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An Exploration of Hispanic Female Principals' Career Advancement Through the Lens of Intersectionality

Natalie Baptiste
nbaptist@mail.umassglobal.edu

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A Dissertation by

Natalie J. Baptiste

University of Massachusetts Global

A Private Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

Irvine, California

School of Education

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Committee in charge:

Marilou Ryder, EdD, Committee Chair

Myrna Côté, EdD

Suzette Lovely, EdD

University of Massachusetts Global

A Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Natalie Baptiste is approved.

_____, Dissertation Chair

Marilou Ryder, EdD

_____, Committee Member

Myrna Côté, EdD

_____, Committee Member

Suzette Lovely, EdD

_____, Associate Dean

Patrick Ainsworth, EdD

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"I am because you are." –Ubuntu

ABSTRACT

An Exploration of Hispanic Female Principals' Career Advancement Through the Lens of Intersectionality

by Natalie J. Baptiste

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived impact of barriers created by the intersection of gender and ethnicity on the advancement of Hispanic females to the K–12 principalship. A second purpose of this study was to identify strategies Hispanic females leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship.

Methodology: This qualitative research study employed a phenomenological approach to describe the lived experiences of nine Hispanic female principals serving in public K–12 schools in Orange and Riverside counties in California. Data collection included an interview protocol of 13 semistructured questions and one-on-one interviews to explore principals' perceptions regarding the impact of intersectionality on their career advancement. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and data were analyzed to identify themes related to research questions.

Findings: Examination of the qualitative data indicated Hispanic female principals relied on characteristics related to emotional intelligence and grit as they navigated the lengthy and challenging route to the principalship. Participants considered their intersectionality an advantage to their attainment of the role and did not perceive they had been negatively impacted by bias, discrimination, or structural barriers.

Conclusions: Hispanic female principals believed their careers were positively impacted by their intersectionality. With few mentors or role models, principals relied on forms of

community cultural wealth, including familial and aspirational capital. Additionally, participants, all first- and second-generation Americans, demonstrated grit, resilience, and positive attitudes characteristic of the immigrant mindset. Findings of the study should be cautiously applied to a wider group because intersectionality was but one factor that impacted Hispanic female principals' perceptions of the barriers encountered and strategies leveraged as they ascended to the principalship.

Recommendations: Further research is recommended to identify the perceived impact of intersectionality for Hispanic female principals who may be less influenced by the immigrant experience. Additional research should explore factors that discourage Hispanic female teachers from seeking the principalship, and the structures that public school districts might put in place to support their advancement.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The United States was more diverse in its population at the start of the 2020s than it had ever been in history (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Although the 2020 U.S. Census revealed the largest racial and ethnic group continues to be individuals who identify as *White alone,* their numbers have declined from 63.7% in 2010 to 57.8% in 2020. Hispanic Americans are the second largest ethnic group, comprising 18.7% of the U.S. population, followed by Black/African Americans at 12.1%. Although all racial groups saw population gains in the decade since the 2010 Census, the Hispanic population grew 23%. People of non-Hispanic origin only grew 4.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

The growth of Hispanic Americans is particularly noticeable in the youngest U.S. residents wherein more than a quarter of children under 18 (i.e., 25.7%) identified as Hispanic or Latino as of 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This increase is reflected in the enrollment data of public elementary and secondary schools nationwide. Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of Hispanic students increased from 16% to 26% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.-b). In California, the Hispanic population as of 2017 was the largest of all ethnic groups, comprising 37.6% of all residents. In 2017, Hispanic students represented 54.3% of all students enrolled in California's public schools (DataQuest, n.d.).

Despite the increasing number of Hispanic students enrolled in schools in the United States, they do not see themselves equally reflected in the faces of educators who provide critical instructional and administrative support. In 2017, 26% of U.S. students identified as Hispanic while only 9.3% of teachers and 8.9% of principals identified as Hispanic (NCES, n.d.-c). Although these numbers were significantly higher in California,

where 20.7% of teachers and 22.5% of administrators identified as Hispanic (DataQuest, n.d.; NCES, n.d.-c), a large discrepancy exists between the demographics of school personnel and the Hispanic students they serve. This discrepancy results in a lack of representation, a factor of critical importance to the academic outcomes of minority students. Multiple studies have pointed to the benefit of minority students having teachers and principals with whom they can identify (Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2017; Hollingworth & Dude, 2009).

Representation is linked to student performance; thus, race, gender, and ethnicity of teachers and administrators impact the academic performance of minority students (Green, 2018; Hollingworth & Dude, 2009). Students benefit from having role models who resemble them, and these individuals are more empathetic and likely to advocate for students from a similar background and culture (Pitts, 2007). Additionally, minority teacher representation benefits both minority and nonminority students and is linked to greater participation of minority students in honors and gifted education classes, higher college-going rates, and lower absenteeism and suspension rates (Green, 2018; Hollingworth & Dude, 2009; Pitts, 2007).

Although teachers have a more direct influence on student outcomes, the role of the principal cannot be understated. The causal relationship between school leadership and student achievement is supported by findings that a principal's impact on student learning and success is second only to a classroom teacher's impact (Grissom et al., 2021; Lopez, 2018). Students may experience greater success when a principal's ethnicity mirrors their own (Capper, 2015). Principals determine school culture, engage with all stakeholders, and create welcoming environments for students and parents (Cotton, 2003;

Leithwood et al., 2010). Principals serve as role models, advocates for students and staff, and choose which teachers to hire and retain (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Pitts, 2007). Additionally, minority principals are more likely to see themselves as social justice leaders who support culturally responsive teaching practices, create culturally responsive school environments, and implement policies that support students of color (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Grissom et al., 2017; Khalifa et al., 2016).

Principals from a Hispanic background are underrepresented relative to the population of K–12 Hispanic students, and this disparity is even greater for Hispanic female principals when compared to White and Black principals (Banks, 2000). Identities shaped by the intersection of ethnicity and gender have caused Hispanic female educators to contend with unique barriers that impede their path to the principalship. Hollingworth and Dude (2009) asserted if the race, gender, and ethnicity of educators impact minority student outcomes, effort must be taken to ensure ranks of the principalship are more reflective of the diverse student population enrolled in schools across the United States.

Background

Hispanic female educators aspiring to the K–12 principalship hold membership in two groups (i.e., female and Hispanic), which are two identities that remain underrepresented in leadership positions. Due to both gender and ethnicity, Hispanic female educators face barriers that impede access to positions of vast influence and impact their ability to affect the academic and social–emotional outcomes of students (Bagula, 2016; Barrera, 2019; Diaz, 2018; Falk, 2011; Lopez, 2018; M. A. Martinez et al.; 2020; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Palacio, 2013; Pimienta, 2014; Reyes, 2015). Similar to careers outside of education, an individual's gender identity significantly

affects educational leadership opportunities. Despite female educators occupying the majority of teaching positions, a role that can lead to the principalship, they are not similarly represented at the administrative level. In 2017–2018, 73% of California's teachers were female, yet only 57% of principalships were occupied by women (DataQuest, n.d.; NCES, n.d.-a).

Access to school leadership is further limited by factors related to race and ethnicity. In California, a state ranked as the second most diverse in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), Hispanic students represented 54.3% of all public school students in 2017–2018, yet only 13.3% of female administrators identified as Hispanic (DataQuest, n.d.). The significance of this disparity lies in the unique qualities that Hispanic female administrators bring to the position, including their commitment to students and the Hispanic community, a passion driven by their personal experiences, and a desire to provide students with opportunities to thrive (Diaz, 2018).

The Principalship

Beyond the teacher, the principal is the most important factor impacting students' academic achievement (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004; Lynch, 2012). In the United States, this role has historically been dominated by men. Men were equated with effective teaching and administration whereas women were seen as less capable of managing a school. In 2017–2018, White men continued to occupy the principalship at rates disproportionate to the number serving as classroom teachers (NCES, n.d.-c).

Historical Perspective

In the earliest U.S. schools, men served as principal teachers and were tasked with teaching and administrative duties before the role evolved to a principal or manager role

(Chappell, 2000; Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007). Throughout the 1900s, women assumed school leadership positions, but advanced to the role at an uneven rate. In the early 20th century, most elementary principals were women supervising women but this changed after World War II when men, profiting from educational opportunities provided by the G.I. Bill, pursued college degrees and positions of leadership (Chappell, 2000; Kafka, 2009). The number of female principals declined due to further social, economic, and political factors. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the principalship remained predominantly male and White (Kafka, 2009).

Much of the research providing the historical perspective of ethnic minority principals describes the experiences of African American principals before and after the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* that challenged the legality of segregated schools. Prior to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision, African American principals served as important role models and respected community members (Davidson, 2009; Thorpe, 2019). However, once school desegregation became unconstitutional, the vast majority of African American principals were relegated to teaching, and many left the teaching profession altogether (Rousmaniere, 2007). Segregation in California's schools had ended for Hispanic—and primarily Mexican American—students almost a decade earlier with the *Mendez v. Westminster* decision in 1946 (Antman & Cortes, 2021). There is a dearth of information on the role of Hispanic principals prior to that time or in the years immediately after.

The Modern Principalship

The role of the principal continues to evolve and is increasingly complex and demanding. In addition to being managers and instructional leaders, principals must also

attend to the political and social–cultural needs of a diverse school community (Green, 2018; Kafka, 2009; Thorpe, 2019). Principals must hire effective teachers, set and communicate goals focused on student learning, and establish a school climate where all students can thrive (Green, 2018). School principals are also required to adhere to the requirements and expectations of state and school district standards and federal legislation about students' academic achievement and the rights of students with disabilities.

Principal Influence

Principals impact student achievement through direct instructional leadership (e.g., engaging with student learning), and indirect leadership wherein they influence teachers by providing support, resources, and instructional guidance (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). According to Green (2018), the principal's effect on student learning is 25%, but when combined with teacher effect, results in a 60% impact on students' academic outcomes. Specific behaviors that positively impact student outcomes include having interactions and relationships, maintaining a positive school climate, creating a collaborative culture, and serving as role models for students and staff (Cotton, 2003).

Despite the increasingly diverse student population, a persistent opportunity gap continues to exist between the academic achievement of students of color and their White counterparts. Although there is acknowledged value of students seeing themselves reflected in the educators who serve them, the principalship has remained largely White. In 2017–2018, over 77% of all U.S. principals were White, while only 8.9% of principals identified as Hispanic (NCES, n.d.-c). Similarly, in 2017–2018, 66.1% of California's principals were White and only 22.5% Hispanic, despite 54.3% of the student population

identifying as Hispanic (DataQuest, n.d.; NCES, n.d.-c). The disparity between the percentage of White principals and principals of color impacts teachers and students. Teachers of color are often committed to serving similar communities to remove social and structural inequities that impact student achievement. According to Green (2018), teachers of color prefer to work with principals of color who consider themselves social justice leaders and are more likely to demonstrate similar commitments and beliefs. Greater job satisfaction and retention is reported when a racial match exists between teachers of color and their principals (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Green, 2018).

Female Principals

Opportunities for female educators to serve as principals declined throughout the second half of the 20th century. By 1973, less than 20% of principals were women (Kafka, 2009). Kafka (2009) explained opportunities for female leadership were scarce due to social attitudes about women's roles outside the home and overt discriminatory hiring practices. Attitudes began to change with the women's rights movement of the 1970s and the subsequent passage of legislation such as Title IX of the *Educational Amendments Act* and the *Women's Educational Equity Act* of 1974 (Davidson, 2009; Lopez, 2018).

Both pieces of legislation outlawed discrimination against women in educational institutions and accompanied a social movement where women began to advocate for greater personal freedoms and professional opportunities. Although legislation removed formal barriers to educational equity, studies have revealed men continue to attain high levels of educational leadership more easily than women, particularly at the secondary school level (Barrera, 2019; Chappell, 2000). A review of the literature suggests

barriers—including family responsibilities and organizational cultures—continue to impede opportunities for women aspiring to positions of educational leadership. Chappell (2000) defined internal barriers as "inhibiting factors that can be changed from within an individual" (p. 23) and external barriers as interpersonal, organizational, or societal factors that impede their advancement.

Internal Barriers to the Principalship

Numerous studies have identified the conflict between personal responsibilities and the demands of leadership as formidable internal barriers to women aspiring to the principalship (Beasley, 2020; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Reyes, 2015; Santiago, 2009). Women who choose to marry and have children often struggle to balance family life with the demands of leadership roles and are reluctant to relocate to pursue leadership opportunities (Beasley, 2020; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Santiago, 2009). Additional internal barriers include a lack of self-confidence and assertiveness, a reluctance to take risks (Chappell, 2000), and the pressure women may feel to align their behavior and characteristics to those more typical of men (Beasley, 2020).

External Barriers to the Principalship

External barriers for aspiring female principals include discriminatory hiring practices, inequitable expectations (Barrera, 2019; Thorpe, 2019), and a workplace culture that favors the promotion of White males (Falk, 2011). Unlike men who may benefit from *the good old boys club* (i.e., a system where men of a similar background use their influence to help each other; Macmillan Dictionary, n.d.), women lack access to insider information and are ill equipped to compete for leadership positions (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Additionally, females contend with a lack of mentorship, advocacy, and

encouragement (Chappell, 2000; Reyes, 2015). Terms such as *glass ceiling* and *labyrinth* refer to the many barriers resulting from a disproportionately lower number of females serving in leadership positions (Barrera, 2019; Falk, 2011; Morgan, 2008). More recently, the term *concrete ceiling* has been used to depict the racial and gender bias women of color face as they attempt to advance their careers in the rigidity of institutionalized systems (Khosroshahi, 2021). According to Khosroshahi (2021), navigating these environments has proven to be incredibly difficult because women of color are held to standards of professionalism defined by White, heterosexual men who have created the unwritten norms surrounding career ambition, advancement, and success.

Hispanic Female Principals

For Hispanic female educators aspiring to the principalship, obstacles due to gender are further compounded by their status as ethnic minorities. Beasley (2020) asserted minority leaders are "challenged with the duality and double marginalization of gender and race" (p. 2). This assertion supports the additive perspective described by Parent et al. (2013) that multiple minority statuses such as race and gender "act independently and combine additively to shape people's experiences" (p. 640). Hispanic female educators face barriers due to gender identity, cultural expectations, and workplace demands, which negatively impact their aspirations and opportunities to seek leadership positions.

Barriers to the Principalship

Despite earning credentials to become administrators, internal and external factors specific to their cultural identity impede the ascendancy of Hispanic female educators to the principalship (Lopez, 2018; Santiago, 2009). The internal barrier referenced most

often is the conflict between cultural expectations and demands of the workplace (Bagula, 2016; Falk, 2011; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Reyes, 2015; Santiago, 2009), and the sense of social isolation due to a lack role models with similar backgrounds. As a result, Hispanic female educators may feel the need to assimilate to advance. Yet, the resulting denial of cultural identity is likely too high a price to pay for many Hispanic females who value serving as role models for their communities (Beasley, 2020; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020).

External obstacles include a lack of mentoring and sponsorship and organizational practices that deny Hispanic females the opportunities to lead. Researchers have demonstrated Hispanic female educators lack mentors and role models with similar backgrounds and experiences (Barrera, 2019; Diaz, 2018; Falk, 2011; Fernandez, 2013; Lopez, 2018). The result is limited opportunities for professional support, validation, and networking (Barrera, 2019), and less insight into organizational barriers and insider information that might otherwise increase their chances for success (Fernandez, 2013). Poor recruitment, unethical promotion, and inequitable expectations are further obstacles to Hispanic females seeking career advancement (Bagula, 2016; Beasley, 2020; Lopez, 2018). Despite their experiences as teachers and formal preparation to serve as educational leaders, Hispanic female educators continue to face challenges that result in their continued underrepresentation as K–12 principals.

Strategies Used to Overcome Barriers

Hispanic female leaders use a variety of strategies to overcome barriers, and a consistent theme is the importance of strong family support, sometimes referred to as *familismo* (Bagula, 2016; Davidson, 2009; Pimienta, 2014). Reyes (2015) found in the

absence of organizational role models, Hispanic female leaders turn to this support system for motivation, guidance, and leadership advice. Additionally, they maintain a strong cultural identity while adapting to the dominant culture, a concept alternatively described as *cultural wealth* (Lopez, 2018) and *social capital* (Diaz, 2018). Other strategies essential to their quest for leadership include mentorship by culturally similar role models and sponsors (Bagula, 2016; Davidson, 2009; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020), the development of personal characteristics such as resiliency and determination (Barrera, 2019; Pimienta, 2014), and a strong sense of self-efficacy (Santiago, 2009).

Theoretical Foundations and Framework

Studies of Hispanic females aspiring to leadership positions include references to theoretical foundations such as social role theory and role congruity theory, both of which examine the role of gender in the personal and professional experiences of women (Barrera, 2019; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006; Wells et al., 2014). Similarly, studies reference critical race theory and community cultural wealth as theoretical foundations that address the impact of race and ethnicity on self-perception, social interactions, and social and professional opportunities (Capper, 2015; Diaz, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Randle, 2018; Yosso; 2005). However, the theoretical framework most aptly suited to the examination of these leaders' experiences is the theory of intersectionality.

The theory of intersectionality explores the lived experiences of individuals for whom the intersection of minority identities (e.g., gender, sexual identity, and race/ethnicity) impact their social interactions and experiences (Bowleg, 2013; Cho et al., 2013; K. Davis, 2008; Nash, 2008). The roots of intersectionality are derived from

feminist studies of the 1970s (Parent et al., 2013), specifically Black feminist and critical race studies (Garry, 2011). Scholars have argued an individual could not consider gender without acknowledging the impact of other identities such as race. The term intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw (1989), who insisted neither feminist nor Black studies could ignore the "intersectional experiences" (p. 166) of subjects who subscribed to both identities.

At the heart of the theory of intersectionality is the concept of identity. Shields (2008) defined *identity* as "social categories in which an individual claims membership as well as the personal meaning associated with those categories" (p. 301) and included self-image and self-expression as components. Studies of intersectionality recognize the implications of multiple minority identities and the experiences, disadvantages, and even opportunities that result.

No individual can be defined by a single identity, and multiple identities interact in different ways to inform an individual's experiences. According to Parent et al. (2013), experiences due to multiple identities differ from those that result from each independent identity. The intersectionality theory "maintains that multiple identities construct novel experiences that are distinctive and not necessarily divisible into their component identities or experiences" (Parent et al., 2013, p. 640).

Unique Challenges for Hispanic Female Principals

According to Thorpe (2019), women of color aspiring to the principalship face unique challenges due to an environment primed to respond to one identity or the other. Although multiple studies address the experiences of Hispanic female educators aspiring to K–12 leadership, few studies consider these experiences through the lens of

intersectionality. Livingston (2013) recommended future studies examine how the intersection of multiple social categories impact individuals' access to leadership roles.

Statement of the Research Problem

The Hispanic population was the largest ethnic group in California as of 2021 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). In 2018–2019, Hispanic students accounted for 55% of all students enrolled in California's public K–12 schools (DataQuest, n.d.). However, there is evidence many of these students are underserved in schools across the state. For example, annual achievement data released by the California Department of Education (n.d.-b) revealed most Hispanic students fail to meet proficiency standards in English language arts (ELA) and math. In 2018–2019, 40.49% of Hispanic students were proficient in ELA and 27.89% were proficient in math. In contrast, 66.36% of White students were proficient in ELA, and 55.55% were proficient in math. The gap in proficiency between student groups is alternatively referred to as the achievement or opportunity gap, with the latter term suggesting the difference results from a lack of access and opportunity. According to Flores (2007), the opportunity gap is due to a variety of factors including a lack of educators who understand and value Hispanic students' culture and experiences.

Research has suggested students realize greater academic outcomes when they have teachers and principals with the same racial or ethnic identity (Fernandez, 2013; Grissom et al., 2017). Teachers and principals who share the same race, ethnicity, or culture with students often demonstrate a special interest and commitment to students and a focus on providing equitable opportunities and experiences (Green, 2018; Pitts, 2007). Murakami et al. (2016) reported Hispanic principals understand the cultural and linguistic

challenges faced by Hispanic students and possess an identity orientation that positively influences student achievement. Murakami et al. further noted Hispanic principals view students from an asset rather than deficit lens and serve as role models for teachers and students alike. The leadership and advocacy impact among Hispanic principals implies efforts toward improving outcomes for Hispanic students must include greater representation of Hispanic people in educational leadership positions.

Hispanic principals are underrepresented in California's public schools, with only 22.5% of principals in 2017–2018 identifying as Hispanic (NCES, n.d.-c). The data provide evidence that few Hispanic students have access to a Hispanic principal who is likely attuned to their socioemotional and academic needs and whose leadership style is influenced by their own minority student experiences (M. A. Martinez et al., 2020). The lack of representation is even more pronounced for Hispanic female educators. In 2017–2018, Hispanic females accounted for only 13.3% of California's administrators while their White female counterparts, also underrepresented, accounted for 38% of administrators (DataQuest, n.d.). Given the need for greater academic gains by California's Hispanic students, the positive impact of representation on student achievement, and the need for Hispanic female role models, it is to the benefit of all stakeholders that more Hispanic female educators are able to attain positions as K–12 principals.

A large body of research has indicated Hispanic female educators who advance to the principalship must contend with internal and external barriers due to their gender and ethnic identities (Bagula, 2016; Diaz, 2018; Lopez, 2018; Pimienta, 2014). The experiences of individuals with dual minority identities are described by Purdie-Vaughns

and Eibach (2008), Voltmer (2018), and Wing (1990) using additive and multiplicative models where these identities interact and compound. The experiences of Hispanic female principals may also be considered through the lens of intersectionality, which claims minority identities combine to create an identity different from each of its components (Voltmer, 2018). However, there is scant research describing the barriers Hispanic females principals face due to the intersectionality of their minority identities. Likewise, few studies have described the strategies Hispanic female educators leverage to overcome said barriers and ascend to the K–12 principalship.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived impact of barriers created by the intersection of gender and ethnicity on the advancement of Hispanic females to the K–12 principalship. The second purpose of this study was to identify strategies Hispanic females leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship.

Research Questions

1. What gender barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 principalship?
2. What ethnic barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?
3. How does the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity impact advancement to the K–12 school principalship as perceived by Hispanic females?
4. What strategies do Hispanic females leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?

Significance of the Problem

It is widely acknowledged that students benefit from educators who understand their experiences and value their cultures. In essence, representation matters. Multiple studies have pointed to representation as a key factor leading to improved academic outcomes for minority students (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2017; Pitts, 2007). Moreover, Hollingworth and Dude (2009) found racially and culturally diverse educators are critical to student success and have called upon school districts to actively recruit administrators who reflect the diversity of the student population. As Hispanic students benefit from the understanding, advocacy, and asset-based lens of culturally similar principals, these students further benefit from seeing gender and ethnic differences in Hispanic female principals (Bagula, 2016).

In California, where Hispanic people are the largest ethnic group, Hispanic female educators are significantly underrepresented among administrators in K–12 public schools. The percentage of Hispanic females serving in school leadership roles is not commensurate with the state's Hispanic population nor with the number of Hispanic students in California's classroom. Unlike Black and White women serving in administrative roles, the number of Hispanic female school administrators is disproportionately low compared to the number of Hispanic students (see Table 1).

Table 1

California Female School Administrators, 2017–2018

Ethnicity	% students	% female administrators
Hispanic	54.3	13.3
White	23.2	38.0
Black/African American	5.5	5.2

Note. Adapted from "DataQuest," by California Department of Education, n.d. (https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest). Copyright by California Department of Education.

Existing research has identified distinct barriers related to gender and ethnicity that impede Hispanic female educators' access to school leadership roles. Gender barriers include conflict between demands of work and family and unfair hiring practices (Chappell, 2000; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Thorpe, 2019). Barriers due to ethnicity include a lack of mentors and role models, a deficit in social capital, and discrimination in hiring (Beasley, 2020; Diaz, 2018; Fernandez, 2013; Pimienta, 2014). However, studies of Hispanic females educators largely used an additive perspective to describe how dual minority identities compound and limit access to the principalship. This study viewed Hispanic female identity through the lens of intersectionality and described the barriers aspiring principals face due to their novel identity. Additionally, this study contributed to an understanding of the strategies Hispanic females employ to overcome constraints due to their intersectional identity.

A heightened awareness of the unique experiences faced due to the intersection of minority identities benefits all stakeholders who are invested in greater representation of Hispanic females in administrative roles. Universities that offer certificates and degrees in educational administration may reconsider the methods used to recruit Hispanic female

teachers, and the support provided once they are enrolled. School districts that seek to promote from within may examine their practices and become more purposeful in recruiting and offering leadership opportunities to Hispanic female employees. Hispanic female teachers themselves may be persuaded that they are integral to realizing improved academic outcomes for Hispanic students, becoming encouraged to pursue the principalship role. This study set out to provide aspiring female Hispanic leaders with a greater understanding of self, the personal and organizational barriers that may impede their advancement to the principalship, and the strategies Hispanic female principals before them have leveraged to attain leadership positions.

Definitions of Terms

Terms used throughout this study are defined herein to provide clarity and a shared understanding of their meaning. The definitions have been used in this context throughout the entire study.

Administrators. Administrators are education leaders at site, district, regional, and state levels who are key people in ensuring all students graduate to be ready for advanced learning and careers (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014).

Barriers (internal). Internal barriers are inhibiting factors that can be changed from within an individual (Chappell, 2000).

Barriers (external). External barriers are interpersonal, organizational, or societal factors that impede an individual's advancement (Chappell, 2000).

Culture. Culture is shared beliefs, values, and assumptions of a group of people who learn from one another and teach others their behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives are the correct ways to think, act, and feel (Moua, 2011).

Disparity. Disparity is a lack of similarity or equality; it is an inequality or difference (Collins Dictionary, n.d.).

Ethnicity. Ethnicity is a term for the ethnic group to which people belong. Usually, it refers to a group identity based on culture, religion, traditions, and customs (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

Gender. Gender describes a group of people in a society who share particular qualities or ways of behaving that society associates with being male, female, or another identity (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-a).

Hispanic. Hispanic refers to a person of Latin American descent, especially of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin living in the United States. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a).

Identity. Identity consists of social categories where an individual claims membership, and the personal meaning associated with those categories (Shields, 2008).

Intersectionality. Intersectionality is a theory that posits multiple identities intersect or combine to create an identity different from each of its components (Voltmer, 2018).

Latina. Latina refers to a woman or girl of Latin American origin living in the United States (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b).

Principal. Principal is the head or person with the most authority in a K–12 school (Grissom et al., 2021).

Representation. Representation refers to including different types of people so different groups are represented (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-b).

White. A White person is a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

White Alone, Not Hispanic or Latino. White alone, not Hispanic or Latino is a category on the U.S. Census Bureau questionnaire for individuals who responded "No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino" and who reported "White" as their only entry in the race question (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to Hispanic females serving as elementary or secondary school principals in Southern California. The criteria for selection included females who: (a) identified as Hispanic or Latina; (b) served as principals in K–12 public schools; and (c) worked in school districts located in Orange and Riverside counties in Southern California.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters followed by references and appendices. Chapter I is an introduction to the history of the principalship, the influence of principals, and the barriers faced by females, specifically Hispanic females, aspiring to the position. Chapter II provides an in-depth review of the literature on the impact of gender and ethnicity on the leadership experiences of women, people of color, and specifically Hispanic female educators. Additionally, Chapter II presents intersectionality as the theoretical framework through which the topic was examined. Chapter III details the research design and methodology of the study, including the instrument used, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data and a discussion

of the study's findings. Chapter V provides a summary, conclusion, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review was to examine literature related to the K–12 principalship and the barriers that exist for Hispanic female educators aspiring to and serving in the role. The chapter commences with an overview of the Hispanic student population in California and the disparity in academic outcomes for this group of learners. Next, the chapter provides a historical perspective of the principalship, including opportunities for women and people of color to serve in the role. Chapter II provides an examination of women in the principalship, including the internal and external barriers they face in advancing to positions of leadership. This section is followed by a description of the barriers faced by people of color, the strategies they leverage to overcome obstacles in their path, and a thorough description of the same issues as lived by Hispanic female educators. Chapter II concludes with an examination of related theoretical foundations and a focus on intersectionality, the lens through which the experiences of Hispanic female leaders can be more effectively understood.

Opportunity and Representation Gaps

More students enrolled in California's K–12 public schools identify as Hispanic than any other racial or ethnic group. In 2020–2021, 55.3% of students identified as Hispanic while only 21.7% identified as White (DataQuest, n.d.). However, California's Hispanic students lag behind their White counterparts in most academic and nonacademic metrics reported by the state. The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress 2020–2021 results revealed a gap of greater than 20 percentage points between Hispanic and White students in the areas of English language arts (ELA) and math. Although 80% of Hispanic students graduated from high school that year, only 45% met

the requirements for attending a 4-year college in the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) systems. In comparison, 88% of White students graduated high school that year, and over 56% met UC and CSU requirements.

Hispanic students were suspended at a rate just below White students (i.e., 0.2% to 0.3%, respectively) as of 2020–2021; however, significantly more Hispanic students than White students (i.e., 17.1% to 10%, respectively) were chronically absent (DataQuest, n.d.). In other words, 17 of every 100 Hispanic students were absent for 18 or more days of school during the 2020–2021 school year. Although this absentee rate was unusually high due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, it is representative of the disparate academic experience of California's Hispanic student population.

The persistent disparity in academic outcomes between different student groups is alternatively known as the achievement gap and the opportunity gap. Although both terms describe disparities in academic achievement, the term *achievement gap* emphasizes the results or outcomes due to educational and societal factors and the term *opportunity gap* calls attention to the unequal opportunities or causes that contribute to differences between groups (Welner & Carter, 2013). Many students from disadvantaged groups lack access to resources including highly effective teachers, a well-balanced curriculum, and rigorous coursework, which lead to unfavorable educational and socioeconomic outcomes. Welner and Carter (2013) argued the achievement or opportunity gap will not close until students are provided meaningful opportunities alongside appropriate resources and support.

In the report "Student and School Cultures and the Opportunity Gap," Carter (2013) described the connection between the way students learn and their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. According to Carter (2013):

> Some of the most consistent and convincing research examining student culture and schooling suggests that when students' cultural backgrounds are dissimilar to the backgrounds of their teachers and principals, the disadvantages experienced by those students are due to educators' lack of familiarity with their social backgrounds, which in turn hinders those educators' capacity to engage with the students effectively. This inability of educators to comprehend the social realities, cultural resources, and understandings of Black, Latino, Native American, and other nondominant groups is one of main drivers of the opportunity gap in American education. (p. 147)

The relationship between student achievement and the ethnicity/culture of their teachers and principals is well documented in the literature (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Flores & Gunzenhauser, 2021; Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Hollingworth & Dude, 2009; Pitts, 2007). Teachers of color benefit from principals of color who have the same commitment and obligation to serving Black, Hispanic, and other student groups. In turn, these teachers and principals benefit students of color by viewing them through an asset-based rather than deficit lens, valuing their culture and experiences, and holding high expectations for academic achievement (Flores, 2007; Murakami et al., 2016).

Representation

Given the persistent achievement gap for students of color and the aforementioned importance of educators who understand and value their cultural ways of

being, interactions, speech, and behaviors, there is abundant evidence that representation matters (Carter, 2013). Representation is defined by a shared understanding among individuals with similar racial or ethnic backgrounds. With common experiences and similar cultural norms, people are more empathetic and likely to fight for the rights of others like them (Pitts, 2007). The importance of representation is supported by a wealth of research suggesting the race, ethnicity, and culture of teachers and school leaders positively impact minority students' academic achievement (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Flores & Gunzenhauser, 2021; Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Hollingworth & Dude, 2009; Pitts, 2007). Teachers of color generally hold higher expectations for students of color. Moreover, teacher diversity is linked to greater rates of gifted identification, lower rates of absenteeism and suspensions, and test score improvement (Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021). Finally, minority teachers serve as role models, and racial congruence between teachers and students results in higher levels of engagement and trust (B. W. Davis et al., 2016).

Similar to the benefits for students, teachers of color benefit when they share the same race or ethnicity as their principals. Principals of color are more likely to recruit, hire, and mentor teachers of color; these principals act as role models and advocates and support all teachers in understanding students of color (B. W. Davis et al., 2016). Teachers report greater job satisfaction and retention when working with principals of color who, like them, demonstrate a commitment and obligation to serve students of color and collaborate to implement culturally responsive teaching practices (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Green, 2018).

Although it is difficult to directly measure the impact of a principal's race on student outcomes, principals of color positively influence student achievement through their hiring practices, culturally relevant leadership skills, and influence on school culture and climate. As schools become more diverse, districts—and ultimately, students—benefit by the recruitment of principals who reflect the demographics of the school community.

Underrepresentation of Hispanic Principals

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Hispanic people are the largest racial/ethnic group in California, comprising 40.2% of the state's population (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Between 2001–2002 and 2018–2019, the percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in public schools throughout the state rose from 44% to 55% (DataQuest, n.d.), yet this increase was not reflected in the number of Hispanic people serving as principals. During the 2017–2018 school year, 54% of California's students identified as Hispanic, while 23% of principals identified similarly, and an estimated 13% identified as Hispanic female principals. Given research signifying the importance of racially and culturally diverse administrators to minority student outcomes, this "representation gap" (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 27) indicates the need for districts to recruit school leaders who reflect their diverse student populations and are equipped to meet the academic and social–emotional needs of their students of color.

The Principalship

The role of a principal has always been multifaceted and demanding. As the lead administrator in the K–12 setting, principals determine many factors that influence student outcomes. Principals serve primarily as instructional leaders; although the

responsibilities have not significantly changed throughout the years, the requirements and expectations have become more regulated (Kafka, 2009). Principals of the 21st century hire, train, and retain effective teachers, shape the school climate, and engage with parents and the community (Green, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2010; Pitts, 2007). Over time, the demographics of individuals serving in the role have shifted in response to the societal issues and norms of the times. However, despite the increasingly diverse student population, the principalship remains overwhelmingly White.

Historical Perspective

The earliest U.S. schools were one room schoolhouses with single individuals serving as teachers for multiple grades. In the mid-1800s, the position of head or principal teachers emerged as schools grew larger with multiple teachers serving students at different levels (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007). These principal teachers, usually men, initially served in instructional and administrative roles. However, over time, these principal teachers left behind their teaching duties as the role of the principalship evolved. In the early 1900s, teaching and administration became separate positions, and principals worked throughout the 20th century with autonomy and authority to lead schools (Chappell, 2000; Kafka, 2009). Professional organizations were formed along with laws requiring principal certification and a level of expertise, and the position of principal became more prestigious and powerful. In addition to their authority over schools, principals often served as community leaders (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007).

During the early decades of the 20th century, an increasing number of women became school leaders. By 1930, 55% of elementary principals were female (Chappell, 2000; Kafka, 2009). However, in the following decades, particularly in the years after

World War II, the number of female principals declined. The principal's role became more managerial; women, who were often considered less capable of managing, were increasingly excluded from opportunities to serve in the position (Chappell, 2000). Recruitment to university programs and graduate programs in school administration was limited to men who were considered to offer a profile of stability and professionalism (Rousmaniere, 2007). Additionally, men returning from the war took advantage of educational opportunities offered by the G.I. Bill, entered the teaching profession, and quickly moved up the ranks to administrative positions. This influx of males further contributed to reduced opportunities for female educators to serve as principals (Chappell, 2000; Kafka, 2009). The decline continued into the second half of the 20th century. By the 1970s, less than 20% of elementary principals and less than 2% of high school principals were women (Kafka, 2009). Since that time, the number of female principals has risen steadily and by 2017–2018, close to 54% of K–12 principals were female, with 65.6% employed at the elementary level (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.-a). Despite this increase, female educators remained underrepresented in the principalship relative to the number of female teachers who made up the majority of individuals serving in the role (i.e., 76.5%).

As the principalship became male dominated during the mid-20th century, it also became increasingly White. The change in demographics was in response to social movements such as the communist scare of the 1950s and the desegregation and civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s (Rousmaniere, 2007). Prior to this time, Black principals were employed in segregated schools where they served as revered school and community leaders. Although lacking the financial resources of their White counterparts,

Black principals operated with autonomy to hire and fire teachers, design educational programs, and engage in activities ranging from teaching to political advocacy. An unfortunate result of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on school desegregation was the closure of Black schools and the elimination of positions previously held by Black principals. States such as Kentucky and North Carolina saw as much as a 90% decline in Black principals between 1954 and 1970 while the percentage of White principals rose sharply (Kafka, 2009). In 2017–2018, the principalship remained predominantly White with close to 78% of principals identified as White while only 10.5% were Black and 8.9% were Hispanic (NCES, n.d.-c).

Evolution of the Principal's Role

According to Rousmaniere (2007), in the 19th century, there were no prerequisites or authorizations for people chosen to serve as head teachers or principal teachers. Often, individuals were appointed to the role due to "circumstance rather than ambition, preparation, or talent" (Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 8) as opposed to specialized training. The 1st decade of the 20th century saw proposals for administrative certificates to distinguish teachers from educational leaders, and the first school management programs were established (Gumus, 2015). Teachers aspiring to the principalship were required to complete special training beforehand, and by 1950, certificates were required by one third of U.S. states (Gumus, 2015; Rousmaniere, 2007). Qualifications for instructional leaders included past teaching experience and the ability to successfully complete managerial and clerical tasks. According to Kafka (2009), the emphasis on administrative skills in addition to instructional leadership continued into the 1950s. The next 2 decades brought increased federal intervention into local educational policy and

expectations for principals expanded to include management of federal entitlement programs and curricular activities (Kafka, 2009).

In 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium established national leadership standards used by most states as the foundation to establish their own school leadership standards (Gumus, 2015). According to Gumus (2015), most states developed certification programs requiring aspiring principals have past experience as teachers, a master's degree in educational leadership or a related area, and completion of a state approved preparation program. Certificate programs typically focus on leadership and management skills and provide courses in instructional leadership, school improvement, and family and community relations (Sun & Xin, 2020).

The 21st century gave rise to federal mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), all of which raised the level of accountability for people serving as principals. These mandates emphasized student academic performance with the goal of raising achievement levels (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2002) and the development of a school culture supportive of students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004). Principals are given the responsibility for managing the general education and the special education programs at their sites and for cultivating learning environments where skilled teachers hold high expectations for all students (Lynch, 2012). University programs and district in-service opportunities provide principals with the requisite knowledge and skills needed for their work with teachers and students (Sun & Xin, 2020).

In the 21st century, the principalship is more complex than ever. As described by Kafka (2009), the role of principal is one of manager, administrator, supervisor, instructional leader, and, increasingly, politician. Kafka (2009) further noted, given the focus on achievement and accountability, "principals are seen as agents of success or sources of failure" (p. 319). Principals are responsible for the recruitment, mentoring, and retention of staff, and serve as transformational and social justice leaders (Green, 2018). They build positive school climates, model fair and equitable practices, establish and communicate goals focused on student outcomes, and strategically manage personnel and resources (Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021). Most importantly, they support staff in raising the level of achievement of all students, particularly underserved students and students with special needs (Green, 2018).

Influence of the Principal

It has been firmly established in the literature that principals are second only to classroom teachers in their influence on student learning (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004; Pitts, 2007). According to Grissom et al. (2021), a principal's impact is greater and larger in scope than initially believed. The ability to improve outcomes by improving the quality of education provided by teachers has been identified by researchers as a significant principal effect (Branch et al., 2013; Grissom et al., 2021). Gentilucci and Muto (2007) suggested principals "influence the influencers rather than influencing the children themselves" (p. 220). The effects of principals, although indirect, are measurable in areas such as attendance, discipline, teacher job satisfaction, and turnover. Additionally, principals influence school culture, climate, and staff morale, and—as culturally proficient leaders—create conditions where diverse students feel

valued and can achieve greater outcomes (Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021). Khalifa et al. (2016) described the school principal as the individual with the most profound impact on instruction and student learning, and in the best position to influence student success through relationships with students, families, and staff and through the climate they foster.

Female Principals

Throughout the 20th century, school leadership became a more established profession and men were provided greater opportunities to meet established standards; thus, the number of women serving in the principalship experienced a steady decline. The number of female principals nationwide remained low throughout the second half of the century despite two landmark decisions (i.e., Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972) prohibiting discrimination in the workplace. In 1993–1994, only 34.5% of U.S. public school principals were female while 73% of teachers were female (NCES, 1997). The number of female principals has risen steadily since that time, and in 2017–2018, 53.7% of principals were women (NCES, n.d.-a). Despite this increase, Grissom et al. (2021) noted although there are more female principals than at any time in history, "the share of women in the principal's office remains well below the share of women in teaching" (p. 85). A gap of 20% persists between the percentage of female teachers and female principals (NCES, n.d.-a).

In addition to underrepresentation in the principalship, additional incongruities exist for female principals. For example, women are far more likely to lead elementary schools; thereby, they are excluded from the more prestigious and higher paying secondary positions that typically lead to district level positions such as the

superintendency (Grissom et al., 2021; Maranto et al., 2018; Rousmaniere, 2007; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). On average, women teach for a longer period of time (i.e., 13.2 years compared to 10.7 years for men) before attaining a position as principal (Arriaga et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Rousmaniere, 2007). Arriaga et al. (2020) explained the "pipeline to the principalship is narrower and takes longer" (p. 20) for women, and men promote more quickly and take a more direct path to the position. Moreover, in addition to greater classroom experiences, female principals are more likely to complete all requirements for administrative positions and hold advanced degrees than their male counterparts (Grissom et al., 2021; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Women feel the need to prove they are worthy of the opportunity to lead, demonstrate their competency for leadership, and are highly prepared before applying for the role of principal (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Morgan, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

Barriers to the Principalship

According to Sanchez and Thornton (2010), educational leaders are perceived as equally effective regardless of gender. Yet, there is a discrepancy between what people perceive as characteristics of women in relation to the character traits required to be an effective school leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). The agentic qualities expected from effective leaders (e.g., strength, authority, decisiveness) are generally associated with men rather than women (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Women are generally perceived to be inclusive, supportive, and emotional, which are traits not considered a fit for leadership (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). Women contend with a dichotomy where they are "expected to fulfill the female gender role by being warm and selfless, and on the other hand, they are also expected to fulfill the leadership role by

displaying assertiveness and competence" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 101). This phenomenon, referred to by Eagly and Carli (2007) as the *double bind*, describes women's risk of being seen as too soft or otherwise too masculine and assertive. Stereotypes such as these serve as barriers to inhibit women from pursuing and achieving success in leadership positions typically occupied by men.

Internal Barriers

Women aspiring to positions of leadership often contend with internal barriers that impact their will to take the steps necessary for advancement. Internal barriers are factors that women have control over and are able to change, yet they serve as impediments to positions of leadership. Internal barriers include low self-esteem, a lack of confidence, and a lack of assertiveness (Chappell, 2000; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

The conflict between personal responsibilities as wives and mothers and the demands of leadership stands as a formidable barrier for women aspiring to the principalship (Beasley, 2020; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Reyes, 2015; Santiago, 2009). Women are often reluctant to leave positions as teachers—which is a role seemingly compatible with family life—or move from one district or geographical area to another in pursuit of leadership opportunities (Beasley, 2020; Chappell, 2000; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Santiago, 2009). Hoff and Mitchell (2008) suggested women recognize something must be given up in the pursuit of leadership and are less inclined than men to sacrifice family responsibilities to do so.

Despite their participation in leadership preparation programs and qualifications for leadership roles, many women feel ill equipped to manage professional challenges; therefore, they elect not to pursue the principalship or choose to delay their entry to

leadership positions (Beasley, 2020; Santiago, 2009). Additionally, women tend to have low expectations of careers in administration. Rather than seek advancement, women wait to be tapped or encouraged to pursue leadership positions (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). Sanchez and Thornton (2010) suggested many women decide against pursuing opportunities to advance to the principalship given the difficulty of balancing a family with a career in leadership and the accompanying stress.

External Barriers

Women aspiring to educational leadership positions also contend with social–cultural and organizational barriers that hinder opportunities to attain the position of principal. Whether real or perceived, these external barriers place women at a distinct disadvantage when moving into administrative positions. Given the lingering perception of leadership as a male domain and the persistence of the good old boys system, women often lack the insider status of their male counterparts and fewer opportunities to network and develop relationships with people responsible for recruitment and hiring (Arriaga et al., 2020; Chappell, 2000; Thorpe, 2019). Other significant barriers include fewer mentors, sponsors, and role models who can provide encouragement and support as women navigate an organizational culture where men typically dominate leadership positions (Arriaga et al., 2020; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). Due to “an inherent bias against women as leaders” (Arriaga et al., 2020, p. 4), and hiring practices that give preference to male applicants, women often find themselves in competition with each other for limited leadership opportunities.

The metaphors of a glass ceiling and concrete wall are used throughout the literature to describe the bias and discrimination that impact female leaders (Arriaga et

al., 2020; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Morgan, 2008; Thorpe, 2019). Both terms reference invisible yet real barriers that prevent or slow the ascendency of women to positions of leadership. According to Khosroshahi (2021), invisible barriers result in lower paying, less prestigious, and less powerful jobs. Labyrinth is yet another metaphor used to describe the challenging path that women face in their leadership journeys, which is one less linear than the path traveled by male leaders (Morgan, 2008; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Thorpe, 2019). The nature of the labyrinth brings to mind the persistence and self-awareness that women must take if they are to navigate the passage toward desired leadership positions (Morgan, 2008).

Strategies Used by Female Leaders

In their journey to the principalship, women use varied strategies to address the internal and external barriers that stand between them and their leadership goals. Chief among these strategies is the persistence and perseverance women must manifest as they travel the challenging and often circuitous route from the classroom to the principal's office (Arriaga et al., 2020; Morgan, 2008). To counteract female stereotypes that negatively impact their ascension to leadership, women may choose to assume traits associated with masculinity and try to assimilate to—or conversely, capitalize on—female traits such as valuing relationships to move ahead (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

Although balancing family responsibilities and work lives remains an ongoing challenge, female leaders rely on the encouragement and support of partners, spouses, and extended family members (Arriaga et al., 2020; Litmanovitz, 2010). When possible, women integrate their work and home lives, prioritize responsibilities and commitments,

and decide what they are willing to sacrifice to pursue their goal of school leadership (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

A review of literature suggested aspiring female leaders leverage their relationships with other women as another strategy to overcome barriers. Peer mentors, specifically those matching in gender, are important allies who serve as role models and provide encouragement, motivation, and coaching (Arriaga et al., 2020; Chappell, 2000; Litmanovitz, 2010; Sanchez et al., 2020; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). According to Shakeshaft et al. (2007), mentoring provides socialization and exchange of knowledge and political insight vital for advancement. Aspiring female leaders also gain valuable information through formal and informal networking opportunities. Through networking, women develop relationships with other leaders, learn effective leadership strategies, and discover potential job opportunities (Chappell, 2000; Davidson, 2009; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). Additionally, networking allows women to gain visibility inside and outside of their organizations.

In addition to capitalizing on opportunities to collaborate with other female leaders, successful female leaders take a proactive stance in seeking opportunities to grow and lead. For example, they participate in continuing education activities, attend seminars and pursue advanced degrees, and demonstrate a willingness to move to another district or relocate to a different city to pursue a principalship (Chappell, 2000).

Principals of Color

At a time when the U.S. student population is more diverse than at any point in history (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), the principalship remains predominantly White. Although the numbers of Hispanic and African American principals have increased over

time, the gains are small and disproportionate in relation to the population of students of color (see Table 2).

Table 2

U.S. African American and Hispanic Student and Principal Demographics

Race/Ethnicity	1993–1994		2017–2018	
	% students	% principals	% students	% principals
Black/African American	16.8	10.1	15.2	10.5
Hispanic	13.5	4.1	26.8	8.9

Note. Adapted from "Percentage Distribution of Public School Principals, by Race/Ethnicity and State: 2017–2018," by NCES, n.d.-c (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718_19110501_a1s.asp). Copyright by NCES.

Between 1993–1994 and 2017–2018, there was little change in the African American student and principal populations (NCES, n.d.-b). In both years, approximately 1 in 6 students and 1 in 10 principals were African American. However, the number of Hispanic students saw a dramatic increase, almost doubling in the intervening years. In 2017–2018, when over 25% of U.S. students identified as Hispanic, less than 10% of principals identified as such (NCES, n.d.-c). Similar disproportions were seen in California, where in 2017–2018, over 50% of students were Hispanic (DataQuest, n.d.) and only 22.5% of principals identified as Hispanic (NCES, n.d.-c).

Historical Perspective

The history of segregated schools throughout much of the South and Midwest parts of the United States is widely documented, as is the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954

Brown v. Board of Education decision that declared separate but equal schools to be inherently unequal (U.S. Courts, n.d.). The Supreme Court's order to desegregate schools under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (U.S. Courts, n.d.) had unintended and unfortunate consequences for the vast majority of African American principals. Prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, African American principals served as important role models and were respected community leaders (Rousmaniere, 2007; Tillman, 2004). Aside from operating schools for Black students, these principals were considered experts on community-related social and economic issues and believed deeply that education ensured continued freedom and access to opportunities long denied to Black children (Tillman, 2004). Although the Supreme Court decision sought to redress the inequitable resources and opportunities available to Black students, it was disastrous for Black principals, most of whom were reassigned, demoted, or fired from their roles (Brown, 2005; Tillman, 2004). Black students and teachers lost the leaders, role models, and advocates who understood their communities and sought to provide opportunities for educational excellence.

There is scant information on the role of Hispanic principals in the early- to mid-20th century. Antman and Cortes (2021) found although Mexican American students attended segregated schools throughout California, segregation was decided at the local rather than state level. Although much has been written about the 1947 *Mendez v. Westminster* decision that abolished segregated schools in California, there is scant information about demographics or impacts of principals leading segregated schools prior to and after the Mendez decision. The dearth of information aligns with Antman and Cortes's (2021) finding that few data existed surrounding the Hispanic population in

California or elsewhere until the latter half of the 20th century. According to the Pew Research Center (2010), the 1980 U.S. Census was the first census where all residents were given the option to identify themselves as Hispanic. Thus, the first national and state data reporting the number of Hispanic principals did not appear until after that time.

Influence of Principals of Color

Research has suggested the race or ethnicity of a principal significantly correlates with positive outcomes for students from the same racial or ethnic group. Principals act as role models by advocating and positively impacting student engagement and academic outcomes for students of the same color (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Grissom et al., 2021; Murakami et al., 2016). They understand the cultural and linguistic challenges students face and see them through an asset-based rather than deficit lens (Fernandez, 2013; Flores, 2007; Murakami et al., 2016). Additionally, as noted by Tillman (2004), principals of color demonstrate compassion, deep understanding for students and their communities, and a fierce commitment to students themselves, including confidence in their ability to learn.

The influence of principals of color is also deeply felt by the teachers these principals hire, mentor, and retain. Green (2018) reported principals of color impact staff diversity through efforts to recruit teachers of color, increasing teacher representation, which is a known strategy for improving outcomes for students of color. Grissom et al. (2021) reported a racial match between principals and teachers resulted in improved teacher outcomes, including less turnover and higher job satisfaction. Additionally, principals of color are more likely to support all teachers in understanding students of

color and implementing culturally responsive teaching practices (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Grissom et al., 2021).

Further adding to the issue of influence is the reported relationship between principals' culture and their leadership styles. Murakami et al. (2016) noted Hispanic principals project a sense of *Latinidad*, which is a deep appreciation for Latino attributes and values. These values include a focus on family, community, and language, and while Hispanic principals are focused on student achievement, they perceive community involvement and student concerns to be on a level with instruction and supervision (Fernandez, 2013; Murakami et al., 2016). Similarly, Tillman (2004) found Black principals demonstrate leadership based on interpersonal relationships and prioritize the social and academic development of Black students. Like Hispanic principals, Black principals demonstrate a commitment to developing positive self-concepts in their students.

As culturally proficient leaders, principals of color offer counternarratives to the negative stereotypes and low expectations often held for students of color. Principals of color believe in and advocate for students and hire effective teachers critical to improving students' academic outcomes (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Green, 2018). Principals of color are likely to see themselves as social justice leaders who feel a commitment and obligation to students and understand the importance of a culturally responsive school environment (Green, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). Importantly, principals of color express a passion to "advocate and right inequities while serving as cultural brokers for students, teachers, and families" (Murakami et al., 2016, p. 292).

Multiple benefits are reported when schools are led by diverse leaders who reflect the race and ethnicity of their students and school community (Capper, 2015; Thorpe, 2019). According to Green (2018) and Grissom et al. (2021), principal diversity impacts school climate, teacher effectiveness and retention, and the academic and social–emotional outcomes for students of color. Although few researchers dispute the positive influence of diverse school leaders, B. W. Davis et al. (2016) asserted it is difficult to determine the extent to which a principal's race impacts student outcomes. The researchers suggested effective school leaders may not need to represent students' race but must understand and value the cultures of their students.

Barriers Faced by Principals of Color

Despite the overwhelming evidence students and teachers of color benefit from leaders with a racial or ethnic match, principals of color encounter barriers similar to those faced by female leaders. Although the term *glass ceiling* is used throughout the literature to describe the impact of invisible, yet potent barriers faced by female leaders, principals of color—and particularly, those who are female—are said to encounter the concrete ceiling or concrete wall (Arriaga et al., 2020; Khosroshahi, 2021; Morgan, 2008; Thorpe, 2019). Both terms signify barriers that are more impenetrable than the glass ceiling and obscure the view of possibilities that exist on the other side (Arriaga et al., 2020; Khosroshahi, 2021).

Akin to female leaders, aspiring principals of color contend with multiple obstacles as they seek advancement. They face racial biases in hiring and other stereotypes, which limit opportunities to attain leadership positions (Beasley, 2020; Fernandez, 2013). According to Fernandez (2013), principals of color are further

impacted by the primarily White superintendent and school board demographics who are critical decision makers in schools. The reality is organizational leaders typically hire individuals of similar backgrounds and cultures. Furthermore, principals of color lack access to mentors who might advise them and lack formal and informal networks from which they might secure social support and access to insider information (Beasley, 2020; Fernandez, 2013; Thorpe, 2019).

Beasley (2020) pointed out principals of color tend to be educated at higher levels and demonstrate solid work ethic; yet, they are often perceived as token hires. Principals of color are held to different standards and inequitable expectations, undergo constant scrutiny, and consistently feel the need to demonstrate competence and credibility (Beasley, 2020; Haar & Robicheau, 2009; Khosroshahi, 2021). Likewise, Fernandez (2013) noted principals of color are more rigorously evaluated and wait longer for promotions. Once in a leadership position, many report a lack of professional acceptance and acknowledgement along with feelings of isolation and a lack of belonging (Arriaga et al., 2020; Beasley, 2020). Beasley (2020) explained these sentiments of dislocation are compounded by negative attitudes from colleagues and a lack of respect and trust from parents and staff members who may be uncomfortable or resent being led by a person of color.

Strategies Used by Principals of Color

Mentoring is a critical support for people of color aspiring to and serving in the role of principal. Mentors provide insight into barriers and help increase chances of success for people looking to advance to a leadership position (Fernandez, 2013). Once individuals attain a leadership role, mentors provide a window into how experienced

principals think and make decisions and provide both personal and professional mentoring (Randle, 2018).

Similar to female leaders, educators of color rely on the strong support of their families as they navigate the journey to leadership or work to effectively serve in the position (Haar & Robicheau, 2009). Educators of color maintain an awareness of how they are viewed in the workplace, yet they strive not to take any words or actions personally or as a reflection of their minority status. Rather, principals of color use strategies such as counterstories to control the narrative around them and their experiences and to change how they are perceived (Capper, 2015; Hobbel & Chapman, 2009). Interestingly, Beasley (2020) and Fernandez (2013) suggested assimilation, or the perception thereof, is another strategy principals of color use to lead in organizations where there are few others of a similar culture or ethnicity.

Hispanic Female Principals

A review of the research reveals Hispanic female principals are underrepresented in educational leadership roles (Barrera, 2019; Lopez, 2018; Pimienta, 2014; Santiago, 2009). In 2017–2018, approximately 54% of California's K–12 public school students identified as Hispanic, the fastest growing demographic in the state (DataQuest, n.d.), while only 13% of female Hispanic principals identified similarly. Between 2011–2012 and 2017–2018, the percentage of Hispanic female administrators remained relatively static compared to an increasing number of Hispanic students (see Table 3). This representation gap is in stark comparison to the percentage of White female administrators who significantly outnumber White students in California public schools.

Table 3

White and Hispanic Female Administrators in California's Public Schools

Academic year	Hispanic students (%)	Hispanic female principals (%)	White students (%)	White female administrators (%)
2011–2012	52	12	26	38
2017–2018	54	13	23	38

Note. Adapted from "DataQuest," by California Department of Education, n.d. (https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest). Copyright by California Department of Education.

The representation gap, also found in other career fields, presents unique challenges in the educational arena. Chief among these challenges are the limited opportunities Hispanic female principals have to create conditions for Hispanic students to excel, advocate for them at the site and district level, and serve as role models for students and teachers. As Bagula (2016) asserted, it is important Hispanic students see themselves reflected in their principals, and all students see gender and racial diversity in their school leaders.

Increasing the representation of Hispanic female educators in the principalship is a strategy districts can employ to improve the academic and social–emotional outcomes for their Hispanic students. Fernandez (2013) reported Hispanic students are more apt to stay in school if there is a racial match and relational attachment to their principals. Fernandez also noted Hispanic administrators have unique insight into the cultural backgrounds of their students. They use common experiences and linguistic capital to engage students and their families and hold high expectations for themselves and others (M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015). Murakami et al. (2016) pointed out Hispanic principals are more likely to acknowledge the value of students' bilingual

and bicultural knowledge and abilities and view students through an asset as opposed to a deficit lens. The educational advantage to underserved Hispanic students is evidenced through improved academic outcomes. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude Hispanic female principals can contribute uniquely to their school communities and are likely to be more attuned than others to the needs of the quickly growing Hispanic community.

Identity

A review of literature established identity as an important concept for Hispanic female principals and those aspiring to the position. The term *Hispanic* describes an ethnicity rather than a race and applies to people from all racial backgrounds. According to Bonilla-Silva (1999), "Race is assigned externally, whereas ethnicity is often a matter of self-assertion" (p. 903). Rather than identifying in racial terms, Hispanic females subscribe to a concept of *Latinidad*, which implies a strong cultural and linguistic identity (Diaz, 2018; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Murakami et al., 2016; Reyes, 2015). They use their cultural identity and bilingual skills to engage with students, parents, and the community (Méndez-Morse et al., 2015) and are driven by their own prior experiences and passion as students to create opportunities for learners to succeed (Diaz, 2018).

Barriers to the Principalship

According to Beasley (2020), Hispanic female principals "are challenged by the duality and double marginalization of gender and race" (p. 2). They serve in the classroom twice as long as Hispanic men before applying for a principalship and face added gender and racial bias compared to their male counterparts (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Sandoval, 2019). Once Hispanic women advance to the principalship, many find themselves assigned to challenging urban schools

with high numbers of students of color, many of whom struggle academically (Bagula, 2016; Beasley, 2020; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). Regardless of their commitment to serving as social justice leaders and influential role models, Hispanic female educators encounter internal and external barriers that impede their ascendancy to school leadership and their success upon its attainment.

Internal Barriers

The internal barrier most referenced in the body of literature is the conflict Hispanic female educators face between cultural expectations and the significant demands of the principalship. Under the influence of a still patriarchal society, many feel guilty not fulfilling the traditional duties expected of them as wives and mothers and have difficulty balancing their careers and families (Barrera, 2019; Falk, 2011; Lopez, 2018; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Pimienta, 2014). This role conflict, at times compounded by a lack of family support, deters many Hispanic female educators from pursuing leadership opportunities (Falk, 2011).

Another internal barrier for Hispanic females educators is their difficulty adapting to the dominant culture while maintaining their Hispanic identity (Bagula, 2016). Beasley (2020) and Hernandez and Murakami (2016) reported Hispanic female leaders often feel pressured to assimilate their speech, expression, and appearance. Although some level of assimilation is essential to success in the role, they struggle to do so while retaining a sense of Latinidad. Additionally, due to their underrepresentation in the role, Hispanic female educators may contend with feelings of isolation and loneliness upon advancement to the principalship (Bagula, 2016; Lopez, 2018; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Menchaca et al., 2017).

External Barriers

While grappling with internal barriers that limit opportunities to seek leadership positions, Hispanic females educators also encounter external barriers due to their ethnic and gender identities. A lack of mentors, specifically ones similar in gender and ethnicity, is a concept most often referenced in the body of research (Bagula, 2016; Barrera, 2019; Diaz, 2018; Falk, 2011; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Lopez, 2018; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Palacio, 2013). Mentors are considered critical supports for educators seeking to advance to leadership positions; however, they are less accessible due to the small number of Hispanic female leaders serving in leadership positions. The lack of culturally similar mentors creates a deficit of *social capital*, defined as the social connections, people, and resources that provide professional and emotional support (Diaz, 2018; Palacio, 2013). According to Barrera (2019) and Méndez-Morse et al. (2015), the lack of formal and informal mentors results in limited networking opportunities and limited guidance, encouragement, and insight such relationships can offer.

Similar to the lack of mentors, Hispanic female educators are disadvantaged by scarcity of role models who can help them navigate challenges faced on their leadership journeys (Barrera, 2019; Falk, 2011; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Palacio, 2013). The lack of role models is an unfortunate result of the small number of Hispanic female educators in educational leadership roles. The path to the principalship and their experiences once in the role become more challenging without the emotional and professional support that role models provide, and the sponsors who advocate and open doors to unseen opportunities (Barrera, 2019; Diaz, 2018).

Among the external barriers Hispanic females educators encounter are discriminatory hiring and employment practices that diminish their opportunities to rise and succeed (Falk, 2011; Lopez, 2018; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Reyes, 2015). Hispanic females are stereotyped as submissive, passive, and traditional (Bagula, 2016; Barrera, 2019; Lopez, 2018; Palacio, 2013; Pimienta, 2014), which are traits that are incongruous to those believed essential for leadership. Hispanic females encounter overt and covert discrimination as their capacity and competency are questioned and bypassed consideration for positions despite holding the necessary qualifications (Lopez, 2018; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Palacio, 2013). According to Falk (2011), these factors result in fewer opportunities to gain administrative experience and correspondingly fewer opportunities for promotion to positions of leadership.

Strategies Used to Overcome Barriers

Resilience and grit were found to be key traits of Hispanic female educators who have attained positions of educational leadership (Bagula, 2016; Barrera, 2019; Lopez, 2018; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Palacio, 2013; Pimienta, 2014). In a 2013 TED talk, Duckworth (2013) defined grit as "passion and perseverance for very long-term goals" (2:54) and asserted grit to be a significant predictor of success. According to Duckworth, people with grit demonstrate resilience, a positive response to adversity, a focused passion toward accomplishing a goal, and a willingness to forgo other things in pursuit of the goal (Perkins-Gough, 2013). Other traits used to overcome barriers reported in the literature include a strong sense of efficacy, confidence, determination, and the tenacity to overcome obstacles in their paths (Lopez, 2018; Palacio, 2013; Santiago, 2009). Together with a strong work ethic, these characteristics are instrumental to the success of

Hispanic female educators ascending to the position of principal (Menchaca et al., 2017; Palacio, 2013).

Just as the lack of mentors has been found to be a major impediment to Hispanic female leaders, researchers have described the availability and support of a mentor as a critical factor to attain a principal position and succeed while serving in the role (Diaz, 2018; Palacio, 2013; Reyes, 2015; Santiago, 2009). Mentors provide professional and personal support and insight into organizational structures and practices, which is particularly important for those without insider status. M. A. Martinez et al. (2020) and Menchaca et al. (2017) suggested the most effective mentors are those with similar cultures and experiences, allowing them to fully understand the cultural conflicts and organizational challenges the principal may be experiencing. Although Santiago (2009) suggested mentors might be male or female, or Hispanic or non-Hispanic, others concurred Hispanic females should seek to network with and gain support from other women of color (Arriaga et al., 2020; Falk, 2011). Falk (2011) asserted networking offers these women opportunities to associate with other Hispanic female leaders who share their experiences and can provide guidance and support. In short, mentors and sponsors who provide encouragement, guidance, and opportunities to network are essential supports Hispanic females use to overcome many barriers to leadership (Palacio, 2013; Reyes, 2015).

Counterstorytelling is another strategy used by Hispanic female educators to bolster their chances at educational leadership. This strategy can be used to challenge the presuppositions and cultural misunderstandings that those in the majority may hold about an individual's potential for leadership (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; J. M. Martinez,

2016). Counterstorytelling also allows people of color to tell and reflect on their lived experiences and share personal and collective stories that are not often told (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). These stories serve to build community among marginalized groups, communicate they are not alone in their struggles, and imagine possibilities not yet realized.

The concept of familismo pertains to a source of strength and support Hispanic female leaders leverage to offset the challenges of leadership. Familismo describes the value placed by Hispanic and Latino individuals on close relationships with immediate and extended family members (Bagula, 2016; Smith-Morris et al., 2013). Considered a core value that encompasses family obligations, support, and respect, Smith-Morris et al. (2013) noted familismo is a contributor to the formation of a strong ethnic identity. Moreover, familismo is closely interwoven into the various forms of community cultural wealth that serve as effective means to counteract internal and external barriers.

Despite the acknowledged conflict between family responsibilities as wives and mothers and the demands of leadership, the support received from family members is instrumental to Hispanic female educators' abilities to serve as school leaders. *Familial capital*, the strength drawn from parents, spouses, and extended family members, is another essential support for those seeking leadership positions (Falk, 2011). Hispanic females draw strength from and rely on family members for emotional, political, and professional support and encouragement, regardless of their leadership knowledge and experiences (Diaz, 2018; Lopez, 2018; Pimienta, 2014; Yosso, 2005). For example, Méndez-Morse et al. (2015) noted mothers sometimes serve as first and ever-available role models in lieu of formal mentors. The closely related concepts of social and cultural

capital were also described as effective tools for Hispanic females. *Social capital* references the social connections and network of people and community resources beyond the family that provide social and emotional support (Barrera, 2019; Diaz, 2018; Yosso, 2005). Likewise, *cultural capital* denotes beliefs, values, and culture, including high levels of ethnic identity, which contribute to the self-confidence and determination of Hispanic females who choose to pursue the difficult path to leadership (Yosso, 2005).

Theoretical Foundations

Social theories provide conceptual understandings of "how societies work, how organizations operate, why people interact in certain ways" (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 631), and provide a lens with which to consider complicated social issues. These theories offer insights into how the advancement of Hispanic female educators to school leadership positions is influenced by cultural norms, values, and expectations tied to gender and ethnic background.

Community Cultural Wealth Theory

Yosso (2005) coined the term *community cultural wealth* to recognize cultural wealth in the form of unique experiences, beliefs, and knowledge that result in persistence and social mobility of people of color. As an outgrowth of critical race theory, community cultural wealth uses an asset-based lens to acknowledge the strength of cultural capital that parents of color and marginalized communities possess, despite being unable to transfer capital wealth to their children (Guzmán et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). Yosso identified six forms of community cultural wealth that help communities of color thrive despite systems of oppression:

- Aspirational capital – The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future and inspire children to do and achieve more despite barriers. Critical skills include individual agency and resiliency.
- Linguistic capital – Intellectual and social skills gained through communication in more than one language, an appreciation of multilingualism, and determination to maintain the home language.
- Familial capital – Cultural knowledge nurtured in the family, including cultural norms, social customs, oral storytelling that incorporates advice and sayings, and a concept of family that extends to a broader group and instills a commitment to the community.
- Social capital – The cultivation of social networks in and outside of the family, the recognition and use of community resources.
- Navigational capital – The ability to navigate systems and institutions that are unfamiliar, and/or not created with people of color in mind.
- Resistant capital – Behavior that is grounded in a legacy of resistance to subordination and that challenges inequities in social and educational institutions.

According to Yosso (2005), the six forms of community cultural wealth "are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (p. 77).

Social Role Theory

Social role theory is defined by Barrera (2019) as shared expectations about appropriate qualities and behaviors that "apply to individuals on the basis of their socially

identified gender" (p. 12). Eagly (1987) first proposed the theory to describe the relationship between perceived gender roles and expectations held for female and male behaviors. According to one key concept, gender roles originate in the perception that activities typically performed by men and women correspond to innate personal qualities required for those activities (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These perceptions lead to stereotypes about social roles and an acceptance of communal and agentic characteristics. Wells et al. (2014) explained communal characteristics, generally attributed to women, correspond to behaviors considered affectionate, sensitive, gentle, nurturing, and kind. Conversely, agentic characteristics such as aggression, dominance, self-confidence, and self-sufficiency, and a tendency toward leadership, are generally attributed to men (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Wells et al., 2014). Eagly and Karau (2002) noted the acceptance of communal qualities for women and agentic qualities for men has contributed to concepts about ideal women and men, beliefs that women and men hold about themselves, attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men, and judgments about behaviors appropriate for one sex or another.

Role Congruity Theory

Role congruity theory is an outgrowth of social role theory and considers the relationship between gender and leadership roles and the potential for prejudicial behaviors (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Eagly and Karau (2002) stated the potential for prejudice arises for female leaders due to the inconsistency between their perceived communal qualities and the agentic characteristics considered a requirement for leadership roles. In other words, men are considered to have the potential for greater success as leaders due to their masculine or agentic characteristics. Diekman and

Goodfriend (2006) posited value is given to people serving in gender-congruent roles and women displaying leadership behaviors are likely to be seen in a less positive light. The authors further stated individuals acting out of line with social gender roles risk being penalized as opposed to those conforming to traditional roles.

Critical Race Theory

The central argument of critical race theory (CRT) is racism is ingrained in the very fabric of U.S. society and institutions (Capper, 2015). Despite the more recently accepted concept of race as a social construct, race and racism remain central mechanisms for understanding inequities that persist for people of color. CRT provides a framework to analyze the social, political, and economic disadvantages of race and social identity. Scholars of CRT posit although ordinariness of racism makes it difficult to detect, racial barriers persist and impact social structures, discourse, representation, and achievement (Diaz, 2018; Randle, 2018; Yamaguchi & Burge, 2019). They argue concepts of colorblindness, neutrality, and meritocracy must be challenged, and voices and stories of people of color must be heard to counteract the dominant White narrative (Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Other tenets of CRT identified by Capper (2015) include permanence of racism, the concept of Whiteness as a basis for privilege, and intersectionality.

Solorzano (1998) further described CRT as a theory challenging "the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to the law by examining how legal doctrine is used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups" (p. 6) and identified five themes encompassed by the discipline. The first theme, centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, posits both race and racism are endemic and permanent, exist in individual

and institutional forms, and have conscious and unconscious elements. The second theme challenges traditional claims of objectivity, meritocracy, and equal opportunity and suggests these claims are a mask for the power and privilege of Whiteness. A third theme is commitment to social justice and the elimination of racism and other forms of discrimination based on gender, class, and sexual orientation. A fourth theme of CRT is recognition, respect, and value of the lived experiences of persons of color. The fifth theme is an interdisciplinary perspective wherein race and racism are viewed through a historical and contemporary context.

Conceptual Framework: Intersectionality

A conceptual framework supports the rationale and significance of the research study. It is the theoretical perspective through which key factors, constructs, and the relationships between them are studied (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).

Intersectionality serves as the primary theoretical framework for exploring the perceptions of Hispanic female educators on the impact of race and gender on their advancement to the principalship. Intersectionality supports an understanding of the experiences of individuals for whom race and gender intersect and compound. The roots of intersectionality lay in feminist studies of the 1970s, specifically Black feminist and critical race studies (Garry, 2011; Parent et al., 2013). The term was coined by Crenshaw (1989), who believed women of color were underrepresented in the feminist movement. Crenshaw insisted neither feminist nor Black studies could ignore the intersectional experiences of subjects who subscribe to both identities, and the interests of women of color are often marginalized in both. An individual could not consider gender without

acknowledging the impact of other identities such as race and sexual identity (Bowleg, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; K. Davis, 2008; Shields, 2008; Thorpe, 2019).

At the heart of intersectionality is the concept of identity. Shields (2008) defined identity as "social categories in which an individual claims membership as well as the personal meaning associated with those categories" (p. 301) and included self-image and self-expression as components. However, no individual can be defined by a single identity, and multiple identities interact in different ways to inform an individual's social interactions and experiences (K. Davis, 2008; Garry, 2011). According to Parent et al. (2013), "Multiple identities construct novel experiences that are distinctive and not necessarily divisible into their component identities or experiences" (p. 640). Thus, the combination of identities creates a new category of experience greater than the sum of each (Crenshaw, 1989; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Voltmer, 2018; Wing, 2000).

The theory of intersectionality acknowledges differences among women and explores how the intersection of race and gender transforms relationships of power (K. Davis, 2008; Thorpe, 2019). Individuals who experience multiple subordinate identities as one identity are often marginalized, face distinctive forms of oppression, and experience disparate outcomes (Arriaga et al., 2020; Bowleg, 2013; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Crenshaw (1991) further described three forms of intersectionality (i.e., structural, political, and representational) and their impact on the experiences of women of color.

Structural Intersectionality

Structural intersectionality provides a lens to examine social and political structures that impact those with overlapping layers of subordinate identities. It supports

an analysis of the policies and practices that create marginalized conditions for women of color and determine the resources allocated to them (Cho et al., 2013; Shields, 2008). According to Crenshaw (1991), women with multiple subordinate identities contend with structural inequities that create conditions and experiences unlike those of White women. They face different obstacles and have different needs, and interventions and access to resources are often unavailable, inadequate, or less effective (Crenshaw, 1991). Women of color are impacted by institutional structures linked to a history of racism and sexism, and expectations based on a single axis identity; therefore, they find limited access to educational and employment opportunities (Hobbel & Chapman, 2009).

Political Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1991) defined political intersectionality as the effect of political laws and policies on individuals with intersecting minority identities. It supports an examination of the impact of political and social forces on individuals with multiple subordinate identities (Cho et al., 2013). Crenshaw (1991) argued women of color are members of two subordinated groups that often pursue conflicting political agendas and priorities and frequently split their political energies between both groups. Multiple oppressions of race and gender are rarely addressed, and intersectional experiences are ignored or suppressed due to each group's political priorities. As an example, feminist and antiracist movements have often failed to recognize women at the intersection of both. Although the Civil Rights Movement focused on racial issues, it did not address women's issues in general. The feminist movement focused on inequalities faced by women without specifically addressing the oppression of Black women (Crenshaw, 1991). Thereby, issues pertinent to women of color were diminished.

Representational Intersectionality

According to Crenshaw (1991), representational intersectionality reflects ways women of color are represented in popular culture (e.g., media, text, film, television) due to the intersection of race and gender. It examines the manner women of color are represented, and how critiques and protests of said representation often ignore the interests of the women themselves. As an example, Crenshaw described the misogynistic portrayal of Black women by the rap group 2 Live Crew. The group was prosecuted for obscenity, but Black women were further demarginalized when the rappers were defended by Black individuals who claimed the manner of depiction as a cultural tradition. How marginalized groups are portrayed or represented lends to the creation and affirmation of stereotypes. Hobbel and Chapman (2009) found stereotypical images affect women of color themselves as they adopt, modify, or reject such images.

A Contrasting View of Intersectionality

Although many people in the research community value intersectionality as a framework for examining the experiences of individuals with multiple social identities, others are critical of underlying concepts that underscore the framework. For example, Wing (1990) questioned if all identities can be considered intersectional and not only identities of multiple marginalized individuals. Similarly, Cho et al. (2013) posited "the failure to give all intersectional subjects their day in the sun is a fundamental shortcoming of the field" (p. 798). Other concerns with the intersectionality framework include the concept of intersectional identities as stable and resistant to changes in time, culture, and geography (Bowleg, 2013) and the increasing understanding of race as a social construct (Parent et al., 2013).

Intersectionality and the Study of Hispanic Female Principals

Much research on women of color in public leadership has focused on one dimension of identity, such as race or ethnicity, rather than considering the impact of multiple subordinate identities (Breslin et al., 2017). Hispanic females in educational leadership contend with bias and discrimination due to race and gender and encounter challenges different than those of White females and Hispanic males in similar roles. Although there is substantial research on the barriers faced by Hispanic female educators and the strategies they leverage to attain and succeed in the principalship, there is limited attention given to the intersectional nature of their identities and its impact on their professional experiences. Instead, much of the literature has explored their experience from an additive perspective where race and gender "act independently and combine additively to shape people's experiences" (Parent et al., 2013, p. 640).

Macias and Stephens (2017) described race and gender as inseparable barriers that limit access to leadership roles and impact individuals' experiences once positions have been attained. Likewise, Breslin et al. (2017) asserted an individual's "experience of inequality in one dimension is closely linked, if not inseparable, from the experience of inequality in other dimensions" (p. 165). Thus, it is reasonable to view intersectionality as the appropriate framework to analyze the experiences of Hispanic female principals to understand how they are impacted by persisting racial and gender inequities in education and the tools they use to overcome barriers to their success (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Macias & Stephens, 2017).

Synthesis Matrix

A synthesis matrix was developed to outline the academic and professional literature used in this study. The matrix shows how the research was categorized related to the influence of the principalship and the experiences of women and people of color who ascend to and serve in the role (see Appendix A).

Summary

Individuals serving in the K–12 principalship have a profound influence on students' academic and social–emotional outcomes. They are instructional leaders who focus on student learning and culturally proficient leaders who establish inclusive school climates where all students feel respected and valued (Cotton, 2003; Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021). As schools throughout the country become increasingly diverse, a review of the literature suggests principal diversity is a key factor linked to improved outcomes for students of color (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Fernandez, 2013; Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Thorpe, 2019). Principal diversity is of particular importance in California where Hispanic students account for the majority of learners enrolled in public K–12 schools and where a large gap persists between their academic outcomes and those of White students. Despite the importance of representation (Capper, 2015; Green, 2018), Hispanic principals, especially Hispanic female principals, remain underrepresented in positions of leadership.

Hispanic female principals ascending to and serving in the role of principal contend with internal and external barriers due to race and gender. Literature has largely described the impact of dual subordinate identities through an additive lens where disadvantages due to gender are compounded by those due to ethnicity. An analysis of

the research suggests the experiences of Hispanic principals might instead be considered through the lens of intersectionality, which holds that "multiple identities construct novel identities that are distinctive" (Parent et al., 2013, p. 640) and result in a unique experience that is "greater than the sum of racism and sexism" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). An analysis of Hispanic female leaders' leadership experiences through an intersectional lens may provide a greater understanding of the strategies they employ to overcome obstacles in gaining access to the principalship.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter III provides a description of the research design and methodology that was selected as the most effective means to study the impact of intersectionality on Hispanic female educators ascending to the K–12 principalship. The chapter begins with the purpose of the study and research questions, followed by a description of qualitative research design, and the researcher's rationale for using a phenomenological approach. Next, the population, sample frame, and sample are described, along with the instrument developed by the researcher and peers. The validity and reliability of the instrument are discussed, and the data collection and data analysis processes are explained in detail. The chapter concludes with a description of potential limitations due to research design and the researcher as an instrument of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived impact of barriers created by the intersection of gender and ethnicity on the advancement of Hispanic female educators to the K–12 principalship. A second purpose of this study was to identify strategies Hispanic female educators leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship.

Research Questions

1. What gender barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 principalship?
2. What ethnic barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?

3. How does the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity impact advancement to the K–12 school principalship as perceived by Hispanic females?
4. What strategies do Hispanic females leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?

Research Design

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), "A research design describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained" (p. 28). Prior to specifying the research design, the researcher must be clear about the research purpose as "decisions about design, measurement, analysis, and reporting all flow from purpose" (Patton, 2015, p. 248). Therefore, the research design defines a plan that is aligned to the research purpose and questions and supports the researcher in drawing the most valid conclusions about the topic in question (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Quantitative and qualitative approaches are the most common categories of research design. Quantitative studies seek to measure and describe phenomena with an emphasis on objectivity and standardization and aim to generalize results to a larger group or population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patten & Newhart, 2018). Qualitative studies emphasize gathering and describing data to provide "insights on interpretation, context, and meaning of events, phenomena or identities" (Patten & Newhart, 2018, p. 22). Other studies employ a mixed-methods approach where both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to provide a complete understanding of the phenomenon studied.

A qualitative research design was most appropriate to this study's research purpose, questions, and intended audience. According to Patten and Newhart (2018), qualitative studies "provide insights on interpretation, context, and meaning of events, phenomena, or identities for those who experience them" (p. 22). In other words, qualitative inquiries examine how people and groups construct meaning from their common experiences (Patton, 2015).

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to capture and describe the lived experience of a person or group contending with a specific phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Phenomenological inquiry explores how individuals make sense of a particular experience or phenomenon and assumes a commonality to shared experiences. A phenomenological approach was suitable to understanding the commonality of Hispanic female educators' experiences due to the intersection of their minority identities and the perceived impact of intersectionality on their ascension to the K–12 principalship.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is the study of how individuals and groups construct meaning based on their experiences and perspectives given a particular phenomenon or problem (Patton, 2015). A qualitative design supported the researcher in capturing participants' perceptions, feelings, and insights through an interview protocol consisting of structured, open-ended questions. During one-on-one interviews, the researcher established a rapport with interviewees and used skillful interviewing strategies to elicit rich responses and probe for depth and detail. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, and the quality of interview data is largely dependent on their skills (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2015). As such, the researcher was

focused and observant to ensure the phenomenological interview process and the subsequent data analysis captured the essence of the principals' lived experiences.

Method Rationale

A qualitative inquiry using a phenomenological approach focuses on how individuals make sense of their lived experiences, and Patton (2015) explained this process involves capturing "how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it" (p. 115). Therefore, a phenomenological inquiry was an appropriate approach used to probe Hispanic female principals' experiences through the lens of intersectionality, which was the phenomenon under study. Participants described and reflected upon the experiences, behaviors, and interactions that comprised their journey to the K–12 principalship. A qualitative phenomenological study provided an effective format where Hispanic female principals could share their perspectives on the impact of their intersectional identities on advancement to principalship positions.

Population

A study's population includes the group the researcher is interested in explaining or describing (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Likewise, the population identifies the larger group that meets a specific criteria and to whom the results of the inquiry might be generalized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The population for this study was 1,382 Hispanic female educators serving as principals in K–12 public schools in California. This number was calculated based on the number of K–12 public schools across the state, the percentage of female principals in California public schools, and the percentage of principals who identify as Hispanic. According to the California Department of

Education (n.d.-a), there were approximately 10,545 K–12 public schools in California in 2021. Because approximately 57% of California's principals were female as of 2017–2018 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.-a), and close to 23% of principals identify as Hispanic (NCES, n.d.-c), the population of Hispanic female principals in California was estimated at 1,382.

Sampling Frame

A sampling frame includes the delimitations identified by the researcher and identifies the members of the population from whom the sample for the study are chosen (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Delimitations for this study included females who: (a) identified as Hispanic or Latina, (b) served as principals in K–12 public schools, and (c) worked in districts located in Orange and Riverside counties in Southern California. Based on these delimitations, the sampling frame for this study was 136 Hispanic female principals. The number was calculated based on approximately 1,040 principals in K–12 public schools in Orange and Riverside Counties (Ed Data, n.d.). Accounting for the percentage of female principals (i.e., 57%) and Hispanic principals (i.e., 23%), it was estimated 136 Hispanic female principals served in K–12 public schools in Orange and Riverside counties.

Sample

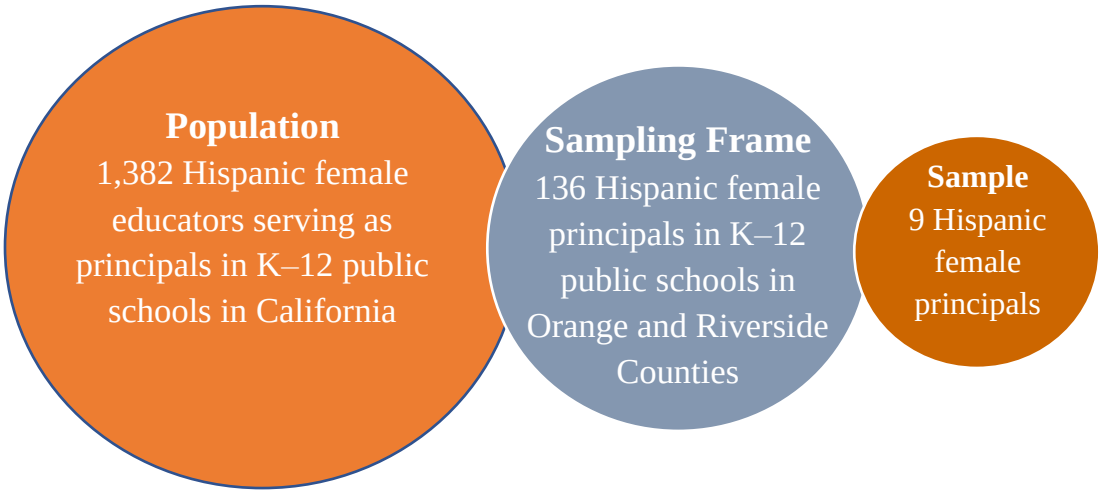
A study's sample is the group of participants chosen due to their knowledge about the phenomena being studied, and from whom data are collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). According to Patten and Newhart (2018), researchers select the sample from the population they are interested in studying and "infer that the characteristics of the sample are probably the characteristics of the population" (p. 89).

Additionally, Patten and Newhart pointed out the importance of a high-quality sample, including the adequacy of the sample size. In qualitative studies, samples are typically small in size; to obtain rich data, researchers strategically select participants using purposeful or nonprobability sampling strategies (Patton, 2015).

For the purpose of this study, convenience sampling was used to select nine K–12 Hispanic female principals as participants (see Figure 1). Convenience sampling is a common nonprobability sampling approach where participants are selected due to their accessibility to the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In essence, researchers rely on their own judgment when identifying study participants. For this study, participants were purposefully chosen to ensure they represented the characteristics outlined in the sampling frame. According to Patton (2015), purposeful sampling is the selection of information-rich participants who provide in-depth information about the phenomena being studied and insight on the issue central to the study's purpose. Patton (2015) further stated, "It is necessary to locate excellent participants to obtain excellent data" (p. 264). Purposeful sampling was an effective method of identifying Hispanic female principals able to contribute to a greater understanding of the impact of intersectionality on their advancement to a leadership position.

Figure 1

Population, Sampling Frame, and Sample of Study Participants



When selecting participants for a study, it is important to select individuals who can provide the best information about the phenomenon of interest, and those from whom the most can be learned (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Merriam, 2002). Qualitative researchers choose subjects who are likely to have had rich lived experiences surrounding the topic being studied. For the purpose of this study, nine principals were selected as participants. Because the sampling frame included Hispanic female principals in two large counties in Southern California, convenience sampling was used to identify potential study participants who met the criteria. The researcher was purposeful in selecting principals who represent Hispanic female leadership at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

The criteria used to select study participants was shared with the researcher's colleagues and university support providers, who were current or past public school administrators. These colleagues identified Hispanic female principals working at K–12

public schools in Orange and Riverside counties who were known to them and provided their contact information to the researcher. Once the list of prospective participants was compiled, the researcher contacted each person by email (see Appendix B) to explain the research purpose, procedures, and expected benefits. The email extended an invitation to participate in the study and provided the expected timeline where interviews would take place. Once the researcher received confirmation of their intent to participate, prospective participants were asked to provide their availability for 1-hour interviews to be conducted through Zoom, an online video conferencing platform.

Instrumentation

Three peer researchers participated in a thematic study to explore the impact of intersectionality on women of color advancing to leadership positions in different fields of education and industry. With support from a faculty advisor, researchers collaborated to establish a research purpose and questions and develop an instrument appropriate to understanding the phenomenon of study (see Appendix C). For the purpose of this phenomenological inquiry, an instrument consisting of 13 standardized, open-ended questions was developed. Patton (2015) defined standardized, open-ended interviews as interviews where the precise wording of open-ended questions and their sequence of questions are determined in advance and are posed to all subjects in a standard format. Interview questions asked participants to describe their career path to the principalship, barriers encountered due to gender and ethnicity, and strategies they employed to address barriers. Additional questions asked participants to share barriers and strategies due to their intersectional identities. Probing questions were included on the instrument so

researchers might elicit greater details and "explore unexpected, unusual, or especially relevant material revealed by a participant" (Patten & Newhart, 2018, p. 161).

Once the instrument was developed, an alignment table was created to ensure interview questions were aligned with the research purpose and research questions (see Appendix D). Members of an expert panel reviewed the completed interview protocol to further verify questions were aligned with the research purpose and to check for clarity and understanding. Peer researchers met to discuss feedback and made final revisions to the instrument prior to conducting field tests.

Field Test of Instrument

A field test of the interview protocol was conducted to gauge the effectiveness of questions in soliciting rich detail from participants. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), a field test is also an opportunity to check for possible bias in interview questions and the need to reword explanations or questions prior to the actual interviews. The interview protocol was field tested with a participant who met all criteria for the study's sample. A peer researcher was invited to observe the field test to provide feedback on the process, the effective use of the instrument, and the researcher's interviewing skills. After the field test was completed, peer researchers met to discuss the feedback from observers and interviewees (see Appendices E and F) and to make minor revisions to the interview protocol. After final revisions, 1-hour interviews were scheduled with each participant. Interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed using the Zoom video conferencing platform.

Researcher as an Instrument of the Study

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of the inquiry and interacts closely with subjects to capture rich details through skillful interviewing and careful observation. To elicit reflections and insights that provide valid data, the interviewer must establish rapport; demonstrate they are nonjudgmental, authentic, and trustworthy; and indicate they hear and connect with the interviewee (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) further described the qualitative interview as a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee and stated that "rapport and empathy reside in that relationship" (p. 461). Additionally, Patton declared the quality of data obtained during interviews are largely dependent on the skills of the interviewer whose experience, perspective, and background are integral to the process.

While using a carefully constructed interview protocol and establishing rapport with the interviewee, a skillful interviewer must also manage the patterns of interaction throughout the interview process. As recommended by Patton (2015), the researcher monitored the pacing of questions and responses to maintain the flow of the conversation. In addition to probes and follow-up questions, the researcher encouraged participant elaboration through nonverbal cues, and reinforcement and feedback were provided to signal appreciation for interviewee responses. In conclusion, the researcher's careful attention to the content and process of the interview, "with both informed by the purpose of the interview" (Patton, 2015, p. 471), were essential to obtaining rich data that contributed to the study's findings.

Validity

Validity is defined as the extent an instrument measures what it is designed to measure (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Validity is further defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2014) as "the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher" (p. 354). Thus, in qualitative research where the researcher is the instrument, validity is dependent on the researcher's collection and interpretation of the data.

To enhance validity, the researcher employed multiple strategies. First, the researcher conducted an instrument field test using a peer observer. After the instrument was finalized, interviews took place, and each interview was audio recorded. During interviews, the researcher used member checking to affirm meaning and clarify responses. Once interviews were transcribed, interviewees were emailed transcripts and asked to review the interview data for accuracy. At this time, participants were invited to clarify or modify the information to enhance the validity of their responses.

Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability refers to the consistency or trustworthiness of the obtained results (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Interview transcripts included direct quotes from participants in addition to the researcher's questions and comments. Email communications provided a record of clarifications or revisions to responses once interviews had concluded.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability involves peer researchers examining and coding the same data to check for agreement between coders. It requires equally knowledgeable coders

come to similar interpretations about the data examined (Campbell et al., 2013). Intercoder agreement, according to Campbell et al. (2013), occurs when peer researchers cross check data codes and reconcile discrepancies to reach agreement on the codes used for a particular piece of text.

After interviews were transcribed and the responses verified by participants, the researcher coded the data and identified emerging themes. Themes were sorted and categorized by research question. The researcher and a peer researcher then sorted and coded the data to determine intercoder reliability. At least 10% of the data were analyzed and coded by the peer researcher, with an agreement of 80% or greater (Patton, 2015). After the data were coded, a narrative analysis was written to identify common themes that emerged from each research question to describe common lived experiences of the study's participants.

Data Collection

Direct data collection, which is when "the researcher collects data directly from the source" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 345), is a key characteristic of qualitative research. Interviews, observations, and documents are the data of qualitative inquiry and this study relied upon an in-depth interview protocol as the primary method to collect data.

The peer researcher team collaborated to develop an instrument where interview questions were aligned with the research purpose and questions. Upon completion, an expert panel reviewed interview questions and provided feedback to enhance clarity and validity. Next, the instrument was field tested by each peer researcher and further revised based on feedback from the interviewee and the peer observer. In preparation for

conducting interviews, the researcher was trained and certified by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program (see Appendix G) to conduct research on human subjects. Additionally, the researcher received approval from the UMass Global University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix H) to conduct the study, and data collection commenced upon its receipt.

Once interviews were scheduled, participants received an email confirmation and a link to the researcher's Zoom online conferencing account. Participants also received the Participant's Bill of Rights (see Appendix I) and the informed consent form (see Appendix J). Informed consent involves advising participants of the research purpose and process, potential harm and benefits, and the option to withdraw from the study at any time (Patten & Newhart, 2018). In signing the form, participants indicated their understanding and willingness to participate in the research study. Additionally, the researcher provided participants with a copy of the interview questions to have on hand and reference during the interview.

Interviews were held via the Zoom online video platform for all participants but one who insisted on being interviewed in person. The researcher began each interview by obtaining permission to record. Recording an interview allows the researcher to focus on active listening and focused interactions with the interviewee and increases the accuracy of the data collected (Patten & Newhart, 2018; Patton, 2015). After a few minutes spent building rapport with the participant, the researcher reiterated the purpose of the study and reviewed the interview protocol. Once the interview commenced, the researcher asked each semistructured question in the order they appeared on the instrument. As appropriate, probing questions were asked to encourage elaboration and clarification of

responses. After the interview was completed, the researcher thanked the participant and explained they would receive a follow-up email with the interview transcript. The subsequent email asked participants to review the transcript and verify responses were a correct representation of their views and experiences. Once interview data were validated, the researcher began the process of data analysis.

Researchers are encouraged to use more than one method of data collection to triangulate and validate data. In addition to interviews and observations, artifacts are a third source of qualitative data. According to Merriam (2002), artifacts may provide insights and clues into the phenomenon of study and are worth the effort to locate and examine. The nine participants were asked to submit by email any written documents or other artifacts (e.g., social media posts, photographs) relevant to their experiences as Hispanic female educators advancing to the K–12 principalship.

Data Analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) defined qualitative data analysis as "an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories" (p. 395). Essentially, the researcher codes the data, making meaning and drawing conclusions based on themes that emerge. Patton (2015) further described qualitative analysis as a challenging endeavor in which an individual must make sense of voluminous data through identifying patterns and "constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (p. 521).

Once the nine interviews were completed, data were transcribed using the Zoom platform. Prior to sharing transcripts with interviewees to check for validity, the researcher completed a visual review to correct errors in transcription and ensure

questions and responses were clearly delineated. During this time, the researcher took the opportunity to preliminarily code the data and take note of emerging themes. After verification by participants, transcripts were analyzed in depth to identify common patterns and themes, and to record frequencies and scores. Proposed theme names were inserted into sentence frames to verify their alignment with research questions.

Limitations

Limitations are methodological weaknesses that may affect data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings. The researcher identified two overarching limitations with the potential to impact the study's results.

Sample Size

Qualitative studies focus on small samples of typically no larger than 40 participants, who are selected purposefully to develop an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patton, 2015). Given geographic and time constraints, the researcher chose a sample of nine individuals, approximately 7% of the 136 Hispanic female principals in the sample frame. Interviews with nine participants yielded information-rich data related to the research purpose and questions, which may be generalizable to the sampling frame. However, it is uncertain whether the results are generalizable to the population given the demographics of Orange and Riverside counties and the diversity of school districts across the state of California.

Researcher Bias

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument. Therefore, an awareness of an individual's biases is critical to conducting a study that is as neutral as possible. Bias may influence the topic selection and the collection and analysis of data (Merriam, 2002).

Due to this researcher's identity as a Black woman with opinions on the impact of intersectionality on her own career, there was a significant potential for bias in research design, data collection, and data analysis.

Summary

Chapter III provided a description of the research design and methodology used in this study of Hispanic female principals contending with the impact of intersectional identities. The chapter began with an overview of qualitative research design, followed by descriptions of the sample and instrumentation, and a discussion of validity and reliability. The processes for data collection and data analysis were detailed, and the chapter concluded with an explanation of the study's limitations.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This qualitative study identified barriers that Hispanic females experience due to gender and ethnicity as they ascend to the K–12 principalship. Furthermore, the study explored Hispanic females' perceptions regarding the impact of intersectionality on their career advancement. The study additionally identified strategies Hispanic females leveraged to address or overcome barriers due to gender, ethnicity, and intersectionality. The foundation for this study was the theory of intersectionality first proposed by Crenshaw (1989), which posits that individuals' social interactions and experiences are impacted by the intersection of multiple subordinate identities. Chapter IV provides an overview of the purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, population, and sample. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the data related to each research question and a summary of the findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived impact of barriers created by the intersection of gender and ethnicity on the advancement of Hispanic female educators to the K–12 principalship. A second purpose of this study was to identify strategies Hispanic female educators leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship.

Research Questions

1. What gender barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 principalship?
2. What ethnic barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?

3. How does the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity impact advancement to the K–12 school principalship as perceived by Hispanic females?
4. What strategies do Hispanic females leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

Qualitative inquiry using a phenomenological approach focuses on how individuals make sense of their lived experiences, and this process involves capturing "how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it" (Patton, 2015, p. 115). Therefore, a phenomenological inquiry was an appropriate approach used to probe Hispanic female principals' experiences through the lens of intersectionality, which was the phenomenon under study.

During one-on-one interviews, participants described and reflected upon the experiences, behaviors, and interactions that comprised their journey to the K–12 principalship. The researcher used skillful interviewing strategies to elicit rich responses and probe for depth and detail regarding perceived barriers due to gender and ethnicity and the strategies Hispanic female principals employed to address or overcome barriers.

Participants were asked to submit by email any written documents relevant to their experiences as Hispanic female principals advancing to the K–12 principalship. No participants submitted artifacts, which left the researcher with no opportunity to triangulate the data. However, member checking took place, with all participants asked to review interview transcripts and revise as needed to support enhanced validity.

Population

A study's population includes the group the researcher is interested in explaining or describing (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Likewise, the population identifies the larger group that meets a specific criteria, and to whom the results of the inquiry might be generalized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The population for this study was 1,382 Hispanic female educators serving as principals in K–12 public schools in California. This number was calculated based on the number of K–12 public schools across the state, the percentage of female principals in California public schools, and the percentage of principals who identify as Hispanic. According to the California Department of Education (n.d.-a), there were approximately 10,545 K–12 public schools in California in 2021. Because approximately 57% of California's principals were female as of 2017–2018 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.-a), and close to 23% of principals identified as Hispanic (NCES, n.d.-c), the population of Hispanic female principals in California was estimated at 1,382.

Sample

A study's sample is the group of participants chosen due to their knowledge about the phenomena being studied, and from whom data are collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). For the purpose of this study, convenience sampling was used to select nine Hispanic female principals as participants. Convenience sampling is a common nonprobability sampling approach where participants are selected due to their accessibility to the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In essence, researchers rely on their own judgment when identifying study participants. For this study, participants were purposefully chosen to ensure they represented the characteristics

outlined in the sampling frame. The sampling frame included females who: (a) identified as Hispanic or Latina, (b) served as principals in K–12 public schools, and (c) worked in districts located in Orange and Riverside counties in Southern California.

Based on these criteria, the sampling frame for this study was 136 Hispanic female principals. The number was calculated based on approximately 1,040 principals in K–12 public schools in Orange and Riverside Counties (Ed Data, n.d.). Accounting for the percentage of female principals (i.e., 57%) and Hispanic principals (i.e., 23%), it was estimated 136 Hispanic female principals served in K–12 public schools in Orange and Riverside counties. Once a list of prospective participants was compiled, the researcher contacted principals by email to explain the research purpose, procedures, and expected benefits, and to extend an invitation to participate in the study. Convenience sampling was an effective method for identifying nine Hispanic female principals willing to participate in the study, which contributed to a greater understanding of the impact of intersectionality on their advancement to a leadership position.

Demographic Data

The names and identifying information of nine study participants were excluded from the findings to preserve confidentiality and anonymity. Instead, participants were identified numerically from 1 to 9 (see Table 4). All participants self-identified as Hispanic females, or Latinas, with Mexican heritage. Two participants described themselves as first-generation Americans. One participant immigrated to the United States as a very young child while the other immigrated as a young adult. Seven participants described themselves as second-generation Americans whose parents immigrated to the United States in the 1950s or later. Eight of nine participants

considered themselves proficient in both Spanish and English while one admitted her Spanish language skills were less than proficient. All participants described their parents as working class and identified themselves as the first generation in their families to earn college degrees in the United States. Four participants served as principals at the elementary level, four at the middle school level, and one at the high school level. Years of experience, inclusive of their time as principals, ranged from 13–36 years and tenure as principals ranged from 1–15 years.

Table 4

Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Generation American	School level	Years in education	Years as a principal
1	Second	Middle	20	5
2	Second	High	36	15
3	First	Middle	26	3
4	Second	Elementary	29	8
5	Second	Middle	19	1
6	Second	Middle	22	9
7	First	Elementary	20	6
8	Second	Elementary	13	4
9	Second	Elementary	23	2

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Data collection began in October 2022 and concluded in November 2022. Data were collected through a semistructured interview protocol using an instrument developed by a team of peer researchers with support from a faculty advisor. The instrument consisted of 13 standardized, open-ended questions. Interview questions asked participants to describe their upbringing and family, career path to the principalship, barriers encountered due to gender and ethnicity, and strategies employed to address or

overcome barriers. Additional questions asked participants to address the impact of intersectionality on their career advancement. Interviews were held via the Zoom online video platform except for one participant who insisted on an in-person interview. The duration of interviews ranged from 31–98 minutes and averaged 51 minutes. Eight interviews were transcribed using Zoom's audio transcription feature and one transcribed using the phone application Temi. After initial review by the researcher, interview transcripts were emailed to participants to provide the opportunity for each to verify the accuracy of responses and make clarifications as necessary.

The researcher used qualitative inductive analysis to make sense of the data collected from study participants. According to Patton (2015), inductive analysis involves "searching the qualitative data for patterns and themes without entering the analysis with preconceived analytical categories" (p. 551). The researcher read, reread, and cross-analyzed transcripts to identify common patterns in participants' responses to interview questions. Patterns were coded or labeled to reflect their significance to related research questions. Findings are presented by research question.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability involves peer researchers examining and coding the same data to check for agreement between coders. It requires equally knowledgeable coders come to similar interpretations about the data examined (Campbell et al., 2013). Intercoder agreement, according to Campbell et al. (2013), occurs when peer researchers cross check data codes and reconcile discrepancies to reach agreement on the codes used for a particular piece of text. After initial coding, the researcher and a peer researcher coded the data to determine intercoder reliability. At least 10% of the data were analyzed

and coded by the peer researcher, with an agreement of 80% or greater as recommended by Patton (2015).

Research Question 1: Gender Barriers

The first research question was: What gender barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 principalship? Interviews revealed participants' perceptions of internal and external barriers that impacted their journey to school leadership. Responses were organized into five themes (see Table 5). Themes included (a) Lack of Self-Confidence, (b) Lack of Trust in Competence, (c) Lack of Like Peers and Mentors, (d) Reluctance to Seek Leadership Opportunities, and (e) Conflict Between Family and Work Obligations. Each theme is addressed in the following sections.

Table 5

Themes Related to Gender Barriers Experienced While Advancing to the K–12 Principalship

Theme	References	Participants	% of Participants
Lack of Self-Confidence	17	8	88
Lack of Trust in Competence	10	4	44
Lack of Like Peers and Mentors	9	4	44
Reluctance to Seek Leadership Opportunities	8	4	44
Conflict Between Family and Work Obligations	7	3	33

Note. $N = 9$ participants.

Lack of Self-Confidence

The theme most frequently referenced by participants in response to gender barriers was a lack of confidence in their ability to effectively lead. In response to an interview question regarding internal gender barriers, eight participants described feelings

of self-doubt. Self-doubt and questioning personal abilities is in direct opposition to feelings of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), “Self-efficacy is concerned not with the number of skills you have, but with what you believe you can do with what you have” (p. 15). In essence, self-efficacy reflects the beliefs individuals hold about their own capabilities to execute the behaviors needed to perform successfully.

Eight of the nine principals voiced uncertainty in their ability to lead, despite their varied leadership experiences prior to assuming the role. On average, participants worked for over 17 years before achieving the position of principal, with each beginning their career as a classroom teacher. In addition to classroom experience, participants described extensive experiences working in site and district level roles, including teacher on special assignment, intervention specialist, instructional coach, bilingual coordinator, and elementary teaching assistant principal. Additionally, eight principals served as assistant principals, spending anywhere from 2–6 years in the role. Regardless of their administrative experience as assistant principals, study participants entered the principalship with doubts about their readiness to effectively lead.

Sanchez and Thornton (2010) noted women often question their capabilities to lead due to a lack of confidence, and self-doubt of readiness to lead was prevalent in participants’ responses about internal barriers to advancement. For example, Participant 1 asked herself, “Am I good enough? Am I the same as or better than others?” Participant 6 similarly wondered, “Can I do this? Am I ready for this? Am I really a good person to lead a school this large? Am I the right person?” These questions by Participant 6 reflect insecurities despite her successful stint as assistant principal at the same school for 6 years prior to becoming principal.

Participants' feelings of self-doubt extended to personal characteristics and leadership skills. Participant 3 stated:

> I didn't want to be a principal because I believed that I couldn't do it. Excuse after excuse, after excuse. I'm too new. I'm not professional enough. I'm too green. I don't have the capability. And I'm female. Like, how the hell am I going to run a school like that?

Participant 4 expressed similar sentiments, noting, "Low self-esteem, lack of assertiveness, lack of confidence, I've experienced all of that." Other participants described a lack of certainness and insecurity as they assumed greater responsibilities. Participant 3 expressed frustration toward feelings of inadequacy and stated, "I told myself, why do I have to question who I am as a female leader? Why do I have to be the doer and not the leader? And that in itself is internal doubt." In a similar vein, Participant 5 admitted, "I did feel a little intimidated. Like oh, maybe I don't know all my stuff."

Three participants connected their feelings of self-doubt to imposter syndrome, questioning whether they were suited to the position of leadership. Parkman (2016) defined imposter syndrome as a trait in women who struggle to attribute their success to their knowledge and skills, believing they are not worthy of praise or reward. Characterized by diminished self-confidence and self-efficacy, imposters have been found to compensate for feelings of inadequacy and ineffectiveness by working harder and longer hours and pursuing perfection. Emphasizing this point, Participant 9 stated:

> I think I was always trying to prove myself to everyone. It was a lack of confidence in myself. So, I would over work, over research, make sure that I knew everything or tried to know everything before I would give a training, or

> before I would teach, or before I would present anything, because I know the imposter syndrome is very true.

Participants 1 and 6 described imposter syndrome as a challenge. Participant 1 stated, "I think a lot of times I struggle in general, and it could tie into being imposter syndrome. Do I deserve to have this position?" Similarly, Participant 6 shared, "I think there's been a lot of that internal struggle, that imposter syndrome that I deal with just every day." Parkman suggested feelings related to imposter syndrome are common in individuals who are the first in their families to achieve a certain level of educational or career success.

Lack of Trust in Competence

The second most referenced theme related to gender barriers was participants' perception that colleagues and supervisors lacked confidence in their leadership abilities. As such, the principals were overcome with an ongoing need to prove they were adequately prepared. Despite possessing the qualifications and experience warranted by the role, half of participants described taking additional steps to reassure others that they were capable. According to Participant 3:

> I know that I needed to be able to win him over, which sucks, but it's what I have to do until I prove myself with my work, with my words, with my attention. I have to go that extra mile to prove myself as a person, as a female, because they don't believe in me because I'm a female.

The concept of women going an extra mile is supported by research that has shown women are typically told they need more time to develop leadership skills (Arriaga et al., 2020). Moreover, female leaders are left with the impression that they must be well-

prepared prior to applying for an administrative position, including earning advanced degrees (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). This notion of preparation—albeit perceived a bit differently—was voiced by Participant 4:

> And as a Hispanic woman, it's more like going back to being a woman right, also feeling that we have to be better prepared than the male, because several of the Hispanic males who are in leadership roles, principalship roles . . . it's like, hmm. They walk around with a lot more confidence than I do.

Participant 9 voiced a similar sentiment, saying, "I have to prove myself through my thoughts, my thought process, my responses, because I do feel a sense of lack of expectation when people meet me."

In the 10 references made regarding the need to prove their capabilities as a leader, all challenges originated with direct reports, colleagues, or district leaders rather than parents or community members. In describing an interaction with a male teacher on her staff, Participant 3 shared, "But it was so hard for him to adapt to us and to get leadership instruction through me as a woman." Participant 5 described the following demoralizing incident between a colleague, the superintendent, and herself:

> So, we talked here and he yelled at me and just totally made me feel like this big [participant making small hand gesture on screen]. And then I had to have two other meetings with him and our superintendent, and I felt like I had to prove to him like we did X, Y, and Z, and we did everything correctly. I felt like because I'm a woman, he thought that I didn't handle it well.

Along with the self-imposed challenges of doubt and insecurity, principals had to contend with assumptions about their leadership abilities based solely on gender.

Lack of Like Mentors and Peers

In response to the interview question regarding external barriers, nearly half of the participants identified the lack of like mentors as a challenge faced during the journey to site leadership. In fact, Participant 8 was the sole principal to mention participation in an established mentorship, which was through her administrative credential program. She lamented the absence of ethnically alike female mentors, stating, "I was just kind of itching for that connection for somebody who maybe I related to, the kind that advocates for you." As the youngest of the nine principals, Participant 8 further shared:

> I didn't really have those female mentors, so much to the level that sometimes you think you're naive, or you don't know. When I was in my admin credential program, I was thinking, "Okay? Well, I'm pretty young at this point. I'm not married, I haven't had a family. What do people do when you get pregnant?" And so, I remember being older and asking my professor, "So, can I get it still a job as a principal and be pregnant?" And he was like, "You go on maternity leave." I had just never had a female even during my childhood, like a female principal who was pregnant, who was a young mother. It's always been either older women, not of color, but older women or men. That's just what I have known.

Participant 6, who was in her 9th year as principal at the time of the interview, also remarked on the lack of mentors or sponsors during her tenure. She articulated the impact of this absence by stating:

> It was very difficult to find someone who had the time to mentor you and guide you, and avoid some pitfalls, or that sponsor who would be like, "Hey, [Person

> XYZ], you would be so good for this position. Let me introduce you to someone." There wasn't that connection, there weren't many connections available.

Participant 6 also referenced the *queen bee syndrome*, described by Cushman (2019) as behaviors engaged in by women who perceive themselves in competition with typically younger women for limited leadership opportunities. This phenomenon creates an environment in which an aspiring leader is provided limited encouragement, support, and sponsorship (Arriaga et al., 2020). Participant 6 elaborated on this point by noting:

> I also think that the part of the employment, discrimination, or promotion and advancement has to do with a little bit of what is called the queen bee syndrome where females in positions of power fear other females coming into those roles. They take almost like, a masculine role where they judge females and they see females as threats; they see females as superficial. So, I think I encountered both the lack of mentors from females and leaders, and then those that were already there, fearing any more females coming into their organizations to maybe take their jobs.

Pianta (2020) described the queen bee syndrome as a form of disempowerment wherein women who have attained positions of leadership are more critical of and less likely to support or yield power to others below them. Pianta further stated such behaviors serve as the biggest obstacles for women seeking to advance their careers.

In addition to voicing a lack of female mentors to guide and support them in their leadership role, several principals noted the lack of female peers with whom they might share a common experience. For example, in her first position as principal, Participant 7 found herself attending cabinet meetings in which women were the minority and the men

in attendance monopolized the conversation. Participant 3 shared a similar experience, stating her middle school principal group was majority male with men dominating the conversation. She stated:

> And now as a principal, the majority are all males. When I first started as a principal, there was a principal breakfast and I remember that when we went to the breakfast of all of us, it was only [Person XYZ] and myself. The conversation was focused on the six male principals, and the two female principals, including me, were pretty much sitting back listening versus them actually having a discussion with us. And so, it was evident it had nothing to do with my color. It had to do with us being females because she was White and I was Latina. And so, it was like, I can't even talk because you guys are dominating the whole conversation.

For female principals already grappling with feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty, the absence of like mentors and peers contributed to the sense that they were largely on their own in navigating the challenges of the role.

Reluctance to Seek Leadership Opportunities

Another theme that emerged in response to the question about internal barriers to leadership was a hesitation to seek the principalship. This hesitation has been a common finding in studies regarding women in educational leadership due to the time and stress that accompany such positions, the perception that women are often not favored by the status quo, and a reluctance to leave the classroom (Chappell, 2000; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). The latter was the experience of Participant 1, who stated, "My dream was to be a

classroom teacher, and I was going to be wheeled out on my deathbed. Like, that's how I was going to retire." She elaborated further by saying:

> In all of the roles that I've had, the only one that I chose to actively pursue and desire was to be a classroom teacher. I didn't want to be an [assistant principal]. I didn't want to be a principal, and so none of these were things that I aspired to get to and worked towards furthering.

Participant 1 ultimately spent 9 years in the classroom and 3 years as a coach before becoming an assistant principal, then becoming a principal. Another participant described her lack of interest in an administrative position, indicating she never attempted to pursue the position of assistant principal despite working in the same district for over 17 years. It was not until she moved to another district, one in which there were more leaders who looked like her, that she pursued an assistant principal position first and then a principalship. Two other participants indicated they initially had no interest in leadership beyond the assistant principal position. When Participant 3 was asked to serve as interim principal and then encouraged to apply for the permanent position, she recalled her response, saying, "No, I don't want to be a principal. I only want to be an assistant principal." Participant 4 echoed this sentiment, reflecting, "I never saw myself as taking the lead as the principal." None of the four principals provided a direct rationale for their reluctance or disinterest in pursuing the principalship. Instead, their statements indirectly reflected the gender barrier themes of self-doubt and a lack of sponsors or mentors. According to Dickerson and Taylor (2000), the avoidance of leadership roles is a form of self-limiting behavior that contributes to diminished opportunities to lead.

Conflict Between Family and Work Obligations

The least referenced theme related to gender barriers was a conflict between the responsibilities of the home and the work environment. During interviews, at one point or another, seven participants spoke about their partners, spouses, and children. Of the seven principals, three had no children and three had one child, while one principal was an outlier with four children. Two participants described the challenges that arose as they tried to balance motherhood with the principalship. For Participant 1, the conflict revolved around expectations to have a family. She recalled:

> There was the pressure to have a child, first of all, and we held out for a long time until it came to the point where I said, "Listen, I'm either going to have a child now or not at all."

After she and her husband decided to start a family, Participant 1 spoke about her choice to return to work only 2 months after her daughter's birth and the guilt that accompanied that decision. She stated:

> You know, it's one of those, excuse my language, but damned if you do, damned if you don't. If you stay at home, you get criticized for not working, and as someone who wants to be a working parent, there's a lot of criticism around that as well, and having my child in daycare, and things of that nature.

Participant 1 went on to express frustration at the idea that she had to choose between her home and career, stating:

> And even now that [my child is] older, trying to balance a work schedule with her activities and not wanting my role as a professional to impede her ability to be a child and me to be a parent to her, but at the same time not willing to give in to,

> "I'm not going to further my career or be good at what I do, because I have to be a mom." I choose to be a mom. I choose to do these things and have a crazy schedule.

For Participant 7, the conflict between work and family was different. During the time her daughter was a baby, she was the sole parent with a stable income and health benefits. Describing the pressure of being the family's main breadwinner, Participant 7 reflected, "I think sometimes when I look back, I literally question, how did I do it? How did I manage all of that?"

Participant 4, the only principal with multiple children, acknowledged motherhood as both a restraining and driving force in attaining a leadership position. While serving as a teacher, her administrator provided leadership opportunities such as coordinating the after-school program. However, she found such a task was in conflict with her role as a mother, explaining, "I chose not to do it for a 2nd year because my children were so little. Those hours were just not working for them." Years later, familial responsibilities no longer served as an obstacle, allowing her instead to look at the financial advantages to stepping into an administrative role.

Research Question 2: Ethnic Barriers

The second research question was: What ethnic barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 principalship? Interviews elicited five themes reflecting participants' perceptions of barriers related to their Hispanic identity (see Table 6). The themes included (a) Perceived Capacity Tied to Identity, (b) Treatment Lacking in Courtesy and Respect, (c) Lack of Trust in Competence, (d) Lack of Confidence in

English Proficiency, and (e) Obstacles Created by Other Hispanics. Each theme shown in Table 6 is addressed in the following sections.

Table 6

Themes Related to Ethnic Barriers Experienced While Advancing to the K–12 Principalship

Theme	References	Participants	% of Participants
Perceived Capacity Tied to Identity	15	7	77
Treatment Lacking in Courtesy and Respect	12	6	66
Lack of Trust in Competence	11	5	55
Lack of Confidence in English Proficiency	8	4	44
Obstacles Created by Other Hispanics	10	3	33

Note. $N = 9$ participants.

When asked to identify barriers due to ethnicity, three participants expressed hesitation to use the term barriers when describing the impact of their ethnicity on their journey to the principalship. Instead, Participant 1 clarified, “I shy away from calling them barriers. Definitely challenges, but not barriers.” Participant 2 had a similar response, stating, “Those aren’t barriers, right. Those are just realities, experiences.” In reflecting on experiences, Participant 6 stated she had encountered stereotypes all her life, but she had a different view of their impact, adding, “I’m not sure I’m going to call them barriers but instead some of the challenges that I had to work through, I guess, to be in the position where I’m at today.” When asked about barriers due to ethnicity, two additional interviewees stated it had not been their experience. According to Participant 4, although people had expressed curiosity about her Hispanic background and shock that Spanish was her first language, she stated, “[Barriers] honestly hasn’t been a reality.”

Participant 7 responded, “It is really hard for me to tell if I have experienced them. . . . It’s hard for me to measure that.” However, when elaborating on their experiences, both principals spoke about ways in which their Hispanic identity created an obstacle to leadership.

Perceived Capacity Tied to Identity

The first interview question aligned with Research Question 2 asked principals to reflect on barriers experienced related to their ethnic identity and share examples or experiences. In response, several participants reached back to experiences preceding their careers in education to illuminate low expectations held for their success. Participant 9 described being raised in a culture and family where women were subservient and there was an accompanying lack of expectation. She shared, “The expectation to ever lead, like in a principal position, is never something that is brought up in conversation.” For Participant 3, the low expectations were a feature of her high school career. She stated:

> But, never did I know that I was even capable of actually going to a 4-year college. I mean, I was never pushed. I mean, for god’s sake, senior year, I was put in an [English language development] class, you know? So, how the hell was I even supposed to think that I was going to go to college?

Participant 8 had a different experience, one in which she was tracked into honors classes in high school but did not receive the requisite support. She explained, “I always felt I was the Latina student, the one Latina student in the honors class. You were being pushed enough, like this was good enough for you.” She felt the impact of this practice years later, saying, “I got to the graduate level at [University of California, Los Angeles] and it took two professors of color to tell me, ‘You write like shit.’” Participant 8

described her experience as a disservice; subsequently, she expressed her commitment to ensuring students under her watch would not experience the same.

Seven participants reported interactions during their careers wherein they were perceived negatively by parents and peers due to their ethnicity. Participant 4 recalled:

> The Anglo parents, especially one in particular, did not want their child in the class because I'm Hispanic, so their child got moved to the teacher of the race they wanted. He was questioning my ability just because I'm Hispanic.

Participant 6 described being pigeonholed as a young teacher into working solely with Hispanic students. She recounted:

> When I was in the teaching profession, my department chair was White and never saw me more than, "She's going to teach the English learner students." Oh, there's an AP biology position, or AP anatomy or physiology class, AP chemistry class. "Hey, I'm here, I'm here." I was the Hispanic. I couldn't move and get out of that label, like, "She works with our [English learner] population."

After leaving the classroom, it was not uncommon for participants to encounter adults who held low expectations for their ability to effectively serve in support or leadership roles. Participant 9 served as a district-level teacher on special assignment providing professional learning prior to becoming a site leader. She described teachers not knowing what to expect from her, saying:

> I think they would look at me and kind of shuffle back and say, "What is this person going to tell or teach me?" And I actually took it as a challenge, and it kind of got me a little excited. I would say more looks, more hesitancy from people, but I did not receive it as a negative thing.

Participant 3 described interviewing for a leadership position in which the only people opposed to her hiring were two White members on the panel. This experience aligned with how both people had treated her as peers prior to the interview. She shared, "There was constant pushback from the White folk to not have a person of color in a position of power."

Even after earning their way to the position of principal, participants continued to encounter individuals who questioned their place in the role. Participant 7 described visitors to the school office frequently assuming that she, a Hispanic female, was not the principal. She shared, "That happens to us more than once. I'm standing there and they just assume I'm not the principal." Participant 3 echoed this experience, recounting an incident at an athletic event where a White teacher charged with monitoring students insisted she could not be the principal. She recalled:

> And so, the athletic coordinator goes, "Yeah, she's the principal." And the kids are like, "Yeah, she's the principal." And so, then [the teacher] still had the audacity to grab her badge and say, "Where's your badge, lady? Where's your badge?" And that's not even the end of it. She still didn't believe the kids or the [athletic coordinator]. She went out to talk to the principal in charge and said, "There's a lady in there claiming that she's a principal." And he turns around, and tells her, "Oh, is that [Person XYZ]?" And she goes, "I don't know. She doesn't have a badge." He comes in and checks up on me. And he goes, "Yeah, that's [Person XYZ]."

Regardless of role (i.e., teacher, coach, or site administrator), participants encountered adults who did not believe they were capable or deserving of the responsibilities with which they had been charged.

Treatment Lacking in Courtesy and Respect

Second to the perception that others held low expectations of them due to their Hispanic identity, six principals experienced treatment lacking courtesy and respect for their position of authority. Participants shared examples of interactions with superiors and subordinates, peers, and parents who felt entitled to question their authority or speak down to them in a manner both uncommon and unexpected to the manner typically afforded to principals. One participant referenced frequent microaggressions and the need to refrain from reacting. She noted, "The second that you go off the rails, you're not heard anymore and respected or able to get your point across." Another participant revealed her inability to respond each time her supervisor talked down to her, saying:

> I always feel lectured. I always feel like, "Yes, please give me all of your wisdom. Let me just sit here and listen because I know nothing." But it's really irritating. And sometimes I try to flip the coin, and I think I'm sitting here listening to this, and I'm sure there's something that I have to hear. So, I'm going to be open. But sometimes they do feel like lectures, and they feel condescending. And I know he doesn't mean it that way, and he doesn't even realize it. He's just carrying on.

Participant 3 recounted the challenges she faced with the union representative at her school. This individual, a teacher leader with influence, questioned her practices and suggested some of her decisions were ineffective. Even after consulting with union leadership, this representative continued to question her. Participant 3 stated:

> I wonder if he would've questioned me as much as he did if I was a White woman. So, I have to sit down and actually write him up because he replied all [to staff members] in responding to me and called me directly a liar. But that's what I deal with. And it's interesting because it is the three White teachers at the school that are always questioning what I do.

More than one participant considered whether parents, peers, and superiors took liberty in speaking to them in a tone or manner unlike that reserved for their White counterparts. Participant 5 recalled an incident when a fellow Hispanic principal, a parent at her school, came in and yelled at her regarding an event that had taken place. Participant 5 recounted:

> I felt like he thought it was okay to come and yell at me because I'm Hispanic female, because he probably thought, "Okay, Hispanic to Hispanic, but you are a female, so I can talk to you like this." So, now that I'm thinking about it, I wonder if I was a White female, if he would have done that.

She was traumatized by the incident, stating, "It rocked my world, like it rattled my world. I've never been yelled at like that before. It was absolutely awful."

Another participant shared a conversation that took place while still an assistant principal wherein her principal, a White male, suggested her ascent to the principalship would be due to his influence, stating, "You're going to be a principal because all the assistant principals that work under me become principals." She recalled her immediate response, saying, "And in my head, it's like, if I become a principal, it's not because of you." This interaction was an example of a microaggression experienced by people of

color where their ability to succeed is not linked to their knowledge or skills but rather to the patronage of a White superior.

Lack of Trust in Competence

The third most referenced theme was participants' perceptions that they, more than their White counterparts, needed to prove they held the requisite skills and abilities to effectively serve as site leaders. This theme directly correlated to the first two themes, with participants referencing the need to convince stakeholders—including educational leaders, students, and the community—that they were worthy of the role.

Two participants described interview processes as atypical of processes experienced by other district leaders. For example, after serving as an assistant principal, Participant 3 was asked to assume the position of interim principal at the same site. The deputy superintendent shared the position had been offered to 12 retired principals, none of whom were available, and informed her, "We are going to give you a chance and hopefully you can prove to us that you actually are able to do the job." When the principalship became available, Participant 3 was encouraged by a school board member to apply for the vacant position. She stated, "I submitted and I had beautiful letters of rec from all the people that I knew. And it was a very interesting process to get that position." The process entailed five interviews. According to Participant 3:

> No other school had done five interviews to get a position for power, and for some reason, I don't know why, they gave me five interviews. But I didn't give up, and that's how I ended up being the principal.

Participant 6 also described a hiring process different than that experienced by her peers. After serving as assistant principal for 6 years, she applied to become principal at the same site, explaining:

> I think the district and the superintendents were nervous about handing the school to a Hispanic female. They did some practices that were never done before, just to verify that the staff would be in agreement with giving me the title. There was a survey that they put out, asking, "What do you look for in a principal?" What qualities and traits do you look for in the principal, almost like a personal attack because I'd been there for 6 years. Almost like, is there something that I don't have that you think I should have? And by the way, this was not a practice. This was something that they just did as I'm next in line. They did not do this for the previous principal.

Other participants described developing a heightened awareness of their skill sets, including oral and written skills, compared to those of their peers. One participant confided, "I feel it more when I'm with colleagues, where I feel like they have some skills more crafted than I do." Another participant explained what they do when communicating, sharing, "I have to double check to build my own confidence, to make sure that I come out as very professional."

Lack of Confidence in English Proficiency

Chief among the challenges principals connected to their Hispanic identity was insecurity about their oral and written English skills. All participants were first- or second-generation Americans and raised in homes where Spanish was the dominant language. All but one principal was educated largely in U.S. schools, mastered English,

and served as interpreters and translators as children for their own parents. Eight principals described themselves as fully bilingual and biliterate. However, one principal confided her Spanish skills were less than proficient. Although all participants considered themselves proficient in English, four participants expressed sensitivity around how they measured up to or were perceived by peers in regard to their oral or written language. As an example, Participant 2 shared:

> I am not shy about saying, "I can't think of that word in English right now." And when I listen to some of my colleagues speak sometimes, I'm in such awe. It's like, "Oh my God, I didn't do that!" It's like, "I'm going to be like you."

Rather than expressing a desire to emulate the language used by peers, other participants described the anxiety of being judged by colleagues, parents, and—in the case of Participant 4—a high-level district official. Participant 4 described:

> She was a woman, Anglo, and her demeanor intimidated me and I would get nervous around her and make sure I spoke correctly, because there is no way I wanted to give her any excuse to say, "Oh, she is not qualified." I felt she was going to nitpick how I spoke, my articulation. I felt like I walked on eggshells with her.

Participant 7 voiced similar apprehension about her spoken language, confiding, "I always think of my accent, if they're going to think I'm less than smart." Another participant described her attentiveness to written communication, stating, "I began to just be very diligent about how I sent out information, making sure I was using good spelling techniques. Again I'm a second language learner, and spelling is not my forte." These

responses indicated concerns about English language capabilities served as yet another challenge for Hispanic female principals.

Obstacles Created by Other Hispanics

The final theme drawn from responses regarding barriers due to ethnicity was tied to challenges created by other Hispanics. In contrast to prior research findings, none of the nine participants named spouses or family members as barriers to advancement. Instead, three participants noted obstacles had been placed in their paths by Hispanic peers, superiors, and the parent community.

Participant 2 insisted the only barrier encountered as a Hispanic had been due to others of a similar ethnic background, elaborating:

> The barriers that I have experienced have been from within my race . . . not my parents, but I'm going to say from my own people that have in a sense wanted to dictate what it is that I'm supposed to do or not do.

She described an incident that occurred early in her career in which she turned down the opportunity to work in a district with a large Hispanic population; instead, she had accepted another job offer in a less diverse area. Participant 2 shared:

> They said, "What good can you do there? We need you here. You need to be working here." And I don't know what came over me, but at that time, I said, "Actually, you know what I think. They need me more here than you need me there, so I'm sorry that you feel that way," and then, I got a sour taste on that.

Participant 2 found this interaction to be reflective of "a kind of internal racism" and reiterated, "Any barriers that I have felt have been from my own."

Participant 3 encountered an obstacle from a Hispanic male assistant superintendent who knew of her successful experience serving as both an assistant principal and interim principal in his district. Despite being in a position where he could have served as a mentor and sponsor, this Hispanic male expressly spoke against her promotion to the role of principal. In doing so, he provided motivation for her to apply for a principalship to prove that she could do it. Regardless of his opposition, she knew others would see her as fit for the position. This same participant led a school where close to 98% of students identified as Hispanic and found initial resistance among the parent community, who struggled to see her as a leader. She shared parents did not understand how she could look like them yet lead the school, explaining, "I look too Mexican. You look like me, you're an immigrant. Like, not believing in me and saying, 'I want to speak to the principal.'" This questioning of her leadership lasted until parents were convinced that her purpose was to truly support their children. Reflecting back on this journey, Participant 3 concluded:

> But it was that struggle of breaking that stereotype of a person, of a woman of color that looked like them. That a Mexicana immigrant could actually lead a school because it is impossible for somebody like me to lead a school. So, I had to prove myself to the community.

Participant 7 described strong, nurturing relationships with other Hispanic teachers and Hispanic principals, female and male, who served as mentors as she taught then moved into administrative roles. However, she recounted an incident as a fairly new principal when she was pulled aside and spoken to abrasively by the only other Hispanic colleague in the room. The incident took place in front of their peers, and when the

offending individual later called to apologize, Participant 7 recalled responding, “I’ve never seen you act like that to anybody. And all of a sudden, I’m the only Latina in the space and you did it to me.” About 2–3 years removed from the incident, Participant 7 became emotional as she described how this treatment stood in direct contrast to the support she had experienced with previous Hispanic colleagues. The three participants who encountered resistance from Hispanic parents, peers, or superiors displayed hurt and indignation because this was the community they least expected to challenge their leadership.

Research Question 3: Impact of Intersectionality

The third research question was: How does the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity impact advancement to the K–12 school principalship as perceived by Hispanic females? Responses were organized into four themes (see Table 7). Themes included: (a) Key Factor in Attaining Their First Principalship, (b) Opportunities for Representation, (c) Assignment to High-Need Schools, and (d) Benefit of Real or Perceived Hiring Quotas. Each theme is addressed in the following sections.

Table 7

Themes Related to Impact of Intersectionality While Advancing to the K–12 Principalship

Theme	References	Participants	% of Participants
Key Factor in Attaining Their First Principalship	24	8	88
Opportunities for Representation	12	7	77
Assignment to High-Need Schools	6	6	66
Benefit of Real or Perceived Hiring Quotas	4	2	22

Note. $N = 9$ participants.

The term *intersectionality* has remained largely an academic term, known to scholars as a conceptual framework and familiar to scholars studying related concepts such as critical race theory. Only two participants were familiar with the term. To support participants' abilities to effectively respond to questions, intersectionality in this study referred to the intersection of two identities (e.g., gender and ethnicity) that compound to impact an individual's social interactions and experiences. When asked to identify barriers due to being a woman and Hispanic, participants struggled to name barriers distinct from barriers previously referenced in response to Research Questions 1 and 2. According to Participant 7, "It's hard to differentiate because you are who you are." However, when asked to share examples or stories of how intersectionality impacted their career advancement, participants were able to articulate their perceptions of its impact.

Opportunity to Lead

The most frequently referenced theme regarding the impact of intersectionality was that identity was a key factor in the opportunity to lead. Eight participants believed their ethnicity and bilingualism were instrumental in their attaining the principalship, albeit in high-Hispanic population, high-poverty schools. This perception is supported by data in Table 8, which displays the student demographics in schools led by the study participants. Participant 2 was the outlier, neither identifying ethnicity or bilingualism as advantages, nor serving at a school in which the majority of students were Hispanic or socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Table 8

Student Demographics in Schools Led by Study Participants

Participant	Hispanic (%)	Socioeconomically disadvantaged (%)
1	86	95
2	16	22
3	98	85
4	86	83
5	72	89
6	89	63
7	77	64
8	84	89
9	82	96

Note. Adapted from "DataQuest," by California Department of Education, n.d. (https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest). Copyright by California Department of Education.

Demographic data revealed eight schools had student populations that ranged from 72% to 98% Hispanic. Additionally, 63% to 96% of students were identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. As seen in Table 9, both ranges exceeded the demographics of schools in the counties where participants' schools were located.

Table 9

Student Demographics in Orange and Riverside Counties

Location	Hispanic students (%)	Socioeconomically disadvantaged students (%)
Orange County	50	47
Riverside County	67	70

Note. Adapted from "DataQuest," by California Department of Education, n.d. (https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest). Copyright by California Department of Education.

The data in Tables 8 and 9 align with reporting by Bagula (2016), who found Latina administrators typically lead schools with high numbers of minority students and large concentrations of students from impoverished backgrounds. Likewise, Arriaga et al. (2020) found principals are commonly asked to serve organizations that look like them. The placement of Hispanic female principals at schools with high Hispanic and socioeconomically disadvantaged student populations might be considered a questionable or inequitable practice. However, for all but one of the principals in the current study, this placement was an access point to school leadership. It also provided the opportunity to use their cultural and linguistic capital to support the school community. Participant 8 expressed this sentiment best, stating, "Being Hispanic, I feel that's actually been the most supportive of me advancing."

In describing the impact of intersectionality on their career advancement, multiple participants were unequivocal in linking leadership opportunities to their identities. Participant 1 explained:

> The three schools where I've been, they've all been low [socioeconomic status], high [English learner] population, high Hispanic population. Being bilingual made me more marketable, and my racial background was a plus. I looked and sounded like the population I was going to serve.

Participant 4 shared a similar experience, stating, "The assistant superintendent at that time recognized that I had the background, and I could serve that school in supporting the teachers and the community." Some responses indicated participants' understanding that they were fulfilling a specific need identified by district personnel. Participant 6 explained, "They were hiring a bilingual assistant principal. It was very convenient for

the district to have a female Hispanic assistant principal helping address the need that we had with the EL [English learner] students and the EL community." Participant 9 shared a similar response, stating, "She saw what I looked like, the image of what she needed, and I spoke Spanish."

An element of participants' intersectional identities that proved advantageous to their advancement was their bilingualism. They noted the importance of a bilingual administrator who could interact successfully with the school community. Participant 5 reiterated this advantage, stating, "A lot of our parents are Spanish speaking so I know they did want someone that would connect with the families here." For three principals with experience as teachers and administrators in Spanish dual immersion programs, bilingual skills were critical to their hiring. Participant 9 explained:

> The reason I got hired as an administrator in [District XYZ], they placed me at a school that had dual language immersion, an English and Spanish language instruction program. I had worked with the largest community of English learners in our school, so that opened that doorway for me.

Based on the responses, all but one of the Hispanic female principals in this study believed their intersectionality was an advantage to their school leadership experience. Further, no participants alluded to their placement at high Hispanic, high socioeconomically disadvantaged schools as having a negative impact of their intersectional identities.

Opportunities for Representation

The opportunity to represent students of the same ethnicity and culture was the second most referenced theme in response to the impact of intersectionality. Given their

identity as Hispanic females, participants indicated they were well-positioned to serve as role models and advocates and made 12 references to the responsibility they felt to students from a similar culture and background. This sentiment aligned with research that suggested ethnicity and culture of school leaders positively impact the academic outcome of minority students (B. W. Davis et al., 2016; Flores & Gunzenhauser, 2021; Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Hollingworth & Dude, 2009; Pitts, 2007). B. W. Davis et al. (2016) and Murakami et al. (2016) reported Latino principals understand the cultural and linguistic challenges of students, view students through an asset lens, and act as role models and advocates for students and the school community.

Participants welcomed the opportunity for representation, yet also voiced the magnitude of that responsibility. Participant 2 stated, "I've got this weight of who I'm representing and it's scarier than all get out because I also don't want to screw up." Participant 4 pointed out, "I personally want to make sure that I am a voice for our parents, our Hispanic parents, especially our Spanish speaking only parents." Similarly, Participant 7 shared, "I feel a strong responsibility, especially with the Latino kids, the Latino girls. I have a responsibility to them to do a good job."

Several participants voiced the value of having similar cultural backgrounds and the ability to relate to students' experiences. They spoke to the importance of students seeing themselves in their school leaders, and seeing possibilities for the future. Participant 9 epitomized this sentiment, stating:

> I love that the girls that I see on my campus see me, and they actually get shocked because they come up to me, and they say, "You're the principal?" It is so gratifying for them to see that, "You know what, I can be that too."

Other responses referenced the need for students to see people like themselves in positions of power. According to Participant 2, “They need to see somebody of color who is not a custodian or working in the kitchen, but in a leadership position.” Participant 3 similarly voiced, “It’s about seeing people of color in positions of power.” Altogether, respondents indicated a heightened awareness of their responsibilities to students through the lens of representation, and a strong motivation to advocate for students and their families.

Assignment to High-Need Schools

Unlike the first two themes, which reported positive ways in which principals’ leadership journeys were positively impacted by their intersectionality, the third theme explored a less positive impact not directly referenced by principals but revealed during the course of interviews. For six participants, their first—and current at the time of the study—assignment as principal was in high-need schools where the majority of students were Hispanic and socioeconomically disadvantaged. This assignment was not unusual; Bagula (2016) and Brown (2005) also found the placement of minority principals at schools with large numbers of minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students is common practice. Additionally, research has overwhelmingly supported the theory that a principal of similar culture and ethnicity is of benefit to students (Fernandez, 2013; Green, 2018; Murakami et al., 2016). Despite their lack of experience, six principals’ first assignments as site leaders were in schools where experienced leadership was required to effectively address the academic and behavioral needs of students, manage teachers and staff, and appropriately support parents and the school community.

Below average academic outcomes are typical for underserved student populations due to language proficiency, low socioeconomic status, and related factors. Participants did not directly reference the significant challenges inherent in leading schools where students underperformed compared to students districtwide. However, DataQuest (n.d.) revealed significant academic gaps between students in schools led by participants—with the exception of Participant 2—and schools across the county (see Table 10).

Table 10

2021–2022 California Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments: Met or Exceeded Standard

Location	English language arts (%)	Math (%)
Orange County		
All schools	57.24	45.24
Schools led by participants (but P2)	32.21	26.28
Achievement gap	25.03	18.96
Riverside County		
All schools	42.17	26.13
Schools led by participants	26.67	14.04
Achievement gap	15.50	12.09

Note. Adapted from "Test Results for California's Assessments," by California Department of Education, n.d.-b (https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp). Copyright by California Department of Education.

Another challenge novice principals in high-need schools faced occurred with veteran faculty and staff who resisted their leadership and sought to undermine them. Participant 3 described the initial reaction by staff and her efforts to win them over, stating, "It's the naysayers that hated movement, they hated change. That never changed

anything until I established relationships with them and then they believed in me." She shared an example demonstrating the defiance she encountered from one staff member:

> When I would go into department meetings, he would say to me, "No, I'm doing it this way instead of doing it that way." And then just last week, I had to sit him down and I said, "You are not the principal and you are not to make decisions that pertain to my job."

After multiple occasions, she felt compelled to respond directly to his defiance of her leadership.

An analysis of interview and test data concluded that at the time of the study, 8 of the 9 Hispanic female principals were assigned to high-need schools with challenging student and school communities. Six of the nine participants were first-time principals. Given the underrepresentation of Hispanic female principals in both counties and the corresponding large number of principals of other ethnicities and genders, their assignment to these schools clearly demonstrated an impact of intersectionality on their career journeys.

Benefit of Real or Perceived Hiring Quotas

Two principals suggested their district's quest to employ greater numbers of Hispanic females, whether explicitly stated or implied, may have benefited their hiring as principals. Participant 4 confided, "As a Hispanic woman, a part of me feels like at the beginning I was placed in the role, placed to fill a quota." Whether or not she was initially hired due to a quota, she insisted:

> But those of us who are in a role of leadership, and we are Hispanic women, we take pride in what we do, and we do it to the best of our ability, and we're all here to serve our community.

Although she may have been given an opportunity due to her intersectional identity, Participant 4 concluded she brought with her a specialized skill set (i.e., bilingualism).

Participant 2 also acknowledged quotas may have been a driving force in leadership opportunities throughout her career, stating:

> I believe I benefited by affirmative action, and I benefited by all means in being identified as a potential candidate in certain scenarios when, and we do it right now, we're looking at candidates, right. All things being equal, can we identify somebody who is a person of color or a female? So, have I been part of it, the recipient of that? Absolutely right.

Each time Participant 2 referenced doors being opened due to gender and ethnicity, she reiterated the importance of being highly skilled and capable of doing the work. After acceptance into a leadership program, she recalled:

> I was looking around the room and going, all right, if this is meeting the quota, I'll ride that wave because at the end of the day I still had to do the work. If it was an edge getting me in, I still had to do the work. I still had to put in the time and do all of those things that were required.

As someone now responsible for hiring staff, Participant 2 was appreciative of the opportunity to do the same for other women of color. She explained, "I'm giddy when I have a person of color who's interviewing, and I'm crossing my fingers that they come across right. They talk, and I'm also not going to compromise."

Research Question 4: Strategies Leveraged to Overcome Barriers Due to Intersectionality

The fourth research question was: What strategies do Hispanic females leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship? Responses were organized into six themes (see Table 11). Themes included (a) Grit as a Key Characteristic, (b) Familial Expectations and Support, (c) Self-Awareness and Social Awareness, (d) Supportive Mentors and Role Models, (e) Personal Empowerment, and (f) Cultivated Relationships. Each theme is addressed in the following sections.

Table 11

Strategies Leveraged to Overcome Barriers Due to Intersectionality

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Grit as a key characteristic	24	9	100
Familial expectations and support	22	8	88
Self-awareness and social awareness	15	8	88
Supportive mentors and role models	18	7	77
Personal empowerment	13	6	66
Cultivated relationships	12	5	55

Note. $N = 9$ participants.

Whereas participants were reluctant to identify barriers due to gender, ethnicity, or the intersection of both identities, all were forthcoming in identifying strategies integral to their advancement to the principalship. Throughout each interview—and particularly in response to the opening interview questions about their background and career journey—principals alluded to internal characteristics and systems of support that were instrumental in their advancement. However, they were challenged again in

distinguishing between effective strategies to address or overcome barriers due to gender and ethnicity and other strategies used to counteract intersectional barriers.

Grit as a Key Characteristic

Grit and its related characteristics was the most referenced theme in response to Research Question 4. Duckworth (2013) defined grit as "passion and perseverance for very long-term goals" (2:54). People with grit demonstrate resilience, a positive response to adversity, a focused passion toward accomplishing a goal, and a willingness to forgo other things in pursuit of the goal (Perkins-Gough, 2013). Perseverance and resilience were common threads as participants described their path to the principalship. Perseverance, defined as "the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-c, para. 1), was reflected in participants' descriptions of the many educational roles in which they served for an average of 17.8 years before becoming principals. All nine participants worked at multiple school sites as teachers, specialists, and assistant principals, and five moved from one district to another seeking greater opportunities to advance. Participant 2—who worked as a teacher, athletic director, and an assistant principal for 21 years before attaining the principalship—described her journey, saying, "I just kind of put one foot in front of the other. And I think that comes from not only my mom, but I think those nuances in terms of perseverance, getting back up, resiliency."

The focused passion Duckworth (2013) described was evident in the response given by Participant 9, who stated:

> I know where I need to go. I know what I'm going to be doing, and I'm going to get there. There's no one that's going to stop me. I'm going to get there. They've

> seen what I am capable of doing, and the superintendent has seen what I am capable of doing based on the longitudinal journey, not just one instance.

Participant 6 also reflected this determination to forge a path to the principalship, stating, "I had a sense of ownership of what I was doing and I think that was what eventually led to, 'Maybe she can run a whole school.'" Similarly, Participant 4 shared:

> I decided that I wanted to have the opportunity to lead a school. I have a lot of knowledge that I want to continue to bring to others. This position opened up and I personally sought to come back to [School XYZ].

In addition to perseverance and passion, participants identified their strong work ethic as integral to their eventual success in attaining the principalship, then serving successfully in the position. This finding was supported by researchers who have found grit and resilience, accompanied by a strong work ethic, are instrumental characteristics of Hispanic female leaders (Bagula, 2016; Barrera, 2019; Lopez, 2018; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Palacio, 2013; Pimienta, 2014). Participant 1 referenced her work ethic multiple times during the interview and referenced her reluctance to take days off work. Participant 6 also referenced her work ethic in describing her appointment as principal at the site in which she had served as assistant principal, stating, "You work hard, you work. It was just a testament to the work that I'd done for 6 years at that site." The career trajectories, the years spent working toward the principalship, and their attitude toward the work reflect grit as a key character trait of each participant as they overcame barriers to the role.

Familial Expectations and Support

All but one participant mentioned the influence of family members, namely their parents—especially mothers—and their spouses, as they advanced to and served in the principalship. This theme was the second most referenced theme for Research Question 4 as participants described how their upbringing and families positively impacted their ability to persevere and overcome obstacles as they advanced in their careers.

Five participants described growing up in homes where education was highly valued. They spoke about the emphasis placed on schoolwork and completing their education, something most parents had not had the opportunity to do. According to Participant 4, "My mom shared that she only went to sixth grade. She wanted us, the three of us, to definitely go to school." Participant 5 recalled, "My mom and dad worked very hard, and they expected us to do well in school, to work hard, and just be good." Participant 2 had a similar recollection, sharing:

> So, both were factory workers. And the thing which is interesting to me as I was growing up and going to school is I loved school, and so I think they liked that I loved school and it was always about getting schoolwork done. As long as I was doing schoolwork, that was a priority at home.

Additional expectations motivated participants to achieve and excel. Contrary to commonly held beliefs about Hispanic females' responsibilities to home and family, parents insisted they become independent women with the ability to overcome difficult obstacles. According to Participant 2:

> I was around those traditions, but I was not given any limitations with regards to that. If anything, there was opportunities and whenever there was a barrier of

> some sort, or I failed somehow my mom, was the impetus to not allow me to have pity on myself and kind of figure out how to figure it out. Figure out how to do this. Figure out what are you going to do. And so with that said, you're just going to have to figure out how to do it. You know whether it's by you asking questions, you're getting more information. You're doing some research, and you try again.

Participant 1 shared her father was adamant that everyone would be independent women even though she and her sisters had more traditional roles in the home. She recalled:

> And so, it was never about if you go to college, it's when you go to college. And having had four girls, my dad required of us to be professionals. He didn't want any kind of job; he wanted four college graduates who were professionals.

A potent, yet less acknowledged, factor that motivated participants to achieve was the humble circumstances in which they were raised. In response to the question about their background and upbringing, participants described their parents, all Mexican immigrants, as blue collar workers with jobs as gardeners, house cleaners, mechanics, and factory workers. Despite, or perhaps due to their own limited opportunities, parents embraced the possibilities for their children and pushed them to excel. Participant 3 acknowledged this motivational factor by saying, "It was really seeing the struggle my parents went through that made me realize this is why they immigrated to this country and I need to prove to myself and to them that I can do this." For participants, their immigrant families were the foundation, motivation, and a source of strength as they worked toward achieving the goal of school leadership.

Interviews revealed participants received high levels of support from their spouses. Rather than describing tension between personal and professional lives,

participants shared the varied ways in which their husbands stepped in to provide critical support. Husbands adjusted work schedules to help with childcare, served as sounding boards, brought balance, and provided guidance and words of support as their wives advanced to school leadership. For example, Participant 6 described her husband as providing words of affirmation and support and even "little therapy sessions" when needed.

Emotional Intelligence

The third highest frequency count for Research Question 4 themes involved a heightened self-awareness and social awareness as reflected in the responses of eight participants. Self-awareness and social awareness are components of emotional intelligence, a concept first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and defined as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). Emotional intelligence is considered a critical characteristic of effective leaders who must recognize and understand their own emotions to manage their behaviors and relationships.

The domain of self-awareness includes emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence (Goleman, 1996). Self-awareness, as indicated by participants, involved monitoring their thinking and giving attention to their physical presence and manner of speaking. Participant 5 confided:

> I ask myself, how are people experiencing you? And so, that's a question that for many years, I've just taken with me, and I ask myself that question like, how are people experiencing me? And that honestly helps put myself in check and regulate

> my emotions. I'm in my head a lot also and I think about what others, I mean, I care what others think of me.

This principal further shared her desire to be perceived differently than her predecessor who had a more assertive style of leadership. She stated, "I was told that this is how other people perceive me, which then I'll talk about how I see myself, that I lead with a feminine style."

Similarly, Participant 9 explained her thinking and actions around being underestimated, saying:

> I don't walk into a room, thinking I own it. I walk in as a person, and maybe because I don't present myself in that kind of fashion. There's something that they're expecting from me. And as soon as I verbalize what I want, I actually change the tone of my voice for them to understand the seriousness of what I'm talking about. And so, my thought process is always, let me give them important information first and foremost. I do start off being polite and thoughtful but a lot of times I get the sense I'm not able to confront issues, but I try to smash those walls. I do confront issues, but I don't confront them in a very harsh way. I confront them in a way that's maybe more female.

For two principals, self-awareness included attention to their physical presence, specifically their short stature. Participant 9 was conscious that at 5 feet, 2 inches tall, her height might be considered a barrier. She counteracted by purposefully building rapport with all stakeholders and showing respect regardless of position or title. She shared, "I want them to see that I don't need to be a little person with a big ego, a big attitude, to

show them that I matter, because I try to let them know that they matter too." She further explained:

> I don't know what culture or what expectation they have of little Hispanic women, but I want them to see me as a person, and I'm not going to get offended because if I get offended, then that's going to affect my reaction to them.

Participant 2 also demonstrated self-awareness regarding her height, noting, "I think I have presence, and to some extent I think my height, as funny as that sounds because I'm short, plays into having to have that presence, confident presence." This principal further stated the importance of dressing in a particular way to counteract others' perceptions, adding:

> I am aware of the fact that people have perceptions, and they develop perceptions because they see color first, they see gender first. At the same time, in knowing that, I dress the way I dress. I try to be as ultra-professional in how I look, and how I come across.

Principals also spoke of their awareness of stigmas and stereotypes that influence how they might be viewed, and how they respond to negative perceptions or low expectations. For example, from the point of view of gender, Participant 1 offered:

> I think also being very hyper aware of stigmas, you know, for example, women being thought of as bossy versus having initiative. You know, those kinds of stigmas that females have. I've always been very aware of them. And I think that has helped me, to put it bluntly, not care, like what I do is what I do and my professional work ethic is what it is, whether I'm female or not. But I think it helps to be aware of those stigmas, and to actively push against them.

When describing strategies leveraged as a Hispanic, Participant 6 explained, "Well, I think it's how you see those stereotypes that we are labeled with, and somewhat use them to tell your story and tell the different story and spin them in a positive light." Another principal expressed she would take on the challenge of changing the trajectory of people's thinking, stating, "After we meet, you are going to see me in a whole different light."

Haar and Robicheau (2009) found the need for constant awareness of how they are viewed by others as a common experience of school leaders who are women of color. Hispanic female principals in the current study not only indicated an awareness for how they were perceived, but also conveyed a belief that they could counteract others' perceptions through their actions and interactions. This determination aligns with heightened levels of self-awareness and social awareness in addition to relationship management, which is a third component of emotional intelligence.

Supportive Mentors and Role Models

Although a lack of mentors surfaced as one theme in the research question regarding gender barriers, it also emerged as a common strategy to overcoming barriers due to gender and ethnicity. Seven principals described the support received from a variety of mentors and the impact on their advancement. Participant 1 expressed a sentiment common in other interviewees, stating, "I've been very blessed to have people in my life who have recognized abilities in me." Participants described the camaraderie, encouragement, and support received from mentors who included female and male principals, district leaders (e.g., superintendents), and—in one case—a school board member.

As they reflected on mentors and role models, participants made little reference to people of a similar ethnicity. Participant 8, who lamented her induction mentor was not Hispanic, was the only principal to state her desire for a Latina mentor. There was greater mention of female role models, with Participant 6 stating, "I have gravitated to the older female generation, to the females who are retiring, or have retired. I'm building those relationships with them and picking their brains and asking for words of wisdom." Three participants described their districts as having a significant number of women in leadership roles. Participant 4 offered, "I have seen women, many women in leadership roles in my district. The women I see in leadership roles are also very supportive, also role models."

Contrary to research that has suggested a lack of like role models and mentors as a significant barrier to Hispanic females (Barrera, 2019; Diaz, 2018), three participants in the current study pointed out their strongest mentor relationships were with White males. Participant 1 shared:

> I have been very blessed to have mentors in my life who have really moved me along, interestingly, all male White, which I had never thought of before. But I think, and maybe I never thought of it this way, maybe I've advanced in my career because I've had male White mentors who have moved me through the paces.

For two of the three participants, their White mentors were male superintendents, and Participant 2 recounted how, she was contacted by the superintendent after interviewing for but failing to secure a principalship. The superintendent had stated, "You know what. I'd like to take you out for a glass of wine, because I'd like to mentor you." Participant 2

shared, “He kind of laid it all out for me so that I had a sense, I mean, does anybody really know what a principal does?” Participant 3 added she was better prepared to respond to questions about vision and school leadership in her next interview; subsequently, she earned the opportunity to serve as principal.

Participant 8 described taking a summer job outside her district and a conversation with that district’s superintendent, also a White male. She shared:

> We had a great first conversation just meeting, and he’s like, “Let me know what happens to you, because you’re going to get picked up.” And I kind of just kept in touch with him once a year, and even though it was just once a year, he was just always a very encouraging person that would ask questions that were prompting. “Have you thought about this? What are you doing?”

Responses tied to this theme indicated participants valued all opportunities for mentorship with little regard given to the gender or ethnicity of mentors. Participant 8 summed up the theme by stating, “I’ve been very fortunate to have different mentors who have been my biggest cheerleaders, who have those prompting questions that kind of nudge.” The desire to have someone with common experiences, someone who saw their value, who could advocate for them or guide them in speaking up for themselves, was seen as a significant strategy in overcoming barriers to the principalship.

Personal Empowerment

Personal empowerment was a key strategy that Hispanic female principals used to build skills and self-confidence in their ability to lead. According to Cattaneo and Chapman (2010), the empowerment process aims to change a person’s social influence and results in “a personally meaningful increase in power that a person obtains through

his or her own efforts" (p. 647). Six principals discussed methods used to motivate and empower themselves to successfully accomplish tasks associated with their roles.

For several participants, self-talk was an antidote to the imposter syndrome and a tool for strengthening their belief that they were worthy of the role. Participant 9 shared:

> So, I have to build myself up every day, and that's a strategy that I use where I am no different than any other person who has sat in this chair. I am capable, and I will do it, and I will learn, and I will ask questions. And so being that go-getter, I don't put limits on myself, and I believe that I can do this, and so I will, and that is a conversation that I have with myself all of the time. I put myself up. It's just something internally that I do, and I've been doing it because there's nobody else out there that's going to do it for me.

Participant 3 related a similar internal conversation, saying, "Like, don't doubt yourself. Like, you can do this. Why do you think you're not strong enough or intelligent enough to run a school?" In the absence of mentors to whom they could turn to for reassurance, principals provided themselves with words of encouragement.

A second self-empowerment strategy was the use of self-help books. Three principals described using self-help books as a source of motivation and personal growth. Participant 6 confided, "There's a lot of books and self-help books that I look to for inspiration. Those are some of the things that I think have really grounded me. No, I got that. I can do this." Likewise, Participant 9 stated, "I read a lot of self-help books and I have an app for motivation. It gives me quotes every day. I follow the podcast by Glennon Doyle, and it's called I Can Do Hard Things." Another principal reported reading self-help books, listening to podcasts, and reading motivational quotes. Although

individuals seldom spoke to the specific content of the books or podcasts, they identified them as tools used to overcome barriers associated with their intersectionality.

One participant described a Ted Talk presentation that landed on her screen and provided a strategy she could use when feeling insecure or anxious. According to the participant, she was exposed to the idea that physicality could change the brain and an individual's actions. She described how she incorporated the speaker's advice, saying:

> She spoke about, if you watch a lot of men, they tend to have certain poses, like the wonder woman pose, or the victor pose, and how just doing that really changes your wiring. And so, I would do that. I would literally go to the bathroom and do these poses and okay, smile like I'm ready. A lot of deep breaths. Kind of fake it until you become it, and just go in there and sit down and pretend that I was cool, calm, and collected.

For 6 of the 9 participants, personal empowerment incorporated the self-awareness described earlier along with deliberate actions aimed at growth and self-improvement. Their reflections and subsequent behaviors improved their capacity to address challenges encountered as school leaders.

Cultivated Relationships

Relationships, particularly those grounded in trust and respect, were identified as essential to principals' abilities to overcome obstacles. Principals described the value of relationships with peers, mentors, and especially with the staff members they led. Relationship building was an important factor for Participant 3, who described connecting and establishing relationships with the most difficult members of her staff, a task made more challenging due to demographics. She shared, "Those were the

relationships that I needed to establish for them to trust me. The staff believed in me, being 99% White, and I'm the person of color."

Participant 9 mentioned the time needed to build rapport and the respect she afforded staff members as she worked to establish relationships. She described her process, sharing:

> I don't want to say get personal, but I always like to know some tidbit about a person to personalize the connection, the meeting. They're more apt to do more for you, more apt to share more when you share a little bit about yourself, and then they get to share something about themselves. I don't know what it is but I open up to people and I laugh a lot. I do. I think it's good to have fun. I like to joke around and I think that's really helped with building relationships, too.

One participant spoke about the importance of relationships with others in similar positions who are able to relate to shared struggles and offer words of affirmation. She described these as relationships with "like-minded females who are maybe not in a leadership role, but who have those same struggles of doubt in their careers." Another participant spoke of the camaraderie shared with other Hispanic female principals in her district, the mentorship they provided each other, and her fortune in working for a district with a number of like peers. Principals' responses indicated establishing and maintaining relationships with a variety of stakeholders was a crucial practice throughout their careers, and especially in their role as site leaders.

Key Findings

Based on the data collected and analyzed from interviews with nine Hispanic female principals, key findings were identified related to barriers experienced due to

gender, barriers experienced due to ethnicity, the impact of intersectionality on career advancement, and strategies leveraged to counteract intersectional barriers. Based on the research, the following key findings were discovered.

Summary of Findings: Barriers Due to Gender

The following factors were barriers due to gender:

- A lack of confidence in their ability to lead was the most frequently referenced theme despite Hispanic female principals' long careers and experiences in a variety of educational roles.
- Hispanic female principals perceived a lack of trust and confidence from others in the school system regarding their expertise and capacity to lead.
- Lacking like peers and mentors, Hispanic female principals perceived themselves to be on their own as they navigated their leadership journeys.

Summary of Unexpected Findings: Barriers Due to Gender

An unexpected finding related to barriers due to gender was: Hispanic females made no mention of cultural, structural, or institutional barriers due to their gender identity.

Summary of Findings: Barriers Due to Ethnicity

The following factors were barriers due to ethnicity:

- Participants believed their expertise and leadership were questioned and they were treated without courtesy and respect due to their ethnicity.
- Principals' capacity to lead was questioned by Hispanics and non-Hispanics, educators, and parents.

- Participants demonstrated a lack of confidence in their written and oral English skills.

Summary of Unexpected Findings: Barriers Due to Ethnicity

The following factors were barriers due to ethnicity:

- Five principals resisted use of the term *barriers* to describe obstacles as they advanced to the principalship, preferring instead to use the terms *experiences* and *challenges*.
- Only two principals referenced structural barriers to their advancement, both encountered as principals when they applied for their first positions in the role.
- Despite an average career span of 17.8 years before attaining their first position as principal, participants did not consider their career trajectory different from that of their non-Hispanic peers.

Summary of Findings: Impact of Intersectionality on Career Advancement

The following factors were impacts of intersectionality on career advancement:

- Participants largely viewed intersectionality as an advantage to their career advancement and a key factor in the opportunity to become site leaders.
- Eight principals led schools in which the majority of students were Hispanic and socioeconomically disadvantaged.
- Principals believed themselves more marketable due to their ethnicity and bilingual skills.

- Representation was seen as an important impact; participants welcomed the opportunity to serve as role models and advocates for students of the same ethnicity.

Summary of Unexpected Findings: Impact of Intersectionality on Career Advancement

The following factors were impacts of intersectionality on career advancement:

- All participants perceived intersectionality an advantage to their careers.
- The only negative impact of intersectionality on principals' careers emerged in an analysis of student demographics and academic outcomes at the schools to which they were assigned.
- Only two participants believed intersectionality was a factor due to districts' hiring quotas.

Summary of Findings: Strategies Leveraged to Overcome Intersectional Barriers

The following factors were strategies leveraged to overcome intersectional barriers:

- Grit, characterized by perseverance, resilience, and work ethic was referenced by 100% of Hispanic female principals in their descriptions of strategies used to overcome barriers.
- Participants demonstrated perseverance by working in a variety of roles, moving from school to school, moving districts, and serving for an average of 17.8 years before becoming principals.
- Family was the second most referenced theme as participants described parents' expectations and the support of partners and spouses.

- Four themes were related to emotional intelligence and self-determination, both within the control of principals.

Summary of Unexpected Findings: Strategies Leveraged to Overcome Intersectional Barriers

The following factors were strategies leveraged to overcome intersectional barriers:

- Participants were encouraged by otherwise traditional parents to be independent women and to pursue professional careers.
- More than half of participants moved from one district to another to seek advancement opportunities.
- Three participants identified White males as their most significant mentors.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived impact of barriers created by the intersection of gender and ethnicity on the advancement of nine Hispanic female educators to the K–12 principalship. A second purpose of this study was to identify strategies Hispanic female educators leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship. Data collection included one-on-one interviews using semistructured interview questions. This chapter provided an analysis of the data related to barriers Hispanic females experienced during their careers due to gender, barriers experienced due to ethnicity, the impact of intersectionality on their career advancement, and strategies used to overcome intersectional barriers. Key findings and unexpected findings related to each research

question were identified. Chapter V provides an overview of the major findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative study identified barriers that Hispanic females experience due to gender and ethnicity as they ascend to the K–12 principalship. Furthermore, the study explored Hispanic females' perceptions regarding the impact of intersectionality on their career advancement. The study additionally identified strategies that Hispanic females leveraged to address or overcome barriers due to gender, ethnicity, and intersectionality. The foundation for this study was the theory of intersectionality first proposed by Crenshaw (1989), which posits that individuals' social interactions and experiences are impacted by the intersection of multiple subordinate identities. Chapter V provides an overview of the study (i.e., purpose statement, research questions, methodology, population, and sample), major findings, major unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research. The chapter closes with reflections from the researcher.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceived impact of barriers created by the intersection of gender and ethnicity on the advancement of Hispanic female educators to the K–12 principalship. A second purpose of this study was to identify strategies Hispanic female educators leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship.

Research Questions

1. What gender barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 principalship?

2. What ethnic barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?
3. How does the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity impact advancement to the K–12 school principalship as perceived by Hispanic females?
4. What strategies do Hispanic females leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?

Methodology

A qualitative inquiry using a phenomenological approach focuses on how individuals make sense of their lived experiences, and this process involves capturing "how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it" (Patton, 2015, p. 115). Therefore, a phenomenological inquiry was an appropriate approach used to probe Hispanic female principals' experiences through the lens of intersectionality, which was the phenomenon under study. During one-on-one interviews, participants described and reflected upon the experiences, behaviors, and interactions that comprised their journey to the K–12 principalship. The researcher used skillful interviewing strategies to elicit rich responses and probe for depth and detail regarding perceived barriers due to gender and ethnicity and the strategies Hispanic female principals employed to address or overcome barriers. A qualitative phenomenological study provided an effective format where Hispanic female principals could share their perspectives on the impact of their intersectional identities on advancement to principalship positions.

Population

A study's population includes the group the researcher is interested in explaining or describing (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Likewise, the population identifies the larger group that meets a specific criteria, and to whom the results of the inquiry might be generalized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The population for this study was 1,382 Hispanic female educators serving as principals in K–12 public schools in California. This number was calculated based on the number of K–12 public schools across the state, the percentage of female principals in California public schools, and the percentage of principals who identify as Hispanic. According to the California Department of Education (n.d.-a), there were approximately 10,545 K–12 public schools in California in 2021. Because approximately 57% of California's principals were female as of 2017–2018 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.-a), and close to 23% of principals identify as Hispanic (NCES, n.d.-c), the population of Hispanic female principals in California was estimated at 1,382.

Sample

A study's sample is the group of participants chosen due to their knowledge about the phenomena being studied, and from whom data are collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). For the purpose of this study, convenience sampling was used to select nine Hispanic female principals as participants. Convenience sampling is a common nonprobability sampling approach where participants are selected due to their accessibility to the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In essence, researchers rely on their own judgment when identifying study participants. For this study, participants were purposefully chosen to ensure they represented the characteristics

outlined in the sampling frame. The sampling frame included females who: (a) identified as Hispanic or Latina, (b) served as principals in K–12 public schools, and (c) worked in districts located in Orange and Riverside counties in Southern California.

Based on these criteria, the sampling frame for this study was 136 Hispanic female principals. The number was calculated based on approximately 1,040 principals in K–12 public schools in Orange and Riverside Counties (Ed Data, n.d.). Accounting for the percentage of female principals (i.e., 57%) and Hispanic principals (i.e., 23%), it was estimated 136 Hispanic female principals served in K–12 public schools in Orange and Riverside counties. Once a list of prospective participants was compiled, the researcher contacted principals by email to explain the research purpose, procedures, and expected benefits, and to extend an invitation to participate in the study. Convenience sampling was an effective method for identifying nine Hispanic female principals willing to participate in the study and contributed to a greater understanding of the impact of intersectionality on their advancement to a leadership position.

Major Findings

Major findings for this study were drawn from themes identified in Hispanic female principals' responses to research questions regarding the barriers experienced due to intersectional identities and the strategies used to address and overcome barriers. A summary of four major findings and two unexpected findings are discussed in the next sections.

Major Finding 1

Major Finding 1 was: Hispanic female principals perceived themselves to be on their own as they advanced to and served in the principal role. Research findings revealed

Hispanic female principals lacked the support of like mentors and peers who might serve as role models and sponsors. Participants lamented the absence of like mentors who might provide a roadmap as they navigated their leadership roles and like peers who would understand the challenges they faced as Hispanic female principals. Although the lack of mentors was considered a barrier, the majority of participants identified the support of mentors as a critical resource to overcoming barriers due to intersectionality.

Several principals reached far back into their educational careers to identify mentors. They spoke of high school and college teachers who believed in them, pushed them to excel, and helped them navigate college and financial aid applications. Once working as educators, participants described fellow teachers, administrators, and—in one case—a school board member as mentors who provided them with guidance and support. Other than one principal assigned a mentor due to her enrollment in an administrative induction program, all mentoring relationships were informal and sporadic.

In most cases, participants failed to mention the ethnicity of mentors; however, three principals noted their most consequential mentors had been White males. According to these principals, White male mentors paved the path to administrative positions by providing advice and encouragement and prompting them to pursue positions of leadership. Participants did not speak of similar experiences in which Hispanic mentors, male or female, took special interest in, guided, or advocated for them as they worked their way to the principalship.

Interviews did not reveal the existence of structured mentoring programs in any of the six districts where participants worked. Several principals mentioned outside resources such as the Association of California School Administrators and the California

Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators with available support. However, no participants availed themselves of mentoring opportunities in either organization. Participant 8 suggested she would have felt more supported and had greater balance between her professional and personal lives if she had joined California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators and been surrounded by like peers.

Although research has indicated the need for culturally relevant mentorship in which Hispanic females are mentored by people who share a similar culture and experience (Diaz, 2018; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Menchaca et al., 2017), participants in this study did not benefit from such mentorship. In the absence of structured mentoring programs and with few opportunities to be mentored by more experienced Hispanic female administrators, principals looked inward and were self-directed and self-reliant as they advanced to the principalship.

Major Finding 2

Major Finding 2 was: Hispanic female principals demonstrated key characteristics related to emotional intelligence and grit as they aspired to and served in the principal role. The most significant resources Hispanic principals relied upon to address and overcome intersectional identity barriers were internal characteristics that determined their emotional and intellectual responses and guided them on their path to the principalship. Hispanic females were propelled to leadership positions due to self-determination grounded in the belief that they were capable and deserving of the role, and their commitment to actions in pursuit of their goal.

Hispanic female principals revealed a keen awareness of their own thinking and emotions and how these factors influenced their decisions and actions. They reflected upon and acknowledged varying levels of confidence and competence in their approaches to leadership challenges. They sought and used self-help resources and strategies to promote personal growth and influence their emotional response to difficult people and situations. Hispanic female principals also demonstrated an acute awareness of how various stakeholders perceived them due to their gender and ethnicity. Correspondingly, they took actions to preempt or counteract negative expectations regarding their readiness and capacity to lead the challenging schools in which they were placed. Self-awareness and social awareness are two components of emotional intelligence, which was a skill Hispanic female principals in this study honed to support their leadership.

Grit was revealed as a dominant characteristic of all nine Hispanic female principals. According to Duckworth (2013), individuals with grit demonstrate perseverance, resilience, and a passionate focus toward accomplishing goals. The principals were a modicum of perseverance, working in varied educational roles for an average of 17.8 years before assuming their first positions as principal. They demonstrated a willingness to move from school to school and district to district as they pursued greater opportunities. Although some participants were initially hesitant to pursue the principalship, they ultimately welcomed the opportunity to lead sites and focus on improved outcomes for Hispanic students. Regardless of challenging school assignments and the lack of support or respect afforded them by different stakeholder groups, Hispanic female principals were steadfast in their belief that they were purposefully placed and able to make a difference. Participants alluded to their family

background, upbringing, and immigrant parents as foundations for the grit and work ethic that supported their advancement to the principalship and their ability to serve effectively once in the role.

Major Finding 3

Major Finding 3 was: Hispanic female principals navigated a lengthy and challenging path to the principalship. Although there has been a dearth of research identifying the average time to the principalship or the typical pathway for educators of different ethnicities, this study's participants worked in various roles for 9–23 years before attaining the role of principal. For four principals, the journey to the role was greater than 20 years. During the 17.8 average years principals worked before assuming school leadership positions, participants served as teachers, site and district specialists, coaches, and assistant principals, among other roles. Although research has suggested female educators are hesitant to move or travel to pursue opportunities (Chappell, 2000; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010), all but one principal worked at multiple school sites and five worked in multiple districts.

Eagly and Carli (2007) used the term *labyrinth* to describe the indirect and complex path women must often take as they advance to positions of leadership. Subsequently, the labyrinth represents a challenging journey to an ultimately attainable goal and the persistence needed to overcome unexpected barriers and detours. This term can aptly be applied to the career path each of the study's participants traveled before they were afforded a position in school leadership.

Major Finding 4

Major Finding 4 was: Hispanic female principals believed their intersectional identity had a positive impact on their advancement to the principal role. Principals in this study self-identified as Hispanic females and Latinas but most were unfamiliar with the term intersectionality. Participants initially struggled to understand how the impact of their intersectional identities differed from impacts due to gender and ethnicity. This finding was similar to Breslin et al.'s (2017) finding that an individual's application of intersectionality is hindered by a lack of understanding of the term and a preference for analysis through the single constructs of race or gender.

After some discussion and reflection on the term, principals overwhelmingly indicated their intersectional identities had positively impacted opportunities for leadership. All but one participant indicated gender and ethnicity were instrumental factors in their appointment at sites with large populations of Hispanic students. As Hispanic females, they were assumed to have a background and experience similar to their students and greater motivation to ensure students were provided with equitable opportunities to succeed. One participant suggested her superintendent knew the school needed a Latina woman who understood and empathized with students and had a "strong Chicana woman attitude."

Other positive impacts of participants' intersectionality were related to school districts' interest in promoting more Hispanic females into positions of leadership. Although most principals did not consider themselves to have benefitted from hiring quotas, they believed district leaders wanted greater diversity in the rank of principal. Given the large number of Hispanic students enrolled in schools throughout both counties

and the importance of representation to student outcomes, Hispanic female principals believed they were placed strategically to positively impact student achievement. Additionally, principals considered their bilingual abilities to be a prominent factor in districts' decisions to hire and assign them to school sites where they could effectively interact with students and parents. In the words of one participant, Hispanic females "were more marketable" due to their intersectional identities.

Unexpected Major Finding 1

Unexpected Major Finding 1 was: Hispanic female principals did not experience significant conflict between their personal and professional lives as they advanced to the principalship. The first interview question asked principals to share information about their Hispanic background, upbringing, and family. Participants spoke at length about their immigrant parents, all of whom had come to the United States from Mexico and worked in blue collar jobs to provide for their families. Although most participants described their mothers as working in a traditional role in the home, the same was not expected of them. Parents urged participants to excel in school, play sports, attend college, and become professionals. Participant 2 shared, "There weren't any limitations placed on me." Both mothers and fathers urged participants to be independent women and pursue careers outside of the home.

Although research has indicated Hispanic females face conflict between cultural and social expectations and careers (Falk, 2011; Menchaca et al., 2017; Palacio, 2013), most principals in this study had a different experience. One principal admitted she faced pressure to have a child while another spoke of the difficulty balancing responsibilities as a mother and principal; otherwise, there was scant description of conflict between the

roles. Participants described partners and spouses as supportive of their decision to become administrators, and helpful and encouraging once they were in the role. It is possible the lack of conflict between career and personal lives was due to the families participants created. Three principals had one child, three had no children, and only one reported having multiple children. Two principals did not reveal if they had children of their own and if so, how many. With few or no children, it is likely principals were free to pursue leadership opportunities and serve in the demanding role of a principal unhindered by familial obligations.

Unexpected Major Finding 2

Unexpected Major Finding 2 was: Hispanic female principals did not perceive that bias, discrimination, or structural barriers impeded their advancement to the principalship. Throughout interviews, principals were asked to describe barriers experienced due to gender, ethnicity, and intersectionality. Five principals objected to using the term *barriers*, insisting the term did not accurately reflect their perception of challenges encountered while advancing to the principalship. The reluctance to identify challenges as barriers reflected a mindset that adverse experiences impacted but did not impede their advancement to leadership positions.

Although two principals attributed their extended hiring processes to bias and one described resistance from White staff members due to her Hispanic identity, six principals questioned if they had experienced any bias or discrimination due to gender or ethnicity. For example, in describing her attempt to attain a position as an assistant principal, Participant 8 commented, “I probably applied at 50 places, and probably got

five interviews out of those 50. I feel like a lot of districts hire internally, so it could be something, it could be nothing." Participant 7 similarly stated:

> I know I have applied for certain jobs, and then it's like, "No, we have a better candidate" and it's hard for me to tell what was the reason for that. I really have no idea. It could have been I didn't have the experience and the career path.

Another participant insisted:

> I don't think I've ever been singled out as a female in my professional career. I feel like I have not been looked down upon or passed over, or anything has been more difficult for me because I'm a woman.

Participant 9 summed up her experience by saying, "I can't really speak for any form of prejudice or bias, as far as not being selected for a leadership position." Only one principal was unequivocal in describing the behavior of certain district officials as biased and discriminatory.

Despite a wealth of research describing overt and covert discrimination faced by Hispanic females as they advance to the principalship (Falk, 2011; Lopez, 2018; Palacio, 2013; Pimienta, 2014; Reyes, 2015) participants in this current study were largely unwilling or unable to identify negative experiences due to gender and/or ethnicity. Participant 8 instead stated challenges along the way resulted in greater motivation and fortitude. She shared:

> I know we talked about barriers and what gets in the way, but also what we go through is what makes us a force when we're in the seat. It is what helps us advocate for our community once we're in the seat.

The reluctance of Hispanic female principals to consider the impact of barriers, bias, and discrimination as they advanced to the principalship was the most surprising finding of this study.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the major findings of the study and supported by a review of the literature regarding the impact of gender and ethnicity on Hispanic female principals.

Conclusion 1: Hispanic Female Principals Need Like Role Models and Mentors as They Advance to the Principalship

Results of this study corroborate research findings that Hispanic females lack role models and mentors as they navigate the path to the principalship (Barrera, 2019; Diaz, 2018; Falk, 2011; M. A. Martinez et al., 2020; Menchaca et al., 2017). Diaz (2018) concluded a limited number of Hispanic female administrators results in a lack of mentors and sponsors for Hispanic females who aspire to positions of leadership. The result is an endless loop of lost and delayed opportunities as Hispanic females find themselves largely on their own, and are "left to find their way through the tumult of hidden norms" (Arriaga et al., 2020, p. 84).

Hispanic female principals in this study identified the lack of mentors as a barrier to their advancement. Although one participant was in a structured mentoring program due to her participation in an administrative induction program, all others described informal mentoring relationships in which they received sporadic support. Participants spoke of their desire for someone with a shared background and experience who might provide guidance and advocate for them. Despite a dearth of mentors and role models,

principals nevertheless identified supportive mentors and role models as one of six key strategies leveraged to overcome barriers due to intersectionality.

Conclusion 2: Forms of Community Cultural Wealth Were Critical to Hispanic Females' Successful Advancement to the Principalship

Yosso (2005) coined the term community cultural wealth to recognize cultural wealth in the form of unique experiences, beliefs, and knowledge that result in persistence and social mobility of people of color. Among the forms of community cultural wealth are social capital, aspirational capital, linguistic capital, navigational capital, familial capital, and resistant capital. Hispanic females relied upon strengths derived from these forms of community cultural wealth to guide them as they worked to overcome barriers and advance to the position of principal.

The long and challenging path to the principalship undertaken by Hispanic females demonstrated aspirational capital, or "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016, p. 2). Critical skills include agency and resilience, and this study's participants demonstrated both skills as they worked in multiple positions, schools, and districts and advanced through their careers.

Principals' descriptions of their family backgrounds and parental support indicated familial capital was essential to their success. According to Yosso (2005), familial capital includes cultural norms, social customs, and a concept of family that extends to the community. Principals attributed much of their drive and ambition to the norms and expectations established by their parents and demonstrated a deep sense of responsibility toward the largely Hispanic school communities they led. They were

highly motivated by the opportunity for representation and acknowledged the value of students and parents seeing themselves reflected in the school's leader.

Two additional forms of community cultural wealth (i.e., linguistic capital and navigational capital) positively impacted Hispanic females aspiring to the role of principal. Linguistic capital is the intellectual and social skills gained through communication in more than one language (Yosso, 2005), and participants readily admitted their bilingual skills were key to their placement in schools with high numbers of Hispanic students. Navigational capital, defined by Yosso as the ability to successfully navigate organizations not created with people of color in mind, was evident as aspiring principals pursued different positions, moved between sites and districts, and maintained an awareness of how they were perceived by individuals capable of influencing their career trajectory.

Conclusion 3: The Grit, Work Ethic, and Attitudes Displayed by Hispanic Female Principals Are Characteristic of Individuals With an Immigrant Mindset

Grit was revealed as a key characteristic of Hispanic female principals as they advanced to the principalship. They persevered through long careers in the classroom and worked in a variety of support roles at the site and district level. Despite the extended time taken to reach the principalship and movement from one school or district to another, principals refused to consider that barriers or obstacles due to intersectionality impeded their advancement.

During interviews, 2 of the 9 principals revealed they were immigrants and the other seven revealed they were children of immigrants. It is reasonable to consider participants' acceptance of their career journey and their perception of the challenges

versus obstacles were influenced by an immigrant mindset. According to Pedron (2020), common characteristics among immigrants include:

- acceptance that the path to growth and success will be uncomfortable,
- a willingness to seek opportunities and be creative where there is a lack of resources,
- the ability to "reframe difficulties as advantages" (p. 63),
- strength and creativity developed due to adversities in life, and
- a broader perspective that enables them to see things differently and embrace progress.

These elements of an immigrant mindset underscored study participants' beliefs that subsequently contributed to their success in advancing to the role of principal.

Conclusion 4: Intersectionality Had Both a Positive and Negative Impact on Hispanic Females' Advancement to the Principalship

Hispanic female principals believed the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity positively impacted their advancement to the K–12 principalship. Participants identified their identity as an advantage throughout their careers as they were hired into positions as teachers, specialists, and administrators. Eight participants acknowledged their language and culture were integral to their ultimate appointment as principals in schools with large numbers of Hispanic students. They were given opportunities to lead due to their bilingual abilities, physical and cultural similarity to students, and districts' perceptions that they would effectively address the needs of Hispanic students and their families. Several participants spoke to the specific advantages districts saw in appointing a Hispanic female or Latina leader.

Although participants saw their intersectionality as an advantage, as novice principals, most were placed in challenging schools where the majority of students were Hispanic and socioeconomically disadvantaged. Bagula (2016) and Brown (2005) found the practice of placing minority principals at schools with large numbers of minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students to be common practice. Despite the widely held belief that students benefit from principals with similar cultures and ethnicity, participants faced significant challenges due to the overwhelming needs of their school communities. The demanding environments in which they were placed as leaders likely contributed to the lack of self-confidence expressed by principals and the lack of trust they believed others held in their capacity to effectively lead.

Conclusion 5: Caution Should be Taken in Applying the Study's Findings to a Wider Group of Hispanic Female Principals

In addition to a shared intersectional identity, the nine principals who participated in this study had a common immigrant background and supportive parents and spouses/partners. Principals' intersectional identity was but one factor that impacted their perceptions of the barriers encountered while advancing to the role. The attitudes and thinking of Hispanic female principals in this study might diverge from that of Hispanic females with different family histories and experiences. According to Bowleg (2013), the concept of intersectionality has been critiqued by scholars who have suggested intersectional identities are subject to differences in history, culture, and geography. There is a danger in assuming the results of this study can be applied to a larger group solely due to a shared intersection of gender and ethnicity.

Implications for Action

Based on the major findings and conclusions of this study, the following implications for action are recommended for school districts and organizations committed to increasing the number of Hispanic females in the principalship:

- School district leaders should analyze district data to reveal what discrepancies exist between demographics of students, teachers, and administrators, then revise hiring and promotion practices accordingly.
- School districts must establish a pipeline to support Hispanic female educators in advancing to the principalship. They should be strategic in identifying teachers and people in other roles who are interested in becoming school leaders and support their growth through recruitment to leadership academies and administrative credential programs.
- Districts must establish mentorship programs in which assistant principals and novice principals are paired with experienced principals. Consideration should be given to consulting mentees about their preference for mentors with like backgrounds or otherwise, and assignments made accordingly.
- Districts should refrain from placing novice principals in the most challenging schools where large numbers of students underperform compared to district averages or where students are members of special populations.
- Organizations such as California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators and Association of California School Administrators must increase their outreach to aspiring administrators. Although both organizations effectively serve people who have advanced to positions of leadership, they

offer limited opportunities for educators who are not yet administrators and who would benefit greatly from networking and mentorship by established leaders.

- Research findings should be shared with university programs that offer teaching and administrative credential programs. Program administrators should consider how to support students in developing a vision for their career trajectory and prepare them for challenges they may encounter due to their intersectional identity. Administrative programs should recruit Hispanic female educators through purposeful outreach to school districts and organizations.

Recommendations for Further Research

This section addresses recommendations for further research regarding the impact of intersectionality on Hispanic females advancement to the role of principal.

Recommendation 1: Replicate the Study With Hispanic Female Principals Who Are Third Generation or Greater

All principals who participated in this study were first-generation American (i.e., foreign born) or second-generation American (i.e., children of immigrants). Given that principals demonstrated characteristics common to people with an immigrant mindset, it is recommended to replicate the study with Hispanic females who are third-generation American or greater to have lived the American experience. The study should explore issues of identity in addition to participants' perceptions of barriers due to the intersection of gender and race.

Recommendation 2: Conduct a Study of Hispanic Female Teachers' Attitudes Toward Becoming Site Leaders

This study aimed to identify barriers Hispanic females experienced as they advanced to the principalship. Participants included nine individuals who had successfully addressed and overcome barriers, and were serving as K–12 principals at the time of the study. It is recommended that research is conducted with Hispanic female teachers who are considering pursuing school leadership in addition to others who have decided against such a pursuit. It would be beneficial to identify teachers' attitudes regarding school leadership, reasons that motivate or discourage the pursuit of the principalship, and barriers that prevent greater numbers of Hispanic females from seeking the position.

Recommendation 3: Conduct a Study of California Districts With a Greater Than Average Ratio of Hispanic Female Principals to Their Hispanic Student Population

Although this study's participants were purposefully chosen according to the study's sampling frame (i.e., self-identifying as Hispanic or Latina and principals in K–12 public schools in Orange and Riverside counties), no consideration was given to the demographics of the six districts in which they served. It is recommended that further research is conducted in California districts that employ a greater percentage of Hispanic female principals to identify the factors, personal and organizational, that contribute to greater representation.

Recommendation 4: Conduct a Study Examining Different Structures of Mentorship Programs Offered by Public School Districts

Mentorship is a critical support for Hispanic females as they advance to and serve in the role of principal. This study revealed most principals lacked consistent mentorship and there were a dearth of structured opportunities or programs. It is recommended that a study is conducted to explore what, if any, mentorship programs are offered by public school districts and how these programs are structured.

Researcher Concluding Remarks and Reflections

I have spent most of my 30 years as a California public school educator working in school districts where the majority of students were Hispanic. While in the classroom, I worked alongside dedicated, hard-working Hispanic female teachers committed to improving the academic outcomes of their Hispanic students. As the parent of children who participated in one district's Spanish dual immersion program, I encountered teachers with deep pride in their cultural background and enthusiasm for developing the Spanish language abilities and cultural understandings of all students. While overseeing the language development program at the district level, I encountered vibrant, highly motivated, and expert Hispanic female teachers who worked in adjunct roles to support the Spanish speaking communities at their schools. However, I seldom encountered Hispanic female assistant principals or principals, nor significant numbers of teachers who aspired to the role.

For years, I puzzled over the factors that inhibited Hispanic female teachers from pursuing the principalship. When questioned about their reticence to become administrators, teachers largely pointed to internal factors such as the desire to remain in

the classroom and their belief that the role would be too political and not worth the effort. My attempts to explore what actions, if any, were undertaken by districts in this study to increase the number of Hispanic female administrators revealed a lack of awareness and/or interest in developing systems to increase representation among district leaders.

An analysis of statewide data indicated Hispanic female principals were similarly underrepresented in school districts across California. Given that students of color realize improved academic and socioemotional outcomes when they have principals and teachers of the same race or ethnicity, I was motivated to research the experiences of Hispanic female principals. I was intrigued by the opportunity to explore their experiences through the lens of intersectionality, which was a concept I understood well given my own intersectional identity as a Black female.

The results of this study contradicted much of what I learned during a review of the literature. The Hispanic female principals I interviewed made few references to structural barriers, bias, and discrimination as impediments to leadership. Likewise, they gave little indication of constraints related to cultural norms and expectations. Most surprising was the absence of any comparison to non-Hispanic peers or indication that their path to the principalship had been more challenging due to their intersectional identity. Hispanic female principals in this study did not describe any organizational supports as they advanced to the role; instead, they attributed their success to personal characteristics including work ethic, self-determination, and agency.

This study's findings confirmed Hispanic females' perceptions that they are largely on their own as they advance to and serve in the role of principal. Findings revealed the internal resources Hispanic female principals applied to their advancement

but left undefined the actions school districts might take to identify, support, and promote Hispanic females to the principalship. The results of this study provide a call to action for districts and organizations committed to increasing the number of Hispanic female principals and willing to invest in creating programs and systems toward that purpose.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

References	Principals, History, Role & Influence	Opportunity Gap & Lack of Representation	Female Principals/Leaders	Principals of Color	Hispanic Female Principals	Concept/construct of Identity	Intersectionality	Theoretical Foundations Gender	Theoretical Foundations Ethnicity	Qualitative Analysis	Data Sources
Antman & Cortes (2021)				x	x						
Arriaga, Stanley, & Lindsey (2020)			x								
Bagula (2016)					x				x		
Banks (2000)			x	x							
Barrera (2019)					x			x			
Beasley (2020)			x	x	x						
Bonilla-Silva (1999)						x					
Bowleg (2013)					x		x				
Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin (2013)											
Breslin, Pandey, & Riccucci (2017)							x				
Brown (2005)				x							
California Department of Education (CDE, n.d.-a, n.d.-b)											x
Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen (2013)										x	
Capper (2015)				x			x		x		
Carter (2013)		x									
Chappell (2000)	x		x								
Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall (2013)							x				
Cotton (2003)	x										
Crenshaw (1989)							x				

References	Principals, History, Role & Influence	Opportunity Gap & Lack of Representation	Female Principals/Leaders	Principals of Color	Hispanic Female Principals	Concept/construct of Identity	Intersectionality	Theoretical Foundations Gender	Theoretical Foundations Ethnicity	Qualitative Analysis	Data Sources
Crenshaw (1991)							x				
DataQuest (n.d.)											x
Davidson (2009)	x			x							
K. Davis (2008)				x			x				
B. W. Davis, Lippa, Lehr, Gooden, & Dinh (2016)		x		x							
Diaz (2018)					x	x			x		
Diekman & Goodfriend (2006)								x			
Duckworth (2013)						x					
Eagly (1987)								x			
Eagly & Carli (2007)			x								
Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)											x
Falk (2011)					x						
Fernandez (2013)				x					x		
Flores (2007)		x		x							
Flores & Gunzenhauser (2021)	x										
Garry (2011)				x			x				
Gentilucci & Muto (2007)	x										
Green (2018)	x			x							
Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay (2021)	x										
Grissom, Rodriguez, & Kern (2017)				x							
Gumus (2015)	x										

References	Principals, History, Role & Influence	Opportunity Gap & Lack of Representation	Female Principals/Leaders	Principals of Color	Hispanic Female Principals	Concept/construct of Identity	Intersectionality	Theoretical Foundations Gender	Theoretical Foundations Ethnicity	Qualitative Analysis	Data Sources
Guzmán, Kouyoumdjian, Medrano, & Bernal (2018)									x		
Haar, & Robicheau (2009)				x							
Hernandez & Murakami (2016)					x						
Hobbel & Chapman (2009)							x		x		
Hoff & Mitchell (2008)			x								
Hollingworth & Dude (2009)	x	x									
Kafka (2009)	x										
Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis (2016)	x										
Khosroshahi (2021)				x							
Ladson-Billings& Tate (1995)									x		
Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi (2010)	x										
Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004)	x										
Litmanovitz (2010)			x								
Livingston (2013)				x			x				
Lopez (2018)	x			x	x				x		
Lynch (2012)	x										
Macias & Stephens (2017)					x						

References	Principals, History, Role & Influence	Opportunity Gap & Lack of Representation	Female Principals/Leaders	Principals of Color	Hispanic Female Principals	Concept/construct of Identity	Intersectionality	Theoretical Foundations Gender	Theoretical Foundations Ethnicity	Qualitative Analysis	Data Sources
Maranto, Carroll, Cheng, & Teodoro (2018)			x								
J. M. Martinez (2016)				x							
M. A. Martinez, Rivera, & Marquez (2020)					x		x				
McMillan & Schumacher (2014)										x	
Menchaca, Mills, & Leo (2017)				x	x						
Méndez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne-Jiménez, & Hernandez (2015)					x	x					
Merriam (2002)										x	
Morgan (2008)			x								
Moua (2011)	x										
Murakami, Hernandez, Mendez-Morse, & Byrne-Jimenez (2016)				x	x	x					
Nash (2008)							x				
National Center for Education Statistics (1997)											x
Palacio (2013)					x						
Parent, Deblaere, & Moradi (2013)							x				
Patten & Newhart (2018)										x	
Patton (2015)										x	
Perkins-Gough (2013)						x					

References	Principals, History, Role & Influence	Opportunity Gap & Lack of Representation	Female Principals/Leaders	Principals of Color	Hispanic Female Principals	Concept/construct of Identity	Intersectionality	Theoretical Foundations Gender	Theoretical Foundations Ethnicity	Qualitative Analysis	Data Sources
Pew Research Center (2010)											x
Pimienta (2014)				x	x				x		
Pitts (2007)	x	x		x							
Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach (2008)							x				
Randle (2018)				x							
Reeves, Albert, Kuper, & Hodges (2008)										x	
Reyes (2015)					x						
Roberts & Hyatt (2019)											
Rousmaniere (2007)	x		x	x							
Sanchez, Paul, & Thornton (2020)			x								
Sanchez & Thornton (2010)	x										
Sandoval (2019)					x						
Santiago (2009)					x				x		
Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger (2007)			x								
Shields (2008)							x				
Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner (2013)									x		
Solorzano (1998)									x		
Solorzano & Yosso (2002)									x		
Sun & Xin (2020)	x										

References	Principals, History, Role & Influence	Opportunity Gap & Lack of Representation	Female Principals/Leaders	Principals of Color	Hispanic Female Principals	Concept/construct of Identity	Intersectionality	Theoretical Foundations Gender	Theoretical Foundations Ethnicity	Qualitative Analysis	Data Sources
The Wallace Foundation (2013)	x										
Thorpe (2019)	x		x	x							
Tillman (2004)				x							
U.S. Census Bureau (2021)											x
Voltmer (2018)							x				
Wells, Peachey, & Walker (2014)								x			
Welner & Carter (2013)	x										
Wing (1990)							x				
Wing (2000)								x			
Yamaguchi & Burge (2019)							x				
Yosso (2005)									x		

APPENDIX B

Introduction Letter to Study Participants

[Date]

Dear [Name],

My name is Natalie Baptiste and I am conducting research into Hispanic female leadership in conjunction with my Doctoral studies at UMass Global. The purpose of this study is to identify the barriers that Hispanic female principals face due to their gender and ethnicity. A secondary purpose of this study is to identify strategies employed by Hispanic female principals to address or overcome barriers due to their dual identities. You have been identified as a Hispanic female principal serving in a K–12 public school in Southern California and as someone who is ideal for this study.

This study will explore how Hispanic females principals counter both internal and external barriers as they advance to the principalship. The data collected will lead to a better understanding of how Hispanic females' intersectional identities impact opportunities to serve as K–12 school leaders. Findings gathered from the research may be used to support individuals and organizations in understanding what steps might be taken to increase the representation of Hispanic female principals in California's K–12 public schools.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. As a participant in this study, your contributions may support other Hispanic females as they seek opportunities for school leadership.

The study consists of an interview that will take approximately 60 minutes. I hope that you decide to participate in this important study. If you make the choice to participate, you retain the option to withdraw at any time. Thank you in advance for your acceptance of my request.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by email at XXXXX@XXXXX.XXX

Sincerely,
Natalie Baptiste,
Doctoral Candidate, UMass Global

APPENDIX C

Interview Script and Questions

SCRIPT

My name is Natalie Baptiste and I am a doctoral candidate at UMass Global in the area of Organizational Leadership. I would like to thank you for participating in this interview regarding Hispanic females advancement to the K–12 principalship.

I will be conducting interviews with a number of female principals such as yourself to gain a clear understanding of the barriers Hispanic female principals face due to their intersectional identities. Additionally, I will explore the strategies that Hispanic female principals use to address or overcome the barriers faced due to gender and ethnicity. I will ask the same questions to each principal participating in the study. I will do this to guarantee, as much as possible, that interviews with all participating Hispanic female principals will be conducted in the same manner.

Informed Consent

Prior to this interview you received information concerning the purpose of the research, UMass Global's Participant's Bill of Rights, and the Informed Consent form. After reviewing the protocols, you were offered an opportunity to ask questions concerning the research and the consent process. At that time, you consented to be a participant in the interview. For purposes of verifying your consent would you again provide a verbal yes as to your consent that will be included in the recording of this interview. Thank you.

I will now begin the interview. When our interview is complete, I will stop the recording and conclude our interview session. After your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the complete transcripts to ensure I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas. Following your review and approval of the transcription, the data will be analyzed along with the data I have collected from the other respondents. Your information will be kept confidential and your name will be changed to protect your identity.

Please let me remind you that your participation is voluntary and will greatly strengthen the study. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or would like to end the interview or not respond to a question, please let me know. I have provided a copy of the interview questions for your reference; however, I may have follow-up questions if clarity is needed. The interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes. Do you have any questions about the interview process?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you briefly share a little about your Hispanic background, upbringing, and family?
2. Can you tell me a little about your career journey that brought you to the role you currently serve in today? What positions did you hold, and for how long?

GENDER BARRIERS

As a leader with knowledge of women's issues, you are aware that women often encounter gender specific barriers throughout their careers; that is, barriers experienced because they are women. Gender barriers can be divided into two categories:

1) EXTERNAL – group and societal that we cannot change and
2) INTERNAL – those personal barriers we can control and change. So first, we are going to talk about any external barriers that you may have experienced.

External Barriers: External barriers include sex-role stereotyping. These barriers include patterns of employment discrimination, such as promotion and advancement, and lack of a mentor, role models, and sponsors.

As you think back on your career leading up to your current leadership role, please reflect on any external barriers you experienced related to being a woman.

3. Can you share an example or story of one or more of these external barriers you experienced as a woman?
4. Can you describe any strategies you used to address or overcome these barriers?

Internal or Personal Barriers: Internal barriers include a reluctance to take risks, low self-esteem, a lack of assertiveness, and a lack of confidence. As you think back on your career leading up to your current leadership role, please reflect on any internal or personal barriers you experienced related to being a woman.

5. Can you share an example or story of one or more of these barriers you experienced due to being a woman?
6. Can you describe any strategies you used to address or overcome these barriers?

RACIAL/ETHNIC BARRIERS

People of color often encounter barriers due to their ethnicity or the color of their skin. Barriers include racial bias, discriminatory hiring practices, low expectations, and questioning of one's qualifications and effectiveness.

As a Hispanic, think back on your career leading up to your current leadership role; please reflect on any barriers you experienced related to being Hispanic.

7. Can you share an example or story of one or more of these barriers you experienced due to being Hispanic?
8. Can you describe any strategies you used to address or overcome these barriers?

INTERSECTIONALITY

The intersection of two separate identities such as gender and race/ethnicity impacts one's social interactions and experiences. They compound to construct novel experiences that are distinctive and not necessarily divisible into their component identities.

We talked about gender barriers, those experienced because of being female and racial/ethnic barriers experienced being Hispanic. As a woman of color, gender and race/ethnicity make up your full identity; they compound and are experienced as one. Please reflect on how these combined identities impacted your advancement to your current leadership role.

Multiple identities construct novel experiences that are distinct, not divisible into component identities

The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw who insisted that studies cannot ignore the intersectional experiences of those who subscribe to two minority identities *"Identity is not additive. In other words, Black women are not white women plus color, or Black men plus gender"* (Wing, 1990 p. 7)
9. Can you share an example or story of a barrier experienced during your career due to being both a woman and Hispanic?
10. Can you share an example or story of how intersectionality impacted your career advancement?
11. Can you describe any strategies leveraged to counteract intersectional barriers while advancing throughout your career?
12. Do you have any advice for Hispanic women in their journey to gain access to higher-level positions in their careers?
13. Are there any final comments you would like to make before we conclude?

POSSIBLE PROBING QUESTIONS

1. What is your opinion about that?
2. Can you expand upon that a bit more?
3. Do you have more to add?
4. Please describe an example of . . .

APPENDIX D

Qualitative Instrument Alignment Table

Research Questions	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13
What gender barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 principalship?			x		x								
What ethnic barriers do Hispanic females experience while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?							x						
How does the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity impact advancement to the K–12 school principalship as perceived by Hispanic females?									x	x			
What strategies do Hispanic females leverage to overcome barriers due to intersectionality while advancing to the K–12 school principalship?				x		x		x			x		

APPENDIX E

Field Test Interviewee Feedback Questions

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe the barriers faced as a Hispanic female principal and the strategies you have leveraged to address or overcome them?
2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?
3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked?
4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?
5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview?

APPENDIX F

Field Test Observer Reflection Questions

1. How long did the interview take?
2. Were the questions clear or were there places when the interviewee was unclear?
3. Were there any words or terms used during the interview that were unclear or confusing?
4. How did you feel during the interview?
5. Did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?
6. For the observer: how did you perceive the interviewer regarding the preceding descriptors?
7. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?
8. Are there parts of the interview that seemed to be awkward and why do you think that was the case?
9. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would it be and how would you change it?
10. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

APPENDIX G

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Certificate

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 18-May-2021
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 42502397

This is to certify that:

Natalie Baptiste

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Subjects Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Brandman University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wa67cc53f-5ce3-45e2-9691-560922c05c36-42502397

APPENDIX H

UMass Global IRB Application Approval Notice

Dear Natalie J Baptiste,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB immediately at IRB@umassglobal.edu. If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at the following link: https://irb.umassglobal.edu/Applications/Modification.pdf.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,
Doug DeVore, Ed.D.
Professor
Organizational Leadership
IRB Chair
[redacted]
www.umassglobal.edu

APPENDIX I

Bill of Rights

UMASS GLOBAL
A nonprofit affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

UMASS GLOBAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD Research

Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

f at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask he researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL nstitutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers n research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be ontacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or y writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna anyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX J

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: An Exploration of Hispanic Female Principals' Career Advancement Through the Lens of Intersectionality

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Natalie Baptiste

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Natalie Baptiste, a doctoral candidate at UMASS GLOBAL. The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of Hispanic females principals as they ascend to site leadership positions. The study will strive to identify the internal and external barriers that aspiring Hispanic female principals face due to the intersection of gender and ethnicity. Additionally, the study will seek to understand the strategies Hispanic females employ to address and overcome the barriers faced due to their intersectional identities. The study's results will add to the body of research regarding the impact of intersectionality on the experience of Hispanic female principals. Results will support organizations in recruiting greater numbers of Hispanic females to educational leadership positions and provide organizational leaders a greater understanding of strategies they might leverage to increase the number of Hispanic females serving as K–12 principals.

By participating in this study, I agree to participate in an online interview. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted via the Zoom platform. Interviews will take place in October and November of 2022. I also agree to providing any relevant artifacts that support experiences shared during the interview.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.
b) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier redacted and confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings will be destroyed. All other data and consents will be securely stored for three years after completion of data collection and confidentially shredded or fully deleted.
c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may positively impact the number of Hispanic females serving as principals, and thereby improve academic and socioemotional outcomes of Hispanic students for whom representation is a critical factor. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide insights into the experiences of

multiple Hispanic females as they ascended to the principalship. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Natalie Baptiste at XXXXX@XXXXX.XXX or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX; or Dr. Marilou Ryder (Advisor) at XXXXX@XXXXX.XXX.
e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.
f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASSGLOBAL, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of Rights." I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedures set forth.

_____

Signature of Participant

_____

Signature of Principal Investigator

_____

Date