system that pertain to race, gender, class, culture, and stereotypes. It also showed how the education system could improve by providing a voice to an often-overlooked population. Two of the three study participants were employed by universities that promoted cultures of diversity and inclusion for Latinas by creating specific departments of diversity and inclusion and promoting a university-wide culture of Latina leaders. One university challenged the dominant ideology by creating a university-wide culture centered on diversity. This study examined LatCrit, FemCrit, and their intersectionality in relation to the three study participants' identities and how those identities impacted their experiences.

Based on the intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit, this study shows that identifying with more than one category contributes to the increase in minority representation in roles traditionally filled by homogenous groups. Higher education is seeing a growth of Latinas as students and professionals looking to enter the industry. Universities need to address the intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit in supporting Latinas in administrative roles. By looking closely at recruitment, hiring, training, and pay through the lens of intersectionality, the university system can provide a better work environment for future Latina administrators and leaders.

There are three recommendations for universities to implement to grow their number of Latina leaders. The first is to create a culture of inclusivity and diversity. Inclusivity and diversity should be the core of who the university is and be evident in every aspect of university culture. Identifying as a Hispanic-serving institution should roll off the tongue in every conversation, lecture, promotion, and job fair. The university

should actively voice and provide opportunities to students from across cultures. This culture of inclusivity and diversity will prove that universities want their students to keep and share their individual identities. Diversity should be at the core of who the university is and represents.

The second recommendation is to actively promote leadership training programs that focus on growing Latina representation. Leadership programs are ways to train the next generation of Latina leaders in higher education. Examples of skills taught in leadership programs include public speaking, effective communication, and conflict management. Conger's (1996) leadership program mentioned in the literature review of this dissertation explained that universities can look at their leaders as change masters. The skills these change masters learn can and will have a long-term impact on Latina students. The way to grow Latina leadership in higher education is through leadership training programs.

The third recommendation is the creation of Latina mentorship programs at the university level. These programs must start with the leadership at each university. Mentoring Latinas provides opportunities to a population that is often overlooked. Mentors understand the unique challenges Latinas face, know how to code-switch, know the language, culture, and how to bridge the cultural divide. Mentorship programs at the university level help Latina students become aware of opportunities for their futures. Without such programs, this population will not become aware of these opportunities and will simply not grow in leadership positions in higher education. Mentorship programs for Latinas at the university level would also benefit several stakeholders. A counselor or educator at a high school, an administrator, a professor, a student, a prospective student,

and a college advisor are among those who are involved in education. Latinx families and community organizations benefit at the community level.

Conclusion

In this multiple case study, I examined the recruitment, promotion, and retention of three Latina administrators at three universities in South Central Texas. Using FemCrit and LatCrit as theoretical frameworks, information was gathered and revealed about the complex and varied stories of three successful Latina leaders. Each participant answered Research Questions 1 and 2 individually. The researcher analyzed the research questions. Cross-case analysis examined the study's framework and two research questions. The researcher identified themes related to each participant based on the literature review. Three themes emerged from this case study. The three themes that resulted were having a voice, counter-storytelling and the importance of family, and the need for mentorship. This study showed Latina leaders can successfully prepare themselves for higher-level roles in higher education if they follow the implications and recommendations provided for each stakeholder.

CHAPTER FOUR

Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

While the Latinx population continues to grow in the United States, Latinx representation in leadership positions within higher education does not. According to the Pew Research Center in 2017, Latinxs made up 5% of faculty (Flaherty, 2019). The American Council on Education, in 2016, reported “4% percent of college or university presidents were Latinx” (Hazelrigg, 2019, p. 1). Zippia (2023b) reported only 14% of college administrators were Latinx. The American Council on Education noted in 2019, “There isn’t one Latinx president in the University of Texas system despite the larger population of Latinx students in this state over others” (Hazelrigg, 2019, p. 1). The number of Latinx students enrolled in higher education continues to grow, but Latinx leaders do not. These statistics emphasize the lack of representation and the need for more Latinx leaders at the university level nationwide.

Lack of diversity in leadership positions hinders an organization's ability to connect with minority communities. The future of minority leadership, specifically Latinas in higher education sees companies addressing inequality within company culture. A workplace that is fair and equitable must start with leadership. Addressing inequalities is paramount. Training employees on what kinds of inequality are part of organizational culture is also helpful. Hiring practices should be intentional and look for diverse candidates. Every candidate should be asked the same questions and participate in

the same structured interview process. Organizations must set the example and remove employees that do not believe in the value of diversity, inclusion, and equality.

Engrained factors can and will get in the way of change. The culture of education has remained consistent since its beginning. Beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and traditions prefer and promote White males into leadership positions. The same group of individuals promote themselves year after year due to ethnocentrism. Unfortunately, fixed attitudes, beliefs based on unsubstantiated data, judgments about others based on other's opinions and experiences, and inflexible generalizations get in the way of progress.

This multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study examined the experiences of three Latina administrators recruited, promoted, and retained at three South Central Texas universities. The two research questions at the center of this case study were:

RQ1: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators from three universities in South Central Texas achieve the positions they are in today?

RQ2: Using the lens of LatCrit and FemCrit, how did successful Latina administrators describe university practices to recruit and retain Latina administrators?

The goal of this case study was to find out what it takes for Latinas to become and grow leaders in higher education. To confront the issue specifically, people must be willing to speak up and embrace change. They must have the mentality to serve and be willing to work alongside others. Redefining what a Latina leader is involves Latinas taking the time to define themselves truly and deeply. The lack of Latina leaders in higher education must be examined. There is not one way of creating change, but Latinas must trailblaze and get out of their own way. Latinas must leave a mark, never stop, challenge themselves, and if it is too easy make things harder.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Three minority-serving universities in South Central Texas were the subjects of this multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study. The data collected resulted from a demographic questionnaire of approximately 10 questions and a one-on-one, semi-structured, recorded interview. The semi-structured, recorded interview included questions on the leaders' backgrounds, opinions on how to lead, and how to move up in a traditionally unrepresented field. The lived stories of each Latina administrator and the practices and initiatives each university used to retain them were imperative to data collection. Latina leaders face the same issues as students while working in a system that is underpopulated by their ethnicity. In this case study, three Latina leaders participated. Data was analyzed using coding. Latina administrators themselves were interviewed to show their perspectives on this study. Data collection mirrored Creswell and Poth (2018).

I sent a demographic questionnaire via email to each Latina administrator who agreed to participate in the study. The questionnaire included 10 questions ranging from education to job satisfaction. The questionnaire asked administrators to explain how they continued to work towards a diverse and inclusive university through their current position. I conducted informal, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the study participants. Interviews allowed participants to talk freely and express their thoughts and feelings without judgment.

The data analysis process began with reviewing the semi-structured, one-on-one interviews of study participants at each university and pulling data that would tell the story of their leadership journey. I utilized comparative methods to ensure data consistency and interview transcription (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Based on the interview notes of study participants, I collected and analyzed data to create behavior patterns and

generalizations. The themes were categorized. Tables, models, and codes were used to present the results. All data collected were validated using multiple methods. I outlined how to protect human subjects regarding trustworthiness and ethical considerations. As a final step, I presented limitations and delimitations to the case study that respect and honor the participants.

Chapter Three presented the findings and answers to the research questions. A cross-analysis of the three interviews was completed to explain the key themes from the data. In addition to the research questions, participants provided implications and recommendations about how Latina leadership can expand in higher education. As a result of this case study, three themes emerged: having a voice, counter-storytelling and the importance of family, and the need for mentorship. It is possible to utilize and study these themes at all universities to create cultures of inclusion and diversity, especially for Latinas who wish to become leaders in their fields.

Summary of Key Findings

The participants in this study emphasized that their success stories were a direct result of having a voice, their background and family, and mentors who paved the way for them to grow in leadership. The intersectionality of Latinx, FemCrit, and intersectional identities gave voice to the oppressed. One of the most common themes that emerged from interviewing Latina administrators in higher education was they had a voice and used it. One participant, Ms. E, mentioned she chooses to have a voice and speak out. She purposely looks for places to work that allow her to have a voice and does not back down from the fact that she is outspoken. For Ms. B, she puts her name out there and sits at the table to give her voice. Ms. M raises her voice by “rising as a people.” By

raising her voice, she concluded, “Then, we’re successful, ‘nosotros todos’ [all of us].” The tenets of LatCrit and FemCrit include challenging dominant ideology and taking on objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Having a voice challenged the education system they worked for and gave voice to people not traditionally heard.

Counter-storytelling and the importance of family was another common theme that resulted from the interviews for this study. All three participants’ parents were immigrants to this country. They all were very close to their families. Their mothers and fathers promoted education and encouraged their daughters to pursue it. Their families also equated education to having a successful and lucrative career. While all three participants experienced discrimination, they were also encouraged by their parents to stand up for themselves and not let others get in the way of their futures. All three study participants became successful leaders in higher education. They all attributed their success to the importance of family.

The Latinas who participated in the case study emphasized mentoring as an essential component. It was imperative for them to serve as mentors to other Latinas at their universities. All three study participants agreed mentoring was the key to their academic leadership success. All study participants also noted mentorship programs at the university level help Latina students become aware of opportunities for their futures. They all concluded without such programs, this population would not become aware of these opportunities and would not grow in leadership.

Themes Related to Theoretical Framework

Themes that resulted from the interviews for this case were deeply rooted in the intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit. The frameworks of LatCrit and FemCrit and their intersectionality focuses on having a voice that challenges dominant ideology and takes on objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit, according to Macias and Stephens (2019), “describes the complexity of systemic issues faced by marginalized groups that are simultaneously part of more than one minority” (p. 164). For all three study participants, having a voice challenged the dominant ideology at the universities they worked for. These women were able to work for universities that focused on objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. It was evident that they were heard, and they were not afraid to express their opinions. As a result of their voices, Latina leadership in each of the universities has changed and grown.

Latina students often find themselves in conflict when balancing traditional family roles with becoming professionals. A key component of LatCrit and FemCrit’s intersectionality is the traditional role of caretaker, balancing traditional family duties with professional success, and family support as a vehicle for success. According to Hancock (2007), the intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit defines the many identities that a person represents themselves with. Intersectionality, according to Dhamoon (2011), is “pushing against hegemonic disciplinary, disciplinary, epistemological, theoretical, and conceptual boundaries” (p. 230). The intersectionality of LatCrit and FemCrit ensures that one studies race, gender, and class together.

For all three Latina leaders in this study, the traditional roles of caretaker, balancing traditional family roles to become successful professionals, and success were

directly linked to their family support. All three Latinas had their full family support from infancy. Their families encouraged them to pursue higher education and become leaders. There was no doubt in each of the women's minds that hard work and education would allow them to be successful. Additionally, all three women respected and were proud of being raised in traditional Hispanic households. However, they never let the traditional roles expected of them get in the way of achieving leadership roles in higher education.

The frameworks of LatCrit, FemCrit, and their intersectionality directly address the importance of mentorship and development programs for Latina leaders in higher education today. According to Conger (1996), leadership programs are essential ways to train the next generation of leaders in higher education. Each study participant attributed their success in higher education to mentoring. Additionally, having mentors at a young age was imperative to the success of all study participants. The responsibility and duty for the three Latina administrators focused on creating and maintaining mentorship programs at the university they each worked for. Conger (1996) also explained training needs to teach "managers and executives how to anticipate what is on their industry horizon and how to mobilize their organization to shape the future" (p. 57). Minorities and genders are a vital part of the future of education. It is important to acknowledge that higher education will require more Latina leaders in the future. Leadership and mentoring programs help Latina students navigate the higher education system and learn about opportunities within it. The Latina administrators who participated in this case study were mentored and guided through leadership programs. Consequently, they could provide a pathway for aspiring Latina students to achieve management positions in the future. The

three Latina leaders in this study have paved the way for more Latinas to lead the education system of tomorrow.

Implications and Recommendations

There are three recommendations universities can implement to grow their number of Latina leaders. The first is to create a culture of inclusivity and diversity. Inclusivity and diversity should be the core of who the university is and be evident in every aspect of university culture. Inclusive practices fully serve the needs of all students. In addition, they contribute to the creation of a broad pool of employable minorities and set a high standard in ensuring that minorities with all levels of education have full access to a global workplace and society.

The second recommendation is to actively promote leadership training programs that focus on growing Latina representation. Leadership programs are ways to train the next generation of Latina leaders in higher education. Examples of skills taught in leadership programs include public speaking, effective communication, and conflict management. The way to grow Latina leadership in higher education is through leadership training programs.

The third recommendation is the creation of Latina mentorship programs at the university level. These programs must start with the leadership at each university. The mentoring of Latinas provides opportunities to a population often overlooked by mainstream organizations. Mentors understand the unique challenges Latinas face, know how to code-switch, know the language, culture, and how to bridge the cultural divide. Mentorship programs at the university level help Latina students become aware of

opportunities for their futures. Without such programs, this population will not become aware of these opportunities and will not grow in leadership.

Findings Distribution Proposal

The desired future based on this qualitative study results in a university system that includes more Latina leaders in administration positions. Developing a plan includes describing a target audience, proposing a distribution method of research, and distributing materials to not only the target audience but also to anyone interested in seeing more Latina representation in higher education. Following is a more detailed description of the target audience, distribution method, and distribution materials.

Target Audience

This qualitative study's target audience is all higher education system members. These stakeholders specifically include Latinas at any level in higher education and students. In addition, the target audience includes the people of influence in higher education who are typically cis-gendered, heterosexual White men, and talent acquisition teams. The statistics of Latina leaders in higher education are very low, even in 2023. In South Central Texas statistics are a bit better but not enough. This topic is generalizable to all racial and ethnic minority communities and can benefit many, even those who do not identify as Latinas in education. Further, this research would benefit high school counselors, teachers, administrators, professors, students, prospective students, and college advisors. At the community level, Latinx families and organizations benefit. Lastly, the target audience is the grassroots leaders in Latinx communities who create and promote relationships within the community. By working with the Latinx community, these leaders can demonstrate the importance of Latina representation in higher

education. Higher education is available to Latinx communities just as much as to anyone else.

Proposed Distribution Method and Venue

The proposed distribution method of this dissertation is peer-reviewed academic journals including *Centro Journal*, *Chicano-Latino Law Review*, *Harvard Latino Law Review*, and the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*. It is possible for academics of all levels to access this case study in these journals. Widespread accessibility is integral to implementing change in a proven antiquated system. With the availability of this paper and research, knowledge and systematic implementation of its findings can shift academia from the inside. The information from this study can also be used within a university setting. Universities can utilize the data and suggestions given in this case study and institute their own Latina leader programs. There is a growing number of universities throughout the United States that are implementing Latina leadership programs. One example is the Latino Leadership program at Friends University. All universities, whether minority-serving or not would benefit from this data. It is possible to present these data at professional conferences, particularly those focused on minority representation in leadership like the Women of Color Leadership Conference and the National Diversity and Leadership Conference. Research found seven Latino and Hispanic conferences happening in 2023. Some of them included: UnidosUS Annual Conference, L'Attitude Conference, and The US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce National Convention (Cantos, 2023). Furthermore, this dissertation may be presented at leadership programs, leadership institutes, and professional conferences designed to promote Latina leadership. Some examples of leadership institutes include the Hispanic

Leadership Institute, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics. In addition, this information will be provided to all teacher training programs around the world. Regardless of whether the training program focuses on minority leaders or not, everyone who attends will benefit.

Distribution Materials

Educators and conferences focusing on diversity in higher education will benefit from this well-documented presentation. This dissertation will be presented through PowerPoint and Canva. I will also create a podcast presenting the findings of this case study. Additionally, I will submit the dissertation to the representatives of the three universities that participated in this case study. This dissertation will also be submitted to Google Scholar. Additionally, I plan to present the findings of this study at minority-serving institutions across the nation. In addition to publishing this dissertation, I intend to present it at conferences and deliver it as a speech. My plan is to develop a bound dissertation booklet that will be accessible to all universities and schools. In addition, this dissertation will be sent to Latinx leadership organizations. Upon completion of the dissertation, it will be submitted to ProQuest and other databases for easy access by students, professors, and the public.

Conclusion

The U.S. Department of Education in 2013 noted 78% of full-time faculty and 84% of tenured professors were White. Whites also represented 87% of university presidents (Supiano, 2015). In contrast, only 23% of senior academic roles are women, and less than 10% of chief academic officers are minorities (Chun & Evans, 2009). I am a

Latina woman in education. I have not seen myself in higher education, especially in administrative positions. My goal is to become a leader in higher education. I hope many like me will break the cycle and grow the number of Latinas in leadership positions in higher education. I also want to help higher education institutions diversify their campuses to represent minority women in leadership positions. Texas is unique because of its large population of Latinxs and the almost 200 colleges and universities in the state. After California, Texas has the most minority serving institutions in the nation (Boland, 2021). These qualifications make the state a great source of information on minority student populations and readily available for research on minority representation in higher education. However, the number of Latina administrators is not congruent with the student population of universities. As Latinx students continue to increase, but Latina representation at universities does not, this study needed to highlight the successful stories of Latinas who have achieved administrative positions in a specific area of the United States, South Central Texas.

This qualitative case study applied the frameworks of LatCrit and FemCrit to examine how Latinas became administrators at three universities in South Central Texas. Moreover, this case study analyzed university practices to recruit and retain Latina leaders, based on LatCrit and FemCrit lenses. Such stories have the potential to bring about positive change, leading to increased representation of Latina administrators in higher education.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age range:
 - a. 20-30
 - b. 31-40
 - c. 41-50
 - d. 51-60
 - e. 61-70
 - f. 71+
 - g. Decline to answer

2. What ethnicity do you most identify with?
 - a. Hispanic
 - b. Latina
 - c. Chicana
 - d. Other (Specify)
 - e. Decline to answer

3. Are you:
 - a. Married
 - b. Divorced
 - c. Separated
 - d. Never Married
 - e. Decline to answer

4. Are you a first-generation college student?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Decline to answer

5. What is your undergraduate degree in?

6. What is the highest degree you have completed?

7. How many years have you worked in higher education?

8. How many years have you been in a leadership role?

9. Have you received leadership training at the university you work for?

10. If yes to question 9, what was the name of the training you received?

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured, Open-Ended Interview Questions

This multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study aims to examine the experiences of Latinas who have been recruited, promoted, and retained in administrator positions at three universities in South Central Texas. These stories can create change, resulting in a more effective representation of Latina administrators within higher education. Your story gives a clearer understanding of an issue that is often discussed as essential, but largely unaddressed by higher education.

1. How would you define the centrality of race and intersectionality here at _____?
2. How have you challenged the education system and its take on objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity?
3. Is there a commitment to social justice and social transformation at this university? If yes, explain.
4. What has been your experience as regards to gender, ethnicity, and class in your profession?
5. Can you tell me about the story of your success?
6. How did you achieve the position you are in today?
7. What practices or initiatives, if any, did the university you work at conduct to recruit more Latinas in leadership positions?

APPENDIX C

Letter of Introduction and Consent

PROTOCOL TITLE: Latina Leaders: A Case Study of Successful Latina Administrators
in South Central Texas

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **Miranda Elise**

Invitation to be part of a research study

You are invited to be part of a research study. This consent form will help you choose whether to participate in the study. Feel free to ask if anything is not clear in this consent form.

Important information about this research study

Things you should know:

This multiple, explanatory, qualitative case study aims to examine the experiences of Latinas who have been recruited, promoted, and retained in administrator positions at three universities in South Central Texas.

To participate, you must be a Latina Administrator/Leader in Higher Education.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a questionnaire and a one-on-one interview. This will take place Spring/Summer 2022.

There are no risks or discomfort from this research.

The possible benefits of this study include telling your story of success and encouraging others to do the same.

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

More detailed information may be described later in this form. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research study.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to tell the stories of a sample of Latina administrators in higher education and discover the hiring and retention practices of three minority-serving universities in South Central Texas. The goal was to show the path to leadership by interviewing at least three Latina administrators at each university studied. Understanding the stories of these women as well as what initiatives these universities are employing to recruit and keep them was imperative to this case study because there is a lack of Latina-specific perspective in research today. This study allows for further understanding of the experiences of Latina administrators in higher education from their individual perspectives.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a questionnaire and a one-on-one recorded interview.

We would like to make **a/an audio/video** recording of you during this study. **Audio/video recording is required** for this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

How long will I be in this study and how many people will be in the study?

Participation in this study will last one year. About 3-5 subjects will take part in this research study.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

There are no risks from participating in this research.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because they will learn about minority leadership from you.

How will you protect my information?

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

We will keep the records of this study confidential by a password-protected drive. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records. This would include:

- Representatives of Baylor University and the BU Institutional Review Board

Will I be compensated for being part of the study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. You cannot withdraw information collected prior to your withdrawal.

If you are a Baylor student or faculty/staff member, you may choose not to be in the study or to stop being in the study before it is over at any time. This will not affect your grades or job status at Baylor University. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you take part in this research study.

Contact information for the study team and questions about the research

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:

Miranda Elise
Phone: 512.577.9173
Email: Miranda_Elise1@baylor.edu

Contact information for questions about your rights as a research participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher, please contact the following:

Baylor University Institutional Review Board
Office of the Vice Provost for Research
Phone: 254-710-3708
Email: irb@baylor.edu

Your consent

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT: By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Signature of Subject

Date

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