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Personal Disruption Strategies Used by Latina Superintendents for Career Advancement

A Dissertation by

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University of Massachusetts Global

A Private Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

Irvine, California

School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

February 2024

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February 2024

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful for all the incredible people who have contributed to my success throughout this academic journey. The completion of this dissertation is not just my achievement, but a testament to the unwavering support and faith of those I love. This dissertation is dedicated to my family, the one I was born into and the ones I adopted on the way.

To my son and daughter who are both my strength and motivation. Thank you for your patience and understanding. Your kindness and thoughtfulness were the fuel that powered me through those long and never-ending days and nights.

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To my classmates and cohort mentor, thank you for joining me in this academic journey. To my dissertation committees, thank you for your time and guidance. Dr. Ryder, thank you for your encouragement, leadership, and inspiration.

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Lastly, to all the brown girls who came before me and those who will come after. We're breaking barriers and building dreams. As the incredible Dolores Huerta said, "Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world." Let's shatter the Glass Ceiling!

## ABSTRACT

Personal Disruption Strategies Used by Latina Superintendents for Career Advancement

by Dina Hernandez

**Purpose:** The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods study was to identify and describe the perceived impact of Johnson and Mohr's (2013) five disruptive career skills on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position.

**Methodology:** Using an explanatory mixed methods approach, this research studied the experiences of eight Latina superintendents in California. Data were gathered through a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Quantitative data involved collecting responses and calculating mean scores while qualitative data were gathered through semistructured interviews. Combining quantitative and qualitative data allowed for an in-depth evaluation and the development of themes from survey and interview data.

**Findings:** The study revealed that Latina superintendents used data and persuasive communication to advocate for equity, particularly for students of color. They exhibited adaptability and resourcefulness, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Latina leaders maintained a balance between cultural humility and self-promotion, subtly integrating the latter into their professional activities. The superintendents pursued a variety of career paths, demonstrating adaptability and resiliency. They prioritized educational equity and student welfare over personal popularity, demonstrating an understanding that respect can often lead to likability.

**Conclusions:** This study supported the literature, affirming the significant impact of ethnicity on Latina superintendents' leadership. It identified key strengths, including their

strategic challenge of authority in advocating for students of color. Latina superintendents effectively balance thorough preparation with improvisation and intentionally use social media for self-promotion. These strengths, combined with a focus on student-centered decisions and leveraging mentorship opportunities, highlight the positive impact of the five disruptive career skills on their executive advancement.

**Recommendations:** The researcher recommends incorporating leadership programs and diversity training that focus on cultural intelligence, cross-cultural communication, and unconscious bias. Structured mentorship programs pairing emerging Latina leaders should be created with experienced mentors who understand the challenges Latinas face due to their intersectionality. In addition, Latinas must have access to organized professional development and networking events to equip them with strategies to navigate leadership challenges, board dynamics, and career opportunities. Last, educators must advocate for educational policies that foster inclusive and diverse leadership, focusing on recruiting, promoting, and retaining minority leaders.

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## PREFACE

One faculty researcher and four doctoral students discovered a common interest in exploring specific behaviors women engage in to disrupt the protocols or processes already identified in the literature to secure promotions or executive leadership positions. The following five disruptive career skills were identified as the framework: (a) challenging and influencing authority, (b) preparing but also improvising, (c) engaging in effective forms of self-promotion, (d) welcoming a less prescribed career path, and (e) aiming for respect over being liked. Through their shared interest, a thematic study was conducted by the four doctoral students to identify whether the identified disruptive skills impacted females securing executive leadership positions. A secondary purpose of the study was that by studying this topic, the researchers can give female leaders the skills they need to break barriers into new and fulfilling careers in upper management. An explanatory mixed methods study was used to identify and describe the perceived impact of W. Johnson and Mohr's (2013) five disruptive career skills on female advancement to executive leadership positions.

The four doctoral students collaborated with one faculty member to develop the purpose statement and research questions to ensure thematic consistency and reliability. The survey instrument, interview questions, and study procedures were designed as a thematic collaborative effort. The thematic group tested the device among themselves to identify any alterations that may have been needed. Each researcher then administered an online survey to female leaders to identify disruptive behaviors that may have impacted their career advancement to executive leadership. Following the survey, the researchers individually interviewed their study participants to explore the impact of disruptive



behaviors on their career advancement and the skills used to break barriers into new and fulfilling careers in upper management.

The term *peer researchers* was used throughout the dissertation to refer to the researchers involved in this thematic study. The peer researchers studied female leaders in the following fields: Dina Hernandez, Latina superintendents; Lorri Oliver, property management executives; Neko Green, senior pastors; and Tricia Thompson, superintendents from elementary background.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Dictionary defines the glass ceiling as “an unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities (Glass-ceiling, n.d.)” Marilyn Loden coined this term, which remains relevant today, over 4 decades ago. According to Loden (2017), women are less likely to advance beyond middle management on the corporate ladder because of cultural obstacles rather than personal obstacles. This assertion is accurate and is reflected in the context of education.

Even though women constitute a significant majority of teachers in public schools, accounting for 76% of the workforce in both public and private educational institutions (USA Facts, 2020), men continue to dominate the majority of administrative positions in education, particularly those of the superintendentship. The K-12 superintendent position is the country’s highest ranking and predominantly male executive post (Cassidy et al., 2021). Historically, White men have held between 82% and 99% of all superintendent seats since the position was created in the 1800s (Glass et al., 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Currently, national statistics indicate that 73% of educational superintendents are male, but only 27% are female (I. Castillo et al., 2021). Although the number of female superintendents has increased over the years, men continue to hold the majority of these positions (American Association of School Administrators [AASA], 2015). It is significant to mention that a mere 2.7% of school superintendents in the United States are Latinas, which signifies a considerably lower proportion (Finnan & McCord, 2018).

Although the proportion of Latinx students is relatively high and the Latinx population is steadily growing, Latinas are disproportionately underrepresented in educational leadership positions nationwide (Catalyst, 2002). There is a need to increase the number of opportunities for Latina superintendents to gain access to positions of authority and exert influence over education policy, decision making, and reform (Blount, 1998).

Moreover, studies have revealed that students benefit from having role models who resemble them. The article “Representative Bureaucracy, Ethnicity, and Public Schools” established a positive correlation between representation and performance, indicating that minority students benefit from having role models who share their ethnicity and culture (Pitts, 2007). The study found that minority students taught by teachers of the same ethnic background achieved higher test scores and graduation rates. Minority educators serve as cultural mediators, facilitating students’ navigation of educational challenges and promoting a sense of inclusivity. According to Pitts (2007), having them in schools promotes cultural awareness, reduces stereotypes, and leads to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. Cassidy et al. (2021) identified the underrepresentation of Latinas in school superintendent positions in the field of education as an equity concern.

Inequity is one of many barriers women face to advancement in educational administration (McCreight, 1999). According to recent research, women continue to face numerous challenges when attempting to advance to high-ranking historically and culturally male-dominated positions such as the superintendency. The underrepresentation of women in school superintendent positions is due to the many

barriers women face (Cassidy et al., 2021). This belief was further supported by Derrington and Sharratt (2008) who asserted that women encounter several internal and external obstacles when climbing the corporate executive ladder. Therefore, there is a need to increase the number of opportunities for females to attain positions of authority.

According to Johnson and Mohr (2013), enhancing the representation of women in leadership roles can be achieved by embracing disruptive innovation and adhering to a disruptive framework. Christensen (1997) defined disruptive innovation as “the process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up-market, eventually displacing established competitors” (p. xviii). The authors argued that embracing disruption provides a proven pathway to success, and they advocated for women to exhibit disruptive behaviors and engage in unexpected actions to thrive in leadership positions (Johnson & Mohr, 2013). Although existing studies have explored strategies employed by women to advance in their careers, further research is needed to understand how women effectively use disruptive leadership tactics, particularly in attaining executive positions like the superintendency.

### **Background**

Historically, women have been underrepresented in positions of leadership. According to Loden (2017), cultural barriers prevent women from progressing beyond middle management on the career ladder. Derrington and Sharratt (2008) supported the assertion that women encounter numerous obstacles in ascending the corporate executive ladder. To overcome these obstacles and advance in their careers, women use a diverse

set of skills. Some strategies women use to climb the leadership ranks include finding a mentor, building strong networks, and speaking confidently (Pianta, 2020).

### **History of Women in Leadership**

More women have entered the workforce in the last 10 years as a result of affirmative action programs, personal fulfillment, and accessibility (VanTuyle & Watkins 2009). Nonetheless, despite an increase in the number of working women, women continue to be underrepresented in top management and administrative positions. In the United States, women make up 46% of the administrative and managerial ranks. However, according to Eagly et al. (2003), women only constitute 5% of the Fortune 500 companies' top executives and 1% of their chief executive officers.

Blount's (1998) research highlighted the golden age of women in educational leadership positions during the first half of the 20th century. The women's suffrage movement played a crucial role in breaking societal norms and propelling women into leadership positions in schools nationwide. A notable milestone was achieved in 1909 when Ella Flagg Young became the first female superintendent. However, despite this historical progress, the underrepresentation of women in the role of school superintendent persists even after 143 years since Ella Flagg's appointment (AASA, 2015).

Furthermore, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, women who worked in school administration voluntarily left the field to open up opportunities for men who had just returned from war. As a result, by 1970, the percentage of women in superintendency decreased to an all-time low of 3% (Wickham, 2007). In addition, the decline in the women's movement following the suffrage amendment, the pervasive social stigma of people who defy gender norms, and the promotion of educational leadership positions as

a highly regarded career for World War II veterans all contributed to the further decline of women in the workforce (Blount, 1998).

Concurrently, social attitudes toward educated, self-sufficient women shifted negatively. Women were perceived as a threat to the manhood of male students and professors, which increased gender discrimination (Blount, 1998). Discrimination against women is one of the most frequently cited barriers to women's advancement to high-level positions (Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018). Gender prejudice can manifest in overt and covert behaviors at the individual and organizational levels. As a result, in 1960 the government began enacting federal laws prohibiting gender discrimination. Despite these legislative initiatives, many barriers remained, and women continued to be underrepresented in leadership positions.

According to data from the 2018–2019 v (CDE, n.d.) women comprise 73% of California's teaching workforce. Of the 73%, 45% are White and 15% are Latina. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022) reports that in California, White women occupy 41% of principal positions, but only 5% of such positions are held by Latinas. People of color are notably underrepresented in leadership positions in educational institutions, especially the superintendent position (Schmitz, 2017). Overall, minorities constitute 8.1% of district superintendents. Furthermore, according to data from Zippia (2023), Latinx superintendents have only increased by 3% in the last 9 years, from 11% in 2010 to 14% in 2019.

### **Current Status and Need for Women in Executive Leadership**

Although women account for 76% of all teachers in the United States, men continue to dominate educational administration, particularly the superintendent position.

Despite accounting for roughly three quarters of the teaching workforce, women hold less than 60% of primary principal positions and less than 30% of secondary principal positions in America (Kowalski et al., 2011). The fact that women hold only 20% of senior school positions, according to McCreight (1999), further supports this disparity and shows that there are still significant obstacles preventing women from advancing in educational administration.

According to *School Superintendent Demographics and Statistics in the US* (Zippia, 2023), the representation of women in the position of public school superintendents stands at 28%. These data pertain to the number of school superintendents in the United States as of 2023. The K-12 superintendent continues to be the highest and most male-dominated executive position in the United States (Cassidy et al., 2021). Women remain underrepresented in school superintendent positions. The absence of female superintendents has been identified as an equity issue in education. Derrington and Sharratt (2008) claimed that the underrepresentation of female superintendents can be attributed to the formidable challenges they face.

### **Barriers Preventing Women From Gaining Advancement**

Women face unique challenges in moving up the educational leadership ladder. Recent research has shown that women face many obstacles when applying for historically and culturally male-dominated positions, such as the superintendent position. According to Loden (2017), several barriers prevent women from progressing beyond middle management. These barriers include both external and internal factors.

## **External barriers**

Women encounter numerous challenges when striving to reach the highest leadership positions. Among these obstacles, gender discrimination and stereotyping stand out as formidable barriers. Extensive research has consistently highlighted gender discrimination as a prevalent and concerning issue (Kowalski & Stouder, 1999). In a study by Kaufman and Grace (2011), it was revealed that over half of the surveyed women had personally encountered instances of sexism. Furthermore, Connell et al. (2015) discovered that women who reported facing gender bias experienced profound emotional distress, ranging from feelings of despair to severe sleep deprivation. Given the significant impact it can have, gender discrimination is a critical concern that has the potential to impede the aspirations of female superintendents.

Gender bias can manifest at both individual and organizational levels, taking the form of overt or covert behaviors that hinder women's advancement. As highlighted by Connell et al. (2015), the pervasive image of leadership is dominated by men and the existence of an exclusive network of good old boys exemplifies gender bias in the professional sphere. Stereotypically, society expects men to assume leadership roles, but women are often relegated to communal and submissive roles (Muñoz et al., 2014).

Extensive research conducted by AASA (2015) spanning several decades revealed disheartening statistics for female superintendents. A staggering 76% of these women believed that school boards doubted their competence in managing district finances, and nearly 82% felt they were viewed as weak managers (Finneran, 2016). To counteract these unfavorable preconceptions, Connell et al. (2015) discovered that female executives deliberately adopted traits typically associated with men, such as decisiveness,



a more assertive demeanor, reduced verbal participation, and establishing a certain distance in their professional relationships. Unfortunately, for many women, assimilating these traditionally masculine behaviors did not improve circumstances. Muñoz et al. (2014) found that when women closely aligned their personal and professional conduct with those commonly associated with leadership positions, society often responded negatively to their behavior.

### **Internal Barriers**

In addition to the external barriers women face in advancing to leadership roles, women also have to overcome internal barriers that are equally formidable. Self-sabotaging behaviors such as thinking too small and lacking self-esteem are examples of these internal obstacles. According to research, some of the most significant impediments preventing women from attaining superintendent positions are internal (Muñoz et al., 2014).

Women's self-esteem can influence their career aspirations and professional advancement, as highlighted in the research conducted by Mason et al. (2016). When women have low self-esteem, it becomes a formidable barrier that hampers their willingness to pursue new competencies and embrace challenging opportunities, as revealed by Ryder and Briles (2003). Notably, self-esteem emerges as a critical factor in shaping women's leadership goals, as elucidated by Mason et al. (2016). The impact of living in a male-dominated society can significantly affect women's self-esteem. Mason et al. discovered that women tend to score lower on measures of self-esteem when compared to their male counterparts. Such disparities in self-esteem levels can be

attributed to the pervasive influence of patriarchal attitudes, which in turn contribute to men being more inclined than women to aspire to positions of superintendency.

Another internal barrier is thinking too small. Thinking too small means underestimating one's worth, lacking the courage to step outside one's comfort zone, being closed to new experiences, and setting perfection as the standard (Muñoz et al., 2014). Women internalize society's negative stereotypes of them, which causes them to lack confidence in their ability to handle difficult tasks such as taking on the role of superintendent (Lerner, 2012). In the face of both internal and external barriers, women have developed various strategies to overcome these challenges and forge a path toward leadership.

### **Strategies Women Currently Use to Gain Advancement**

According to Lerner (2012), women employ various strategies to overcome barriers and gain career advancement. These methods include participating in mentorships, professional development, and establishing networks. Creating a power web is the most commonly identified strategy used by female superintendents to combat self-sabotaging behaviors. To gain advancement, women must create a power network by selecting individuals in their lives who are devoted to their personal development. In addition, to develop their careers, women must act confidently by sharing their accomplishments, qualities, and skills with others and taking full responsibility for their hard work. Furthermore, women also employed constructive preparation, which included turning fear into an ally and remaining present when confronted with discomfort. Another strategy mentioned in Lerner's research states that one can accept fear by practicing mindfulness, facing fears, and following their intuition.

## **Theoretical Foundations**

Several theories support and frame the understanding of how women have been affected by society and gender expectations. These theories include but are not limited to social role theory, role congruity theory, and expectancy–value theory. These three theories help explain the impact that gender has on leadership advancement.

### **Social Role Theory**

Empirical evidence from studies in education and social role theory (Blount, 1998) supports the existence of gender stereotypes. The social role theory states that women are often viewed as less competent leaders because of societal perceptions of their roles within the social hierarchy (Finneran, 2016). To attain effectiveness, women must exert a more significant amount of effort compared to men.

### **Role Congruity Theory**

At the core of the role congruity theory lies an extension of the social role theory, which delves into the impact of gender expectations on shaping behavioral differences (Finneran, 2016). Within the realm of education, bias against female leaders often stems from the perceived incongruity between feminine qualities and the demands of leadership positions. Extensive research conducted by O’Neill and Blake-Beard (2002) demonstrated that masculine traits have been associated with effective management whereas feminine characteristics have not. Consequently, gender stereotyping perpetuates the belief that women possess diminished authority, further perpetuating the challenges women encounter in assuming leadership roles.

## **Expectancy–Value Theory**

In addition, the expectancy–value theory sheds light on the consequences, such as decreased work performance, decreased self-esteem, increased anxiety, and diminished expectations of success, encountered by individuals who are subjected to stereotypes. This theory, which uses a multiplicative function to predict behavior and motivation, holds that expectations and values are positively correlated (Smith et al., 2015). According to the expectancy–value theory, individuals choose, persevere, and excel in their chosen career domain when they have confidence in their competence and a sense of worth. The expectancy–value theory predicts, therefore, that women’s motivation and inclination toward leadership roles are intrinsically linked to their expectations of attaining success.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Disruptive Innovation**

In the mid-1990s, Christensen (1997) coined the phrase *disruptive innovation* to describe how new entrants in a market may disrupt incumbent enterprises. Christensen is widely regarded as the father of disruptive innovation, which holds that the most successful ideas are those that create new markets and value networks while upending existing ones. Volumes of studies and data demonstrate how disruptive thinking increases the chances of success for goods, businesses, and even countries. Since 1995, disruptive innovation has been a ground-breaking idea in business (Thomond et al., 2003). Furthermore, according to Johnson and Mohr (2013), disruption can have a personal impact not only on entrepreneurs who start disruptive businesses but also on those who work within and move between companies. In addition, Johnson, a founding partner in

Christensen's investment firm, demonstrated how disruptive thinking, which has contributed to the success of many products, companies, and even countries, can be applied to a career.

### **Five Disruptive Career Skills**

Johnson (2015), author of *Disrupt Yourself: Putting the Power of Disruptive Innovation to Work*, modified Christensen's disruption theory to create a seven-point personal disruption framework. According to Johnson, although disruption is a proven road to commercial success, it may also work on a personal level for people who work inside and move between firms. This personal disruption framework was later adapted to identify five disruptive career skills for females seeking advancement to executive leadership positions: (a) challenge and influence authority, (b) prepare but also improvise, (c) engage in effective forms of self-promotion, (d) embrace a less prescribed career path, and (e) strive for respect over liking (Johnson & Mohr, 2013).

The first strategy emphasizes the importance of empowering women to question and influence those in authority. To truly thrive, women must acquire the skill of challenging and persuading individuals in positions of power, rather than simply conforming to their demands. The second strategy encourages improvisation. For instance, when attending a meeting without contributing, women are advised to think on their feet and find something to say. This career skill entails avoiding delays and actively participating even if it means speaking up spontaneously. The third strategy focuses on self-promotion and identifying effective approaches for women within a company. These methods of self-promotion are typically more subtle than those used by men. Women must diligently work, excel in their performance, and ensure that others are aware of their

hard work and outstanding achievements. The fourth strategy involves embracing nontraditional career paths. An increasing number of women are pursuing unconventional, self-directed careers that align with their unique skills and ideals. Last, the fifth and final disruptive strategy emphasizes striving for respect rather than being liked. Challenging preconceived notions may be difficult, but embracing unexpected approaches is what true disruption is all about.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Women are graduating from colleges and universities more than ever (Loden, 2017). There are more women in the labor force. Even though there are more working women, this increase in female presence is not reflected in management or leadership positions. In the United States, women hold 63% of middle- and senior-level management positions but only 7.4% of Fortune 500 CEO positions (Hinchliffe, 2020). Although research has been conducted on ways to assist women in attaining positions of power and influence (Pianta, 2020), women continue to lag behind men.

The lack of high-ranking female leadership representation is also reflected in education. There are very few female superintendents. Even though women make up 76% of all teachers in the United States, across the country, women only constitute 24% of public school superintendents. According to Llewellyn (2020), women have the professional skills and educational knowledge to manage school districts. However, it is still unclear why there aren't more female superintendents. Despite typically being better suited for the role, research has shown that female educators who want to be superintendents face obstacles that males do not (Melendez de Santa Ana, 2008; Tallerico, 2000).

According to Cassidy et al. (2021), the underrepresentation of women in school superintendent positions is due to the many barriers they face. Derrington and Sharratt (2008) agreed with this idea, stating that women face many internal and external barriers when moving up the corporate executive ladder. Latinas in particular, face many challenges on their way to leadership positions, including discrimination, racism, and a lack of representation at the highest levels of education. Furthermore, Latinas pursuing the superintendency have encountered difficulties in recruiting and hiring methods that are atypical for White males and sometimes White females (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Tallerico, 2000).

Despite these growing demographic disparities, little is known about Latina superintendents, how they get the job, and how they overcome their challenges (Galiana, 2014). Research has shown that there should be more opportunities for Latinas to become superintendents so they can get into positions of power where they can help make policy, make decisions, and change things in the field of education. This underrepresentation not only represents a missed opportunity for Latinas but also deprives the education system of the valuable perspective and experiences that Latinas can provide.

Some research has been conducted regarding strategies women use to advance on the career ladder. The majority of studies on women have focused on women overall and the difficulties they encounter. However, there is limited research on the challenges Latinas experience on their path to a superintendent position. Moreover, research has indicated that Latinas and other women of color face greater obstacles than White women. In addition to sexism, Latinas also face racism (Avila, 2018; Brown, 2004; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

The underrepresentation of Latinas in superintendent roles is a serious problem that needs further investigation and attention. This study examined and investigated the lack of representation of Latinas in superintendent posts. In addition, it researched the dynamics of Latina superintendents and the obstacles they experience to obtain a superintendent position and sought to discover the tactics Latinas have used to advance their careers to the superintendent level.

According to Johnson and Mohr (2013), one way to increase the number of female leaders is through disruptive innovation and adherence to a disruptive framework. These authors posited that women must be disruptive and do the unexpected to be successful. Disruption has a proven track record of success. More research, however, is needed to investigate how Latina superintendents use disruptive strategies to advance to leadership positions.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods study was to identify and describe the perceived impact of Johnson and Mohr's (2013) five disruptive career skills on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position.

### **Research Questions**

1. What perceived impact did challenging and influencing authority have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
2. What perceived impact did preparing but also improvising have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
3. What perceived impact did engaging in effective forms of self-promotion have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?



4. What perceived impact did welcoming a less prescribed career path have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
5. What perceived impact did aiming for respect over being liked have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?

### **Significance of the Problem**

Gender diversity in leadership has been a concern, particularly in the corporate and educational sectors. Even though women have made some progress, they are still underrepresented in top leadership positions, such as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Catalyst (2023) discovered that just 8.2% of Fortune 500 CEO positions are now held by women, a proportion that has stayed fairly steady in recent years. The National Women's Law Center (n.d.) asserts that women are frequently underpaid and passed over for promotions and other leadership positions. Women in the United States are only paid 84 cents for every \$1 earned by males. The pay gap is considerably wider for women of color (National Women's Law Center, n.d.). Moreover, men are frequently preferred for leadership positions because of gender bias and stereotypes that portray men as more competent and authoritative than women.

Women are also underrepresented in educational leadership positions, notably as superintendents. Women made up 28% of public school superintendents in the United States in 2021, according to *School Superintendent Demographics and Statistics in the US* (Zippia, 2023). The path to becoming a superintendent, the highest level of educational leadership, can be difficult regardless of gender or race. However, research reveals that women, particularly Latinas, face unique challenges in reaching this goal. Latinas experience discrimination and bias based on gender and ethnicity as one of the

primary obstacles to becoming superintendents (Castillo & Valencia, 2011). Similarly, The American Associate of School Administrators (2015) discovered that only 2.7% of all superintendents in the United States are Latinas, underscoring the demand for greater Latina representation in positions of educational leadership.

There are multiple reasons for increasing the number of Latina superintendents. One of these reasons is based on the research by Dobbin and Kalev (2016), which indicated that diverse leadership is crucial for an organization's success because it introduces new perspectives, concepts, and methods for making decisions and solving problems. Coinciding with this research, Hunt et al., (2018) found that a more diverse leadership team also produces better financial results and higher employee satisfaction. Furthermore, research by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA, 2015) discovered that diversity in leadership promotes higher creativity and cooperation in educational methods as well as better educational outcomes for all children.

In addition, having more Latinas in educational leadership positions is critical to ensure that the growing number of Latino students in the United States is adequately represented and that they have access to high-quality educational opportunities. Latina superintendents bring a unique perspective to the field of education, which can positively influence the educational outcomes of Latino students (Zavala, 2019). According to numerous studies (M. G. Castillo & Valencia, 2011), having Latina leaders in the classroom has many advantages, including a better understanding of Latino students' special needs and difficulties. In contrast, the underrepresentation of Latina leaders in education has a disproportionately negative impact on Latina pupils in particular. A study conducted by the National Women's Law Center (n.d.) demonstrated that Latina students

are less likely than their White peers to complete high school and enroll in college, which can have long-term consequences for their professional and personal development. It has been demonstrated that Latina superintendents are effective leaders who can bridge cultural obstacles and educational difficulties (Villalpando, 2016). Latina leaders bring a plethora of experiences and cultural knowledge to help create a more inclusive and inviting environment for Latino children in the classroom (Cortes, 2018). The good influence of Latina leadership in education has been extensively acknowledged and documented, and the United States has an increasing demand for more Latina superintendents (Jordan, 2023).

There are numerous reasons to conduct further research on Latina superintendents. To begin with, it would broaden the understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by Latinas in leadership positions. This knowledge would allow for developing strategies to assist Latina superintendents in overcoming obstacles such as discrimination and gender bias (M. G. Castillo & Valencia, 2011). Furthermore, the research would provide insights into the distinct strengths and skills that Latina superintendents bring to leadership positions, which would be useful in promoting educational diversity (Zavala, 2019).

The research findings could also be used to develop more inclusive and equitable educational policies and practices, promote diversity and cultural competence in leadership, and assist Latinas in education with professional development and career promotion. Moreover, the study could help create efficient mentorship, networking, and leadership programs for aspiring Latina superintendents and other women in leadership roles (Zavala, 2019). Findings from this study would benefit education by improving

knowledge of the impact of Latina leadership on students and schools. Jordan (2023), for example, contended that Latina superintendents can positively impact Latino students' academic progress by being role models and fostering a supportive learning environment. As a result, children from all backgrounds would have equal opportunities to achieve in a more varied and inclusive education system. Finally, the research findings would be helpful to individuals and groups striving to promote diversity and equality in education. Villalpando (2016), for example, argued that the research may be used to create training programs and initiatives to assist Latinas in obtaining leadership positions. The research could also help shape policies and practices targeted that encourage diversity and equality in education, which would benefit not only Latina superintendents but also students and the larger community.

In conclusion, there is an urgent need to study Latinas' experiences as they strive for and succeed in leadership roles in education, notably as superintendents. Such studies would highlight the particular difficulties and obstacles Latinas face as well as their innovative leadership styles and methods. The results of this study could help advance educational reform, diversity in leadership, and equal opportunity for all. The underrepresentation of Latinas in leadership positions, such as superintendents, is a significant issue that warrants additional study. The lack of research on Latina superintendents is a significant gap in education, limiting the understanding of the experiences and obstacles faced by these women in leadership roles and the strategies they used to overcome them. Cortes (2018) claimed that the few studies on Latina superintendents have mainly concentrated on their narratives and the factors contributing to their success. More in-depth research on the topic is required to better understand the

barriers and challenges faced by Latina superintendents as well as to identify strategies to promote their success in leadership positions. By addressing this knowledge gap, this research will help guide the development and advancement of Latinas in educational leadership roles.

### **Definitions**

The following terms are both theoretical and operational terms that are relevant to the study. Theoretical definitions are cited from literature, and operational definitions are the working definitions for this study.

#### **Operational**

**Affirmative action.** An active effort to improve employment or educational opportunities for members of minority groups and women (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022).

**Authentic leadership.** Leadership that is a result of strong relational capacity and the symbolic relationship of leader and follower (Eagly, 2005).

**Barriers.** Social constructs that interfere with the advancement of individuals in their career (Cassidy et al., 2021).

**Bias.** An inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair (Smith & Noble, 2014).

**Code-switching.** The process of shifting from one linguistic code (a language or dialect) to another depending on the social context or conversational setting (Morrison, 2024).

**Cultural norms.** What is encouraged, discouraged, accepted, or rejected within a group (Groysberg et al., 2020).

**Culture.** Learned beliefs, values, symbols, and norms that are common to a group of people (Northouse, 2010).

**Discrimination.** The act, practice, or an instance of discriminating categorically rather than individually (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a).

**Disruptive behavior.** Seven-Point Framework by Johnson (2019) is a proven algorithm for developing personal disruption and high growth for individuals; it includes:

1. Taking the Right Risks
2. Play to Your Distinctive Strengths
3. Embrace Constraints
4. Battle Entitlement, the Innovation Killer
5. Step Down, Back, or Sideways to Grow
6. Give Failure Its Due
7. Be Driven by Discovery

**Disruptive innovation.** Innovation at the low point of the market that eventually upends an industry (Christensen, 1997).

**Diversity.** Refers to the distinct traits that make a person unique, such as race, gender, religion, education, age, ability, and national origin and culture (B. A. Williams, 2020).

**Glass ceiling.** An invisible barrier that prevents women from moving beyond a certain point in an organization (Hamilton, 2023).

**Good old boy network.** An informal system in which men with the same social and educational background help each other (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-c).

**Imposter syndrome.** When a person feels unqualified and unworthy of respect. The individual feels underestimated and undervalued despite their abilities (Bahn, 2014).

**Inclusion.** The act of including someone or something as part of a group, list, or a person or thing is included (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

**Latinx.** Gender-neutral term referring to someone living in the United States who was born in or has ancestors from Latin America (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023).

**Male-dominated.** Controlling, prevailing, or powerful position, especially in a social hierarchy (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b).

**Prescribed career path.** List of steps to take in one's professional life to progress into different or more advanced roles at work (BambooHR, n.d.)

**Queen bee syndrome.** Coined to describe the general phenomenon that in particular women who have been individually successful in male-dominated environments are likely to oppose the women's movement (Staines et al., 1974).

**Self-promotion.** Communicating one's skills to allow for the recognition of strengths by others (Schwabel, 2013).

**Self-sabotage.** Internal thoughts and external actions that work against oneself in getting what one wants (Ryder & Thompson, 2022).

**Sexism.** Cultural and economic structures that divide genders into dominant or subordinate subjects (Frye, 1983).

**Stereotypes.** Beliefs about the attributes of people classified into a social category (Eagly et al., 2003).

## **Theoretical**

**Expectancy–value theory.** A theory that says people’s choices, persistence, and success can be explained by how much they value an activity and how well they think they will do at it (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

**Gender role.** How people are expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct themselves based upon their assigned sex (Money, 1973).

**Social role.** The part people play as members of a social group (McLeod, 2008).

## **Delimitations**

This study was delimited to Latina public education superintendents in California. Only superintendents who (a) had at least 1 year of experience as a K-12 public education superintendent and (b) exhibited strong verbal and nonverbal communication skills were included in the sample group. To ensure these delimiters, purposeful and convenience sampling was used.

## **Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters, a references section, and appendices. Chapter II presents a review of literature connected to the history of women in educational leadership and an in-depth look at the personal disruption strategies women use to attain high-level positions within school districts. Chapter III describes the research design and methodology of the study. Next, the instrument used to collect the data for the study is described along with the procedures. An overview of the sample selected from the study is described. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data and a discussion of the findings. Chapter V presents a summary, conclusion, and



recommendations for the study. Finally, the study ends with a reference section and appendices.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins with an exploration and historical overview of women in leadership. Women have historically fallen behind their male colleagues in leadership roles. According to Loden (2017), women are unable to advance beyond middle management because of cultural constraints. The review continues with a discussion of the present situation and the need for more women in executive leadership. Derrington and Sharratt (2008) stated that females face many barriers when climbing the corporate executive ladder. These barriers include both internal and external factors. Moreover, the review explores the strategies employed by women to advance their careers, such as seeking mentorship, cultivating power networks, and fostering confidence (Pianta, 2020).

Additionally, the review explores relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing female executive leadership. The components of Johnson and Mohr's (2013) Personal Disruption Framework are presented and studied to better understand the impact and behaviors underlying these disruption methods. This chapter also summarizes the identified gap in the literature and sets the foundation for further research. It continues with a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and finally concludes with the problems identified in the literature.

### **History of Women in the Workforce**

The history of women in the workforce reflects a journey of progress, challenges, and persistent gender disparities. Over the years, women's participation in the workforce has evolved significantly, shaping societal norms and influencing policies. At the turn of

the 20th century, women constituted 20% of the labor force (Yellen, 2020). However, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, wartime labor shortages, and women's rights movements, women began to enter various sectors of the workforce.

Women's participation in the workforce has undergone significant transformations during times of war. World War I and World War II were pivotal periods that saw women enter the workforce in unprecedented numbers and take on traditionally male-held roles. During World War I, women made significant strides in workforce participation, taking on roles that were traditionally held by men, including government, aircraft plants, shipyards, and manufacturing companies (Levine & D'Agostino, 2017). Building upon the workforce advancements made during World War I, World War II further shaped women's labor force participation. In response to the demands of the war, women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers, replacing men serving in the armed forces.

Following the conclusion of World War II, there was a notable rise in women's labor force participation rates. This increase can be attributed to the growing demand for clerical workers and the rising education levels among women (Levine & D'Agostino, 2017). As opportunities expanded and educational attainment improved, women played an increasingly vital role in the workforce.

From 1930 to 1970, opportunities for highly educated women expanded, opening new possibilities. The 1970s marked a significant shift as societal expectations increasingly favored women's workforce participation. This change aligned with the implementation of workplace protections, such as the Pregnancy Discrimination Act in 1978, and increased recognition of sexual harassment in the workplace. The rates of

women's participation in the labor force in the United States showed a constant rising trend between 1960 and 1980. According to Levine and D'Agostino (2017), this expansion can be attributed to the passage of federal legislation aimed at eliminating barriers to employment and gender-based wage discrepancies. Nevertheless, the persistence of salary inequities and societal norms that pressured women to resume traditional gender roles upon the return of men from war continued to pose significant obstacles.

To address these challenges and promote gender equality, legislative measures were introduced. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 aimed to address wage discrimination between men and women. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 further strengthened women's rights by prohibiting various forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act played a significant role in protecting women's rights in the workplace, prohibiting gender discrimination, and promoting equal opportunities (Levine & Agostino, 2017). Despite these legislative advancements, barriers and gender biases persisted, impeding women's progress in attaining leadership positions and equal representation.

In conclusion, the history of women in the workforce reflects advancements, challenges, and ongoing progress. Significant strides have been made, but gender disparities and biases still persist, emphasizing the need for continued efforts to achieve true gender equality.

### **The History of Women's Roles in Educational Leadership**

The evolution of educational leadership has been influenced by a variety of societal movements, policy shifts, and gender dynamics. Over time, significant efforts

have been made to increase representation and diversity in leadership positions within educational institutions. However, persistent challenges, such as gender discrimination and the underrepresentation of minorities, have necessitated ongoing advocacy for equitable leadership opportunities.

In the early 20th century, the women's suffrage movement and the overturning of preexisting social norms propelled women into leadership positions in schools (Blount, 1998). One notable milestone during this period was the historic appointment of Ella Flagg Young as the first female superintendent in 1909 (American Association of School Administrators [AASA], 2015). This motivated women to challenge societal norms and assume leadership positions in schools across the nation. However, despite this progress, women's representation in school administrator roles continues to face challenges, even after 143 years.

The aftermath of World War II saw a decline in the percentage of women in educational leadership positions as many women voluntarily left to open up opportunities for returning male veterans (Wickham, 2007). This decline was further compounded by the societal shift in attitudes toward educated and self-sufficient women, leading to increased gender discrimination (Blount, 1998). Federal legislation, such as the enactment of laws prohibiting gender discrimination in the 1960s, aimed to address these disparities and promote equality in leadership roles (Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018). However, barriers persisted, contributing to the limited presence of women in top management and administrative positions (Eagly et al., 2003).

Most recently, data show a regression and decline in the number of female leaders. According to a recent study of the 500 largest school districts in the United

States, 49% of these districts experienced superintendent turnover between March 2020 and September 2022. The stress caused by the pandemic led to a record number of leadership changes, and the superintendent turnover rate increased by over 46%. During this time period, men replaced 62 of the 94 female superintendents who resigned (ILO Group, 2022).

Research also reveals disparities in leadership representation among different ethnic groups. Recent data from the California Department of Education (CDE, n.d.) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022) indicate that women represent 73% of California's teaching workforce. However, when examining principal positions in California, there is a notable discrepancy; White women hold 41% of these positions compared to only 5% for Latina women. Moreover, people of color are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions, particularly in the role of superintendent, of which minorities make up only 8.1% (Schmitz, 2017). A more specific focus on Latino superintendents reveals limited progress with an increase of only 3% in the last 9 years (Zippia, 2023).

These findings underscore the urgent need for greater attention to diversity and inclusion in educational leadership positions. Addressing these disparities requires concerted efforts to promote gender equity and advocate for increased representation of minorities at all levels in educational institutions.

### **History of Latina Superintendents**

Despite some progress in women's representation in educational leadership over the past century, the number of women holding superintendent positions remains disproportionately low, particularly for women of color. Based on a survey conducted by

the AASA (2015), it is evident that there is a notable underrepresentation of female superintendents accounting for fewer than 10% of the overall population. According to research by Corona (2022), this disparity is even more pronounced for minority women.

Corona's (2022) research shed light on the long-standing underrepresentation of women, specifically Latina superintendents, in educational leadership roles. Her study explored the experiences, challenges, and opportunities faced by Latina women in their pursuit of leadership positions in the education system. The findings reveal a multitude of obstacles that have hindered the advancement of Latina educators to superintendent roles, perpetuating the historical trend of chronic underrepresentation for minority women.

The study by Corona (2022) also delved into the experiences of Latina superintendents, highlighting the unique challenges they face in their leadership roles. It discussed the lack of representation and the need for support systems and career development opportunities to empower Latina educators to pursue and thrive in superintendent positions. Corona's research underscored the importance of creating inclusive environments that nurture and uplift aspiring Latina leaders in the education sector.

Additionally, Avila (2018) presented a phenomenological study that examined the experiences of Latina superintendents in California public schools. The research delved into the factors that influence their leadership journeys, highlighting the significance of mentorship, role models, and empowerment in breaking barriers and achieving success in educational leadership.

Luna (2020) further contributed to the discussion by sharing the stories of Latina superintendents, offering a qualitative exploration of their leadership and persistence.

Through in-depth interviews and narratives, the study captured the lived experiences of these educators, shedding light on the ways they navigate challenges, advocate for change, and create opportunities for themselves and others in the field of educational leadership.

The National Latina/o Leadership in Education (NLLE) Project provided a comprehensive national exploration of Latina leadership in education (Murakami, 2018). This report drew on a wide range of data, surveys, and case studies to analyze the experiences and contributions of Latina educators in various leadership roles, including superintendent positions. The NLLE Project aimed to promote diversity and inclusion in educational leadership and advocates for increased representation of Latina leaders in decision-making positions.

In summary, the history of Latina superintendents reveals a persistent underrepresentation of women, particularly women of color, in educational leadership roles. The research studies previously cited highlight the challenges faced by Latina educators in pursuing superintendent positions and underscore the importance of supportive environments, mentorship, and empowerment initiatives to break down barriers and foster equitable representation in educational leadership.

### **Barriers Preventing Women From Gaining Advancement**

Women in educational leadership face a number of obstacles that prevent them from advancing to historically male-dominated roles. As highlighted by Loden (2017), women who aspire to advance in educational leadership beyond middle management face a variety of obstacles in their pursuit of male-dominated occupations such as



superintendent. These gender inequalities can manifest at both the individual and institutional levels through overt and covert actions (Pianta, 2020).

The previously mentioned roadblocks can be divided into two categories: external forces and internal constraints. External obstacles include gender bias, stereotyping, discrimination, and racism whereas internal obstacles include self-sabotaging behaviors such as lack of confidence, thinking too small, and cultural identity. A number of studies have described the sociocultural barriers women face in their pursuit of leadership positions (Pianta, 2020; VanTuyle & Watkins, 2009). Gender disparities can materialize at both the individual and institutional levels, and it can be manifested in both overt and covert actions (Pianta, 2020).

### **External Barriers**

The presence of gender bias, stereotyping, and discrimination in the realm of educational leadership has been a long-standing concern. Despite the interest and qualifications of women, they face various constraints that restrict their choices and decisions along the leadership route, including sexism, bias, and discrimination (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). These constraints contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and hinder their professional growth. This segment delves into how these external factors hinder women's progress, including a segment about Latinas, who face unique and additional challenges rooted in cultural and racial stereotypes.

Gender inequalities currently exist in educational leadership (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). A study conducted by Muñoz et al. (2014) found that more than half of the women surveyed reported encountering gender bias and stereotypes. Discriminatory

practices within the educational system contribute to the promotion and perpetuation of negative gender stereotypes that undermine women's capacity for leadership (Pianta, 2020).

This fact is further supported by Holloway (2000), who stated that females are less likely to become administrators when compared to males. This can be attributed to gender discrimination, bias, and stereotypes. Although females dominate the ranks of teachers, the field of educational leadership has historically comprised males (Burton & Weiner, 2016). According to the NCES (2022), 77% of public school teachers were females, so it is clear that females' percentages in leadership are not proportional to their percentage in the teaching workforce.

Women often face unfair assumptions about their abilities, which can affect their chances of obtaining higher positions. Society tends to view women less favorably as potential candidates for leadership positions. According to Krüger (2008), some of the misconceptions associated with women include being compliant, passive, emotional, ambiguous, and sensitive and are characterized perceived as weaknesses. In contrast, men are commonly characterized as possessing traits such as independence, competitiveness, activeness, rationality, and self-assuredness that are more aligned with a leadership role. This assertion is also corroborated by Sanchez and Thornton (2010), who stated that within the realm of public education, the prevailing stereotypes regarding successful leadership have hindered the progress of women seeking to obtain leadership positions. Therefore, it may be argued that there are still prevailing preconceptions that hinder women from attaining leadership roles or restrict their capabilities because of the influence of stereotyping (Young & McLeod, 2001).

A number of studies have indicated that gender stereotypes are to blame for the inadequate representation of women and minorities in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Holloway 2000; Sanchez & Thornton 2010). According to Avila (2018), women leaders are still perceived differently than men in leadership roles; they are frequently held to different standards and inaccurately represented as either soft and ineffective or manipulative and overbearing. Furthermore, when women do assume these responsibilities, their conduct is often evaluated negatively (Meister et al., 2017). Because of social beliefs and expectations, women generally and minority women in particular are held to different standards than White men (Chin, 2011). This concept is further supported by Lopez (2008), who noted that males are still viewed as more trustworthy administrators. Tallerico (2000) found that gender stereotypes led to a lack of consideration for female applicants. According to her research, “a search consultant expressed his concern about affirmative action, saying, “I won’t just put women or minorities into the finalist pool” (p. 26). This statement is a typical example of gatekeeping.

### **Gate Keeping**

Gatekeepers act as filters in the job application process, determining who gains entry and who is denied (Lewin, 1947). Gatekeepers hold the responsibility of selecting and conveying information about job applicants, and their decisions can have a profound impact on an individual’s future. Lewin’s gatekeeping model highlights the role of specific individuals or events in controlling access to higher level jobs. However, in predominantly White school districts, implicit biases and preferences for similarity come

into play. Individuals tend to gravitate toward those who resemble them, (Pianta, 2020). This preference for similarity perpetuates the lack of diversity in leadership positions.

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles further exacerbates the preference for similarity. Men, who currently hold the majority of leadership positions, tend to preferentially select other men with minimal scrutiny (Pianta, 2020). This perpetuates a cycle in which women are overlooked for advancement opportunities, contributing to the persistent gender imbalance in leadership positions. The presence of male-dominated leadership images and exclusive networks poses significant challenges for female leaders (Connell et al., 2015).

Gatekeeping in job applications and advancement plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's future. The decisions made by gatekeepers have the power to determine whether someone progresses to higher level positions (Corona, 2022). Lewin's gatekeeping model, proposed in 1947, emphasizes the role of specific individuals or events in controlling access to these higher level jobs (Lewin, 1947). Essentially, gatekeepers act as the filters that decide who gains entry and who faces exclusion. The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles has created a notable tendency for men to preferentially select other men with limited scrutiny (Pianta, 2020). This inclination toward similarity perpetuates the existing lack of diversity in leadership positions, leading to limited opportunities for women and people of color to secure supervisory positions. The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles perpetuates a preference for similarity, hindering diversity. Discriminatory practices in superintendent recruitment pose significant concerns for racial and ethnic minority groups, further limiting their advancement opportunities.

Discriminatory hiring and promotion practices pose significant concerns for racial and ethnic minority groups in superintendent recruitment. Studies have shown that individuals from these groups cite discriminatory practices as a barrier to their advancement; between 50% and 60% report such experiences (Brunner, 2003). These practices further limit the representation of diverse voices and perspectives in leadership positions. In superintendent recruitment, individuals from racial and ethnic minority groups face significant challenges because of discriminatory hiring and promotion practices.

### **Discrimination**

Despite the enactment of numerous laws since the 1960s to protect women from discrimination and promote workplace equality, women continue to face ongoing challenges. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy established the President's Commission on the Status of Women, led by Eleanor Roosevelt, to address the issue of discrimination against women and make recommendations for their advancement (Levine & D'Agostino, 2017). The Commission recognized the significance of gender discrimination and proposed measures to ensure equal treatment for women.

To further combat discrimination, Congress enacted the Equal Pay Act in 1963, which aimed to provide equal pay for equal or substantially equal work regardless of gender. Additionally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Title VIII). This legislation played a crucial role in protecting women's rights in the workforce.

Despite these government initiatives, gender-based obstacles persisted, resulting in a persistent gender disparity, particularly in leadership positions (Pianta, 2020).

Women consistently lag behind men in terms of career advancement. The Supreme Court has also upheld state and local laws that prohibit workplace discrimination based on gender. However, compared to other countries, the United States still lags behind in terms of workplace benefits and protections, especially for working parents (Levine & D'Agostino, 2017). Several European Union and Latin American countries offer more comprehensive workplace benefits and protections. Young and McLeod (2001) highlighted the presence of unequal opportunities, asserting that various forms of discrimination persist in relation to income, benefits, recruiting, hiring, and promotion.

In summary, despite the implementation of laws and initiatives to address gender discrimination, women continue to face obstacles in the workplace. The United States has made progress, but there is still work to be done to ensure equal opportunities and benefits for women.

Gender discrimination remains a prominent barrier faced by women aspiring to leadership roles. Kowalski and Stouder (1999) identified gender bias as a prevalent issue, manifesting in both overt and covert behaviors at the individual and organizational levels. Female superintendents often face skepticism regarding their financial management capabilities and leadership strengths (AASA, 2015). Women encounter gender stereotyping when applying for leadership roles, leading to perceptions of them as communal and subordinate rather than decisive leaders (Muñoz et al., 2014). Adopting masculine traits to counteract bias can backfire because society may react negatively to this behavior (Connell et al., 2015).

When examining the obstacles that women encounter in their professional advancement, it is crucial to acknowledge the pervasive influence of gender bias. This

bias, as extensively discussed by Helgesen and Goldsmith (2018) and Hopkins (2012), significantly impacts women's career trajectories. However, gender bias is not the sole factor contributing to these challenges. Cultural norms, traditional perspectives, and racial preconceptions also play a substantial role, particularly in the context of Latina superintendents. In this regard, Valenzuela (2021) highlighted the influence of cultural norms that reinforce male authority, female submission, and the prioritization of family responsibilities. Additionally, racial preconceptions and prejudice toward Latinas can impede their progress and retention in the superintendency. It is necessary to take note of gender issues in educational leadership, but within groups, consideration must also take place, such as ensuring proportionate racial and ethnic representation (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

### **Racism**

The intersectionality of gender and race generates dual layers of challenges for Latina superintendents. For women of color, additional hurdles arise because of discrimination and racism in the workplace. Studies by Thompson (2023) have shown that women from minority backgrounds experience even greater challenges in gaining advancement in educational leadership. Overcoming racial bias and promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives are crucial to fostering equal opportunities for all women.

Ortiz (1999) found that districts with high Hispanic pupil populations, high staff attrition, financial difficulties, and strained relations with the Hispanic community were more likely to consider Latina candidates for superintendent positions. These districts frequently confront a shortage of superintendent candidates. In addition, Ortiz noted that during the interview process, applicants with Spanish surnames were viewed as less

desirable in comparison to applicants from other districts. This perception, according to Aceves (2013), contributes to the notion that Latinas/os are primarily employed in districts in need of development, with low academic scores, or in low socioeconomic communities. Consequently, Latinas continue to be underrepresented in superintendent positions; only 2% of superintendents were Latinas as of 2009.

In addition to Latinas encountering the same level of gender discrimination as White women (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008; Glass et al., 2000; Gresham & Sampson, 2019), they also face unique stereotypes rooted in Latin culture, such as patriarchy, machismo, and *familismo*. Valenzuela (2021) highlighted the intersectionality of gender and race, which generates dual layers of challenges for Latina superintendents. Cultural norms and traditional perspectives that support male authority, female submission, and prioritizing family contribute to these challenges. Valenzuela further noted that racial preconceptions and prejudice toward Latinas can hinder their ascension and retention in the superintendency. Latinas may be perceived as either assertive or submissive and passive because of racial stereotypes (Gresham & Sampson, 2019; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015).

Sexism remains one of the most frequently reported obstacles faced by women in their pursuit of executive-level employment (Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018; Hopkins, 2012). Women have encountered prejudice from various individuals and institutions, including board members, search firms, and even other women (MacArthur, 2010).

### **Internal Barriers**

In addition to external obstacles, women must also face internal obstacles, such as self-sabotage, thinking too small, and low self-esteem, to advance to leadership positions.



According to research (Muñoz et al., 2014), self-imposed barriers are among the most significant obstacles women face in obtaining superintendent positions.

### **Self-Sabotage**

One of the most substantial internal barriers hindering women from reaching superintendent positions is self-sabotage (Muñoz et al., 2014). Internalizing societal stereotypes, women may underestimate their abilities and worth, resulting in a lack of confidence in handling challenging roles (Lerner, 2012). Lower self-esteem levels among women further impact their career aspirations and readiness to take on new challenges (Mason et al., 2016). As presented by Pianta (2020), “Internal barriers such as self-sabotage behaviors can impact women’s attainment of leadership roles and affect their chances of achieving their dreams (p. 8). According to Lerner (2012), women exhibit self-sabotaging behaviors by allowing their internal critic to exert control over their actions, namely by repressing their voices in circumstances when they need to express themselves.

### **Lack of Confidence**

Internally, women often grapple with a lack of confidence in their abilities and qualifications, which holds them back from pursuing higher leadership roles. Self-esteem can impact women’s career ambitions and advancement. Mason et al. (2016) defined self-esteem as one’s attitude toward oneself, whether positive or negative. Low self-esteem can prevent women from seeking out new skills and challenges (Ryder & Briles, 2003). Mason et al. (2016) found that self-esteem is a crucial factor in determining leadership objectives and that women scored lower than men on self-esteem measures. Living in a male-dominated society has a significant impact on women’s self-esteem.

Because of ingrained societal misconceptions, women have internalized and maintained these limiting beliefs about their capabilities, causing them to underestimate themselves and think too small (Lerner, 2012). Women's perceptions of their level of readiness often play a part in their choice to delay entering administrative posts. This factor helps explain why more women than men earn graduate and doctoral degrees in the field of education (Pianta 2020). Further research from Avalos and Salgado (2016) reported that Latina leaders frequently have to deal with their own feelings of insecurity. This idea is supported in research by Smith et al. (2015), which highlighted how gender-based stereotypes can lead to decreased confidence and limited opportunities for women in leadership roles.

### **Thinking Too Small**

Another internal barrier is a tendency to think too small, by which women may underestimate their potential and settle for lower-level positions. Overcoming this mindset involves promoting assertiveness and ambition among women leaders, emphasizing the value of aiming high and pursuing their career aspirations fearlessly. Thinking too small is another internal barrier that prevents women from stepping out of their comfort zones, closing themselves off to new opportunities, and striving for perfection (Muñoz et al., 2014). This mindset limits their pursuit of leadership positions like superintendent. Because of ingrained societal misconceptions, women have internalized and maintained these limiting beliefs about their capabilities, causing them to underestimate themselves and think too small (Lerner, 2012).

## **Latin Cultural Expectation**

It is not possible to make a blanket assumption that the experiences of women, regardless of their socioeconomic or racial background, are the same or comparable (Fitzgerald, 2003). Latinas experience similar marginalization as their White counterparts because of gender when they are superintendents (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008; Glass et al., 2000; Gresham & Sampson, 2019). However, the intersectionality of gender and race may impart an additional challenge for some Latinas because of cultural gender norms.

The intersection of gender and race can introduce added challenges for Latinas because of cultural gender norms. This perspective is further supported by Avalos and Salgado (2016), who contended that the small number of Latinas in leadership positions may be attributable to a number of challenges and barriers they encounter, not only because of their gender but also because of their race. As previously noted by Gil and Vazquez (1996), Latinos often adhere to traditional family values that place specific expectations on women. As Harris (2007) pointed out, Latina girls and young women are groomed to be wonderful spouses and are chastised if they do not marry at an early age.

Familismo, characterized by a strong identification and bond with both nuclear and extended family members, is considered a paramount value among Latinos (Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006). Furthermore, the presence of familial obligations and caregiving responsibilities may also serve as an impediment to the advancement of Latina leaders. The cultural value of familismo, which prioritizes the family unit, poses particular challenges for Latina leaders because it is rooted in traditional gender roles and the expectation to prioritize familial demands above personal ones (Avalos & Salgado, 2016). Latinas frequently undergo socialization that prioritizes

family obligations over job pursuits (Suarez-McCrink, 2002). Latina leaders frequently encounter challenges while making decisions regarding their professional pursuits, personal relationships, and familial responsibilities. The continual tug-of-war between work and family may deter Latina professionals from pursuing higher leadership roles (Avalos & Salgado, 2016).

The family unit can also play into the barriers Latinas face in pursuing professional positions. Mendez-Morse et al. (2015) reported that many Latinas and women of color are attached to their communities and are hesitant to relocate away from family, especially as parents age. Similarly, even when relocation is not a factor, Latina leaders frequently find themselves navigating the delicate balance between family obligations and professional responsibilities, often more so than their male counterparts (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). This internal conflict stemming from the tension between work and home may sometimes lead Latinas to impose limitations on themselves or decide to vacate leadership positions (Derrington & Sherratt, 2008).

This cultural element is closely tied to the concept of male authority within the family structure. This view is further supported by Avalos and Salgado (2016), who argued that the existence of a patriarchal societal structure, which upholds the belief in male superiority and female inferiority, serves as an impediment to the advancement of Latina leaders. Men are more likely than women to aspire to the position of superintendent because of patriarchal attitudes. Melendez de Santa Ana (2008) has observed that women seeking superintendency roles often face the necessity of relocating and once appointed must commit significant time to their positions. However, this can place Latinas in a predicament because it contradicts cultural gender norms that

traditionally assign women the primary responsibility for home and family matters. The act of uprooting a family and moving can be seen as destabilizing the family unit for the sake of one individual's career, which is at odds with the prevailing Latino cultural value of prioritizing family cohesion over individual pursuits (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000).

### **Strategies for Women's Advancement in Educational Leadership**

The internal and external barriers women face while climbing the executive leadership ladder have been studied and noted, as have the strategies they use to overcome some of these roadblocks. Lerner (2012) asserted that women use a variety of strategies to overcome obstacles and advance their careers. These strategies include participating in mentorship programs and cultivating professional networks. Recent research has provided insights into the significance of networks and mentoring connections in facilitating the upward mobility of women and enabling them to overcome gender-related limitations (I. Castillo et al., 2021).

### **Mentoring**

Women have increasingly turned to mentoring as a powerful tool to surmount the barriers that have historically hindered their progress toward executive leadership roles. Research has shown that the development of mentorship relationships and the application of various support systems play a crucial role in facilitating the acquisition, advancement, and retention of women in positions of leadership in the field of education, according to Sanchez and Thornton (2010). Mentorship provides a structured platform for women to gain guidance, insights, and support from experienced professionals who have navigated similar challenges. According to Goffney and Edmonson (2012), this phenomenon plays

a substantial role in enhancing the overall achievements of individuals within their respective fields.

In addition, Magdaleno (2006) posited that mentor relationships that involve a gender match can be highly effective and serve as a valuable source of support for those facing gender-related barriers. A study of female central office administrators and their aspirations to the superintendency noted that through mentorship, women can develop the crucial skills, confidence, and networks needed to break through the glass ceiling (Muñoz et al., 2014). This is further supported by Quilantan and Menchaca-Ochoa (2004), who reported that Latina superintendents who participated in mentorship and professional exchanges were more likely to advance in their careers.

### **Networking**

In addition to mentoring, networks also serve as sources of support for participants, nurturing their confidence in their leadership capabilities and propelling them toward innovative and effective educational leadership. Salazar Montoya and Kew (2020) emphasized the significance of social capital, networking, and bridge-building as crucial components for achieving success in administrative endeavors. According to Higgins and Kram (2001), the attainment of success for female superintendents is heavily reliant on the power of relationships and robust social networks. This assertion was reinforced by Tallerico (2000), who argued that women's chances of attaining a superintendency role are enhanced when they actively cultivate relationships with those who have firsthand knowledge of their professional achievements.

Furthermore, Nikkiah et al. (2012) emphasized the significance of establishing opportunities for women to connect with peers, reflect on their situations, recognize their

strengths, and devise strategies for positive change. This emphasis on establishing strong social networks aligns with the findings of Higgins and Kram (2001) concerning the significance of relationships for female superintendents. The formation of social networks is of utmost importance for individuals in leadership positions, particularly for female superintendents. These networks not only provide opportunities to develop and refine leadership abilities but also serve as a valuable source of ongoing support throughout their career trajectory.

In summary, networking and mentoring have proved indispensable for women seeking to overcome gender barriers and ascend to leadership positions such as the position of superintendent. The cultivation of social capital and the construction of bridges within professional networks enable aspiring female educational leaders to acquire the skills, confidence, and support necessary to navigate the complex landscape of educational leadership. In an era in which the adage “it’s who you know” remains true, women seeking the position of superintendent must surround themselves with influential mentors and networks to pave the way for their own success.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Physical differences between the sexes are believed to have led many societies to assume that men are better suited for more demanding occupations. The existence of gender stereotypes has been demonstrated by research in education and social role theory (Blount, 1998). Many theoretical frameworks exist that substantiate and provide a contextual framework for comprehending the impact of societal dynamics and gender norms on women. Social role theory, role congruity theory, and expectancy–value theory

exemplify a set of theoretical frameworks. These three hypotheses aim to provide insight into the impact of gender on the development of leadership abilities.

### **Social Role Theory**

Social role theory is a sociological and psychological framework that seeks to explain how social roles, expectations, and stereotypes influence human behavior and the roles individuals occupy in society (Eagly & Wood, 2012). According to this theory, the social roles that a person's gender, race, ethnicity, or other characteristics play in society have a substantial effect on their behaviors, decisions, and opportunities.

The manner in which society views women's positions makes them appear less capable of leadership than men (Finneran, 2016). This perpetuates the stereotype that women cannot be effective leaders. To be regarded as effective, women must therefore exert significantly more effort than males. Based on the research of Eagly and Wood (2012), the social role theory seeks to explain how a society assigns specific roles to men and women based on their perceived strengths and weaknesses, as observed over time.

Societies assign specific roles and expectations to individuals based on their demographic characteristics according to the social role theory. These roles comprise a broad range of responsibilities and behaviors, effectively dictating the script that individuals are expected to follow in their daily lives (Eagly & Wood, 2012). A central tenet of this theory is the concept of gender roles, which reflect societal norms regarding how men and women should conduct themselves, make career decisions, and carry out familial responsibilities. Essentially, these responsibilities exert a significant influence on the thoughts, actions, and decisions of individuals.



Furthermore, social role theory recognizes the importance of stereotypes in shaping human behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2012). These perceptions, which are frequently rooted in societal expectations associated with various social roles, have the capacity to generate biased judgments and treatments. In their attempts to conform to or defy these roles, individuals frequently find themselves adapting to the roles they occupy or those imposed by society. This adaptation process has profound effects on their self-concept, behaviors, and aspirations, resulting in real-world outcomes.

Social role theory also acknowledges the dynamic nature of society and the ever-changing landscape of role expectations. As societies undergo change and redefine gender roles, individuals frequently adjust their behaviors and decisions to conform to the new norms (Eagly & Wood, 2012). However, it is crucial to recognize that social role theory is not devoid of criticism. Some argue that it may oversimplify the complexities of human behavior, potentially ignoring the agency of the individual and the diversity of experiences within different social groups (Ridgeway, 2011).

In conclusion, social role theory is an indispensable framework for understanding the complex interaction between societal roles, expectations, and stereotypes in influencing human behavior. It reveals how individuals conform to or resist these roles, particularly in the context of gender roles, and how stereotypes shape their perceptions and actions. Although the theory has been instrumental in clarifying the role of societal norms, it is important to recognize its limitations and consider the interaction between individual agency and social influence (Ridgeway, 2011).

## **Expectancy–Value Theory**

Expectancy–value theory is a significant psychological and motivational framework that examines the intricate processes by which individuals make decisions and engage in diverse behaviors. This theory posits that individuals are motivated to pursue specific activities or objectives when they have an expectation of success and attach personal value or significance to the outcomes of those pursuits (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

At the heart of expectancy–value theory are two primary components that jointly influence the motivation and decision making of an individual. The first component is expectation, which represents a person’s perception of the likelihood of attaining a specific outcome through their efforts. It primarily addresses the query, accomplishments and task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The second component is value, which is the evaluation of how much a person values or cares about the potential outcomes associated with a particular activity or objective (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

According to the theory, motivation arises from these two crucial components. Individuals are more likely to engage in a task or activity when they perceive they have a reasonable chance of success (high expectancy) and place a high personal value on the outcomes (high value; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This framework recognizes that these perceptions of expectation and value are inherently subjective and can vary substantially between individuals. What one person considers attainable and valuable may differ substantially from another’s viewpoint.

The expectancy–value theory is widely used in educational contexts, where it plays a crucial role in comprehending students’ motivation and interest in learning.

Educators use this theory to identify factors that can increase students' self-efficacy, or their belief in their ability to succeed, while boosting the perceived value of educational tasks (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Educators can effectively influence students' motivation to learn and excel by fostering a healthy equilibrium between expectation and value.

Moreover, the theory emphasizes the impact of cultural and social factors on individuals' perceptions of value and expectations. Societal expectations, cultural norms, and peer influences have a substantial effect on how individuals evaluate their likelihood of success and the significance of particular outcomes (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This acknowledgement of external influences adds a layer of complexity to the theory, highlighting the need to consider the broader context when attempting to comprehend motivation and decision making.

In summary, expectancy–value theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex processes of motivation and decision making. It emphasizes the importance of individuals' beliefs about their success potential and the personal weight they assign to the outcomes of their endeavors. As a versatile theory, it has practical applications in education and sheds light on the complex interplay of personal, cultural, and societal influences on human motivation and choice.

### **Role Congruity Theory**

Role congruity theory arises as a significant psychological framework for comprehending the complexities of gender stereotypes and their pervasive impact on leadership. This theory examines how society's engrained perceptions of gender roles influence the evaluation of an individual's leadership potential (Eagly & Karau, 2002). At its foundation, role congruity theory acknowledges that people frequently associate

certain traits and behaviors with particular genders, which influences their evaluation of who is a capable leader.

Central to this theory is the acknowledgment of the enduring influence of gender stereotypes. In society's eyes, leadership roles are typically linked with traits such as assertiveness, decisiveness, and independence, characteristics traditionally attributed to masculinity. Consequently, role congruity theory posits that individuals are more inclined to perceive someone as a suitable leader when their traits and behaviors align with the gender stereotypes linked to that role (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

A particularly compelling aspect of this theory is the concept of *double bind*, which is particularly relevant to women in leadership positions. This phenomenon exemplifies the difficulty encountered by women who are expected to simultaneously exhibit stereotypically masculine leadership traits and stereotypically feminine communal traits, such as warmth and nurturing. Deviating from these expectations may result in negative feedback and diminished assessments of their leadership potential (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Although role congruity theory acknowledges the progress made in dismantling traditional gender stereotypes and redefining leadership, it also highlights the ongoing obstacles. Even in the face of changing societal norms, the theory demonstrates that these profoundly ingrained stereotypes continue to have a significant impact on the evaluation of leadership potential (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In practice, role congruity theory is an indispensable instrument for comprehending and addressing gender disparities in leadership positions. By illuminating the relationship between gender stereotypes and leadership evaluations, Eagly and Karau

(2002) highlighted the importance of confronting and challenging these stereotypes to pave the way for greater gender equality in leadership roles.

In conclusion, role congruity theory provides invaluable insights into the influence of gender stereotypes on perceptions of leadership. It emphasizes the necessity of recognizing and combating the enduring influence of these stereotypes when assessing leadership potential. Although progress has been made in dismantling traditional gender norms, this theory serves as a reminder of the continued significance of challenging these stereotypes to promote greater gender inclusivity in leadership positions.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Disruptive innovation theory, originally coined by Christensen (1997) in the mid-1990s and popularized through his book *The Innovator's Dilemma*, has significantly influenced both the business world and personal career development. This section explores the historical development of disruptive innovation theory and its adaptation for personal career growth.

### **Historical Development of Disruptive Innovation Theory**

Christensen (1997) coined the term “disruptive innovation” in the middle of the 1990s to describe the introduction of new technologies or business models that initially target niche or low-end markets but eventually cause disruptions in established companies. His groundbreaking work in *The Innovator's Dilemma* popularized this theory, emphasizing that innovative technologies or business models starting in low-end or niche markets could challenge established businesses. This theory suggests that disruptive innovation often catches established companies off guard because they tend to focus on improving their existing products or services for their current customers rather

than exploring new markets or technologies. Christensen argued that these disruptions occur because established companies become complacent and fail to recognize the potential of these new innovations until it is too late. Additionally, he emphasized how crucial it is for businesses to be willing to disrupt themselves to remain competitive and fend off disruptive newcomers.

Christensen's (1997) research spanned various industries with an initial focus on the disk drive industry. For example, in the disk drive industry, Christensen's research showed that disruptive innovation occurred when new technologies or business models introduced unique features that catered to niche customer segments. This led to the rise of companies like Seagate and Western Digital, which initially targeted low-end markets with their lower cost, lower capacity disk drives, eventually disrupting established companies like IBM and Digital Equipment Corporation. His research revealed that incumbent companies thrived when innovations improved performance in dimensions valued by customers. However, a shift occurred when innovations deviated from these dimensions, introducing unique features that catered to niche customer segments. Christensen (1997) identified this consistent pattern across industries and product life cycles. This pattern of disruptive innovation, characterized by the introduction of new technologies or business models, led to the popularization of the theory. Eventually, it transitioned from a descriptive framework to a causal theory, explaining innovation and competitive responses comprehensively as further research developed (Christensen et al., 2015).

In the article titled "Disruptive Innovation: An Intellectual History and Directions for Future Research," Christensen et al. (2018) offered a comprehensive perspective on

the evolution of disruptive innovation theory. The authors argued that disruptive innovation theory is applicable not only to traditional industries but also to emerging sectors. They proposed that understanding the fundamental principles of disruptive innovation can help managers and entrepreneurs anticipate and respond effectively to technological disruptions. By adopting a proactive approach, businesses can leverage these disruptions as opportunities for growth and gain a competitive advantage in the market. The shift from a descriptive to a normative framework has sparked further research and exploration into the potential applications of disruptive innovation theory across various industries and product life cycles (Christensen et al., 2018; Raynor, 2011). This shift has led to a deeper understanding of how disruptive innovation can be leveraged for competitive advantage and organizational success. Experiments conducted to assess the predictive reliability of disruptive innovation theory's foundational concepts focused on businesses launched by Intel. These experiments substantiated the theory's statistically significant influence on accurately forecasting outcomes. Additionally, case studies like Amazon's Kindle and The New York Times, which use the theory as inspiration for their innovation strategies, demonstrate the versatility of disruptive innovation theory in predicting outcomes across various industries (Christensen et al., 2015).

### **Adaptation of Disruptive Innovation Theory for Personal Careers**

The principles of disruptive innovation theory extend beyond business and technology, finding relevance in personal career development. One of the key proponents of applying disruptive innovation principles to careers is Johnson (2015), as detailed in her book *Disrupt Yourself*.

Personal disruption is another application of disruptive innovation theory that focuses on individuals rather than businesses. This paradigm encourages individuals to proactively disrupt themselves by continually learning and adapting to stay ahead in a rapidly changing world. By embracing personal disruption, individuals can not only navigate career transitions more effectively but also unlock new opportunities for growth and success. The concept of personal disruption, derived from disruptive innovation theory, has gained traction in recent years as individuals seek to navigate and thrive in an ever-changing professional landscape (Johnson, 2015).

*Disrupt Yourself* by Johnson (2015) introduced the concept of personal disruption akin to the disruptive innovation seen in businesses. Johnson suggested that individuals should continually challenge themselves, step out of their comfort zones, and seek new opportunities for growth and learning. The book outlines a structured framework for achieving personal disruption, emphasizing the importance of recognizing strengths, pursuing unconventional paths, and adapting to changing circumstances. *Disrupt Yourself* provides a roadmap for personal and professional development by embracing change and leveraging disruption as a catalyst for success.

Johnson's (2015) personal disruption paradigm offers a structured framework for individuals to proactively seek novel opportunities, push their boundaries, and remain at the forefront of their professional journeys. Furthermore, personal disruption requires individuals to step out of their comfort zones and challenge themselves to acquire new skills and knowledge. This mindset shift allows individuals to anticipate and adapt to industry shifts, technological advancements, and market demands, ultimately positioning themselves for long-term success.



In an article titled “Women Need to Realize Work Isn’t School,” Johnson and Mohr (2013), discussed the challenges women face in transitioning from the educational system to the professional world. Her article highlights the need for women to recognize that the workplace operates differently from the school environment. Although academic success often relies on following rules, meeting expectations, and seeking approval from authorities, the workplace demands a different set of skills and behaviors. Women are encouraged to embrace disruptive thinking, challenge traditional norms, and take career risks. The article underscores the importance of women recognizing the limitations of the school mindset and actively disrupting their career paths to excel in leadership roles. Johnson and Mohr’s theory advocates for women to embrace innovation and adaptability as they navigate their professional journeys. Overall, their article calls for a shift in perspective and approach to empower women in the workplace.

In the pursuit of gender equity and empowerment in the workplace, it is crucial to identify and nurture skills that can help women excel in their careers. Johnson and Mohr (2013) advocated five key disruptive behaviors that are instrumental in assisting women to assert themselves, challenge traditional expectations, and foster professional growth. These behaviors include embracing disruptive thinking by challenging traditional norms and approaches, challenging and influencing authority by questioning the status quo, preparing for new opportunities while being open to improvisation and calculated risks, seeking effective ways of self-promotion to actively advance one’s career, and welcoming less prescribed career paths through intentional disruption. These behaviors are seen as instrumental in helping women excel in the workplace and assert themselves, emphasizing the importance of being respected rather than merely liked, thus challenging

traditional expectations and fostering professional growth. To better understand these disruptive behaviors suggested by Johnson and Mohr (2013), it is important to explore each of the behaviors.

### **Five Disruptive Behaviors**

#### **Challenge and Influence Authority**

Challenging and influencing authority is an essential trait for female leaders. This set of behaviors involves confidently questioning traditional hierarchies and advocating for change when necessary with the aim of breaking down barriers and fostering innovation (Johnson & Mohr, 2013). The ability to strategically challenge and influence authority is an essential trait for female leaders. This requires the confidence to challenge the status quo, propose alternative ideas, and advocate for change when necessary. By respectfully and constructively challenging authority, female leaders can contribute to a more inclusive and progressive work environment. This skill encourages others to think critically and consider alternative viewpoints. Female leaders who can effectively challenge and influence authority can have a substantial impact on their organizations and industries, fostering innovation and positive change.

In the workplace, women often find themselves striving to meet the expectations set by authority figures, mirroring their school experiences (Johnson & Mohr, 2013). However, challenging and influencing authority is crucial for career growth. This skill involves questioning the status quo, challenging traditional hierarchies, and advocating for change and innovation. For example, a female executive may challenge outdated policies or practices that hinder progress and propose alternative solutions. Women can initiate discussions, propose innovative solutions, and strategically challenge

conventional wisdom in the workplace. By becoming more proactive and assertive, they can gain recognition for their leadership potential. Female leaders who can effectively challenge and influence authority can have a substantial impact on their organizations and industries, fostering innovation and positive change (Novotney, 2023).

Sheryl Sandberg (2013), CEO of Facebook and a prominent figure in the tech industry, has been a prominent advocate for gender equality in the workplace, challenging traditional norms and authority structures in the tech and business worlds. She authored the bestselling book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, addressing the career challenges women encounter and encouraging them to assume leadership positions. Sandberg's advocacy and co-founding of the Lean In movement have had a substantial impact, influencing corporate policies, fostering mentoring, and advocating for greater gender diversity in leadership positions.

Although there are numerous advantages for women who challenge and influence authority, there are also potential disadvantages. One potential disadvantage is that women who challenge authority may face backlash and criticism from those who are resistant to change. Therefore, it is important to be strategic in navigating these challenges. For example, a woman who challenges authority in a male-dominated workplace may be met with resistance and be labeled as difficult or aggressive (Association for Psychological Science, n.d.). Furthermore, Eagly and Carli (2003) stated that women who challenge and influence authority may be viewed as deviating from societal norms, resulting in unfavorable peer perceptions and evaluations.

## **Prepare but Also Learn to Improvise**

Success in leadership roles demands a balance between thorough preparation and adaptability. Women must anticipate challenges, make swift decisions, and take calculated risks, demonstrating readiness to pivot and recalibrate their strategies when necessary (Johnson & Mohr, 2013). This skill demands a delicate equilibrium between preparedness and agility. Successful female leaders not only anticipate potential hurdles and openings but also show the readiness to pivot and recalibrate their strategies when required (Feld, 2021).

In school, thorough preparation serves as a cornerstone of success. Yet in the workplace, the art of improvisation and adaptability is equally crucial. It is paramount for women aiming for leadership roles to harmonize the two—thorough preparation and the ability to pivot when the unexpected arises. This balance empowers female leaders to anticipate potential challenges and opportunities while navigating the dynamic landscape of their roles. To excel, women must cultivate the vital skills of thinking on their feet, making swift decisions, and taking calculated risks (Johnson & Mohr 2013). The ability to prepare diligently while remaining open to adaptation is a critical skill for female leaders. In an ever-evolving world, those who can effectively strike this balance are not only better equipped to navigate challenges but also capable of inspiring meaningful change (Feld, 2021).

The success story of Oprah Winfrey serves as a beacon of hope, emphasizing that the fusion of preparation and improvisation is the key to success. The journey of Oprah Winfrey is a combination of meticulous planning and ingenious improvisation (Garson, 2011). Oprah laid the groundwork for her future with a solid education in

communications and media from Tennessee State University. Early in her career, she served as a local news anchor, which gave her practical experience. However, what distinguished Oprah was her ability to seize unexpected opportunities. When faced with a demotion in Nashville, she saw the potential for more and embraced a morning talk show in Baltimore, marking a pivotal moment of improvisation. This transformation catapulted her to national prominence. Oprah's genuine hosting style was another form of improvisation that resonated profoundly with viewers, resulting in a ratings increase when her show was renamed "The Oprah Winfrey Show." Beyond television, she improvised by entering the film industry, founding "O, The Oprah Magazine," and establishing her own network, OWN. In conclusion, Oprah's preparation and improvisation, from education to seizing opportunities and her distinctive hosting style, led to her iconic status in media and entertainment.

### **Find Effective Forms of Self-Promotion**

Strategic self-promotion involves confidently and strategically showcasing one's skills, achievements, and value within an organization. It ensures that one's hard work and contributions receive the recognition they deserve (Johnson & Mohr, 2013). There is an abundance of literature that has suggested women should actively seek suitable avenues for self-promotion, ensuring that their hard work and contributions receive the recognition they deserve (Johnson & Mohr, 2013; Reynolds, 2022).

Unlike school environments, where performance often speaks for itself, the workplace requires women to actively advocate for their achievements (Johnson & Mohr, 2013). Women often encounter a double bind when it comes to self-promotion. They must find strategies that align with their workplace culture and individual values. To

navigate this challenge effectively, women should experiment with self-promotion methods that are subtle yet impactful, allowing them to gain recognition without compromising their authenticity. By finding authentic and effective self-promotion strategies, women can achieve great success.

Martha Stewart's path to success is evidence of her skillful self-promotion. She embarked on her career path with an undying enthusiasm for housekeeping, cooking, and entertaining. Her ability to effectively advertise her expertise and lifestyle brand was the key to her success. Martha Stewart's first breakthrough came through her television program, "Martha Stewart Living," where she demonstrated practical solutions for everyday living. Her on-screen persona radiated sincerity, rendering her approachable and relatable to a wide audience. This authenticity became the foundation of her strategy for self-promotion. She did not limit herself to television. Martha Stewart has established a media empire that includes magazines, publications, and an online presence. Her brand represented a DIY (do-it-yourself) lifestyle, and she promoted it through a variety of media channels. Martha Stewart adopted online platforms in the digital age. Her website, social media presence, and digital content enabled her to interact directly with her audience, thereby promoting her brand and products. Martha Stewart's career exemplifies how effective self-promotion can result in enormous success. Her rise from passion-driven entrepreneur to internationally recognized lifestyle icon is a testament to the effectiveness of strategic self-promotion in the business and media worlds.

### **Welcome a Less Prescribed Career Path**

Encouraging women to welcome unconventional career trajectories and unorthodox opportunities involves taking calculated risks, exploring diverse industries or

roles, and seeking out varied experiences. This empowers women to position themselves as adaptable and resourceful leaders (Johnson & Mohr, 2013). Encouraging women to embrace less prescribed career paths is vital in today's dynamic professional world. By being open to unconventional opportunities and leveraging their diverse experiences, women can position themselves as adaptable and resourceful leaders. These unconventional pathways often lead to leadership opportunities that capitalize on their unique strengths (Gray, 2018; Samit, 2015).

Unlike the structured trajectory of academia, careers are often unpredictable and nonlinear, making the embrace of unconventional paths truly empowering. It is essential for women to recognize that unique career journeys are not only acceptable but also increasingly prevalent. Women should leverage their diverse experiences and skills to their advantage, positioning themselves as leaders and inspiring other women to do the same (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2022).

Whitney Johnson's (2015) career path is a shining example of a nonlinear journey that defies conventional prescriptions. Instead of following a well-trodden road, she blazed her own trail through the worlds of finance, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Her willingness to explore diverse fields, from investment banking to cofounding Rose Park Advisors and becoming a leading authority on disruptive innovation, demonstrates that success often emerges from embracing the unexpected twists and turns of one's unique professional journey. Johnson's career is a reminder that it is not always about following a prescribed path, but rather about having the courage to chart one's own course and continually adapt to the evolving landscape of opportunities.

### **Aim for Being Respected, not Just Liked**

Aiming to be respected, not just liked, involves prioritizing professional respect over popularity. It means making decisions and taking actions that earn the respect of colleagues and superiors even if those decisions are not always the most comfortable or popular ones (Johnson & Mohr, 2013; J. C. Williams, n.d.). By prioritizing professional respect, individuals demonstrate their commitment to maintaining high ethical standards and integrity. This priority may require making tough choices, such as speaking up against unfair practices or challenging the status quo. However, earning the respect of others through one's actions and decisions ultimately builds a strong foundation of credibility and trust, which are essential for long-term success in any professional setting (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

In school, popularity is often a priority, but in the professional world, earning respect through actions and decisions is of greater importance. According to Johnson and Mohr (2013), it is more important for women to be respected than admired. To pursue their professional goals, women must put popular opinion aside and prioritize building a solid reputation and gaining the trust of their colleagues and superiors. By doing so, women can establish themselves as credible and trustworthy professionals, paving the way for long-term success and recognition in their chosen field. An example is Angela Merkel, who has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills and has become one of the most influential political figures in the world.

Angela Merkel is an example of a leader who earned respect rather than popularity. As German Chancellor, Merkel was known for her pragmatic and unwavering approach to leadership. She was admired for her role in managing crises, including the



European financial crisis and the refugee crisis. Her public approval has fluctuated significantly based on the decisions she has made while performing her duties. Yet, regardless of the surveys, Merkel has remained steadfast in her vision of a unified and inclusive Europe, losing approval points with the numerous decisions she has made to implement this vision. She chose to adhere to her beliefs over momentary popularity, which gained her respect and, consequently, gave her greater long-term influence (Salinas, 2020).

### **The Gap**

Even though education is still a sector primarily dominated by women, Latina superintendents are still underrepresented in positions of leadership in the educational system. In educational leadership, people of color are significantly underrepresented, particularly in superintendent positions (Schmitz, 2017). Gender discrimination and societal prejudices continue to impede women's advancement, highlighting the significance of sustained efforts to promote inclusive workplaces.

Despite the growing disparities in demographics, there is a lack of understanding regarding the specific obstacles Latina leaders encounter, the avenues through which they attain their positions, and the methods they employ to overcome challenges (Galiana, 2014). Notably, there is a significant research gap concerning Latina superintendents and their career pathways to attain such positions. Previous studies have shed light on the strategies and support systems, such as role models, networking, and sponsors, which have benefitted White educators in reaching superintendent roles. However, little is known about how these supports and strategies, or their absence, impact the journey of Latinas in achieving superintendent positions (Corona, 2022).

## **Synthesis Matrix**

The academic and professional literature's alignment with this study's variables is highlighted in a synthesis matrix (see Appendix A).

### **Summary**

Chapter II provided an extensive literature review that aligned with the research focus on the history of women in the workplace, particularly in leadership roles, specifically emphasizing women in school leadership, including Latina superintendents. This section delved into the historical challenges women encountered and the strategies they employed to break through these barriers.

Historically, women faced obstacles in attaining leadership roles, often trailing behind their male counterparts. As noted by Loden (2017), cultural constraints limited women's progression beyond middle management positions. The contemporary landscape still presented significant challenges, emphasizing the urgent need for increased female representation in executive leadership roles, including Latina superintendents (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008). These challenges, both internal and external, impeded women's ascent up the corporate ladder.

To overcome these hurdles and advance their careers, women adopted various strategies, including seeking mentorship, nurturing powerful networks, and building self-assurance (Pianta, 2020). Additionally, this literature review explored pertinent theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Johnson and Mohr's (2013) Personal Disruption Framework was examined in detail, shedding light on the disruptive methods and behaviors that underlay female executive leadership, including Latina superintendents.

In conclusion, Chapter II identified a critical gap in the existing literature and laid the groundwork for further research. The chapter also discussed the theoretical and conceptual frameworks relevant to the study, including Latina superintendents. The chapter culminated by summarizing the issues identified in the literature, providing a clear path forward for the research.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter III describes the methodology used to determine and delineate the extent to which the five personal disruption strategies have been used by Latina superintendents and the perceived impact that the use of these strategies has had on the advancement of their careers. Johnson and Mohr's (2013) framework for personal disruption identifies five important behaviors that were the subject of this study: challenge and influence authority; prepare but also learn to improvise; find effective forms of self-promotion, welcome a less prescribed career path; and go for being respected, not just liked.

The chapter begins with a purpose statement and research questions and then describes the qualitative and quantitative research designs, population, sampling frame, and sample. The instrumentation is then described in detail, including quantitative and qualitative instruments, field-testing, and the research as an instrument. Following a discussion of the instruments, validity, reliability, and data acquisition methods are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods research study was to identify and describe the perceived impact of Johnson and Mohr's (2013) five disruptive career skills on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position.

### **Research Questions**

1. What perceived impact did challenging and influencing authority have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?

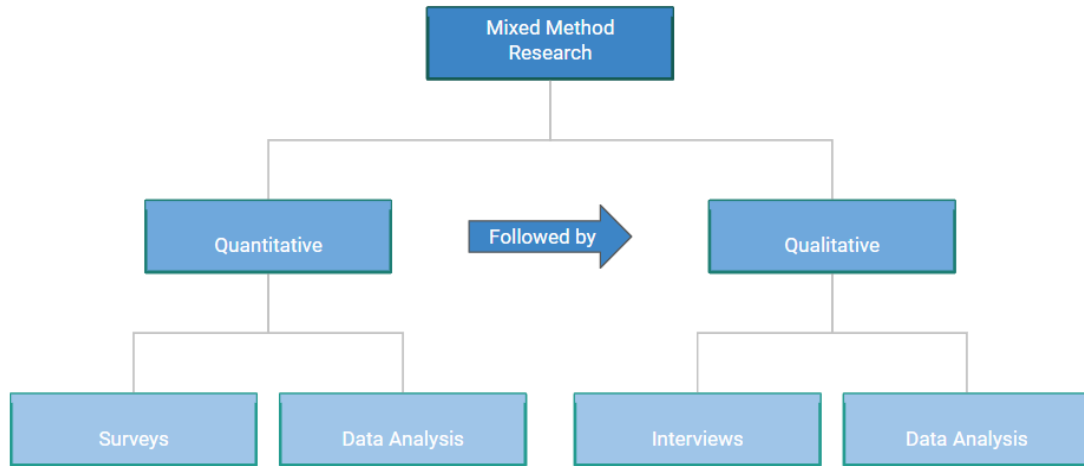
2. What perceived impact did preparing but also improvising have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
3. What perceived impact did engaging in effective forms of self-promotion have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
4. What perceived impact did welcoming a less prescribed career path have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
5. What perceived impact did aiming for respect over being liked have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?

### **Research Design**

An exploratory mixed methods research design was selected for this study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), this particular design offers the advantage of gathering more extensive data compared to other designs. This enables researchers to analyze both the process and outcomes of the study. Additionally, this design addresses the limitations of using a single approach, bolstering the reliability of the findings obtained through this method. Furthermore, a mixed methods design allowed for the examination of more complex research questions, which was required by this study to analyze the five disruptive strategies employed by the participants of the study. Moreover, by employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, I was able to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the use and degree of implementation of the five disruptive strategies. Last, the research followed the sequential explanatory mixed methods design outlined by McMillan and Schumacher. Quantitative data were gathered first, which were subsequently supplemented with qualitative data to provide further insight into the findings derived from the quantitative analysis (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Mixed Method Design*



*Note.* Adapted from *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell, 2003, SAGE Publications.

**Quantitative Research Design**

The quantitative portion of this study was conducted using a nonexperimental, descriptive research approach. The study began with a Google Form survey to investigate whether and to what extent Latina superintendents used the five personal disruptive methods as well as how they perceived their usage of those strategies influenced their career progression (see Appendix B).

The first section of the survey (Part 1) consisted of Likert-scale questions and provided examples of the five disruptive career skills.

**PART I:** The following survey represents the five DISRUPTIVE CAREER SKILLS. For each skill there is an example of behaviors associated with each category. Using the 4-point scale for each Disruptive Career Skill, please indicate how frequently you have engaged in each career skill as you progressed along in your leadership career.

- 4= *Definitely Yes*
- 3= *Generally Yes*
- 2= *Generally No*

*1= Definitely No*

**PART II:** If you checked *Definitely Yes or Generally Yes*, how much of a positive impact do you perceive it had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?

*4= High Degree*

*3= Some Degree*

*2= Little or No Degree*

*1= Detrimental to My Career Advancement*

The purpose of developing these scales was to ensure that participants were required to respond by either agreeing or disagreeing with each statement, eliminating the option of picking a neutral response (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This approach would provide highly descriptive quantitative data that could subsequently be analyzed in terms of measures such as mean, mode, and frequency.

### **Qualitative Research Design**

In *The Dissertation Journey*, Roberts and Hyatt (2019) stated that qualitative research is appropriate for discovering and documenting the perceived influence of people's experiences from their points of view. A qualitative research approach allows for a deep exploration of unique experiences and views, providing a rich description of the phenomena under investigation. To this end, following the collection of quantitative data, I planned virtual Zoom interviews with respondents to gather additional information on the use of personal disruption methods by Latina superintendents. The qualitative data collected were intended to supplement and enrich the quantitative data (Creswell et al., 2011).

The qualitative survey included 12 open-ended questions (Appendix C). The participants were asked two opening questions. They were asked to discuss their career

journey, their current role, previous positions held, and the duration of each of the positions. The participants were then asked about each of the five disruptive strategies. Each question began with a description of the disruptive strategies, followed by two follow-up questions: for example,

## **1. CHALLENGE AND INFLUENCE AUTHORITY**

**Challenging Authority:** Challenging authority refers to the act of questioning, opposing, or pushing back against those in positions of power or leadership who make decisions or enact policies. It involves a willingness to challenge the status quo, question assumptions, and propose alternative ideas or solutions.

- As you reflect on your career, can you share any stories or examples of how you may have challenged authority while advancing your career?
- In reflecting on this career area, what impact, positive or negative, do you believe challenging authority had on your career trajectory?

### **Method Rationale**

The intention of this thematic study was to examine how women use disruptive strategies to advance their executive careers. A team composed of a faculty researcher and four doctoral candidates shared a common interest in examining the specific strategies used by female executives from distinct backgrounds to navigate personal disruptions. This study employed a mixed methods approach to evaluate the efficacy of five personal disruption techniques for advancing women's careers.

The team of researchers employed a purposive sampling method (Patton, 2014) to select leaders from both educational and public organizations. Each researcher conducted interviews with eight individuals. The team of researchers pursuing doctoral degrees conducted a comprehensive study spanning various domains. These domains encompassed Dina Hernandez's examination of Latina superintendents, Tricia



Thompson's investigation into female K-12 superintendents with elementary education backgrounds, Lorri Oliver's research on female property managers, and Neko Green's exploration of female pastors.

Consistency was maintained throughout this thematic study in formulating the purpose, research questions, and research procedures. Within this cohesive thematic research group, each member worked independently, focusing on a shared sample population of leaders, and adhered to a uniform methodology encompassing explanatory mixed methods along with a standardized set of interview and survey questions. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of both quantitative and qualitative research dimensions, thus enriching the depth and breadth of the study.

A mixed methods research design was chosen for its ability to offer comprehensive data analysis, address various research questions, and bolster the credibility of findings compared to using a single method (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Specifically, a sequential explanatory design was adopted to enable the sequential collection of quantitative data, followed by qualitative data in the form of open-ended interview questions. This sequential approach allowed for the qualitative data to build on and elaborate upon the insights gleaned from the initial quantitative.

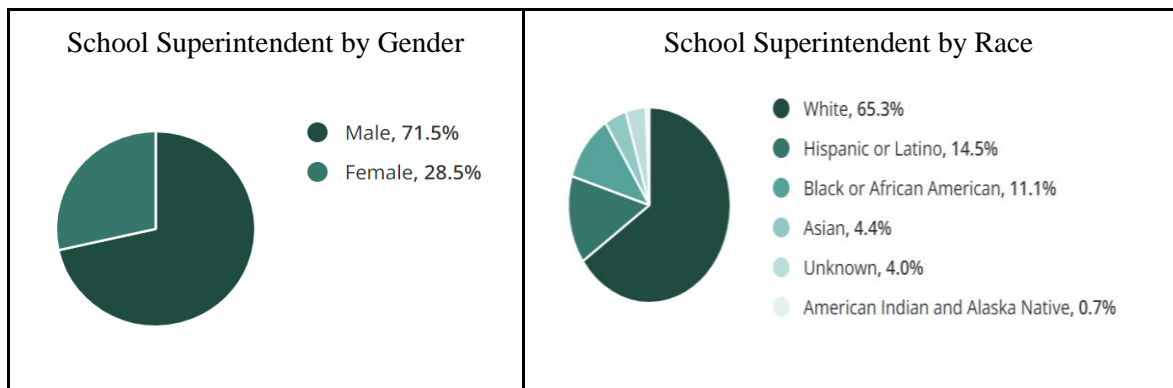
### **Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that a population in a study is the group that the research aims to analyze and generalize the findings from. Furthermore, a population is defined as a group of individuals who are distinct from other groups by one or more unique features (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The population for this study was Latina superintendents in the United States. A superintendent is the school district's

chief executive officer (UMass Global, n.d.). Currently, there are 7,292 school superintendents employed in the United States, and 28% of the superintendents are women (Zippia, 2023). The majority of school superintendents are White, making up 65% of the total population, and 14% of all school administrators are Hispanic or Latino (see Figure 2). Using these data, I estimated that there are 285 Latina superintendents in the United States.

**Figure 2**

*School Superintendent Demographic Charts*



*Note.* From *School Superintendent Demographics and Statistics in the US*, by Zippia, July 21, 2023, pp. 1, 3 (<https://www.zippia.com/school-superintendent-jobs/demographics/>).

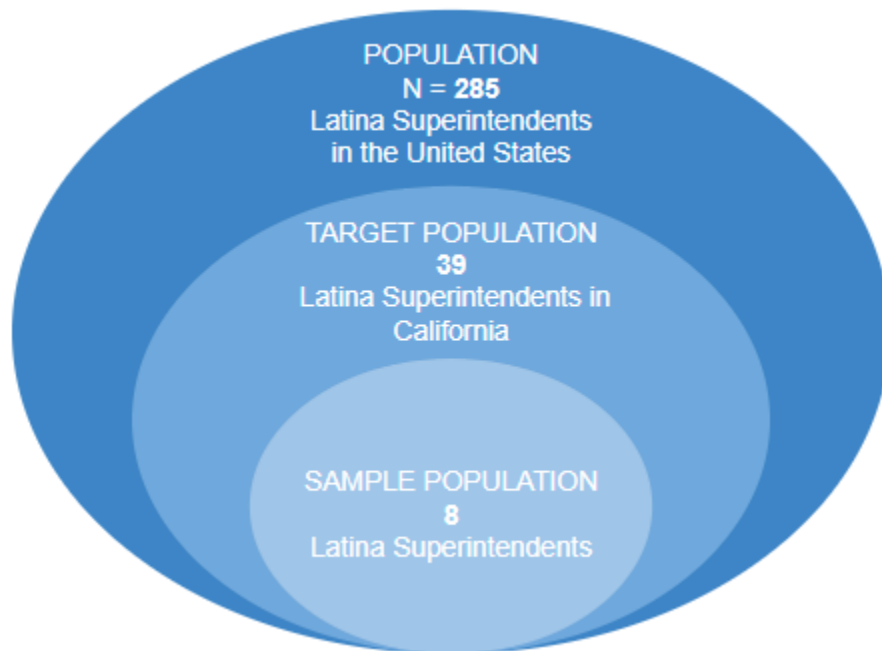
### **Sampling Frame**

The target population, also known as the sampling frame, refers to the comprehensive list of sampling units from which the sample is chosen (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Because of the large number of possible candidates in the population (285), it was not possible to include all of them in the study. Therefore, I identified a target population because of time, financial, and other resource constraints (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The team of researchers selected a subset of the population. The target demographic was used to make generalizations about the study's larger population.

The sample frame for this study was limited to Latina superintendents of education who are currently working in California. The California Department of Education (CDE, n.d.) reported that there was a total of 1,018 school districts in California in 2022–2023. However, the report did not indicate the gender or ethnicity of the population. There is limited information on the genders and ethnicities of the current superintendents serving in California. However, Martin Perez (2021) reported that in 2021, there were 39 Latina superintendents in California. (See figure 3)

**Figure 3**

*Population Funnel*



**Sample**

To establish a suitable sample population for this research, a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling was used. According to Patton (2014), purposive sampling is an appropriate strategy in qualitative research when the objective is to select

participants with specific knowledge, experiences, or characteristics pertinent to the research question. This method optimizes the likelihood of choosing individuals who can contribute the most valuable data to the research endeavor. For instance, when investigating the experiences of Latina superintendents in California, purposeful sampling facilitated the identification and selection of participants who met the criteria of being Latina and holding superintendent positions in California.

In addition to purposeful sampling, convenience sampling was incorporated to address practical considerations. Given the potential scarcity of Latina superintendents in California, convenience sampling facilitated the identification of accessible participants who were willing to participate in the study. Although convenience sampling acknowledges the inherent limitations regarding representativeness, its use was balanced with purposeful sampling to ensure a meaningful exploration of the perspectives and experiences of the Latina superintendents serving in California.

### **Sample Selection Process**

There is no one singular database that lists the demographic information of the current superintendents in California. Therefore, the sample selection process for participants began by researching the CDE's (n.d.) website and database. The database listed the names and districts of all the superintendents currently serving in California. However, the list did not include the gender or ethnicity of the superintendents. Therefore, I contacted the following organizations and affiliations for information and possible candidates: the California Association of Latina/o Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA), the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA), and

the California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE) to identify and nominate participants. Additionally, I used numerous district contacts to connect with possible participants. The outreach was successful in gathering several names of Latina superintendents. Once the potential participants were identified, they were invited to participate in the research study via email and phone calls.

After obtaining eight willing participants for the study, I emailed each participant the Informed Consent, UMASS Global Internal Review Board (IRB) Participant's Bill of Rights, interview protocol, and survey protocol (see Appendices, D, E, C, and B). The interview dates and times were determined based on the availability of the participants. Zoom was used to conduct and record virtual interviews. The interview questions regarding personal disruptions and their impact on career development were provided to the participants for reference during the interview along with a copy of their quantitative survey responses for convenience of reference within each category. To ensure consistency in each interview, a protocol was used; however, if a participant struggled to answer a question, follow-up and confirmation questions were addressed.

### **Instrumentation**

I employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design involving two distinct phases of data collection with a primary emphasis on quantitative methods (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The initial development of both the quantitative and qualitative survey tools was a collaborative effort involving a team of four subject researchers and a faculty member. The design of these surveys was aligned with the conceptual frameworks presented by Johnson and Mohr (2013) regarding personal disruption methods.

Using a Likert scale survey, the quantitative instrument was used to collect initial data from participants regarding their experiences. Each participant was able to rate the frequency with which they engaged in each career skill on a continuum spanning from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*: (4) *definitely yes*, (3) *generally yes*, (2) *generally no*, and (1) *definitely no*. If the respondent answered (4) *definitely yes* or (3) *generally yes*, the online survey then asked follow-up questions created to measure the perceived impact of each of the behaviors on their career advancement. These questions followed the Likert scale as follows: (4) *high degree*, (3) *some degree*, (2) *little or no degree*, or (1) *detrimental to my career advancement*.

The quantitative survey established a framework for participants to reflect on their experiences, which was followed by qualitative, open-ended interviews. The original group of four peer researchers and one faculty member collaborated to design an online survey that collected the quantitative data. In contrast, qualitative data were gathered through an open-ended interview protocol developed by the thematic group. This approach allowed respondents to elaborate on their quantitative survey responses and provide a nuanced account of their experiences from their own perspectives, yielding rich phenomenological data. I used this combined dataset to conduct a thorough analysis, identifying and coding themes and triangulating the findings to provide a holistic comprehension of the personal disruption strategies employed by the respondents and the resulting impact.

### **Quantitative Instrumentation**

The initial phase of the study consisted of administering a quantitative online survey (see Appendix B) to assess the personal disruption behaviors experienced by the

participants throughout their career development and to evaluate the impact of these behaviors on their professional trajectories. Using an online survey provided a number of benefits, including expense and time efficiency, prompt responses, and easy follow-up (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In addition, by collecting quantitative data, I was able to derive statistical insights and draw inferences from the results, a technique known as inferential statistics (Salkind, 2017). Quantitative data play a crucial role in mitigating bias because it allows decisions to be based on empirical evidence and objective analysis. Peer researchers designed the survey instruments in accordance with the five personal disruption strategies initially proposed by Johnson and Mohr (2013).

### **Qualitative Instrumentation**

The second phase of the study consisted of qualitative interviews, during which I used a predefined script (see Appendix C) consisting of open-ended questions to elicit additional insights from participants, expanding on their quantitative survey responses. This standardized open-ended interview method corresponds to one of Patton's (2014) four distinct interviewing techniques. All interviewees were asked the same questions in the same order to facilitate comparisons of responses (Patton, 2014). The interviews were conducted using Zoom, an online conferencing platform.

Before diving into the interview questions, I initiated brief conversations with the participants to establish rapport and develop trust. After these initial interactions, participants were given an overview of the purpose of the study and an explanation of the procedural safeguards in place, and then the interviews commenced. Each interview was recorded and subsequently transcribed using the Temi application for transcription.

Before entering the transcripts into the NVivo software for coding purposes, they were shared with participants for review and possible adjustments.

### **Researcher as the Instrument**

During the qualitative interview phase, I acted as an instrument, which could have introduced potential researcher bias depending on my level of engagement with the interview subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is noteworthy, however, that my role was entirely external to this study; my interaction with the subjects was solely limited to the interviews. I maintained no prior personal or professional relationships with the participants. This detachment from the subjects significantly bolstered the validity of the study's findings because I had no vested interests tied to the study's outcomes. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognize that I did engage in the interpretation of the findings derived from the open-ended interviews, assuming the role of an instrument that might potentially influence the outcomes and conclusions of the study.

### **Quantitative Field Test**

In accordance with established research practices (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), the quantitative survey underwent a field test to validate the absence of bias in both procedures and questions. For this purpose, I recruited a retired superintendent who met all of the sampling criteria with the exception of current employment, a deliberate choice made to assure the survey questions' viability. This participant had extensive experience navigating dissertations, allowing her to offer feedback from a dissertation-centric standpoint. After completing the quantitative field test, the participant filled out a feedback form, which I reviewed to ensure there was no discernible bias and that the survey was conducted as planned (see Appendix F).



## **Qualitative Field Test**

Similar to the quantitative field test, a qualitative field test was conducted with the same participant who had previously taken the quantitative survey to ensure the absence of bias in both the technique and question content in adherence to established research protocols (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The qualitative field test was carried out via an online interview using Zoom, facilitated by the qualitative field-test tool (see Appendix C). To enhance the rigor of this process, the interview was observed by an adjunct faculty member affiliated with the Organizational Leadership Ed.D. program, who provided valuable feedback based on her observations of the open-ended interview (Appendix H).

## **Validity**

Validity in research assesses the extent to which an instrument accurately measures its intended construct (Patten & Newhart, 2023). In a mixed methods study like this one, it is imperative to establish the validity of both quantitative and qualitative findings. For the quantitative instrument's validity, the thematic research team employed expert judges, as recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2010). Additionally, they ensured that the questions closely aligned with the theoretical framework and the intended use of the scores related to personal disruptive strategies.

In the qualitative phase, NVivo software was used for identifying themes, applying codes, and triangulating the qualitative data. Prior to each interview, I elucidated the study's purpose, contributing to construct validity. It is important to note that this study's external validity is confined to individuals meeting the specific sampling criteria because it targeted a specific subset of Latina superintendents.

## **Reliability**

Patten and Newhart (2018) defined reliability in research as the likelihood of obtaining consistent results when using the same set of queries or tests. Several reliability measures, including interobserver reliability and parallel-forms reliability, were implemented in this study to improve the consistency of results over time. The interobserver reliability was enhanced through the collaborative development of the survey with thematic peers, assuring the incorporation of multiple perspectives. By evaluating subjects using both a quantitative survey and a qualitative interview, a dual assessment approach to the study's content was implemented to ensure parallel forms of reliability. Standardized open-ended interviews were used to increase reliability, and a faculty member observed the field test to assure uniform survey administration. All interviews underwent transcription and were returned to respondents for validation, thereby ensuring intercoder reliability. The use of NVivo for categorizing themes further mitigated the possibility of researcher bias in result interpretation, thereby enhancing the overall reliability of the study's findings.

## **Data Collection**

In this explanatory mixed methods study, data collection unfolded in two distinct phases. First, an electronic survey consisting of 12 questions was administered via Google Forms, employing a Likert scale for responses. Only responses categorized as *definitely yes* or *generally yes* were considered as indicating the presence of impactful disruption behavior. Subsequently, interviews with each participant were conducted using the online video conferencing tool, Zoom.

Following a thorough field test, data collection officially commenced upon my certification by the National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research to engage in human research. I also obtained approval from the UMASS Global Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. Upon receiving IRB approval, the eight participants were provided with the UMASS Global IRB Informed Consent (see Appendix D) and UMASS Global Bill of Rights (see Appendix E). Along with these documents, participants received an email containing a link to the electronic survey. Data collection initiated once each participant provided their informed consent to partake in the study. To ensure the secure storage of data, I maintained them on a password-protected digital device with exclusive access rights limited to me alone.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

Preceding the collection of quantitative data, I initiated the process by sending participants informed consent and bill of rights forms, accompanied by a comprehensive explanation of data usage and the assurance of strict confidentiality, aligning with the guidelines presented by McMillan and Schumacher (2010). Once participants had reviewed and formally consented to participate in the survey, they were provided with a link to access and complete the survey. Each participant was allotted a 1-week timeframe to complete the survey, a task typically taking approximately 10 to 15 min to accomplish. To ensure participants met the deadline, I proactively sent two reminder emails before the stipulated time window for survey completion closed.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

Following the completion of the electronic surveys, one-on-one interviews were scheduled with each respondent. With the consent of each participant, these interviews

were recorded to facilitate transcription at a later stage. Each interview session had a duration of approximately 60 min.

At the outset of each interview, I initiated introductory questions designed to establish rapport and put the respondent at ease. The purpose of the study was reiterated, ensuring clarity and understanding before delving into the 12 open-ended questions. The interviews followed a standardized open-ended format. To aid respondents in the interview process, I furnished all participants with a copy of their quantitative electronic survey results during the open-ended interviews. All interviews were meticulously recorded and subsequently transcribed using the web-based transcription service, Temi. Once the transcription process was complete, I shared a copy with each participant for review to ensure accuracy. Upon receiving approval from each participant, the interview results were transferred to the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo. This facilitated the identification of themes and the coding of data, enabling in-depth analysis and interpretation.

### **Data Analysis**

In a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, quantitative data serve as the initial phase, followed by qualitative data, with the latter intended to bolster and provide deeper insights into the quantitative findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Qualitative data play a pivotal role in shedding light on the nuances of each participant's quantitative responses, offering specific narratives and examples that illustrate how leaders employed disruptive behaviors and their perceptions of how these strategies influenced their career advancement.

Upon the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, a triangulation approach is employed, enabling the synthesis of findings to draw generalizations regarding the

effectiveness of these strategies for the female participants. This combined analysis allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between personal disruption strategies and career progression among these women.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative data analysis involved the collection and examination of data obtained from the online Google Forms survey. Descriptive statistics were applied to succinctly organize and consolidate the survey findings, offering an overview of the frequency of personal disruption strategies used. Specifically, descriptive data, such as the mode, were determined to assess central tendency. The mode was employed to identify which personal disruption behaviors occurred most frequently among the participants.

The survey questions were structured as closed-ended queries, employing predetermined response scales featuring a 4-point Likert scale. This scale included numerical assignments: 4= *definitely yes*, 3= *generally yes*, 2= *generally no*, 1= *definitely no*. Participants completed the survey as the initial phase followed by the subsequent interview component of the study.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

The analysis of qualitative data necessitates a distinct approach to derive meaningful insights. To distill significance from qualitative responses, I conducted a process of coding words into themes to extract meaning, aligning with established methods (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

In this study, eight interviews were conducted, recorded, and subsequently transcribed. Ensuring the accuracy of quotations, I shared the transcriptions with the

respondents for verification. Once approved, these transcriptions were then imported into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis tool, to facilitate the identification and coding of themes.

I systematically reviewed all text for categories that pertained to the research question, generating codes within NVivo that encapsulated high-frequency words and recurring themes. For codes with limited frequencies, a thorough reassessment was conducted to determine their significance and relevance to the study's objectives. Each code was meticulously scrutinized to ensure its direct alignment with addressing the research questions posed.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The research study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Prior to data collection, written consent was obtained from each respondent, and comprehensive safeguards were implemented to safeguard the rights and anonymity of the Latina superintendents. These measures, consistent with the principles outlined in the Bill of Rights, included providing participants with the option to withdraw from the study at any point and adhering to all ethical protections (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). To ensure secure storage, the data were stored on a password-protected digital device, with exclusive access granted solely to me. These precautions were enacted to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of the participants throughout the research process.

### **Limitations**

In accordance with established research principles (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), it is vital to recognize the inherent limitations within this study. These constraints can impact the study's outcomes and its potential for generalization to a wider population. To maintain transparency, the following limitations are acknowledged: First,

the geographic location in which the study was conducted may restrict the applicability of findings to other regions, as regional variations in personal disruption strategies may not have been fully considered. Second, the study's relatively small sample size, consisting of eight participants, may limit the depth and breadth of insights and hinder the ability to extend findings to a larger population of Latina superintendents. Third, time constraints imposed on the study might have impacted the thoroughness of data collection and analysis, potentially limiting the exploration of personal disruption strategies and their long-term consequences. Last, despite diligent efforts to minimize bias, it is essential to recognize that my perspective and interpretation could still influence the study's results and conclusions, underscoring the importance of acknowledging potential bias for a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes.

### **Location of the Study**

Given the vast number of school districts and superintendents across the United States, I opted to narrow the study's focus exclusively to superintendents within the state of California. To facilitate access to participants, a combination of convenience and purposeful sampling strategies was employed. The study specifically targeted Latina superintendents serving in California. Consequently, it is important to note that the study's results can only be effectively generalized to Latina superintendents in the public educational context within the state of California. The geographic location where the study was conducted may limit the generalizability of findings to other regions or contexts. Regional variations in personal disruption strategies may not have been fully accounted for.

### **Sample Size of the Participants**

The study enlisted the participation of a total of eight participants, a sample size deemed appropriate for a mixed methods study, as suggested by Patton (2014). Nonetheless, it is crucial to emphasize that the study's findings should not be extrapolated to the broader population of female superintendents across the entire United States. The limited sample size constrains the generalizability of the study's outcomes beyond the specific participants involved in the research.

### **Time Constraints**

Time is a limitation known all too well by all within education, but especially by female superintendents. Finding the time to schedule to make it through all the open-ended interview questions within a 60-min time frame may have limited the depth of the interview and, subsequently, the results. Time constraints imposed on the study could have influenced the depth of data collection and analysis. A more extended study duration might have allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of personal disruption strategies and their long-term effects.

### **Bias of the Researcher**

Qualitative research inherently involves the narrative construction of stories and is susceptible to the potential bias of the researcher. In this study, it is imperative to acknowledge and disclose my background as an educational leader aspiring to a superintendency because this represents a noteworthy source of potential bias. My encounters with internal and external barriers, as detailed in the study, could have influenced the analysis of findings because of personal experiences.



To mitigate the impact of researcher bias, a proactive approach was taken. I maintained an epoche or journal, as defined by Moustakas (1994), to conscientiously acknowledge and set aside my preconceptions, thereby fostering openness to new ideas. Additionally, the use of open-ended questions during interviews was instrumental in minimizing bias. Subsequently, after each interview was conducted and transcribed, the transcripts were shared with the participants for their review, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of their statements. These measures were instituted to enhance the trustworthiness and impartiality of the study's qualitative findings. Despite efforts to minimize bias, my perspective and interpretation may still have influenced the study's results and findings. Awareness of this potential bias is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the research.

### **Summary**

The third chapter provided a comprehensive description of how this sequential explanatory mixed methods study was carried out. The chapter began with an overview, a statement of purpose, and research questions. Following was an explanation of the research design, which included both quantitative and qualitative designs. Next, the population, sampling frame, sample, and sample selection procedure were outlined, followed by a discussion of quantitative and qualitative instrumentation, as well as the researcher as an instrument. Directly following, the validity and reliability were discussed, followed by data collection and analysis. Finally, limitations and ethical considerations were discussed. The quantitative and qualitative findings and analysis are presented in Chapter IV, and Chapter V concludes with a discussion of the findings and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

### Overview

The aim of this mixed methods explanatory study was to investigate and describe the use and impact of personal disruptive strategies on the career development of Latina superintendents. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative metrics to assess the implementation of these techniques and their influence on the career trajectories of individuals. The research was grounded on a framework developed by Johnson and Mohr in 2013, which sought to evaluate the impact of five specific strategies on the professional trajectories of women:

- challenging and influencing authority
- preparing but also learning to improvise
- engaging in effective forms of self-promotion
- welcoming a less prescribed career path
- aiming for being respected over being liked

Chapter IV presents a comprehensive review of the study's objectives, research questions, research methodologies, data gathering techniques, and data collection procedures employed as well as the population and sample under investigation. Chapter IV concludes with a presentation of the data in accordance with the research questions and a summary of the results.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods study was to identify and describe the perceived impact of Johnson and Mohr's (2013) five disruptive career skills on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position.

## **Research Questions**

1. What perceived impact did challenging and influencing authority have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
2. What perceived impact did preparing but also improvising have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
3. What perceived impact did engaging in effective forms of self-promotion have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
4. What perceived impact did welcoming a less prescribed career path have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
5. What perceived impact did aiming for respect over being liked have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?

## **Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

### **Population**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the population under investigation is the group from which the researcher seeks to draw conclusions and make generalizations. A population is additionally characterized as a collection of individuals who possess one or more distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from other groups (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This study's demographic consists of Latina superintendents employed within the United States. At present, the United States is home to a total of 7,292 school superintendents, of whom 28% are female (Zippia, 2023). White people constitute the majority of school superintendents, accounting for 65% of the overall population. Latino school administrators make up about 14% of the total.

Based on the statistics provided, it can be derived that there are approximately 285 Latino superintendents in the United States.

### **Sample**

To ensure that the sample population for this study was appropriate, a blend of purposeful and convenience sampling techniques was employed. Patton (2014) argued that purposive sampling is a suitable approach in qualitative research when the aim is to appoint participants who possess particular knowledge, experiences, or attributes that are relevant to the research inquiry. This approach maximizes the probability of selecting participants who possess the greatest potential to provide valuable insights for the research study. Purposive sampling was used to identify and select individuals who met the predetermined criteria of being Latina and holding the position of superintendent in California.

Convenience sampling was integrated alongside purposive sampling to accommodate pragmatic considerations. In light of the potential scarcity of Latina superintendents in California, convenience sampling was employed to facilitate the recruitment of willing and easily accessible participants for the study. Although convenience sampling has inherent limitations in terms of representativeness, it was used in conjunction with purposeful sampling to ensure a thorough inquiry of the perspectives and experiences of the Latina superintendents now working in California.

### **Demographic Data**

The names and identifying details of the study participants were removed from the results to protect their privacy and confidentiality. As shown in Table 1, the eight research participants were sorted alphabetically from A to H. The sample consisted of

eight Latina superintendents with varying degrees of experience. The participants represented different size districts as shown in Table 1. Fewer than 5,000 students are considered a small district for the purposes of this study, 5,000 to 15,000 students are considered a medium-sized district, and more than 15,000 students are considered a large district.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographic Information*

Participant ID	Grades	District size	Years of experience
Participant A	K-5	Small	10
Participant B	K-6	Medium	2
Participant C	K-12	Small	3
Participant D	9-12	Large	1.5
Participant E	K-5	Small	1
Participant F	K-8	Medium	7
Participant G	K-8	Small	5
Participant H	K-8	Small	2

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

To acquire the necessary information for the study, I used an online questionnaire during the quantitative portion of the investigation, and then conducted a semistructured interview during the qualitative portion. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data is discussed in the following sections.

## **Quantitative Data Analysis**

The online survey was constructed using the Google Form application. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize, organize, and consolidate survey findings. Through the collection and analysis of the results, descriptive data were obtained, including the proportion of participants who responded in a particular fashion to each question. The electronic survey included 13 closed-ended questions that were evaluated using a predetermined 4-point Likert scale. For questions pertaining to the use of the behavior, the following numerical values were assigned: 4 = *definitely yes*, 3 = *generally yes*, 2 = *generally no*, and 1 = *definitely no*. Inquiries were also incorporated to assess the perceived impact of the disruptive career skill on the individual; responses were restricted to a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *high degree* to *detrimental to my career development*. The following Likert scale, 4 = *high degree*, 3 = *some degree*, 2 = *little or no degree*, and 1 = *detrimental to my career development*, was used to measure the impact. After completing the survey, participants engaged in an open-ended semistructured interview.

## **Qualitative Data Analysis**

In the qualitative interview phase, respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on the disruptive strategies they used, which were previously mentioned in the online survey. In accordance with Patton's (2014) described methodology, I conducted interviews that pertained to the five personal disruption strategies outlined by Johnson and Mohr (2013). The interview incorporated both structured and semistructured inquiries. Each interview was conducted via the online video conferencing application Zoom and lasted between 30 and 60 min. After recording and transcribing each interview

using the transcription software Rev, the qualitative analysis software Delve Tool was used to code the transcripts. To address the research questions, I categorized emergent themes from the data according to the five personal disruption strategies.

Themes were derived from participant interviews using qualitative inductive analysis, which classified data without preconceived frameworks or theories. Initial readings generated themes, subsequently refined through further development. After initial data coding, themes lacking sufficient references or support were eliminated, and overlapping themes merged. The findings for each research question are presented.

### **Interrater Reliability**

Interrater reliability is a method that researchers use to assess both bias and consistency when categorizing data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Following the initial coding of the data, a fellow researcher replicated the process on 10% of the data, and a consensus was reached on 84% of the themes encoded in the data, meeting the minimum 80% requirement suggested by Patton (2014).

### **Research Question 1: Challenging and Influencing Authority**

The first question asked, “What perceived impact did challenging and influencing authority have on Latina superintendents’ advancement to an executive leadership position?”

### **Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

Figure 4 shows that in challenging authority, 37.5% of participants agreed that they definitely challenge authority, 50% agreed that they generally do this, and 12.5% said that they generally do not challenge authority. In Figure 5, when evaluating the impact of challenging authority, 57.1% believed to some degree that this had a positive

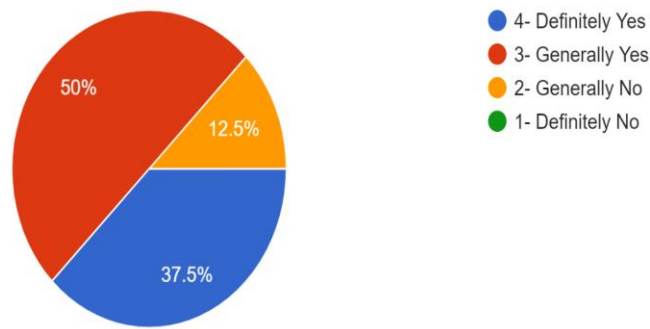
impact on their career trajectory, and 28.6% rated this as having a detrimental impact on their career trajectory.

**Figure 4**

*Quantitative Responses to the Use of Challenging Authority*

EXAMPLE: I speak up to my superiors rather than tell my bosses what they want to hear.

8 responses

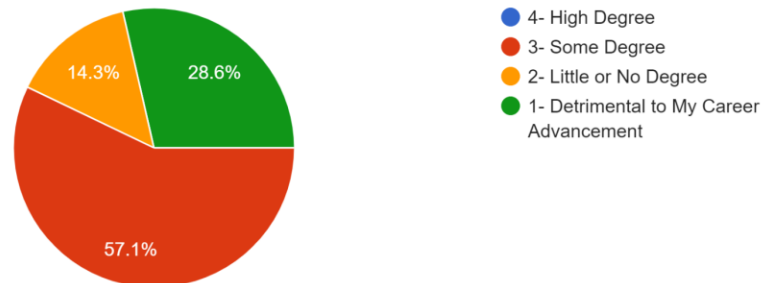


**Figure 5**

*Quantitative Responses to the Impact of Challenging Authority*

How much of a positive impact do you perceive Challenging Authority had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?

7 responses





## Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation

### *Challenging Authority*

The identified themes reflect a diverse range of approaches Latina superintendents employed when faced with the need to challenge authority in their careers. Some superintendents took bold steps, directly confronting leadership or policies they found inequitable or unjust. Others adopted a more strategic approach, using influence, advocacy, and negotiation. The following themes emerged: advocacy for historically marginalized students of color navigating ethnicity and gender dynamics, professional integrity and ethics, and strategic approach to challenging authority. The themes and frequency are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience, Challenging Authority.*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Advocacy for historically marginalized students of color	16	8	100%
Navigating ethnicity and gender dynamics	14	8	100%
Professional integrity and ethics	13	8	100%
Strategic approach to challenging authority	10	5	62.5%

**Advocacy for Historically Marginalized Students of Color.** A common thread among all the participants was their unwavering commitment and advocacy for marginalized students of color and ensuring equity and access in education. The following statements illustrate and highlight this dedication and commitment to educational equity. Participant A stated,

I'm very well focused on what my job is, and that is to be the voice of the students and to improve the educational organizations on behalf of all students and primarily on behalf of people of color. I serve all students, but there is that extra oomph for those students of color.

This sentiment was echoed by Participant H who noted, "My target in education has always been looking out for the interests of Latino students and families because I saw the change education made in my life and I want them to be able to reap the same benefits." These responses revealed a consistent dedication among Latina superintendents to advocate for students, particularly students of color.

**Navigating Ethnicity and Gender Dynamics.** The theme of ethnicity and gender emerged prominently across all the participants. This theme was mentioned several times, indicating it was a significant aspect affecting how Latina superintendents challenged authority. Participant A mentioned gender as she shared her experience of being in male-dominated environments. She vividly recalled, "I found myself in many meetings with all males, mostly white. I was the very first woman in over a hundred years, and I was definitely the first Latina of Hispanic descent that ever served at that school." Similarly, Participant B reflected on her experiences, stating, "I was one of the five women in the whole room, and there were no other Latinas in the room, only white males. So, of course, that was a whole different experience because you're like, okay, wait, where am I?" Echoing these sentiments, Participant C added, "As a woman and a woman of color ... they want you to wear the cup. They just don't want you to fill the cup." Further expanding on this theme, Participant H briefly touched upon the broader issues of representation, noting, "There are very few women in this position, and even fewer

Latinas. So, it's a very small number of us in these chairs." On a different note, Participant D shared her perspective with regard to gender and how that impacted how she navigated board dynamics:

We have two women and three men on the board. I definitely feel that as a woman, it would not bode well for me to challenge their authority. So, I try to work more with the two women and do more of the influence than to try and challenge their authority.

Overall, the topic of ethnicity and gender played a significant role in shaping how Latina superintendents navigated and challenged authority.

**Professional Integrity and Ethics.** Another prevalent theme observed across the participants' responses was advocacy for justice and integrity. Participants frequently expressed the importance of advocating for justice, standing up for what is right, and maintaining integrity in various situations. Participant A exclaimed, "There was a time when I completely challenged the board and my superintendent because they wanted to unseat an assistant principal that I had worked with and that I really felt was an unjust issue." Similarly, Participant C stated, "I went to the school board and asked them to change board policy. We fought, we showed data, we shared stories." Likewise, Participant H highlighted integrity versus job security: "I will lose my job, and I'm okay with that if you ask me to do something that doesn't align with my integrity and what I know is right."

**Strategic Approach to Challenging Authority.** The superintendents unanimously recognized the risks associated with challenging authority and strategically navigated these situations to mitigate potential career harm. Participant H highlighted this

cautious strategy, stating, “I’ve been very strategic and careful when I have challenged or opposed authority, identifying safe conditions for pushing back to protect my job.”

Echoing this sentiment, Participant B mentioned, “I’ve been very careful and strategic in identifying safe conditions when challenging the status quo.” Despite acknowledging the risks, Participant A emphasized the necessity of speaking up: “I spoke up at the expense of my career because it was necessary.” Participant B also reflected on the risk of speaking out, noting, “I did speak out possibly when it could have hurt my career, but I felt I had to.” This sense of fear and necessity was further echoed by Participant E, who described the intimidation associated with such actions: “And I mean, it was a scary thing.”

***Impact of Challenging Authority***

The following themes emerged regarding the perceived impact of challenging authority, mixed impact of challenging authority, integrity and values over career considerations, and evolution in leadership approaches (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents’ Experience of the Impact of Challenging Authority*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Mixed impact of challenges authority	13	6	75%
Integrity and values over career consideration	7	5	62.5%
Evolution in leadership approaches	4	4	50%

**Mixed Impact of Challenging Authority.** The participants in this study shared diverse experiences and perspectives regarding how challenging authority impacted their career paths. Five participants reported positive impacts. However, three participants experienced negative consequences, noting adverse effects on their career trajectories because of challenging authority.

Among the five participants who reported a positive impact of challenging authority, some attributed the positive impact to how they approached the situation. Some also recognized the possibility that the impact could have been negative. For instance, Participant B remarked, “I would say it had a positive impact for me, but it could have not.” Echoing this, Participant C added, “I think it’s a positive impact because I was careful on how I went about it.”

In contrast, three participants shared experiences when challenging authority led to detrimental outcomes. Participant A shared, “There was a time when I completely challenged the board and my superintendent, and I know that it probably tainted my career a little bit with that administration.” Similarly, Participant D acknowledged, “I would say that it had a negative impact for quite some time.”

**Integrity and Values Over Career Consideration.** The theme of integrity and values over career consideration resonated strongly among the participants, reflecting a recurring emphasis on prioritizing ethical values over personal career interests. The participants’ narratives demonstrated their dedication to standing up for what they believed to be ethically correct. Participant A demonstrated this sentiment by stating,

I've been a person that has been very, very well grounded, that is very purposeful, and I have very high integrity. I feel like if I have to jeopardize my integrity, then it's not worth me doing that job.

Likewise, Participant E 's stance supported this sentiment, "I will lose my job, and I'm okay with that if you ask me to do something that doesn't align with my integrity and what I know is right." These statements reveal the participants' unwavering dedication to upholding personal values, irrespective of potential career consequences.

**Evolution in Leadership Approaches.** A key theme among participants was the evolution of their leadership through challenges. They observed that confronting authority often leads to valuable learning and personal growth. Participant A reflected on the critical nature of these moments: "These were memorable moments where you felt like, Okay, I'm either going to make it, it's going to mean my job, or not." Similarly, Participant D acknowledged the educational value of these experiences: "I learned so much more about how to lead." Participant F highlighted the importance of self-awareness in leadership, noting, "Knowing yourself as a person and understanding how you want to lead." Overall, these narratives illustrate an evolutionary journey in leadership marked by deep reflection and learning.

## **Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

### ***Influencing Authority***

Figure 6 demonstrates that in the area of influencing authority, 25% of participants said that they certainly do it, 62.5% agreed that they generally do, and 12.5% said they do not. When evaluating the impact of this, 57.1% believed it had a significant

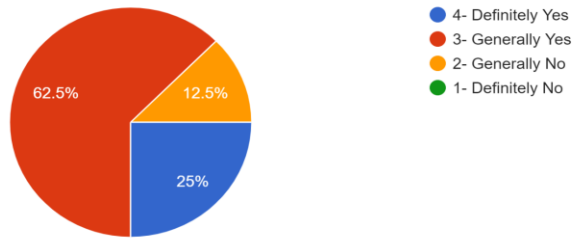
degree of positive impact on their career trajectory, and 42.9% believed it had some degree of positive impact on their career trajectory (see Figure 7).

**Figure 6**

*Quantitative Responses to the Use of Influencing Authority*

EXAMPLE: I often find a problem that needs to be solved and persuade others in the direction of what one feels to be the correct answer.

8 responses

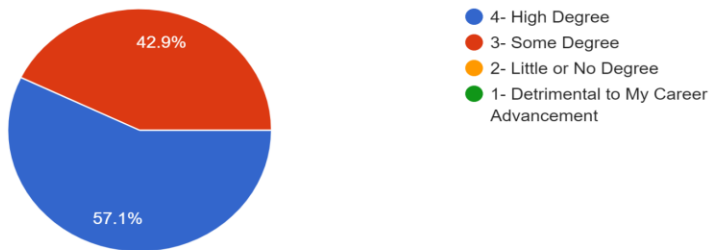


**Figure 7**

*Quantitative Responses to the Impact of Influencing Authority*

IMPACT: How much of a positive impact do you perceive Influencing Authority had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?

7 responses



## Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation

### *Influencing Authority*

The second part of the first research question examined how Latina superintendents engaged in influencing authority and the impact it had on their career trajectory. Most of the superintendents emphasized building relationships, strategic leadership, and using data to drive change. Some participants also mentioned how they influenced and navigated board politics and dynamics as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience, Influencing Authority*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Relationship building and persuasive communication for equity	13	6	75.0%
Strategic leadership and data-driven decision making	26	5	62.5%
Navigating organizational challenges-board dynamics	8	3	37.7%

#### **Relationship Building and Persuasive Communication for Equity.**

Participants highlighted the importance of building relationships and employing persuasive communication to advocate for equity. The value of establishing rapport, trust, and collaboration as foundational pillars was a common thread across multiple interviewees. Participant B, Participant G, and Participant H discussed the role of trust and collaboration in their professional journeys. Participant H shared experiences about leveraging relationships to advocate for change, “Relationships are just an enormous



piece if you're going to be a leader. I think relationships built upon trust ensure effective communication when bringing about change." This insight highlights the significance of trust, collaboration, and effective communication in influencing authority.

**Strategic Leadership and Data-Driven Decision Making.** Participants identified data-driven decision making as a pivotal strategy for advocating equitable opportunities and influencing impactful changes. The use of data as a persuasive tool to drive necessary changes was a consistent approach showcased by multiple interviewees. Participant E stated,

I think data speaks for itself. You can't negate data. You can't argue data. In every aspect of my career, I've always used data as a driving force because data overcomes whatever biases, whatever ideas you might have, and you can't argue with numbers.

Furthermore, Participant E illustrated how she used data acted as a catalyst for questioning disparities in educational outcomes:

When I got to that school the majority of our students were not proficient. This is during CST time, and I kind of questioned, well, what's going on? They had a lot of excuses. The parents moved, gangs in the community. But I argued, "What are the factors we can control?"

By challenging excuses and focusing on controllable factors through data analysis, Participant E demonstrated a proactive approach to addressing educational disparities by leveraging statistical evidence. Participant H highlighted the role of persuasive communication backed by data:

I approached the superintendent and followed up with a presentation that shared the demographic shift in our schools. I asked about parity between employees that looked like the students and if it was a priority. I was a product of that school district, and I wanted to see changes.

Participant H used data as a persuasive tool to instigate change by highlighting the need for diversity and inclusion based on statistical evidence. The examples provided by the participants demonstrate the value of data to influence authority.

### **Navigating Organizational Challenges: Board Dynamics and Politics.**

Navigating organizational challenges, board dynamics, and political intricacies emerged as a critical aspect highlighted by several participants. The ability to maneuver through these complexities while maintaining effectiveness in leadership was a recurring theme.

Participant C discussed the political aspects of challenging the board:

As a superintendent, you work with a board. ... You do have to challenge some of their authority in a way that is respectful, obviously. But it has gotten me in a bit of trouble in my first year as a superintendent.

Participant F emphasized her experience in managing board dynamics, “Having had the experience, ... it’s really helped me navigate our governance team and make sure we continue to build on the good ... to identify red flags, be responsive, and caution board members.” Participant H outlined the importance of tactful communication in managing board behavior, “I find a tactful way to tell my board members, because I know if I don’t, that behavior or whatever it is that they’re doing is just going to continue and it’s going to escalate.”

### ***Impact of Influencing Authority***

Upon analyzing the participants' responses regarding the impact of influencing authority, I found three main themes emerged: the positive impact of influencing authority, maintaining integrity despite challenges, and emotional intelligence and leadership as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience of the Impact Influencing Authority*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Positive impact of influencing authority	10	6	75%
Maintaining integrity despite challenges	4	4	50%
Emotional intelligence and leadership	3	3	37.5%

**Positive Impact of Influencing Authority.** Many interviewees acknowledged that influencing authority had a beneficial impact on their careers. Participant D discussed the positive benefits of influencing authority. She stated, "When you're working directly with schools, it takes longer to get there, but you have better commitment and buy-in by the people who are implementing the systems. And so, there's so much benefit from that." Participant F enthusiastically stated, "Oh, it has always had a positive impact. Influence tends to be more on the positive side than it is on the negative side." This sentiment was echoed by Participant G, who also said, "It was definitely a positive.

**Maintaining Integrity Despite Challenges.** Several participants expressed feeling more comfortable influencing rather than directly challenging authority because it

aligned with their personalities and values. They also emphasized the importance of maintaining integrity despite the challenges they faced. Participant A, for example, noted, “But at the end of the day, you have to have integrity and you have to stand for something.” This statement was similarly stated by Participant C who said, “I lead with truth; I lead with integrity.” This sentiment was further expressed by Participant E: “So whether it costs me my health or me having to find another employment that was okay because I never negated my integrity. And for me, it’s always about the kids.”

**Emotional Intelligence and Leadership.** The theme of emotional intelligence emerged among some of the participants. Participant A described emotional intelligence as “emotional intelligence, to know when to be assertive, when to lay back, when to let the learning happen, when to interject.” She further stated, “You need to have emotional intelligence because you work with people. Your job is to influence, to build and to move people.” This sentiment was further echoed by Participant C: “It’s about equity and access. I need to know the stories. I need to know the people, I need to build relationships, but more importantly, I need to know the why.”

### **Research Question 2: Preparing but Also Improvising**

The second research question examined, “What perceived impact did preparing but also improvising have on Latina superintendents’ advancement to an executive leadership position?”

#### **Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

Regarding both planning and improvising, 50% of respondents agreed that they do so unquestionably, and 50% agreed that they do so generally (see Figure 8). As shown in Figure 9, 87.5% of respondents who evaluated the impact were of the opinion that it

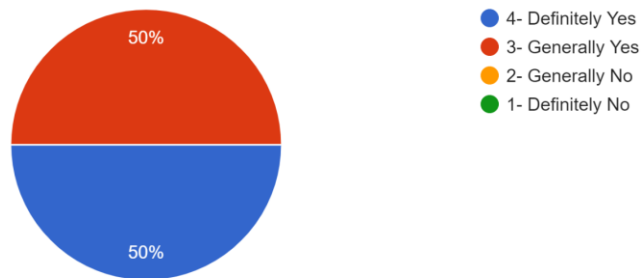
had a significant positive influence on their career trajectory. On the other hand, 12.5% of respondents indicated that this positively impacted their career trajectory to some extent.

**Figure 8**

*Quantitative Responses to the Use of Preparing but Also Improvising*

EXAMPLE: While I like to prepare in advance, I also am comfortable going into unfamiliar situations and capable of providing on the spot solutions.

8 responses

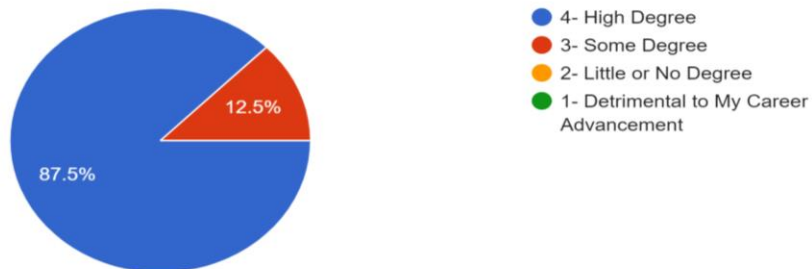


**Figure 9**

*Quantitative Responses to the Impact of Preparing but Also Improvising*

IMPACT: How much of a positive impact do you perceive Preparing but also Improvising had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?

8 responses



## Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation

### *Preparing but Also Improvising*

The following three themes were identified based on the responses provided by the eight participants regarding situations in which they had to improvise without prior planning: adaptability and situational leadership, navigating unforeseen circumstances, and confidence and resourcefulness as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience, Preparing But Also Improvising*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Adaptability and situational leadership	18	8	100%
Navigating uncertainty and decision making	21	6	75%
Confidence and resourcefulness	7	4	50%

**Adaptability and Situational Leadership.** The theme of adaptability and situational leadership was emphasized by all the participants. They highlighted the significance of adaptability in their leadership approaches based on situational demands. Participant E shed light on the unpredictable nature of leadership, affirming, “Preparation is key. ... But just the nature of being a leader, you don’t ever know what day-to-day is going to be like.” Participant C highlighted the importance of collaborative problem solving, stating, “I came in and said, look, let’s figure this out together. Let’s be elbow partners.” Participant A discussed the ability to learn and adapt: “If you’re going to be a leader, you’re always going to be a learner.” These shared perspectives underscore the

dynamic nature of leadership, emphasizing continual learning, collaborative problem solving, and preparedness for unforeseen challenges.

**Navigating Uncertainty and Decision Making.** Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic surfaced as a prominent topic among all the participants. This theme illuminated situations in which leaders faced a lot of uncertainty. They had to make important decisions without much planning because of unexpected events brought on during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant B expressed the profound uncertainty experienced during the pandemic, labeling it as “the most uncertain period” in her career. She continued to say, “I probably would say one of the biggest areas that I thought I was specifically planning and then had to improvise, and change was during COVID.” Participant E also shared a similar statement: “When COVID hit, everybody was figuring out how to communicate with the community.” These examples demonstrate the challenges Latina leaders faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and their ability to navigate during uncertain times.

**Confidence and Resourcefulness.** The theme of confidence and resourcefulness emerged throughout the narratives shared by some of the participants. Participant C recounted a situation when she had to be courageous and resourceful, taking a risk by asking her team to work collaboratively to solve a problem: “I asked them, let’s figure this out together. That was a huge risk and was really, really scary.” This statement encapsulates the courageous approach to problem solving, emphasizing the importance of confidence when facing challenges. Participant G demonstrated resourcefulness, affirming, “At the last minute, whatever needs to happen, I get to do it ... thanks to the team that I have.” Participant H’s reflection on being overprepared also demonstrates the

proactive approach to readiness: “I have to be overprepared to feel prepared. But I think as an educational leader, you also have to always be ready to pivot.” This statement underscores the balance between preparation and resourcefulness. Overall, these narratives illuminate confidence and resourcefulness demonstrated by Latina superintendents in educational settings.

***Impact of Preparing but Also Improvising***

The following themes surfaced during the interviews regarding the impact of preparing but also improvising adaptive decision making in crisis situations, preparedness for unforeseen circumstances, and positive impact of embracing improvisation as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7**  
*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents’ Experience, Impact of Preparing But Also Improvising*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Adaptive decision making in crisis situations	17	8	100%
Preparedness for unforeseen circumstances	12	8	100%
Positive impact of embracing improvisation	13	7	87.5%

**Adaptive Decision Making in Crisis Situations.** The participants uniformly stressed the importance of adaptability and swift decision making in their roles as superintendents. Participant B shared firsthand experiences citing instances of facing emergencies such as a school fire or responding to natural disasters: “I had to make decisions that affect a community, as a superintendent, you need to move really quickly from one minute to the next, I have to make decisions at times on the drop of a pin.”



Participant C emphasized, “You have to be able to improvise. You can’t know everything.” Participant F also provided an insight into their proactive approach during the COVID-19 pandemic organizing vaccination clinics and personally administering tests to staff:

We were going into work opening up the district office at 6:30 in the morning so we could personally test our staff. ... Everybody needs to see you right there with them and try to be part of the solution.

This example illustrates the adaptability required of leaders in crises and how they navigate unforeseen challenges.

**Preparedness for Unforeseen Circumstances.** The importance of being ready for unforeseen circumstances was stressed by all the interviewees. Participant D compared being prepared to face unforeseen circumstances to a teacher preparing a lesson plan: “You are going to have a great lesson plan, but you also have to prepare for where it could go sideways and where you have to have a lot of other information.”

Participant F echoed the idea stating, “As a superintendent, especially in times of crisis, everybody needs to see you right there with them and try to be part of the solution.”

Participant G also emphasized preparedness, acknowledging “Sometimes I just say, we have to do what we have to do. We do it and go with it.”

**Positive Impact of Embracing Improvisation.** Some of the participants recognized the benefits of planning and improvisation. Participant C emphasized, “You can’t know everything. And if you can’t improvise you have to be centered and you have to know who you are and you have to trust your gut.” Similarly, Participant E noted the value of improvisation, stating, “Being able to think on the spot and change trajectory is

critical for a position like a superintendency.” Additionally, Participant H also highlighted the significance of adaptability: “You just never know if something’s going to move forward, whatever the circumstances that you’re meeting, you might just need to pivot and you need to be prepared to pivot.” Moreover, Participant F shared experiences of community care during the pandemic, emphasizing the importance of adapting to unforeseen circumstances: “Especially in times of crisis, everybody needs to see you right there with them and trying to be part of the solution.” These collective narratives highlight the importance of embracing improvisation and adaptability in the superintendent’s role.

### **Research Question 3: Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion**

The third research question asked, “What perceived impact did engaging in effective forms of self-promotion have on Latina superintendents’ advancement to an executive leadership position?”

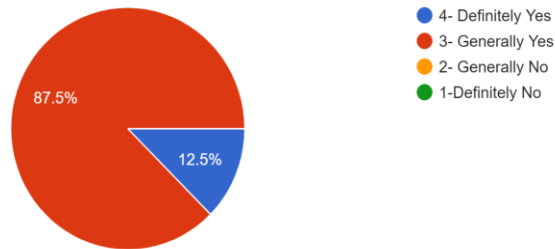
### **Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

Regarding engaging in effective forms of self-promotion, Figure 10 reveals that 12.5% of respondents agreed that they do so unquestionably, 87.5% agreed that they do so frequently. As depicted in Figure 11, among those assessing the impact of this, 37.5% believed it had a significant positive influence on their career trajectory; 50% agreed that it had some positive influence; and 12.5% agreed that it had minimal to no positive influence.

**Figure 10**

*Quantitative Responses to the Use of Engaging in Effective Forms of Self Promotion*

EXAMPLES While I believe in allowing my work to speak for itself, I have found ways to effectively highlight my accomplishments.  
8 responses

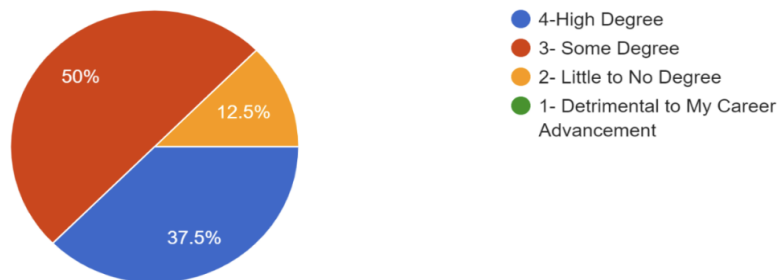


**Figure 11**

*Quantitative Responses to the Impact of Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion*

**EXAMPLES**

How much of a positive impact do you perceive allowing your work speak for itself, had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?



**Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

*Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion*

The following themes surfaced during the interviews regarding the experiences lived by Latina superintendents and how they effectively used self-promotion strategies and the impact it had on their career trajectories (see Table 8).

**Table 8***Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience, Engaging in Forms of Self-Promotion*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Self-promotion and cultural identity	18	8	100%
Subtle self-promotion through work and actions	16	8	100%
Overcoming cultural barriers for self-promotion	12	6	75%
Communication and social media as a self-promotion tool	4	4	50%

**Self-Promotion and Cultural Identity.** Balancing self-promotion and humility emerged as a prominent theme in the experiences shared by some Participants. Participant A stated, “I share my achievements and accomplishments under an air of humility.” This was echoed by another participant who stated, “Humility is a big value in my family, humility that it’s, it’s always been very difficult for me throughout my career to self-promote, try to, it feels like you’re bragging on yourself, and that’s kind of a hard thing to do.” In addition, Participant G commented, “And that’s one of the things she said culturally speaking, I am Mexicana, Latina and we’re not taught to showcase, or show off.” This sentiment was further expressed by Participant H who said, “And I think it might be a matter of either my culture or even upbringing where we tend to work more toward the common good of the group as opposed to the merit of one person that, and we’re also taught to be humble.” These statements expressed the conflict some of the Latinas experienced between effectively self-promoting and their cultural identity.

**Subtle Self-Promotion Through Work and Actions.** Latina superintendents acknowledged the cultural aspect of humility, finding it challenging to overtly self-promote. Instead, they preferred indirect methods to showcase accomplishments. This emerged as a prevalent theme echoed by Participants A, B, and D. Participant A exemplified this notion by emphasizing her active engagement in community events, such as attending parent meetings and partaking in a recent carnival, where they received commendations from several parents for their outstanding work. This reflects a form of subtle self-promotion through visible presence and contributions, garnering positive feedback from stakeholders without explicit self-advertisement.

In addition, Participant B brought up a viewpoint that emphasized the fact that almost every professional action might be interpreted as a form of self-promotion. Participant D presented a more modest approach, focusing on promoting the collective achievements of students and staff rather than emphasizing individual recognition. Participant D emphasized, “I think if there’s any promotion, it’s of the work that we do ... and less about who gets to take credit for that.” This perspective accentuates the subtle nature of self-promotion, in which the focus is diverted from individual achievements to the broader accomplishments of the entire team. These statements denote how some Latina superintendents used their work as a means to promote and showcase.

**Overcoming Cultural Barriers for Self-Promotion.** The theme of overcoming cultural barriers for self-promotion was obtained from the reflections of Participants C, E, G, and H. Participant H reflected on cultural differences, stating, “Growing up, my colleagues who were not of my culture ... have no problem with sharing about themselves.” Participant C reflected on the struggle, stating, “It was really hard, but I did

it. ... Culturally speaking, we're not taught to showcase and to say, okay, this is what we're capable of doing." This was echoed by Participant H who further emphasized the cultural inclination toward group merit, stating, "We tend to work more toward the common good of the group as opposed to the merit of one person." Additionally, Participant E articulated a challenge in embracing self-promotion despite not naturally leaning toward it. Participant G discussed the difficulty of advocating for oneself, particularly when it is necessary to self-promote to advance in one's career.

**Communication and Social Media as Self-Promotion Tools.** This theme is evident in the experiences shared by Participants A, E, F, and G. Participant A acknowledged the deliberate use of social media for self-promotion, actively engaging by consistently posting and sharing thoughts. She recognized the significance of these digital spaces in shaping professional perception. Similarly, Participant E stressed the importance of using communication platforms, especially social media, to offer insights into personal values and thought processes. Participant F specifically stressed the impact of community outreach, stating, "I love being out in our community. ... It really was a very quick way for me to let the whole community know who I am." This physical engagement showcased active involvement, allowing for personal connections and establishing a professional presence within the community.

Additionally, Participant G highlighted their social media use, stating, "I'm big in social media, and I was very active on Twitter in my previous district." This participant emphasized the influential role of social media as a platform for self-promotion, leveraging digital spaces to foster engagement and exhibit professional attributes.

### ***Impact of Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion***

During the interviews about the perceived impact of engaging in effective forms of self-promotion, the following themes emerged: self-promotion strategies and visibility, indirect self-promotion and visibility, and mixed impact of self-promotion (see Table 9).

**Table 9**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience, Impact Engaging in Forms of Self-Promotion*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Self-promotion strategies and visibility	10	6	75%
Indirect self-promotion and humility	13	7	75%
Negative impact of self-promotion	12	5	62.5%

**Self-Promotion Strategies and Visibility.** Visibility emerged as a prominent strategy used by many Latina superintendents as evidenced by Participants A, B, F, G, H, and D. Participant A underscored the importance of visibility, perceiving it as a form of self-promotion. Her statement, “You’re visible. You’re visible everywhere,” highlights the significance of being present across various platforms or settings, contributing to heightened recognition. For Participant F, the role of social media in engaging families was crucial. She mentioned, “I have families that constantly compliment that branding. ... They feel part of it.” This acknowledgment highlights the positive impact of an active social media presence in fostering community engagement and inclusivity.

**Indirect Self-Promotion and Humility.** The themes of indirect self-promotion and the role of humility emerged as key elements influencing the self-promotion strategies of Participants A, F, and H. Participant A spoke about indirect self-promotion, emphasizing validation from others. She stated, “It would be more of a validation of maybe what people have already known or what they’ve been told.” Participant F highlighted the role of humility in her self-promotion approach, saying, “But I also share my achievements ... under an air of humility.” Participant H also focused on indirect promotion and humility, expressing, “I do it again ... with an air of humility because I feel blessed and I’m just really grateful.” These statements from the participants underscore the importance they place on indirect self-promotion strategies and humility in their roles as Latina superintendents.

**Mixed Impact of Self-Promotion.** The findings from Latina superintendents reveal diverse perspectives on the impact of self-promotion in their careers, highlighting both positive and negative viewpoints. Participant B expressed a positive stance on self-promotion, stating, “Absolutely positive because gaining the knowledge and doing what’s best for kids was my way of gaining recognition.” Similarly, Participant E viewed self-promotion positively, especially in the context of being part of a marginalized community. She affirmed, “Positive. Especially being part of a marginalized community, you have to learn to do that. Shamelessly and self-promote.” Participant F also shared a positive perspective, linking self-promotion to parent engagement. She noted, “Overall? It’s been positive. ... I have families that constantly compliment that branding, so to speak, because they feel part of it.”



Conversely, some participants had negative views of self-promotion. Participant D reflected on her observations, stating, “Looking at others, those who have been big self-promoters, which has hindered their careers rather than helped their careers.” Participant H expressed discomfort with self-promotion despite using it strategically. She said, “It’s never felt very comfortable ... but I do use that strategy ... with an air of humility.”

These findings indicate that Latina superintendents have varied experiences and attitudes toward self-promotion. Although some recognize its importance in gaining visibility and advancing professionally, others point out the potential drawbacks and cultural challenges, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that includes humility.

#### **Research Question 4: Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path**

The fourth research question asked, “What perceived impact did welcoming a less prescribed career path have on Latina superintendents’ advancement to an executive leadership position?”

#### **Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

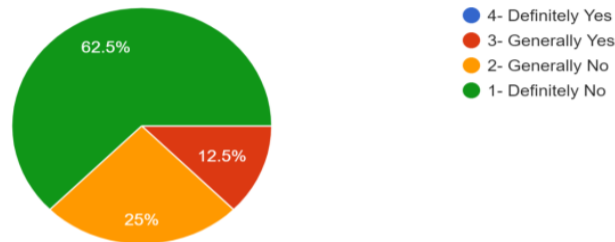
According to Figure 12, 12.5% of participants indicated that they normally welcome a less predetermined career path. In comparison, 25% agreed that they generally do not and 62.5% agreed that they absolutely do not. Figure 13 shows that when evaluating the impact of this, 100% believed that it had a significant positive impact on their career trajectory.

**Figure 12**

*Quantitative Responses to the Use of Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career*

EXAMPLES: I have taken a lateral move or a job outside my career field.

8 responses

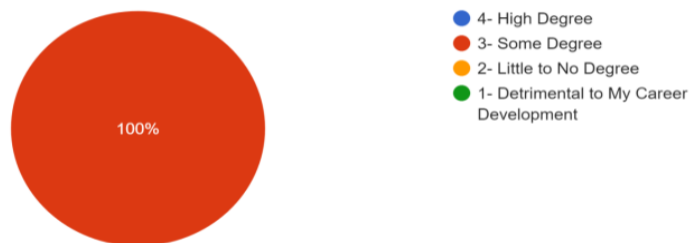


**Figure 13**

*Quantitative Responses to the Impact of Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path*

IMPACT: How much of a positive impact do you perceive Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?

1 response



**Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

*Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path*

Based on the career reflections of the Latina superintendents centering on their experiences regarding welcoming a less prescribed career path, the following themes

emerged: traditional versus divergent career trajectories, unforeseen opportunities and mentorship, and cultural values and expectations (see Table 10).

**Table 10**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience, Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Traditional trajectories vs. divergence	14	8	100%
Unforeseen opportunities and mentorship	10	6	75%
Cultural values and overcoming expectation	7	4	50%

**Traditional Trajectories Versus Divergence.** The exploration of career paths among Latina superintendents highlighted a range of experiences, from traditional to divergent trajectories. Participant A described her career path as traditional, each role representing an upward movement. She said, “Every position that I’ve taken has been an upward movement.” Participant B also followed a traditional trajectory, particularly noting the influence of her gender on this path. She stated, “But as a female, I do feel like I followed the trajectory that was very traditional.” Participant D, while acknowledging a traditional career path in education, also highlighted her involvement in nontraditional education-related endeavors. She commented, “I have been involved in other education-related endeavors that weren’t traditional.” Participant F spoke about the importance of taking varied steps in a career. She expressed, “I’m a big believer in steps. I think you build credibility by sitting in a lot of different seats.”

In contrast, Participant C discussed how her career deviated from the traditional path when she was asked to open a charter school. She reflected on this as a valuable experience, saying, “It was actually the greatest gift ever because what it did is it gave me a lot of experience and understanding.” Participant E shared a similar divergence in her career, having worked as an attorney before transitioning to education. This background provided her with a strong foundation to advocate for equity in her role as a superintendent. Participant G challenged the idea of a linear career path. She emphasized the benefit of varied experiences, stating, “It doesn’t necessarily have to be 1, 2, 3; it can be 1, 5, 3, 7. It doesn’t have to follow that pathway.” These narratives from Latina superintendents illustrate a spectrum of career trajectories ranging from following traditional paths to embracing diverse and unconventional experiences.

**Unforeseen Opportunities and Mentorship.** Another theme that emerged from the experiences shared by Latina superintendents highlights unforeseen opportunities that affected the career trajectories of some of the participants.

Participant B’s journey exemplifies how unexpected opportunities led to career growth. She recounted that her site administrator encouraged her to pursue her administrative credentials, which led her to where is now, a superintendent: “In a lot of ways, it was actually the greatest gift ever because what it did is it gave me a lot of experience.” Participant C resonated this sentiment by stating that opening a school led to greater opportunities:

It’s a huge opportunity that I had. I mean, to create schools, it’s a gift. I hope everybody has that opportunity in life. I never would’ve thought based upon where I had started that that’s actually what I would’ve done.

Participant F, recalled that she was given the advice to take any opportunity that was offered:

If you get an opportunity, always say yes. Don't turn it down because you don't know if that opportunity's going to come back. So, she always says yes. She's like, there's never going to be the right time for anything. You just have to take that leap of faith and do so.

Participant H reflected on the fact she changed her career trajectory from psychology to educational leadership because she was mentored and advised to do so:

But in order to become a school psychologist, I was advised that you should probably be a teacher first. ... I was a teacher and a school psychologist that I was exposed to these other possibilities and was actually mentored to move in a different direction. So, it took me out of the school psych path and put me more into the admin path.

These experiences highlight the significant role that unexpected opportunities and mentorship can play in shaping the career paths of Latina superintendents, underscoring the value of adaptability and openness to new possibilities in professional growth.

**Gender Difference.** The theme of gender differences in career progression, particularly in the speed of rising to executive leadership positions, emerged prominently in the discussions with Latina superintendents. Participant B highlighted the distinct trajectories between males and females in reaching executive roles. She outlined a standard career path for females and contrasted it with the faster progression often experienced by males:

So, I really did lead a very standard trajectory. I would say as for a female. For a female, I want to make that clear because males do not follow the same trajectory that we do. And that is research based. Males jumped, they would've jumped, no coaching assistant, assistant principal probably by the age of 30, principal by the age of 33, and then superintendent by the age of 40. So, they have a whole different trajectory, I would say. But as a female, I do feel like I followed the trajectory that was very traditional.

Participant H echoed this sentiment, noting that men often “leap over positions when they become superintendents.” This comment reinforces the perception of a faster and possibly more streamlined path to leadership roles for men compared to women.

Participant E also touched on the gender dynamics within the superintendency, observing that it is a “very male dominated position.” This statement reflects the broader gender imbalance in top leadership roles in the education sector. These insights from Latina superintendents underscore the challenges and disparities in career advancement based on gender, highlighting the different paths and barriers experienced by women on their way to executive leadership positions.

### ***Impact of Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path***

Based on the responses provided by the eight participants regarding whether not moving or staying with a traditional trajectory had a positive or negative impact on their career, the following three themes were identified: exploring varied career paths in educational leadership, embracing challenges and breaking prescribed paths, and the significance of diverse experiences in professional growth as shown in Table 11.

**Table 11**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience Impact of Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Exploring varied career paths in educational leadership	10	4	50%
Embracing challenges and breaking prescribed paths	8	4	50%
The significance of diverse experiences in professional growth	5	3	37.5%

**Exploring Diverse Career Paths in Educational Leadership.** The experiences of Latina superintendents, as shared by Participants A, C, D, and H, reveal the diversity in career paths within educational leadership. Participant A highlighted the significance of continual learning and growth in her career journey. She expressed a point at which she felt the need to seek new challenges, stating, “I’ve done that. I’m just doing the job. I’m not learning anymore, and I need to move on.” This statement underscores her dedication to professional development and her desire to find roles that offer new learning experiences.

Participant C discussed a notable transition in her career path, moving from the curriculum and instruction department to the human resources department. This move demonstrates her ability to adapt and venture into different areas within the educational field, showcasing her diverse skill set and willingness to explore new roles.

Participant D shared insights into her unique career trajectory, which involved transitioning from a principal role into the realm of educational business. She described

this move: “I stepped from being a principal into the business realm, that’s not the most common path.” This indicates a break from traditional paths in educational leadership, highlighting her willingness to embrace nonconventional roles and areas of expertise.

Participant H highlighted the uniqueness of her expertise, particularly in an area not commonly associated with superintendent roles. She emphasized her special education background, noting, “There’s not too many superintendents who consider themselves to be experts in the area of special education.” This specialization distinguishes her in the field of educational leadership, showcasing the importance of niche expertise in expanding leadership roles. These narratives collectively illustrate the varied and unique career trajectories of Latina superintendents in educational leadership, reflecting their individual journeys, specialized skills, and the nonlinear paths they have navigated to achieve their current positions.

**Embracing Challenges and Breaking Prescribed Paths.** The narratives shared by some of the participants reflect a common theme of embracing challenges and breaking away from prescribed paths. Participant C’s choice to move to a smaller district highlighted her readiness to embrace new challenges. She recounted, “I wasn’t sure how to navigate such a big district. So definitely that made that decision to go into a smaller district, which I learned so much because I was able to navigate it so much more and ins and outs and learn the people, the key players, the key just overall.” This decision illustrates her courage to step out of her comfort zone and her desire to gain a deeper understanding of different educational environments.

Similarly, Participant A expressed the need for continual growth and learning in her career. She stated, “I needed to move because okay, I’ve done that. I’m just doing the



job. I'm not learning anymore, and I need to move on." This sentiment reflects her commitment to professional development and her determination to seek new challenges rather than remain in a stagnant role.

These narratives from Latina superintendents in educational leadership demonstrate a willingness to embrace challenges and diverge from traditional or expected career paths. Their experiences underscore the importance of adaptability, continual learning, and the courage to pursue new opportunities in professional growth and development.

**The Significance of Diverse Experiences in Professional Growth.** Some of the narratives shared by the participants illuminated the impact and significance of embracing diverse experiences and professional growth. Participants A, B, D, and F shared the importance of serving on various committees as a way to enhance their skills and gain visibility. Participant B emphasized the benefits of participating in committees beyond her immediate role: "But I just decided as an AP to participate in a lot of committees outside as well so that I could be influential in the district making decisions." Similarly, Participant C noted the learning opportunities provided by committee involvement: "I'm part of this committee, part of that committee, that's how I am going to learn more." Participant D also highlighted the strategic importance of seeking diverse roles, explaining, "I did that for that reason. It gave me a lot of experience."

Participant H discussed her extensive involvement in bilingual special education, spanning multiple school districts. She expressed confidence in her expertise, saying, "I really do feel I am an expert. ... I often served as a consultant for other school districts regarding bilingual special education issues." Her experience in a specialized area of

education underscores the significance of developing niche expertise as a part of professional growth.

These experiences shared by Latina superintendents underscore the importance of embracing a variety of roles and responsibilities. Their involvement in committees and specialized fields not only expanded their skill set but also increased their influence and recognition within the educational community. This diverse professional engagement highlights the role of varied experiences in shaping effective leaders in education.

#### **Research Question 5: Aim for Being Respected Over Being Liked**

The fifth research question asked, “What perceived impact did aiming for respect over being liked have on Latina superintendents’ advancement to an executive leadership position?”

#### **Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation**

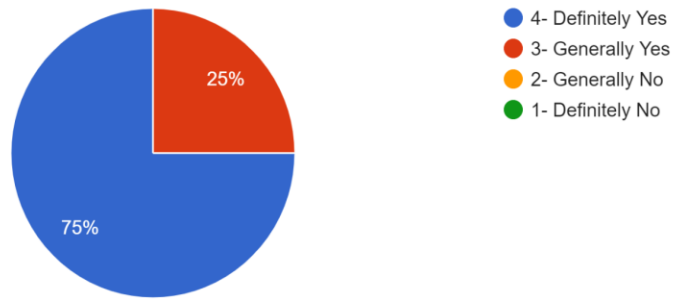
Figure 14 shows that in the area of aiming for being respected over being liked, 75% of participants agreed that they definitely do this, and 25% agreed that they generally do this. As shown in Figure 15, when evaluating the impact of this, 62.5% believed to a high degree that this had a positive impact on their career trajectory. In comparison, 25% rated this as having some degree of a positive impact on their career trajectory, and 12.5% agreed this had little to no degree of impact on their career trajectory.

**Figure 14**

*Quantitative Responses to the Use of Aiming for Being Respected Over Being Liked*

EXAMPLES I have undertaken actions that may not necessarily enhance my popularity but have garnered respect for my decision-making abilities.

8 responses

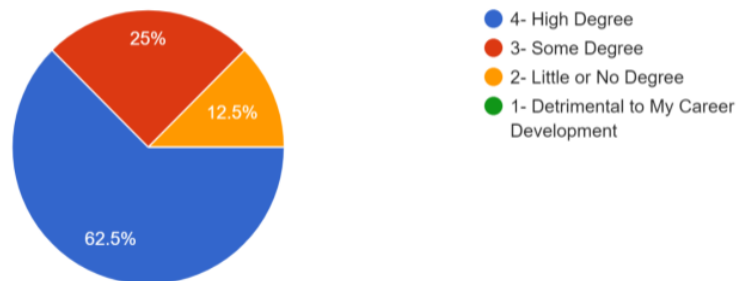


**Figure 15**

*Quantitative Responses to the Impact of Aiming for Being Respected Over Being Liked*

IMPACT: How much of a positive impact do you perceive Aiming for Respect over Being Liked had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?

8 responses



## Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation

### *Aiming for Being Respected Over Being Liked*

During the interview questions on aiming for being respected over being liked, the following themes emerged: ethical leadership, courageous decision making, prioritizing educational equity and student welfare, resilience in upholding righteous decisions and prioritizing integrity, and navigating likability vs respect as shown in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience, Aiming for Being Respected Over Being Liked*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Ethical leadership courageous decision making	24	8	100%
Prioritizing educational equity and student welfare	21	8	100%
Navigating likability vs. respect	16	6	75%

**Ethical Leadership Courageous Decision Making.** This theme demonstrates the importance of prioritizing the needs of the organization over personal sentiments and the courage required to execute difficult decisions. The interviews revealed instances when participants prioritized organizational welfare over personal preferences. Participant A articulated this by stating,

I've said no to program changes when they are not good for the schools. I've advanced and approved advanced courses going against popular demands. I made

the tough call to demote someone I valued because it was the best choice for the organization.

Her actions reflect a dedication to what is best for her organization even at the cost of personal sentiments. Similarly, Participant D shared her experience of making an unpopular decision to change the football coach, a choice that was met with disapproval because of the coach's popularity. She stated, "I have had many, many times where I was not necessarily liked. I think one of the big ones was changing the football coach. That was a very unpopular decision because he was well-liked." Her decision highlights the courage needed to prioritize the organization's welfare over personal popularity.

Participant B recounted her reputation for holding people accountable, particularly in her role with assistant principals. She explained, "They sent me an assistant principal that wasn't doing a good job, and it was my job to assist with that." Moreover, Participant E, recalled facing challenges, holding teachers accountable, and addressing union grievances: "I just took on these battles and the union constantly grieved me." Together, these narratives from Latina superintendents illustrate the critical role of ethical leadership and courageous decision making in educational settings. They highlight the necessity of making difficult choices for the greater good, often in the face of opposition, to ensure the best outcomes for their organizations.

**Prioritizing Educational Equity and Student Welfare.** Fostering educational equity and ensuring student success was echoed throughout the participants' narratives. Participant B emphasized this by asserting, "I am doing what is right for kids. That is the bottom line for me." This statement reflects her dedication to student-centered decision

making and her commitment to ensuring that students' needs and interests are at the forefront of her actions.

Participant C also emphasized a student-first approach, with particular attention to students of color. She firmly stated, "I'm going to always put kids first. I'm also going to think about students of color first." This reflects her commitment to educational equity and her awareness of the unique challenges faced by students from marginalized communities.

Participant E echoed the importance of prioritizing student welfare in her decision-making process. She affirmed, "I will always do what's right for kids." This sentiment highlights her principled approach to leadership in which the well-being and success of students are the guiding factors in her decisions.

Finally, Participant G solidified the common stance of prioritizing student welfare even when it requires making difficult decisions. She stated, "I will make tough decisions for the kids," demonstrating her willingness to face challenges and make hard choices in the best interests of students.

These perspectives collectively underscore the commitment of Latina superintendents to fostering educational equity and prioritizing the welfare of students in their decision-making processes. Their leadership is characterized by a steadfast dedication to student success and a deep understanding of the role educational equity plays in achieving this goal.

**Navigating Likability Versus Respect.** The participants' narratives revealed diverse perspectives on the balance between likability and respect in leadership roles. Several participants expressed a preference for respect over being liked. Participant B

clearly stated her stance, saying, “I’d rather be respected, especially in the positions I have had.” This sentiment was echoed by Participant E, who emphasized the value of respect in leadership, noting, “Respect is so much more valuable than being liked in leadership positions.”

Participant H shared her journey of evolving priorities, initially valuing being liked but later realizing the greater importance of respect. She recounted, “At first, it was important for me to be liked. ... As I became more experienced, it was more important to be respected.” This shift highlights how perspectives can change with experience.

Participant B further elaborated on the enduring nature of respect compared to the fleeting nature of likability. She added, “Like I said, you can like somebody one day, the next day you may not like them anymore, but respect is something that endures and leaves lasting impressions on people who will then want to follow you.” This viewpoint underscores the idea that respect is a more stable and influential foundation for effective leadership.

Conversely, Participant C offered a different perspective, suggesting that likability and respect are not mutually exclusive. She affirmed, “I feel that it goes hand in hand because I don’t see respect as necessarily being polarized by being liked. You can be liked and respected at the same time.” This stance highlights the possibility of achieving a balance in which a leader can be both respected and liked.

These varying viewpoints from Latina superintendents illuminate the complex interplay between being liked and being respected in leadership positions. Some prioritize respect for its enduring impact, but others believe in the possibility of harmonizing respect with likability.

### ***Impact of Aiming for Being Respected Over Being Liked***

The following themes surfaced when the participants were asked to share their experiences and perceptions concerning the impact of aiming for being respected over being liked: impact of prioritizing respect over being liked, integrity and consistency, and transparent communication and courageous decision making (see Table 13).

**Table 13**

*Themes Related to Latina Superintendents' Experience, Impact of Aiming for Being Respected Over Being Liked*

Theme	References	Participants	% of participants
Impact of prioritizing respect over likability	16	8	100%
Integrity and consistency	21	8	100%
Transparent communication and courageous decision making	10	6	75%

**Impact of Prioritizing Respect Over Likability.** Participant A emphasized the importance of being respected as a leader: “I am recognized as a leader who’s very well respected. ... It’s not just about being liked; it’s about appreciating dedication and clarity in leadership.” This highlights her belief that respect stems from demonstrating commitment and clear leadership qualities.

Participant B underscored the significance of respect, asserting, “Respect is something that people earned by hard work and their actions.” She emphasized that respect is a result of one’s efforts and behavior rather than a byproduct of popularity.

Participant E linked respect with effective decision making, affirming, “The more I make decisions that are beneficial for children and staff, the higher the level of respect



garnered, even if people might not agree with those decisions.” This viewpoint suggests that respect can be gained through making beneficial decisions for the community even if they are not universally popular.

Similarly, Participant H recognized the importance of making tough but necessary decisions in leadership. She noted, “A vital quality in educational leaders is the willingness to make tough, yet necessary, unpopular decisions.” This underscores her belief that respect is often earned through the courage to make difficult choices.

The participants collectively expressed that prioritizing respect over likability has positively impacted their careers. Participant B further supported this sentiment, stating, “Respect is something evident in well-respected individuals, and it’s a quality worth aspiring to.” This reinforces the idea that respect is a key attribute for successful leadership and has a lasting impact on one’s career trajectory.

These perspectives from Latina superintendents demonstrate a unified view on the value of prioritizing respect in their professional journeys, emphasizing that respect often earned through hard work, clear leadership, and tough decision making, is a crucial element for effective and enduring leadership.

**Integrity and Consistency.** Latina superintendents underscored the importance of integrity and consistency in their decision-making processes, as reflected in the comments of Participants D, E, and H. Participant D emphasized the primacy of integrity in her leadership role: “For me, it’s more about integrity rather than being liked. ... Hopefully, they’ll like me then for the right reasons.” This highlights her belief that integrity should be the foundation of decision making and likability should be a secondary though favorable outcome.

Participant E echoed this sentiment, tying respect to decision making that prioritizes the welfare of children and staff. She said, “The more I make decisions that are right by kids and staff ... the higher level of respect you get. ... I’m good with not being liked.” This illustrates her commitment to making decisions based on what is best for others even at the expense of her own popularity.

Participant E further stressed the importance of aligning decisions with students’ best interests, noting, “The more I make decisions that align with the best interests of our students ... the higher the level of respect garnered, even if those decisions might not be popular.” Similarly, Participant H underscored the need to make challenging yet necessary decisions that align with the best interests of students and the educational institution.

Additionally, Participant D highlighted the value of consistency and predictability in her decision making. She mentioned, “People may not always agree with me, but they understand the reasoning behind my decisions. ... I’m pretty consistent, and that predictability has proven beneficial.” This consistency helps others understand her leadership approach even if they don’t always agree with her decisions.

These perspectives from Latina superintendents demonstrate a shared emphasis on integrity, consistency, and a focus on what is best for students and staff. They highlight the necessity of making principled decisions that align with core values even when these decisions are challenging or unpopular, reinforcing the idea that respect and understanding in leadership often stem from a steadfast commitment to integrity and consistency.

**Transparent Communication and Courageous Decision Making.** The narratives of Latina superintendents highlight the essential roles of transparent communication and courageous decision making in cultivating respect in leadership positions. Participant F emphasized the value of clear and honest communication. She stated, “Reaffirms the importance of having transparent communication. ... People appreciate the truth. ... It is better to be done that way.” This underscores her belief that openness and honesty are key to effective leadership and in gaining trust and respect from others.

Participant H supported the notion that making difficult yet necessary decisions is a crucial quality in superintendents. She remarked, “One of those qualities that I think people look for in superintendents ... making those hard decisions that are unpopular but necessary.” This reflects her understanding that leadership often involves navigating challenging situations which decisions might not be well-received but are important for the greater good.

Participant G’s perspective further validated the positive impact of transparent communication on leadership perception and effectiveness. Her affirmation suggests that clear communication is not just a tool for information dissemination but also a critical component of effective leadership.

Moreover, Participant F exemplified a proactive approach to handling challenging situations. She illustrated this with her experience in school negotiations and consolidation processes: “We’ve had very difficult negotiations ... and are going to be going through the school consolidation process now. ... No one can say they didn’t know because we’ve been putting it out there.” This demonstrates her commitment to keeping

stakeholders informed, even during tough circumstances, ensuring transparency throughout the process.

These insights from Latina superintendents underscore the importance of transparent communication and the ability to make tough decisions in leadership roles. They highlight that earning respect in such positions often hinges on the ability to communicate clearly and navigate difficult decisions with integrity and courage.

### **Key Findings**

The analysis of data from quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with eight Latina superintendents generated significant findings about the application and impact of Johnson and Mohr's (2013) personal disruption strategies on their career trajectories. The study revealed the following key conclusions.

#### **Summary of Findings: Challenging Authority**

- Advocacy for students, especially students of color, was a prominent driving force for challenging authority among Latina superintendents.
- Latina superintendents maintained high ethical standards, often challenging authority when decisions compromised their principles.
- Gender and ethnicity influence how Latina superintendents challenged authority.
- Latina superintendents employed a strategic and thoughtful approach when challenging authority.

#### **Summary of Unexpected Findings: Challenging Authority**

- Challenging authority on behalf of students led to promotions for several Latina superintendents.

- The intersectionality of ethnicity more than gender influenced how Latina superintendents challenged authority.

#### **Summary of Findings: Influencing Authority**

- Latina superintendents strategically used data to influence and guide decisions.
- To influence authority, Latina superintendents employed relationship-building and persuasion techniques.
- By skillfully navigating organizational challenges and board dynamics, Latina superintendents were able to influence key leadership.

#### **Summary of Unexpected Findings: Influencing Authority**

- With experience, some Latina superintendents reported shifting from challenging to influencing authority to effectively advocate for change.

#### **Summary of Findings: Prepare but Also Improvising**

- Latina superintendents improvised and adapted their leadership to fit the situation or current need.
- During the COVID-19 shutdowns, Latina superintendents adeptly navigated uncertainty by preparing and improving as needed.
- Confidence and resourcefulness characterize Latina superintendents' authoritative approach, emphasizing their preparation and ability to improvise resourceful solutions.

#### **Summary of Unexpected Findings: Prepare but Also Improvising**

- Being overly prepared was a common theme among Latina superintendents; however, they often went off the plan and improvised to meet the needs or concerns of their community.

- Some Latina superintendents expressed hesitation when improvising or speaking up in predominantly white male environments.

### **Summary of Findings: Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion**

- Latina superintendents reported feeling conflicted between engaging in self-promotion and their cultural identity.
- Participants effectively promoted in subtle ways through their hard work and actions.
- Latina superintendents skillfully overcame cultural barriers for self-promotion, leveraging their unique cultural perspectives to assert authority and advance their careers.
- Some Latina superintendents effectively used social media as a self-promotion tool.

### **Summary of Unexpected Findings: Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion**

- Self-promotion was seen negatively and clashed with the Latina's cultural values and expectations.
- Humility was valued higher than self-promotion for the Latina superintendents.

### **Summary of Findings: Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path**

- Latina superintendents followed diverse and varied career paths, bringing a range of experiences to educational leadership.
- By seizing unforeseen opportunities and embracing diverse experiences, Latina superintendents demonstrated adaptability and resilience in educational settings.
- Participants observed that gender influences the speed of advancement to superintendent positions, and men generally progress faster than women.

### **Summary of Unexpected Findings: Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path**

- Mentorship and guidance significantly influenced the career trajectories of several Latina superintendents.

### **Summary of Findings: Aim for Being Respected Over Being Liked**

- Latina superintendents prioritize educational equity and student welfare over personal popularity.
- Integrity and ethics are more important to Latina superintendents than likeability.
- Latina superintendents earned respect by engaging in transparent communication and courageous decision making.

### **Summary of Unexpected Findings: Aim for Being Respected Over Being Liked**

- Latina superintendents believe that respect leads to being liked.
- Several participants indicated that it is possible to be both respected and liked.

### **Summary**

The aim of this explanatory mixed methods study was to explore the perceived impact of Johnson and Mohr's (2013) personal disruption skills on the advancement to executive leadership positions for eight Latina superintendents. The collection of information involved a Likert scale survey questioning the use and impact of the five disruptive career skills and a semistructured interview. This chapter presented a data analysis concerning the implementation and the perceived impact of the five career skills on the participants' career progression. Significant and unexpected findings pertaining to each research question were identified and presented. The fifth chapter presents a comprehensive summary of the findings, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for future investigation.

## CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This explanatory mixed methods study examined the career trajectory of Latina superintendents and how they used personal disruption strategies as proposed by Johnson and Mohr (2013). The study aimed to ascertain whether the disruption strategy was used and determine the degree to which participants perceived the personal disruption strategy to have affected their professional career trajectory. The study builds on the research conducted by Johnson and Mohr (2013), entitled “Women Need to Realize Work Isn’t School.” This article explained why it is crucial for women to recognize that the professional world differs significantly from the classroom, and the qualities that helped them succeed in school may not be sufficient to succeed in a leadership position. Chapter V presents a comprehensive outline of the study, including its objectives, research inquiries, methodology, sample, and population as well as significant discoveries, conclusions, practical implications, and suggestions for further investigation. Concluding reflections are presented in the chapter.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this explanatory mixed method study was to identify and describe the perceived impact of Johnson and Mohr’s (2013) five disruptive career skills on Latina superintendents’ advancement to an executive leadership position.

### **Research Questions**

1. What perceived impact did challenging and influencing authority have on Latina superintendents’ advancement to an executive leadership position?
2. What perceived impact did preparing but also improvising have on Latina superintendents’ advancement to an executive leadership position?



3. What perceived impact did engaging in effective forms of self-promotion have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
4. What perceived impact did welcoming a less prescribed career path have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?
5. What perceived impact did aiming for respect over being liked have on Latina superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position?

### **Methodology**

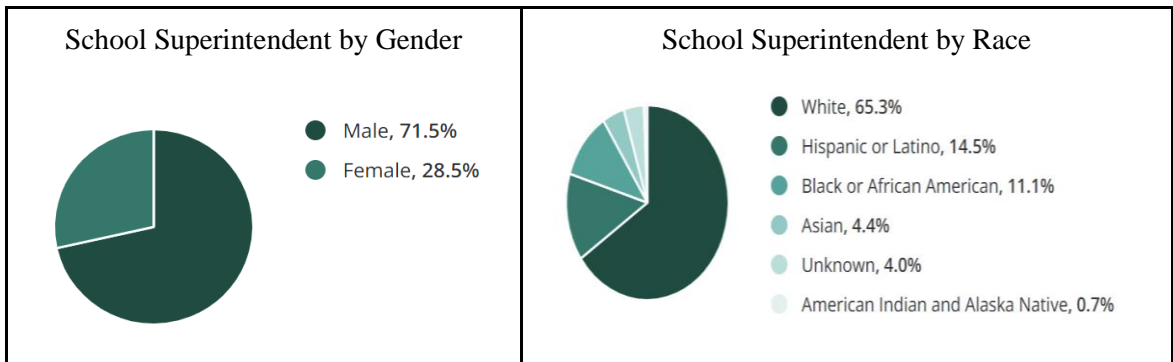
An explanatory mixed methods research design was selected for this study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), this particular design offers the advantage of gathering more extensive data compared to other designs. This enables researchers to analyze both the process and outcomes of the study. Additionally, this design addresses the limitations of using a single approach, bolstering the reliability of the findings obtained through this method. Furthermore, a mixed methods design allowed for the examination of more complex research questions, which was required by this study to analyze the five disruptive strategies employed by the participants of the study. Moreover, by employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, I was able to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the use and degree of implementation of the five disruptive strategies. Last, the research followed the sequential explanatory mixed methods design outlined by McMillan and Schumacher. Quantitative data were gathered first and subsequently supplemented with qualitative data to provide further insight into the findings derived from the quantitative analysis.

## Population

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the population under investigation is the group from which the research seeks to draw conclusions and make generalizations. A population is additionally characterized as a collection of individuals who possess one or more distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from other groups (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This study's demographic consisted of Latina superintendents employed in the United States. At present, the United States is home to a total of 7,292 school superintendents, of whom 28% are female (Zippia, 2023). The majority of school superintendents, accounting for 65% of the overall population, are White individuals (see Figure 2, repeated here for ease of reference). Latino representation among school administrators stands at 14%. Based on the available data, an approximation of 285 Latina superintendents in the United States can be derived.

**Figure 2**

### *Superintendent Population*



*Note.* From *School Superintendent Demographics and Statistics in the US*, by Zippia, July 21, 2023, pp. 1, 3 (<https://www.zippia.com/school-superintendent-jobs/demographics/>).

## **Sample**

To ensure that the sample population for this study was appropriate, a blend of purposeful and convenience sampling techniques was employed. Patton (2014) argued that purposive sampling is a suitable approach in qualitative research when the aim is to select participants who possess particular knowledge, experiences, or attributes that are relevant to the research study. This approach maximizes the probability of selecting participants who possess the greatest potential to provide valuable insights for the research. For example, in the investigation of the experiences of Latina superintendents in California, the use of purposive sampling enabled the detection and inclusion of individuals who satisfied the specified requirements of being Latina and working as a superintendent in California. Convenience sampling was integrated with purposive sampling to accommodate pragmatic considerations. Considering the possible scarcity of Latina superintendents in California, the identification of accessible and willing participants for the study was facilitated through the use of convenience sampling. Although convenience sampling has inherent limitations in terms of representativeness, it was used in conjunction with purposeful sampling to guarantee a meaningful investigation into the viewpoints and experiences of the Latina superintendents currently employed in California.

## **Summary of Major Findings**

Through analysis and synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative data the following major findings were discovered. Major findings are aligned with the five conceptual areas as outlined in the literature review.

## **Challenging and Influencing Authority: Major Findings**

The first major finding related to how Latina superintendents challenged and influenced authority to advance in their careers was that advocacy for students, especially those of color, served as a prime motivation when challenging authority. All participants expressed an unrelenting commitment to advocate for equity and challenge authority on behalf of students, especially students of color. Some examples include speaking out and challenging the board for inequity in student achievement, changing assessment practices for English language learners, and increasing access to A-G courses for minority students. As one participant stated, “If we design for the margins, we design for everybody.”

These examples demonstrate the participants’ commitment to challenging the status quo and influencing educational policy and practices for greater equity. Each participant used their position, whether as a teacher, administrator, or superintendent, to advocate for underrepresented groups and effect change within their organizations.

A second major finding of this study was that when challenging authority, Latina superintendents maintained high ethical standards and a recognition that they were influenced by the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity. Latina superintendents consistently maintained integrity and ethics. Their decisions were rooted in fairness and a service-oriented mindset, driven by their moral code and core values, as demonstrated by a participant who said, “One thing that I learned is that you have to stay true to yourself. You have to know your core values and what’s important to you.”

The participants also discussed how gender and ethnicity affected them. As one participant put it, “The intersection of being a female person of color ... I think has led me

and a lot of other Latinas to be overprepared for positions that we hold and maybe overqualified in some respects for some positions that we have held along the way.”

A third major finding was that Latina superintendents are intentional and strategic in their use of data, building relationship, and persuasion techniques. Latina superintendents skillfully employed a blend of data analysis, relationship building, and persuasive communication to make impactful decisions.

Data were used to drive changes that were unpopular but important for the benefit of the students. For example, one participant used data to highlight disparities in student achievement for minority students. Another participant discussed how she used data to improve student scores, taking her school from an 800 to a 900 school. A third participant used data to highlight the lack of representation and staff diversity.

The value of building relationships was also emphasized by the Latina leaders who stressed that long-lasting changes come from collaboration. They successfully connected with their boards, staff, and community by building relationships based on trust, transparency, and communication. One superintendent shared an experience of having to change school borders. She mentioned how she used data and constant communication to navigate through that challenging process. Another participant discussed building relationships with her staff to affect and influence a change in school culture. She talked about the value of gaining their trust and establishing her credibility.

### **Challenging and Influencing Authority: Unexpected Major Findings**

An unexpected finding of the study was that although Latina superintendents reported that challenging authority could be detrimental to their career advancement, standing up on behalf of students in some cases led to career promotions. For example,

one participant shared that as a new school psychologist she was fearful of speaking up; nonetheless, she challenged the way bilingual assessments were conducted. Her challenge led to changes in the assessment, and she was recognized as an expert, which later led to her promotion as an administrator. Another participant shared that her constant challenge of low student achievement scores led to her participating in many committees and eventually becoming a coach, which led to her promotion to principalship. Another participant recounted how her challenge of low student achievement during her interview landed her position as superintendent. These narratives collectively illustrate a pattern in which Latina superintendents, despite facing potential risks to their careers, prioritized student advocacy, which often resulted in positive outcomes for their career advancement.

### **Prepare But Also Improvise: Major Findings**

A major finding of this study was that Latina superintendents demonstrated their ability to prepare but improvise and adapt their leadership as needed to fit the situation. A prime example of this adaptability was their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These Latina leaders were required to make significant, rapid decisions in the face of the unprecedented crisis, often having to improvise solutions and strategies with very little time to plan. A superintendent recounted her experience in swiftly transitioning to online learning platforms, underlining her ability to navigate during uncertainty. Another superintendent discussed how she had to learn to manage a budget during severe financial cuts, showcasing her adeptness at crisis management and decision making in challenging financial situations. These scenarios illustrate the capacity of Latina superintendents to

navigate through uncertainty and respond effectively to crises, showcasing their adaptive leadership in unpredictable circumstances.

The second major finding underscores the Latina superintendents' ability to lead with confidence and resourcefulness. Latina leaders not only are prepared but also possess the ability to improvise resourceful solutions when conventional strategies may not suffice. Their confidence empowers them to make bold decisions, and their resourcefulness allows them to find innovative solutions to ensure effective and efficient management of their school districts.

An example of adaptability and resourcefulness was provided by a superintendent who shared that she and her staff got trained to administer COVID-19 tests, going beyond traditional administrative roles to directly ensure the safety and health of their staff and students. This act highlights both confidence and resourcefulness to problem solving. Another example was provided by a superintendent: recognizing the critical need for technology access, she rapidly implemented measures to provide students with the necessary digital tools, showcasing confidence to make prompt and decisive decisions.

Furthermore, in the face of budget constraints exacerbated by the pandemic, another Latina superintendent showcased her resourcefulness. Instead of resorting to standard cost-cutting measures, she creatively reallocated resources and sought alternative funding to sustain educational programs. These instances from the COVID-19 pandemic illuminate the distinctive leadership style of Latina superintendents, one that blends confidence with innovative problem solving.

### **Prepare but Also Improvise: Unexpected Major Findings**

An unexpected major finding was how Latina superintendents balanced being overprepared with adaptive improvisation. This finding reveals their approach to meticulous planning and flexibility and how Latina superintendents displayed the ability to pivot from their well-laid plans. Their agility in improvisation is particularly evident in scenarios that demand immediate and decisive action.

Whether it is adapting to sudden policy shifts, responding to emergent community needs, or navigating the complexities of crisis management, Latina superintendents have shown their ability to adjust their strategies on the spot. For example, one Latina leader shared that she planned a parent presentation on data and then had to pivot and change the topic to bullying because the parents were more interested in that discussion. Another example was given by a leader who discussed how she had to modify the ethnic studies course she had originally planned so that it would be approved by the board. This flexibility is not due to a lack of preparation, but rather to an understanding that leadership often requires quick thinking and responsiveness to rapidly changing circumstances and needs. The ability of the Latina leaders to balance meticulous planning with the capacity to improvise effectively is a testament to their dynamic leadership.

### **Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion: Major Finding**

A major finding of engaging in effective forms of self-promotion was the manner in which Latina superintendents balanced the conflict between their cultural identity and engaging in self-promotion. The superintendents subtly promoted themselves through their hard work and actions. These Latina leaders demonstrated a balance between the



need for self-promotion and adherence to their cultural value of humility. This balancing act was illustrated by the experiences shared by the participants.

For instance, a participant reflected on her journey toward embracing self-promotion, particularly in social media and community engagement. Her approach to self-promotion was subtle and intertwined with her role and responsibilities. By increasing her visibility in educational communities and social media, she managed to elevate her profile while maintaining a focus on her work. This method of promotion, though not overt, led to recognition and appreciation within her community.

Similarly, other participants promoted their skills and capabilities through participation in various committees and events. This subtle self-promotion technique underscores a strategic and culturally sensitive approach to self-promotion among Latina superintendents. Rather than engaging in overt self-promotion, their tactics are integrated into their professional activities. This approach not only aligns with their cultural values but also effectively communicates their competencies and achievements in a manner that is authentic and respectful of their identities. This finding is significant because it illustrates the unique ways in which Latina superintendents navigate the intersection of cultural identity and professional advancement, employing subtlety and authenticity in their self-promotion strategies.

### **Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion: Unexpected Major Finding**

An unexpected finding revealed that self-promotion was perceived negatively and in conflict with cultural values and expectations among Latina superintendents, who placed a higher value on humility than on self-promotion. This conflict primarily arises from a cultural emphasis on humility, which is deeply ingrained in Latino communities.

The traditional values prioritize collective achievements and modesty over individual achievements and self-aggrandizement.

For Latina superintendents, this cultural expectancy creates a unique challenge when one is navigating the professional landscape, particularly in leadership roles in which self-promotion can be a critical aspect of career advancement. Their inclination toward humility, a virtue highly esteemed in their cultural context, often comes into tension with the expectations of self-promotion prevalent in professional settings. This tension is not just a matter of personal preference but is deeply rooted in the cultural fabric that shapes their identities and professional personas.

### **Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path: Major Finding**

A major finding in the career trajectories was that Latina superintendents followed diverse and varied career paths, marked by adaptability and resilience. The career journeys of Latina superintendents illustrate their adaptability, resilience, and the ability to embrace diverse experiences. For example, a participant shared a story that illustrates adaptability. She shared a story of having to step up to meet the needs of her district. She agreed to take on a dual role as superintendent and principal during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. This highlights her adaptability and willingness to step up to opportunities even during times of uncertainty.

Another participant's career path also reflects this theme of adaptability and varied experiences. Her career began outside of education; she was an accountant. Another participant began her career as an attorney and then came into education. Her experience in the courtroom prepared her to navigate the political challenges of the school board. Another example was a Latina leader who recalled being asked to open a

school. A few superintendents gave examples of moving within the field of education into the human resources or business departments. Latina leaders shared that these shifts were very valuable in preparing them to serve in their current role as superintendents.

These narratives from Latina superintendents highlight how their career paths are far from linear or predictable. They are characterized by a readiness to seize unforeseen opportunities, a willingness to step into unfamiliar roles, and a resilience that enables them to thrive in various educational settings. Their stories underscore the importance of flexibility and openness in professional growth, particularly in educational leadership, in which the ability to adapt and respond to changing circumstances is crucial.

### **Aim for Being Respected Over Being Liked: Major Findings**

A major finding with regard to respect and likeability was the commitment of Latina superintendents to prioritize educational equity and student welfare over personal popularity and likeability. This was exemplified in various instances, as revealed in their leadership approaches and decisions. For example, Participant G exemplified this commitment through her decision-making process, making tough choices regarding personnel. She recalled when she had to let go of a very popular coach because it was in the best interest of students. Another example shared by a Latina leader discussed how she denied promoting someone she liked because it was not the best decision for the district. Another leader shared that she had to let go of staff because they were not meeting the needs of students. These examples illustrate the dedication of Latina superintendents to put educational equity and student welfare ahead of their own popularity and likeability.

### **Aim for Being Respected Over Being Liked: Unexpected Major Findings**

An unexpected finding was the belief among Latina superintendents that respect can lead to likability and that both can be achieved simultaneously. This viewpoint suggests that respect, often earned through ethical and principled actions, can pave the way to likability.

For example, a participant shared that making difficult personnel decisions earned her the respect of her staff and the school community. She described making choices that prioritized the best interests of students, demonstrating a commitment to ethical leadership. Although these decisions might not have been immediately popular, they established her as a leader willing to make tough calls for the right reasons. This kind of leadership not only garners respect but can also lead to admiration and likability. This participant shared that members of her staff who initially opposed her decisions later admitted that those decisions were the best decisions. Other participants shared similar stories.

### **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the major findings of the study and supported by a review of the literature regarding the use of Johnson and Mohr's (2013) personal disruption strategies by Latina superintendents in their career trajectories.

#### **Challenging and Influencing Authority**

According to Johnson and Mohr (2013), challenging and influencing authority is a skill that involves questioning the status quo, challenging traditional hierarchies, and advocating for change and innovation. It is an essential trait for female leaders and crucial for career growth. In support of this concept, Novotney (2023) stated that female

leaders who can effectively challenge and influence authority can have a substantial impact on their organizations, fostering innovation and positive change.

### **Conclusion 1**

*Ethnicity more than gender impacts Latina superintendents' approach to their commitment to equitable and principled decision making.*

In challenging authority, ethnicity plays a significant role in shaping Latina superintendents' approach to equitable and principled decision making. This can be explained by the role congruity theory (Finneran, 2016), which examines how society's perceptions of gender roles influence the evaluation of an individual's leadership potential. It acknowledges the double bind women face in leadership positions in which they are expected to exhibit both traditionally masculine and feminine traits. This theory is instrumental in understanding the gender-based challenges Latina superintendents encounter in their leadership roles.

Expectancy value theory (Smith et al., 2015) posits that individuals are motivated to pursue specific activities or objectives when they expect success and attach personal value to the outcomes. It emphasizes the importance of cultural and social factors on individuals' perceptions of value and expectations, which is particularly relevant for Latina superintendents who navigate unique cultural and societal expectations. Together, these two theories provide a framework that is pivotal to understanding the leadership dynamics of Latina superintendents.

### **Conclusion 2**

*Latina superintendents will not compromise their principles when making decisions for students of color.*

Latina superintendents demonstrate a steadfast commitment to their principles, particularly in making decisions that impact students of color. This commitment is reflected in their consistent and strategic approach to challenging authority to maintain high ethical standards. Employing a variety of tactics, including advocacy, negotiation, and direct confrontation of inequitable policies, they advocate for marginalized students, striving for equity and access in education.

Latina leaders through their principled leadership play a critical role in shaping and improving equitable educational outcomes for minority students. The presence of Latina leaders in educational settings offers significant benefits to students, a fact well-supported by extensive literature. According to Zavala (2019), Latina superintendents contribute a distinctive perspective to educational leadership, which positively influences the educational experiences and outcomes of Latino students.

This positive influence is further corroborated by studies from M. G. Castillo and Valencia (2011), which highlight the numerous advantages of having Latina leaders in educational roles. These benefits include a profound understanding of the unique needs and challenges faced by Latino students. Jordan (2023) noted that Latina superintendents can significantly impact Latino students' academic progress. They serve as role models and create nurturing educational environments, fostering both academic success and personal growth among these students.

### **Conclusion 3**

*Although Latina superintendents are strategic in how they challenge authority, they should be aware of the unintended consequences.*

The act of challenging authority has been acknowledged as beneficial for career growth, specifically for women (Johnson & Mohr, 2013). However, Latina superintendents, in their efforts to challenge authority, often find themselves navigating the double bind – a situation in which they must balance assertiveness with traditional feminine qualities like empathy and nurturing. This balancing act, as described in role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), can lead to unintended consequences, such as being perceived as either too aggressive or too soft, affecting their credibility and leadership effectiveness.

Given their ethnic backgrounds, Latina superintendents' actions might be interpreted through the lens of cultural stereotypes. When challenging authority, their behavior could be misread as aligning with certain stereotypes, leading to unintended backlash or undermining of their authority.

In conclusion, although it is essential for Latina superintendents to challenge authority as a part of their strategic leadership, they must also be cognizant of the potential unintended consequences. These might include strained relationships, misinterpretation of actions because of cultural stereotypes, and long-term career impacts. Awareness and careful navigation of these complexities are crucial for their sustained success and effectiveness in leadership roles.

#### **Conclusion 4**

*In addition to being overly prepared, Latina superintendents must be willing to improvise and respond as needed to meet the needs of the students, staff, and situation.*

In their work, Johnson and Mohr (2013) identified preparation coupled with the ability to improvise as the second critical disruptive skill women should engage in to be

successful. Thorough preparation is very important for effective leadership, but the ever-evolving nature of educational environments also requires flexibility and adaptability.

Latina superintendents, therefore, must embrace the art of improvisation, enabling them to respond swiftly and effectively to unexpected challenges and opportunities. This duality of being meticulously prepared yet agile in response is crucial in addressing the diverse needs of students, staff, and various situations that arise in education.

Latina superintendents often emphasize the importance of thorough preparation in their roles. However, the dynamic nature of educational leadership also requires them to be adept at improvisation. This concept is further supported by Loutfi (2021), who stated that “improv plays a powerful role in corporate leadership, helping individuals and organizations not just adapt, but thrive in any environment” (p .1).

Improvisation is not just a reactive skill but a proactive leadership strength. Latina superintendents who can spontaneously address issues and find creative solutions enhance their leadership credibility and effectiveness. According to Feld (2021), successful female leaders not only anticipate potential hurdles and openings but also show the readiness to pivot and recalibrate their strategies when required. He further emphasized that female leaders who possess the crucial skill of rigorously preparing while also being open to adaptation are more adept at overcoming obstacles and also more capable of generating significant changes.

## **Conclusion 5**

*Latina superintendents need to use social media for district promotion to enhance community relations.*



Johnson and Mohr (2013) asserted that strategic self-promotion involves confidently and strategically showcasing one's skills, achievements, and value in an organization to receive recognition. This belief is further supported by an abundance of literature that has suggested women should actively seek suitable avenues for self-promotion, ensuring that their hard work and contributions receive the recognition they deserve (Johnson & Mohr, 2013; Reynolds, 2022).

For this purpose, Latina superintendents need to leverage social media as a tool to enhance their visibility, promote their district, and enhance community engagement. By regularly updating these platforms, they can keep the community informed about district activities, achievements, and challenges, fostering a sense of transparency and openness. The immediacy of social media provides a direct line of communication between superintendents and their communities.

### **Conclusion 6**

*Latinas must leverage their unique cultural awareness and perspective to advance their careers.*

Latina superintendents possess a unique cultural awareness that can be a significant asset in their leadership roles. By capitalizing on their unique strengths and leveraging their diverse experiences, women can position themselves as adaptable and resourceful leaders (Gray, 2018; Samit, 2015). This awareness enables them to connect with diverse student populations and communities in meaningful ways, creating a more inclusive and empathetic educational environment. By leveraging their cultural insights, Latina superintendents can foster stronger relationships with their communities. Latina superintendents can use their cultural perspective to inform decision-making processes.

This approach ensures that policies and initiatives are inclusive and considers the diverse backgrounds of students and staff.

By embracing and using their cultural backgrounds, Latina superintendents serve as role models for aspiring leaders, particularly those from similar cultural backgrounds. This representation is crucial for inspiring and encouraging the next generation of diverse educational leaders. Women should leverage their diverse experiences and skills to their advantage, positioning themselves as leaders and inspiring other women to do the same (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2022).

### **Conclusion 7**

*Taking advantage of unexpected opportunities and mentorship can lead to considerable career growth and development, particularly for Latina superintendents.*

Mentorship is a critical factor in the development of Latina superintendents. It offers guidance, support, and insight, particularly valuable in a field in which Latina representation is limited. Mentors can provide both practical advice and emotional support, helping to navigate the unique challenges faced in leadership roles.

To gain advancement, women must create a power network by selecting individuals in their lives who are devoted to their personal development (Lerner, 2012). Recent research has provided insights into the significance of networks and mentoring connections in facilitating the upward mobility of women and enabling them to overcome gender-related limitations (L Castillo et al., 2021).

In addition, Magdaleno (2006) posited that mentor relationships that involve a gender match can be highly effective and serve as a valuable source of support for those facing gender-related barriers. Munoz stated that women can develop the crucial skills,

confidence, and networks needed to break through the glass ceiling (Muñoz et al., 2014). This is further supported by Quilantan and Menchaca-Ochoa (2004), who reported that Latina superintendents who participated in mentorship and professional exchanges were more likely to advance in their careers.

In conclusion, for Latina superintendents, career growth and development are significantly enhanced by taking advantage of unexpected opportunities and engaging in mentorship. These elements provide avenues for learning, networking, and personal growth, which are crucial for navigating the complexities of educational leadership and advancing in their careers.

### **Conclusion 8**

*Although earning respect was not a primary goal for Latina superintendents, their focus on ethical leadership and educational equity often led to garnering respect.*

According to Johson and Mohr (2013), it is more important for women to be respected than liked. To pursue their professional goals, women must put popular opinion aside and prioritize building a solid reputation and gaining the trust of their colleagues and superiors. Latina superintendents prioritize ethical leadership, which inherently involves making decisions that are just and fair. This commitment, although primarily aimed at creating a positive educational environment, inadvertently garners respect from colleagues, staff, and the community. The focus on doing what is right rather than easy establishes them as ethical leaders who lead with integrity.

By consistently making decisions aligned with ethical leadership and educational equity, Latina superintendents build trust within their communities. This trust, over time, translates into respect that leads to professional success. Earning the respect of others

through one's actions and decisions ultimately builds a strong foundation of credibility and trust, which are essential for long-term success in any professional setting (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

In conclusion, for Latina superintendents, respect is often an outcome of their steadfast commitment to ethical leadership and educational equity. Although not their primary goal, their dedication to these principles naturally leads to a heightened level of respect from all stakeholders in the educational community. This respect further reinforces their effectiveness and impact as leaders.

### **Conclusion 9**

*Despite the complexity of balancing likability and respect, Latina superintendents can achieve both by demonstrating a commitment to student-centered decision making that involves making tough decisions for the greater good.*

Aiming to be respected not just liked involves prioritizing professional respect over popularity. It means making decisions and taking actions that earn the respect of colleagues and superiors even if those decisions are not always the most comfortable or popular ones (Johnson & Mohr, 2013; J. C. Williams, n.d.).

Leaders face the difficult task of choosing between being liked or respected. Despite the complexity of balancing likability and respect, it is possible to achieve both. Latina leaders can achieve both being respected and liked by demonstrating a commitment to student-centered decisions that involves making tough decisions for the greater good.

Making decisions that prioritize students' needs and welfare often leads to respect even if these decisions are tough or unpopular. By focusing on what benefits students,

Latina superintendents demonstrate a clear and compelling leadership priority that garners both respect and appreciation from staff, parents, and the community.

Likability can stem from genuine engagement and empathy in leadership. Latina superintendents who actively listen to and involve their communities in the decision-making process can maintain likability even when making difficult decisions. The responsibility of educational leadership sometimes requires making choices that are not immediately popular. However, when these decisions are clearly communicated as being in the best interest of students and the school community, they can lead to long-term respect and appreciation. Consistently making decisions based on student needs and being transparent about the reasoning behind these choices can help Latina superintendents build trust. This trust, over time, translates into both likability and respect.

In conclusion, Latina superintendents can navigate the complexities of being both liked and respected by focusing on student-centered decision making. This approach, characterized by making tough but necessary decisions for the greater good, establishes them as leaders who are both compassionate and principled, thereby earning the admiration and respect of their communities.

### **Implications for Action**

The study's major findings and conclusions support the following recommendations for action for organizations, school districts, and Latina educational leaders.

### **Implications for Educational Leadership Programs**

- The unique challenges and experiences of Latina superintendents highlight the need for leadership training programs to incorporate cultural competency and diversity training.
- There's an implication for more mentorship and support structures specifically designed to support Latina superintendents and other minority leaders in education.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

- Educational policies should consider the unique perspectives and needs of diverse communities, as highlighted by the experiences of Latina superintendents.
- Educational policies should be more inclusive, considering the diverse cultural backgrounds and needs of the student population.
- There is an implication for educational systems to adopt more equitable practices and policies, as demonstrated by the leadership approaches of Latina superintendents.

### **Implications for Personal and Professional Development**

- The need for Latina superintendents to leverage their cultural awareness for career advancement suggests that professional development should include training in cultural intelligence and its application in leadership.

### **Implications for Community Engagement and Communication**

- The role of social media in enhancing community relations implies a need for more strategic communication approaches in school districts.

- The implications of leveraging cultural awareness suggest that schools and districts should actively engage with and represent their diverse communities.
- To ensure the accessibility of this study's findings for both present and future leaders, I plan to publish it in ACSA, CALSA, and women's publications. In addition, I am committed to sharing these insights through presentations at upcoming Women in Education Leadership Events.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Recommendations for further research regarding the use and impact of personal disruption strategies by female K-12 superintendents from an elementary background are discussed next.

#### **Recommendation 1**

*Replicate the study involving females superintendents from various ethnic backgrounds who employed personal disruption strategies to determine whether there are significant differences in their approaches.*

This study revealed the unique challenges Latina superintendents face because of their intersectional identity. This dual minority status shapes their leadership styles and approaches, making their experiences distinct from their counterparts. It would be valuable to explore whether this would be different for females of other ethnic groups. Comparing the experiences of Latina superintendents with those from other ethnic background would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges Latina superintendents face because of their intersectional identity as both women and members of an ethnic minority.

## **Recommendation 2**

*Replicate the study comparing male and females who employ personal disruption strategies to determine whether there are significant differences in their approaches.*

Research has suggested that men and women may exhibit different leadership styles. A comparative study could explore these differences and their impact on the use of personal disruption strategies. Comparing female superintendents with their male counterparts could provide insightful data on the gender dynamics and how gender influences the use of disruptive strategies and the impact they have on their career progression.

## **Recommendation 3**

*Replicate the study with members of the LGBTQ+ community who employ personal disruption strategies to determine whether there are significant differences in their approaches.*

Members of the LGBTQ+ community often face distinct challenges in professional settings including issues related to discrimination, identity expression, and workplace inclusivity. Researching their experiences in educational leadership roles could shed light on these unique challenges and how they navigate them. Expanding the research to include LGBTQ+ superintendents could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership in education. It would provide a broader perspective that encompasses a wider range of experiences and leadership styles that could provide valuable insights into this intersectionality in leadership.



## **Concluding Remarks and Reflection**

My personal experience as a first-generation Latina immigrant has significantly influenced my career trajectory in the field of education. The duality and intersectionality of my Latina heritage and female identity have not only been instrumental in shaping my leadership approach but have also influenced how I approach and make decisions.

Upon immigrating to the United States at the age of 3, I was immediately confronted with significant language and cultural barriers. These early academic challenges, magnified by encounters with apathetic educators, were not just obstacles I needed to overcome but became pivotal in shaping my leadership philosophy. These experiences fostered resilience and adaptability, which later became cornerstones of my professional identity.

As I integrated further into American society, the necessity of balancing my cultural heritage with the demands of the dominant culture became increasingly apparent. This process of Americanization was complex and multifaceted. I mastered the art of code-switching to navigate the delicate balance between my Latina identity and the expectations of mainstream American culture. This skill was vital not only for my personal survival but also for my professional success. It allowed me to adeptly handle both overt and subtle forms of micro- and macrocultural aggressions and bias, which were, unfortunately, a part of my journey.

In addition to resiliency and code switching, my schooling also taught me other skills. However, as Johnson and Mohr (2013) highlighted the same traits that helped me succeed in school, such as collaboration, following the rules, and a service-oriented mindset, ironically became impediments to my professional advancement. I have been in

education for 25 years and have moved up from teacher to site administrator to director. I have made a move approximately every 8 years. In contrast, many of my male counterparts have ascended at a much faster pace, typically every 3 years. This disparity is not just my story, but it echoes the broader systemic barriers that women, particularly Latinas, encounter in educational leadership.

This study, inspired by my personal experiences and the broader challenges faced by Latinas in educational leadership, seeks to illuminate the specific barriers and strategies relevant to Latina superintendents. The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of these unique challenges and to offer strategic guidance for future Latina leaders in this field. For instance, a key strategy identified is cultivating a support network inclusive of mentors who understand and appreciate the cultural dynamics faced by Latinas.

Through this work, I aspire to contribute to the discourse on diversity in educational leadership, focusing on the underrepresented narratives of Latina superintendents. It is my hope that this research not only brings to light the challenges and triumphs of Latina leaders in education but also serves as a catalyst for more inclusive and supportive strategies for aspiring Latina superintendents. In doing so, I seek to pave the way for future generations of Latina educators, fostering a landscape in which their aspirations for leadership can be realized with fewer barriers.

In conclusion, this study provides strategic insights into the career advancement of Latina superintendents, which is essential for increasing their representation in educational leadership. By doing so, it paves the way for enhancing the academic and cultural experiences of the growing population of Latino students who greatly benefit

from having role models and leaders who reflect their own backgrounds and understand their unique cultural needs. “Si se puede!”

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Matrix

	Historical of Women at Work	History of Women in Education	History of women in leadership	Gender inequality in leadership	Current status of Latina in superintendency	Barriers	Strategies women use	Social Role Theory	Expectancy Value Theory	Gender Organization Theory	Disruptive Career skills	Research methods
Aceves, D. A. (2013). Breaking the glass ceiling in the superintendency: La Lucha of Latina superintendents in Texas.			X		X							
American Association of School Administrators. (2015). Study of the American Superintendent: 2015 mid-decade update. Alexandria, VA: Author.	X			X								
Avalos, M., & Salgado, Y. (2016). Legacy of hope: Latinas overcoming barriers to success. National Forum of Educational Administration & Supervision Journal, 34, 24-31. <a href="http://www.nationalforum.com/Journals/NFEASJ-SI/NFEASJ-SI">http://www.nationalforum.com/Journals/NFEASJ-SI/NFEASJ-SI</a>						X						
Avila, P. (2018). Latina community college leaders and the role cultural intelligence plays in their leadership (El liderazgo inteligente de administradoras Latinas) (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 10807839)			X									
Bahn, K. (2014). Faking it: Women, academia, and impostor syndrome. Chronicle Vitae.						X						
BambooHR (n.d.). Prescribed career path. In BambooHR an HR Glossary for HR Terms. Retrieved November 26, 2022. <a href="https://www.bamboohr.com/hr/glossary/career-path">https://www.bamboohr.com/hr/glossary/career-path</a>										X		
Blount, J. M. (1998). Destined to rule the schools: Women and the superintendency, 1873–1995. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.	X						X					
Brown, K. M. (2004). Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy. Educational Administration Quarterly, 40(1), 77–108. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X03259147">https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X03259147</a>						X						
Brunner CC (2003) Invisible, limited, and emerging discourse: research practices that restrict and/or increase access for women and persons of color to the superintendency. Journal of School Leadership 13(4): 428–450.			X		X							
Burton, L. J., & Weiner, J. M. (2016). "They Were Really Looking for a Male Leader for the Building": Gender, Identity and Leadership Development in a Principal Preparation Program. Frontiers in psychology, 7, 141. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00141">https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00141</a>	X											
California Department of Education. (2020). Data & statistics. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/">https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/</a>	X											
Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d).inclusion. In dictionary.cambridge.org Retrieved December 6, 2022, from <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/English/inclusion">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/English/inclusion</a>			X									
Cassidy, M., Burgin, X. D., & Wasonga, T. A. (2021). Gender differences in perceived barriers of aspiring superintendents. Management in Education (Sage Publications, Ltd.), 35(3), 127–135. <a href="https://doi-org.umassglobal.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0892020620988010">https://doi-org.umassglobal.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0892020620988010</a>			X			X						
Castillo, I., Menchaca, V. D., & Lopez-Estrada, V. (2021). Latina Female Superintendents Securing Positions in Small Rural School Districts. AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice, 17(4), 7–23. <a href="https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Female+AND+Superintendents&amp;pr=on&amp;id=EJ1284029">https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Female+AND+Superintendents&amp;pr=on&amp;id=EJ1284029</a>			X									
Castillo, M. G., & Valencia, R. R. (2011). Latina superintendent experiences in the United States. The Journal of Latina Critical Feminism, 9(1), 22-35.					X							
Catalyst (2002, May 15). Advancing Latinas in the workplace: What managers need to know. Retrieved from Catalyst website: <a href="https://www.catalyst.org/research/advancing-latinas-in-the-workplace-what-managers-need-to-know/">https://www.catalyst.org/research/advancing-latinas-in-the-workplace-what-managers-need-to-know/</a>					X							
Chin, J. L. (2011). Women and Leadership: Transforming Visions and Current Contexts. Forum on Public Policy Online, 2011(2).			X	X								
Christensen, C.M. (1997). The Innovator's Dilemma. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press. Boston, Massachusetts.											X	

	Historical of Women at Work	History of Women in Education	History of women in leadership	Gender inequality in leadership	Current status of Latina in superintendency	Barriers	Strategies women use	Social Role Theory	Expectancy Value Theory	Gender Organization Theory	Disruptive Career skills	Research methods
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Christensen, C. M., Raynor, M. and McDonald, R. (2015). 'What is disruptive innovation?'. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 93, 44–53.												X
Connell, P. H., Cobia, F. J., & Hodge, P. H. (2015). Women's journey to the school superintendency. <i>Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership</i> , 2, 37–63.				X			X					
Corona, Julie, (2022)"Gatekeeping Experiences Latina Superintendents Encountered as They Attained Their Superintendent Position". Dissertations. 462. <a href="https://digitalcommons.umassglobal.edu/edd_dissertations/462">https://digitalcommons.umassglobal.edu/edd_dissertations/462</a>							X					
Cortes, E. (2018). The influence of social capital on Latina superintendents' success in the United States. <i>Journal of Hispanic Higher Education</i> , 17(4), 371-386.				X			X					
Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). <i>Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches</i> . Sage publications.												X
Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). <i>Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research</i> (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.												X
Creswell, J. W., Klassen, A. C., Plano Clark, V. L., & Smith, K. C. (2011). <i>Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences</i> . Bethesda (Maryland): National Institutes of Health, 2013, 541-545.												X
Dana, J. A., & Bourisaw, D. M. (2006). <i>Women in the superintendency: Discarded leadership</i> . Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.					X		X					
Derrington, M. L., & Sharratt, G. (2008). Female superintendents: Breaking barriers and challenging life styles. <i>Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin</i> , 75(2), 8–12. and challenging life styles. <i>Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin</i> , 75(2), 8–12.							X					
Dobbin, F., & Kalev, A. (2016). Why diversity programs fail. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 94(4), 84-92.					X							
Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. <i>The Leadership Quarterly</i> , 14(6), 807-834. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.004					X							
Eagly, A. H., Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C., & van Engen, M. (2003). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: A meta-analysis comparing women and men. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> , 129(4), 569–591. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.4.569">https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.4.569</a>				X								
Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. <i>Psychological review</i> , 109(3), 573.										X		
Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). Social role theory. <i>Handbook of theories of social psychology</i> , 2, 458-476.								X				

Eisenbeiss, S. A., Knippenberg, D. V., & Boerner, S. (2008). Transformational Leadership and Team Innovation: Integrating Team Climate Principles. <i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i> , 93(6), 1438-1446. Link to article; <a href="https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19025260/">https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19025260/</a>							X					
Encyclopedia Britannica. (2022, October 26). Affirmative action. In Encyclopedia Britannica. <a href="https://www.britannica.com/topic/affirmative-action">https://www.britannica.com/topic/affirmative-action</a>	X											
Encyclopedia Britannica. (2023, February 2). Latinx. In Encyclopedia Britannica. <a href="https://www.britannica.com/topic/Latinx">https://www.britannica.com/topic/Latinx</a>	X											
Feld, K. M. (2021, July 29). 10 Female Leaders Offer Advice On How To Pivot To New Opportunity Amidst Uncertainty. <i>Entrepreneur</i> . <a href="https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/10-female-leaders-offer-advice-on-how-to-pivot-to-new/365903">https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/10-female-leaders-offer-advice-on-how-to-pivot-to-new/365903</a>							X					

	Historical of Women at Work	History of Women in Education	History of women in leadership	Gender inequality in leadership	Current status of Latina in superintendency	Barriers	Strategies women use	Social Role Theory	Expectancy Value Theory	Gender Organization Theory	Disruptive Career skills	Research methods
Feld, K. M. (2021, July 29). 10 Female Leaders Offer Advice On How To Pivot To New Opportunity Amidst Uncertainty. Entrepreneur. <a href="https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/10-female-leaders-offer-advice-on-how-to-pivot-to-new/365903">https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/10-female-leaders-offer-advice-on-how-to-pivot-to-new/365903</a>							X					
Finnan, L., & McCord, R. (2018). 2017–2018 AASA Superintendent salary and benefit survey: Non-member version. Retrieved from <a href="https://aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/Final%20Report%202017-18%20Non-Member.pdf">https://aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/Final%20Report%202017-18%20Non-Member.pdf</a>					X							
Finneran, C. A. (2016). Building the leadership capacity of women in K-12 education: Successful strategies that create the next generation of women school and district leaders (Doctoral dissertation, Awarding University). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 10235549)								X				
Fitzgerald, T. (2003). Interrogating orthodox voices: Gender, ethnicity and educational leadership. <i>School Leadership &amp; Management</i> , 23(4), 431- 444. doi: 10.1080/1363243032000150962				X								
Frye, M. (1983). Sexism. <i>The politics of reality: Essays in feminist theory</i> , 17-40.						X						
Galiana, A. A. (2014). <i>The Hispanic superintendent</i> (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3637716)					X							
Garson, H. S. (2011). <i>Oprah Winfrey: a biography</i> . Bloomsbury Publishing USA.											X	
Gil, R. M., & Vasquez, C. I. (1996). <i>The Maria paradox: How Latinas can merge old world traditions with new world self-esteem</i> . New York, NY: G. P. Putnam & Sons.						X						
Glass, T. E., Bjork, L., & Brunner, C. C. (2000). <i>The study of the American school superintendency 2000: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium</i> . Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.		X										
Gloria, A., & Castellanos, J. (2006). <i>The Latina/o pathway to the Ph.D.: Abriendo caminos</i> . Sterling, VA: Stylus.							X					
Gloria, A., & Rodriguez, E. (2000). Counseling Latino university students: Psychosociocultural issues for consideration. <i>Journal of Counseling and Development: JCD</i> , 78(2), 145-154. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb02572">https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb02572</a> .							X					
Goffney, L., & Edmonson, L. S. (2012). Perceptions of race and gender in the superintendency. <i>Journal of Texas School Women Executives</i> , 1(1), 3-36.				X		X						
Gray, K. (2022, September 9). 6 Rewarding Reasons to Choose a Non-Traditional Career Path. Brit + Co. <a href="https://www.brit.co/advantages-of-Choosing-non-traditional-career-path/">https://www.brit.co/advantages-of-Choosing-non-traditional-career-path/</a>											X	
Gresham, G., & Sampson, P. (2019). Women superintendent research: 2014-2016 dissertation literature review content analysis. <i>The Athens Journal of Education</i> , 6(4), 257-270.							X					
Grogan, M. & Brunner, C. (2005). Women superintendents and role conceptions: (Un)Troubling the norms. In L. Björk, & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), <i>The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice and development</i> (pp. 227-250). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press		X										
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## APPENDIX B

### Quantitative Survey Instrument

#### INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me regarding your leadership and what has led to your success as a female leader. It is my hope that by studying this topic we can give female leaders the skills they need to break barriers into new and fulfilling careers in upper management.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research on Johnson and Mohr's **FIVE DISRUPTIVE CAREER SKILLS** on female (career focus; i.e., supt,) advancement to an executive leadership position. The five identified disruptive career skills include the following:

1. Challenging and Influencing Authority
2. Preparing but also Improvising
3. Engaging in Effective Forms of Self Promotion
4. Welcoming a Less-Prescribed Career Path
5. Aiming for Respect Over Being Liked

It's best not to 'overthink' the statements and respond with your first perceptual thought. This survey should only take about 10-15 minutes. After you complete and submit the survey, the researcher will contact you to schedule an interview to explore your thoughts on these career skills and how they may have an impact on women's ability to move forward in her career.

#### Directions:

**PART I:** The following survey represents the five DISRUPTIVE CAREER SKILLS. For each skill there is an example of behaviors associated with each category. Using the four-point scale for each Disruptive Career Skill, please indicate how frequently you have engaged in each career skill as you progressed along in your leadership career.

*4= Definitely Yes*

*3= Generally Yes*

*2= Generally No*

*1= Definitely No*

**PART II:** If you checked *Definitely Yes or Generally Yes* how much of a positive impact do you perceive it had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?

*4= High Degree*

*3= Some Degree*

*2= Little or No Degree*

*1= Detrimental to My Career Advancement*

## DISRUPTIVE CAREER SKILLS SURVEY

### 1. CHALLENGING AND INFLUENCING AUTHORITY

**Challenging Authority:** Challenging authority refers to the act of questioning, opposing, or pushing back against those in positions of power or leadership who make decisions or enact policies. It involves a willingness to challenge the status quo, question assumptions, and propose alternative ideas or solutions.

	4 Definitely Yes	3 Generally Yes	2 Generally No	1 Definitely No
<b>EXAMPLE:</b> I speak up to my superiors rather than tell my bosses what they want to hear.				
<i>If you checked “Definitely Yes” or “Generally Yes” Above</i>				
<b>IMPACT:</b> How much of a positive impact do you perceive <b>Challenging Authority</b> had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?	4 High Degree	3 Some Degree	2 Little or no Degree	1 Detrimental to my Career Advancement

**Influencing Authority:** Influencing authority refers to the act of using persuasive communication and other means to affect the decisions and actions of those in positions of power or leadership. It involves a willingness to engage with authority figures, build relationships, and make reasoned arguments to shape outcomes that align with one’s goals or values.

	4 Definitely Yes	3 Generally Yes	2 Generally No	1 Definitely No
<b>EXAMPLE:</b> I often find a problem that needs to be solved and persuade others in the direction of what one feels to be the correct answer.				

*If you checked “Definitely Yes” or “Generally Yes” Above*

<b>IMPACT:</b> How much of a positive impact do you perceive <b>Influencing Authority</b> had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?	4 High Degree	3 Some Degree	2 Little or no Degree	1 Detrimental to my Career Advancement
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## 2. PREPARING BUT ALSO IMPROVISING

**Preparing But Also Improvising:** While it is important for all leaders to go into situations with a game plan, it is equally important that they also go in with the skills to pivot and stray from the game plan as the situation prescribes.

	4 Definitely Yes	3 Generally Yes	2 Generally No	1 Definitely No
<b>EXAMPLE:</b> While I like to prepare in advance, I also am comfortable going into unfamiliar situations and capable of providing on the spot solutions.				
<i>If you checked “Definitely Yes” or “Generally Yes” Above</i>				
<b>IMPACT:</b> How much of a positive impact do you perceive <b>Preparing but also Improvising</b> had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?	4 High Degree	3 Some Degree	2 Little or no Degree	1 Detrimental to my career advancement

## 3. ENGAGING IN EFFECTIVE FORMS OF SELF-PROMOTION

**Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion:** For anyone to recognize and appreciate the uniqueness and excellence they bring to a leadership role, it is essential that they actively showcase their achievements. Self-promotion can be achieved through direct and indirect methods.

	4 Definitely	3 Generally	2 Generally No	1 Definitely

	Yes	Yes		No
<b>EXAMPLES</b> While I believe in allowing my work to speak for itself, I have found ways to effectively highlight my accomplishments.				
<b>If you checked “<i>Definitely Yes</i>” or “<i>Generally Yes</i>” Above</b>				
<b>IMPACT:</b> How much of a positive impact do you perceive <b>Engaging in Effective Forms of Self Promotion</b> had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?	4 High Degree	3 Some Degree	2 Little or no Degree	1 Detrimental to my career advancement

#### 4. WELCOMING A LESS PRESCRIBED CAREER PATH

**Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path:** While many believe playing it safe and following a prescribed career path will lead to career advancement, some suggest that being open to and pursuing alternative career paths will lead to career advancement.

	4 Definitely Yes	3 Generally Yes	2 Generally No	1 Definitely No
<b>EXAMPLES:</b> I have taken a lateral move or a job outside my career field.				
<b>If you checked “<i>Definitely Yes</i>” or “<i>Generally Yes</i>” Above</b>				
<b>IMPACT:</b> How much of a positive impact do you perceive <b>Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path</b> had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?	4 High Degree	3 Some Degree	2 Little or no Degree	1 Detrimental to my career advancement

#### 5. AIMING FOR RESPECT OVER BEING LIKED

**Aiming for Respect Over Being Liked:** This happens when you choose the path that is not precisely what will make you popular but rather garner you the most respect.

	4	3	2	1
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	Definitely Yes	Generally Yes	Generally No	Definitely No
<b>EXAMPLES</b> I have undertaken actions that may not necessarily enhance my popularity but have garnered respect for my decision-making abilities.				
<b>If you checked “<i>Definitely Yes</i>” or “<i>Generally Yes</i>” Above</b>				
IMPACT: How much of a positive impact do you perceive <b>Aiming for Respect over Being Liked</b> had on your advancement to an executive leadership position?	4 High Degree	3 Some Degree	2 Little or no Degree	1 Detrimental to my career advancement

## APPENDIX C

### Qualitative Survey Instrument

#### OPENING QUESTIONS

- Can you tell me a little about your career journey that brought you to the role you currently serve today?
- What positions did you hold, and for how long?

#### 1. CHALLENGE AND INFLUENCE AUTHORITY

**Challenging Authority:** Challenging authority refers to the act of questioning, opposing, or pushing back against those in positions of power or leadership who make decisions or enact policies. It involves a willingness to challenge the status quo, question assumptions, and propose alternative ideas or solutions.

- As you reflect on your career can you share any stories or examples of how you may have challenged authority while advancing your career?
- In reflecting on this career area, what impact, positive or negative, do you believe challenging authority had on your career trajectory?

**Influencing Authority:** Influencing authority refers to the act of using persuasive communication and other means to affect the decisions and actions of those in positions of power or leadership. It involves a willingness to engage with authority figures, build relationships, and make reasoned arguments to shape outcomes that align with one's goals or values.

- As you reflect on your career can you share any stories or examples of how you may have influenced authority while advancing your career?
- In reflecting on this career area, what impact, positive or negative, do you believe challenging authority had on your career trajectory?

#### 2. PREPARING BUT ALSO IMPROVISING

**Preparing but also Improvising:** While it is important for all leaders to go into situations with a game plan, it is equally important that they also go in with the skills to pivot and stray from the game plan as the situation prescribes.

- As you reflect on your career can you share any stories or examples of how you came into situations fully prepared, but you were able to make something up on the spot, without prior planning or preparation in a way that achieves a desired outcome.

- In reflecting on this career area what impact, positive or negative, do you believe preparing but also improving had on your career trajectory?

### **3. ENGAGING IN EFFECTIVE FORMS OF SELF-PROMOTION**

**Engaging in Effective Forms of Self-Promotion:** For anyone to recognize and appreciate the uniqueness and excellence they bring to a leadership role, it is essential that they actively showcase their achievements. Self-promotion can be achieved through direct and indirect methods.

- As you reflect on your career can you share any stories or examples of how effectively you promoted the work you have done in a way that achieves a desired outcome?
- In reflecting on this career area what impact, positive or negative, do you believe engaging in effective forms of self-promotion had on your career trajectory?

### **4. WELCOMING A LESS PRESCRIBED CAREER PATH**

**Welcoming a Less Prescribed Career Path:** While many believe playing it safe and following a prescribed career path will lead to career advancement, some suggest that being open to and pursuing alternative career paths find themselves in more senior positions.

- As you reflect on your career can you share any stories or examples of how you have welcomed a less prescribed career path in a way that helped you see your organization from a wider lens?
- In reflecting on this career area what impact, positive or negative, do you believe welcoming a less prescribed career path had on your career trajectory?

### **5. AIMING FOR RESPECT OVER BEING LIKED**

**Aiming for Respect Over Being Liked:** This happens when you choose the path that is not precisely what will make you popular but rather garner you the most respect.

- As you reflect on your career can you share any stories or examples of how you have taken actions to be respected over being liked?
- In reflecting on this career area what impact, positive or negative, do you believe aiming for respect over being liked had on your career trajectory?

### **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...
5. Can you provide an example of..
6. Can you discuss ...
7. Tell me about a time when ....

## APPENDIX D

### Informed Consent

#### **INFORMATION ABOUT: Personal Disruption Strategies Used By Latina Superintendents from an Elementary Background for Career Advancement**

**RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:** *Dina Hernandez, M.A.*

**PURPOSE OF STUDY:** You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by *Dina Hernandez*, a doctoral student from the School of Education at UMass Global. The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods research study is to identify and describe the perceived impact of Johnson and Mohr's five disruptive career skills (2013) on Latina Superintendents to their advancement to an executive leadership position.

The interview(s) will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes and will be conducted in a one-on-one virtual interview setting (using Zoom).

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 and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue as a text document and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my 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 help add to the research regarding personal disruption strategies used by female superintendents for career advancement. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide new insights about this study in which I participated. 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 [REDACTED].
- 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 re-obtained. 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, UMass Global, 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 procedure(s) set forth.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX E

### UMass Global Internal Review Board 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.

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



## APPENDIX F

### Quantitative Feedback Form

#### Field-Test Survey Feedback Questions

Included in Electronic Survey: As a doctoral student at UMASS Global, I appreciate your feedback as it helps me to build the most effective survey instrument possible. Your participation is crucial to this effort.

Please respond to the following questions after completing the survey. Your answers will assist me in refining the survey items. This will allow me to make edits to improve the survey prior to administering to potential study participants.

A copy version of the survey was provided as an attachment to the email that contained this feedback form to refresh your memory of the instrument, if needed.

Thank you very much for your assistance. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

1. How many minutes did it take you to complete the survey, from the moment you opened it on the computer until the time you completed it?
2. Did the portion up front that asked you to read the consent information and click the agree box before the survey opened concern you at all?
3. The first paragraph of the introduction included the purpose of the research study. Did this provide enough clarity as to the purpose of the study?
4. Was the Introduction sufficiently clear (and not too long) to inform you what the research was about? If not, what would you recommend that would make it better?
5. Were the directions to Part 1 clear, and did you understand what to do? If not, would you briefly state the problem.

6. Were the brief descriptions of the 5 choices prior to your completing the 12 items clear, and did they provide sufficient differences among them for you to make a selection? If not, briefly describe the problem.

7. As you progressed through the 12 items in which you gave a rating of 1 through 5, if there were any items that caused you to say something like, "What does this mean?" Which item(s) were they? Please use the paper copy and mark those that troubled you. Or if not, please check here:

## APPENDIX G

### **Qualitative Participant Feedback Form**

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe your experiences with self-sabotaging behaviors, the impact, and strategies used to overcome the barriers?
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 H

### **Interview Observer Feedback 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? a. For the observer: how did you perceive the interviewer regarding the preceding descriptors?
6. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?
7. Are there parts of the interview that seemed to be awkward and why do you think that was the case?
8. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would it be and how would you change it?
9. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

## APPENDIX I

### Introduction Letter to Study Participants

Date

Dear (Name),

My name is Dina Hernandez, and I am conducting research into female leadership in conjunction with my Doctoral studies at UMass Global. The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods research study is to identify and describe the perceived impact of Johnson and Mohr's five disruptive career skills (2013) on Latina Superintendents' advancement to an executive leadership position.

You have been identified as a Latina superintendent in California and as someone ideal for this study. This study will explore how personal disruption strategies have impacted the career advancement of Latina superintendents. The data collected from surveying and interviewing Latina superintendents are intended to increase the understanding of the impact of personal disruption strategies on women's careers in educational leadership. Findings gathered from the research are anticipated to be used to describe personal disruptive strategies and measure the extent to which they are believed to impact female career advancement.

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 assist other female administrators striving for the superintendency. The study consists of an electronic survey that will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and a follow-up interview that will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time. Thank you in advance for your acceptance of my request. Your involvement is critical to the success of this study. If you have any questions, you may contact me at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Dina Hernandez Doctoral Candidate,  
UMass Global

APPENDIX J

**Quantitative Instrument Alignment Table**

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
What perceived impact did challenging and influencing authority have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?	X				
What perceived impact did preparing and improvising have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?		X			
What perceived impact did engaging in effective forms of self-promotion have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?			X		
What perceived impact did welcoming a less prescribed career path have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?				X	
What perceived impact did aiming for being respected over being liked have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?					X

APPENDIX K

**Qualitative Instrument Alignment Table**

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
What perceived impact did challenging and influencing authority have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?	X				
What perceived impact did preparing and improvising have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?		X			
What perceived impact did engaging in effective forms of self-promotion have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?			X		
What perceived impact did welcoming a less prescribed career path have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?				X	
What perceived impact did aiming for being respected over being liked have on Latinas' advancement to an executive leadership position?					X