Mentoring Relationships as Social Capital in the Career Advancement of Latina School Administrators

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Mentoring Relationships as Social Capital in the Career Advancement of

Latina School Administrators

by

Ligia Veronica Alberto

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Department of Education, Management, Leadership and Policy

Seton Hall University

May 2018
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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Ligia Alberto, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ed.D. during this Fall Semester 2017.

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The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, and my sons Ryan and Dylan. I could not have completed this dissertation without your love and support. Thank you for your patience and your unconditional love. You are the reason I embarked on this journey. I love you!
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank all my professors at Seton Hall University, particularly my dissertation committee members. Dr. Sattin-Bajaj, I would not have been able to complete this dissertation without your mentoring and guidance. Words cannot express my gratitude to you! You were an incredible source of knowledge and support. Taking your classes and having you as my mentor was a life-changing experience. Dr. Kuchar, you played an essential role in my personal and professional development over the years. As a professor, I thank you for expanding my knowledge in your classes, for your encouragement to complete this program, and for your unconditional guidance. As a professional, I thank you for hiring me as a school counselor, for giving me the opportunity to become a school leader and for being a role model and a great mentor. Dr. Babo, you taught me to love statistics, but most importantly you made me feel valued in your classes. Thank you!

I want to thank my friends and family members who supported me throughout the years and who were essential to my success. Gladys, you embarked on this journey with me from the beginning to the end. Love you! Xiara, Carolina, Jessenia, Lazarito, Vilma, and Luis, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I also want to thank my Seton Hall hermanas Omayra and Ivette. Although you completed your doctorates before I did, you kept pushing me until I crossed the finish line.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank the talented women who took part in this study. Your stories were compelling and inspiring to me. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me and the rest of the world. I hope this paper can inspire more Latinas to seek administrative positions. Si se puede!
Abstract

This study examined the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, specifically on the underrepresentation of Latina women holding leadership administrative positions in education. Using social capital as the theoretical framework, this study explored the role of mentoring relationships in the career advancement and promotions of Latina women. A narrative research design was selected to collect participants’ stories about their career advancement into school leadership positions. The narratives were collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews. A total of 20 Latina school administrators were interviewed for 45 to 60 minutes. Upon completion of the interviews, the data was analyzed using narrative analysis. This study showed that mentoring relationships are essential to the career advancement of Latina school administrators. Current literature shows that Latina women have traditionally found mentors outside of their professional environments. Typically, these mentors include their mothers or other close family members (Méndez-Morse, 2004). However, all the women in this research study stated that they had formal or informal professional mentoring relationships. Participants reported stronger mentoring relationships with informal mentors. Most of the informal mentoring relationships were established through close work with their immediate supervisors. This study suggests that having informal mentors facilitated Latina women’s aspirations to become school leaders. In addition, the findings of this study suggest mentors were essential for Latina women attainment of leadership positions and therefore, counteract the pattern of underrepresentation of Latinas in such roles in New Jersey schools.

Keywords: Latinas in school leadership, Latina school administrators, mentoring, social capital, career advancement
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Chapter I: Introduction

There are few Latinas in the leadership structure of the United States. From government and corporate America to K-12 and higher education, there is a pattern of absence that contradicts the rapid population growth of Latinos/as in the nation. Although there are over 28 million Latinas in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), only one is a Senator, and fewer than 2% of representatives on U.S. Congress are Latina (History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, Office of the Historian, 2017). In top-tier management corporations, there is only one Latina Fortune 500 CEO, and Latinas represent less than 1% of Fortune 500 board members (Deloitte & The Alliance for Board Diversity, 2016). In education, although 54% of school principals and 26.9 % of superintendents are women, Latinas represent less than 8% of the total population of school principals and 1% of school superintendents — the highest leadership position one can obtain in K-12 schools (Ellerson et al., 2015; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Hill, Ottem, DeRoche, 2016; Taie & Goldring, 2017; Tallerico, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b).

The limited representation of Latinas in leadership positions does not mirror the rapid growth of the Latino population. Latinos are increasing in population share and are expected to grow from 55 million in 2014 to 119 million by 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2014). Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2015a) shows that, between the fall of 2003 and the fall of 2013, the K-12 Latino student enrollment grew from 9 million to 12.5 million and is expected to continue increasing. By contrast, African American and White students’ enrollment decreased and is projected to continue declining over the next few years.
The diversification of schools in America has prompted policymakers, as well as federal and state officials to consider the value of having teachers and school administrators with similar racial/ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds to the students whom they educate. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan attested, “We know that students benefit when they can learn from teachers who look like them and who can be strong role models” (Resmovits, 2011). He also emphasized the need to increase minority teachers, explaining that “recruiting more Latino teachers are part of our overall effort to strengthen the teaching profession and to ensure that students are learning from a diverse group of great teachers” (Resmovits, 2011). This argument has been supported by research studies, which have found that Latino/a teachers and administrators provide social, academic and psychological benefits to Latino students because they tend to have higher expectations for minority students, and are more likely to have multicultural awareness and understanding of students’ social contexts (Brooks et al., 2012; Frankenberg, 2008; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Méndez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne Jiménez & Hernández, 2015; Ochoa, 2007; Valle & Rodríguez, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2004).

**Educational Leadership in New Jersey**

New Jersey is home to nearly 9 million people. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) reports that, for the 2016-2017 school year, there were 678 operating school districts and 88 charter schools open to the 1,373,267 students enrolled in K-12 schools. Recent data from both the U.S. Census Bureau (2017) and the NJDOE (2017) show that the student population is “majority minority” — see Table 1 for a comparison of state-wide and K-12 school population demographics.
Table 1

*New Jersey State Census Population Estimates and Public School Student Population by Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Population in NJ</th>
<th>Public School Student Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data represents percentages. Adapted from the New Jersey Department of Education (2017) and Census Bureau (2017).

Whereas the racial/ethnic makeup of the student population is comparable to the statewide population, the same is not true of the composition of the schools’ certified personnel. As Table 2 shows, the populations of teachers and administrators do not reflect the racial/ethnic makeup of the student body in New Jersey schools. Whereas students of color are more than half of the student population, teachers and administrators of color only represent roughly 15% and 20% of the certified personnel population, respectively.

Table 2

*New Jersey Students and Public School Employees by Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data represents percentages. Adapted from New Jersey Department of Education (2017) and Census Bureau (2017).
A similar disparity exists in the gender breakdown of certified school personnel. Overall, only 23% of teachers in New Jersey are male, yet men represent almost half (45.7%) of school administrators. Further, non-Asian males are overrepresented in administrative positions regardless of their race. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the New Jersey public school employee population by position, race, and gender. Notably, when examining the cross-section of race and gender, the data show that for both White and Latino males, there are 2 administrators for every teacher, while for African American males, the ratio is nearly 3:1. The ratio for Asian males is roughly 1:1. In contrast, for White, Latina and Asian females, there is fewer than 1 administrator for every teacher, while African American females have a higher ratio of 2:1.

Table 3

New Jersey Public School Employees by Position, Race, and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data represents percentages. Adapted from the New Jersey Department of Education (2017).

Problem Statement

The research literature on educational leadership has extensively examined the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Loder & Spillane, 2005; McGee, 2010; Sherman & Beaty, 2010). Yet, few studies have focused specifically on the
underrepresentation of Latina women in educational leadership positions. As a result, little is known about the cause of this underrepresentation. Moreover, there is little known about Latina administrators’ career paths and their experiences while pursuing school administrator roles. Although they comprise a small proportion of the overall educational leadership corps, Latinas are represented across a variety of administrator positions including vice-principal, principal, supervisor, director, and assistant superintendent. A small number have also attained superintendent roles.

The United States demographics are changing, and Hispanics are now the largest minority group in America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). As a result, Latino students are the greatest majority in schools with more than 12.5 million students across the country, and the statistics predict schools will continue to serve an even larger number of Hispanic students (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). For that reason, increasing the number of minority teachers is essential to adapt to the changes in demographics as research studies have found minority teachers act as role models for minority students (Villegas and Lucas, 2004). This is important because most educational leaders begin their careers as k-12 teachers. Therefore, a study that examines how Latinas have transitioned from the classroom into administrative positions adds to the empirical literature on the ongoing gender and racial/ethnic gap in leadership, as well as shed light on the ways these few women are obtaining positions as school administrators and what might be done to increase the number of Latina school administrators. Additionally, this study provides valuable information for individuals in educational leadership who wish to advance their careers in education.

This investigation pays specific attention to the role of mentors in Latina administrators’ professional trajectories. Scholars have highlighted the importance of mentoring for obtaining
essential skillsets, exposure, protection, and potential career advancement (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Méndez-Morse, 2004; San Miguel & Kim, 2014; Washington, 2010). Additionally, studies employing theories of social capital have indicated positive career outcomes for those who foster social relationships with others. These outcomes include improved access to resources, information, and sponsorship (Coleman, 1988; Halpern, 2005; Lin, 2001; Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001). Given the evidence on the power of social capital for generating relationships such as mentorships for career advancement, a study that explicitly explores the extent to which mentoring relationships have contributed to Latina educational administrators’ success in achieving educational leadership positions would provide valuable new knowledge and insight on the subject.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this narrative study was to examine how Latina school administrators in New Jersey move through the ranks to reach leadership positions. Using social capital as the theoretical framework, this study explored the role of mentoring relationships in the career advancement and promotions of Latina women and to what extent social capital/mentoring contribute to the increasing pool of Latina administrators.

**Research Questions**

The central question guiding this study was: What is the role of mentoring relationships in the professional advancement of Latina school administrators? This study answers that using four research questions:

- How do Latina school administrators develop relationships with mentors?
• What career-advancement-related benefits and resources do Latina school administrators receive from mentoring relationships?

• How have mentors impacted the career decisions of Latina school administrators?

• How have mentors helped Latina school administrators gain access to information and professional opportunities?

Women in Educational Leadership

Although women are outpacing their male counterparts in educational achievement by completing more bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees and representing the majority of undergraduate and graduate college students, women are disproportionally underrepresented in leadership positions (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). This is especially true in education, where females represent more than three-quarters of all K-12 school teachers, yet only 26.9% of superintendents (Ellerson et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2015b). This is notable because most educational leadership career paths originate with the K-12 teacher role.

Scholars have identified several reasons for the limited number of female school leaders. First, for many women, the lack of female role models and mentors serves as a barrier to perceiving administrative positions as an attainable career goal (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Johnson 2011; Peters 2010). Similarly, the challenge of creating work-life balance has been noted as a restrictive factor for women as family commitments and time constraints limit women’s ability to raise children while maintaining a career (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kafka, 2009; McGee, 2010; Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008). Loder and Spillane (2005) have argued that the reduced ability to interact with the students after attaining an administrative position is a key factor in the underrepresentation of women in these roles. Furthermore, Dominici, Fried, and Zeger (2009)
have attributed the problem to the absence of socialization, inclusion, access to information, social networks, and resources for women.

Latina women who aspire to educational leadership positions experience the same barriers and obstacles as non-minority women, but they also face challenges unique to their triple minority status — being women, members of a racial and ethnic minority, and, often, part of a low-socioeconomic status group since Hispanic households are among the lowest in wealth in the nation (Ackerman, Fries & Windle, 2012; Maes, 2010). Ortiz and Marshall (1995) described the lack of women of color in leadership as follows, “becoming an educational administrator in public schools requires sponsorship and intense socialization. For women and minorities, educational administration is an exclusive area to enter and be successful” (p. 92).

Despite its status as an exclusive area to enter, several Latinas have successfully entered and remained in administrative roles. In their study of the work and leadership experiences of 233 Latina school principals/assistant principals, Méndez-Morse et al. (2015) found that more than two thirds of the participants believed that sponsors, mentors, and role models played an important role in their development as leaders. Unfortunately, the specific impact of those relationships was not explored in the study.

**Mentoring and Social Capital**

Mentoring is defined as a relationship between a junior or less experienced person and a person in power who can teach, encourage, and facilitate the advancement of the junior person — also known as the protégé (Kanter, 1977). Researchers have explored the benefits associated with mentoring relationships for decades (Blickle, Witzki & Schneider, 2009; Bynum, 2015; DiRenzo, Weer & Linnehan, 2013; Ghosh & Reio Jr., 2013). Both formal and informal
mentoring have been found to be a pivotal factor for promotion and career success for women, including Latinas (Litmanovitz, 2011; Peters, 2010; Sherman & Beaty, 2010; Sherman et al., 2008). Mentors tend to provide their mentees with essential skill sets, protection and exposure leading to possible career growth (Johnson, 2011; San Miguel & Kim, 2015; Washington, 2010).

The professional literature has explored two main aspects of mentoring — career development and psychosocial benefits (Kram, 1988). Career development includes exposure, protection, sponsorship, coaching, visibility, and leadership. Psychosocial functions include self-esteem, confidence, sense of capability and acceptance (Archard, 2012; Kram, 1988). Research studies have demonstrated that mentors facilitate career advancement by encouraging protégés to seek leadership roles, preparing them to take leadership roles, increasing their confidence, and providing protection and advice (Crocitto, Sullivan & Carraher, 2005; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; San Miguel & Kim, 2015; Sherman et al., 2008). The literature has also highlighted that mentoring is also beneficial for mentors as helping others give mentors a great sense of accomplishment and gratification (Jonson, 2002).

Social capital is one of the theories associated with career advancement. Early social capital theories were developed by two sociologists — James Coleman in America and Pierre Bourdieu in Europe in the 1980’s (Lin, 2001). Coleman (1988) referred to social capital as the investment in social relations with the expectation of positive returns, specifically to make things possible that otherwise would not be possible. Coleman highlighted the structure of social capital as the result of trust, norms, sanctions and the mutual expectations and obligations individuals or groups create in their surroundings. On the other hand, Bourdieu (1983) conceptualized social capital as a resource embedded in society; the result of networks and social connections, particularly beneficial to those economically privileged and the high hierarchy of
the dominant class. His most prominent work *Distinction* (1984) revealed that culture and social class relations have an exclusive and positive impact on the middle and upper classes, especially when people from the middle and upper classes attempt to identify themselves as worthy of those lower on the social ladder. In relation to career advancement there are three main theoretical approaches to social capital: Weak Tie Theory (Granovetter, 1973) Structural Hole Theory (Burt, 1992) and Social Resource Theory (Lin, 1999). This study positioned mentoring relationships as sources of social capital to examine whether social capital was central to the career advancement of Latina school administrators.

**Significance of the Study**

Although many studies have examined females in educational leadership (e.g., Adams & Hambright, 2004; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Loder & Spillane, 2005; McGee, 2010; Sherman & Beaty, 2010), there are very few studies about women of color, particularly Latina school leaders. Moreover, few studies have explored the role of mentoring relationships as an explicit source of social capital as these two theories though similarly related to positive career outcomes, are completely independent in the research literature. As such, this study contributes to the limited literature on the experiences and perceptions of school leaders who identify as people of color.

**Research Design**

I used qualitative research methodologies to answer the research questions because I was interested in exploring the lived-experiences, behaviors, and perspectives of the participants. This is one of the main characteristics of qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall, 1995; Patton,
To collect the participant’s stories about their career advancement into school leadership positions a narrative research design was selected for the study.

Semi-structured interviews were used to capture the narratives of the participants. This interview format was selected because it provides consistency across participants while allowing for some spontaneity. Twenty female Latina school administrators were interviewed for 45 to 60 minutes, each. Upon completion of the interviews, the data was analyzed using narrative analysis procedures (Webster & Mertova, 2007), which included coding the verbatim interview transcripts to find common themes and patterns that synthesized how the participants attained leadership positions.

**Limitations**

This study was limited to Latina certified administrators serving as vice-principals, principals, supervisors, and directors working under a supervisor, director, or principal certificate in public schools in the state of New Jersey. Additionally, since the nature of the questions were qualitative research questions, this study was completed using a small number of participants. Consequently, findings cannot be generalized to individuals other than those involved in the process of this investigation. Although a small sample was used to complete the study, the findings increase our understanding of how some Latina school leaders have advanced professionally in their careers.

**Delimitations**

This study only included Latina school administrators in the state of New Jersey. To take part in the study, the administrators had to be certified school administrators working under a supervisor, director, or principal certificate in public school schools in New Jersey. In addition,
the participants had to meet the following three characteristics: 1) they were female, 2) the self-identified as Hispanic/Latina descent which includes Cuban, Mexican Puerto Rican, South or Central America or other Spanish culture or origin (regardless of immigration generation) and 3) they were currently employed as school administrators in public schools in the state of New Jersey.

**Definitions and Terms:**

- **Culture:** “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time” (Culture, n.d.).

- **Diversity:** “the condition of being diverse: variety, especially in inclusion of (diverse) people (as people of different races and cultures) in a group or organization” (Diversity, n.d.).

- **Formal mentoring:** an established mentor-protégé relationship that is managed by an organization (Bynum, 2015).

- **Good-Old-Boys Network:** often defined as “older male executives and male professors who typically prefer protégés who are junior versions of themselves” (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000, p. 4).

- **Hispanic or Latino/a:** a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Latino and Hispanic populations represent distinct groups. Latino refers to people from a Latin American country and those who speak a language originated from the Latin language. Hispanic on the other hand refers to anyone who is from a Spanish speaking country including Spain (Krogstad & John, 2014).
- **Informal mentoring:** mentoring relationship formed by chance and not managed by an organization (Bynum, 2015).

- **Latina:** refers to females of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or Spanish culture of origin (Krogstad & Cohn, 2014)

- **Mentoring:** an intense, dyadic relationship in which a more senior, experienced person, called a mentor, provides support and assistance to a more junior, less experienced colleague (Hezlett & Gibson, 2007, p. 385; Kanter, 1977).

- **Social Network:** the social connections between entities (Hezlett & Gibson, 2007).

- **Superintendent:** the chief executive officer (CEO) of the school district, hired by the school board to manage the administrative affairs of the school district (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996).
Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the literature related to women in school leadership positions and their experience with mentoring relationships. I also explore the literature about social capital as the theoretical framework guiding this study. To gather information for the literature review, I researched scholarly articles and books using online databases and resources from the Seton Hall University library portal. I also found information through online databases such as Google Scholar to complement my search. After reviewing the reference lists within the articles, I was able to identify additional articles relevant to my search.

I began this process using broad terms including “women in educational leadership” and “Latinas in educational leadership.” I found that the research about Latinas in school leadership was very limited. For example, when searching for information using the words “women in educational leadership” there were 459,315 results in contrast to the 23,989 results obtained using the words “Latinas in educational leadership.” I then used the words “Hispanic women in educational leadership” and obtained 64,717 results. The terminology was refined several times using terms such as “Latina school leaders,” “Hispanic female school leaders,” “women school leaders,” “Latinas in the superintendency,” “women in the superintendency,” “lack of women in educational leadership,” “Latina women in educational research,” and “Hispanic women in education.”

I found information related to my theoretical framework by searching for scholarly articles about social capital using the terms “social capital theory,” “women and social capital,” “Latinas and social capital,” and “school leaders and social capital.” Several articles about social capital frequently mentioned James Coleman, Pierre Bourdieu, Robert Putnam, Mark Granovetter, and Ronald Burt. I then researched the works of those scholars.
Regarding the theory of mentoring, I used the following words: “mentoring,” “Latinas and mentoring,” “women and mentoring,” “mentoring and school administrators,” and “mentoring and social capital.” Researchers Daniel Levinson and Kathy Kram were cited frequently in the literature. I also describe their work in this chapter.

The literature from my searches will be organized into the following subsections in this chapter: women in school leadership, barriers and challenges for women leaders, Latinas in school leadership, theory of social capital, theory of mentoring, phases of mentoring, women and mentoring, Latinas and mentoring as well as mentoring as social capital.

**Women in School Leadership**

Women have represented the majority of teachers in American classrooms for an extended period of time. Their presence in schools began in the nineteenth century when they were employed as inexpensive workers to replace men who were leaving the teaching profession for other ventures (Shakeshaft, 1999). Since schools were considered an extension of the home, women were considered best fit to educate children due to their perceived innate nurturing characteristics and maternal instincts. On the other hand, males were believed to be assertive, self-confident, and better managers, hence, best suited to lead others (Loder & Spillane, 2005, Shakeshaft, 1999). Today, women continue to dominate the teaching profession with more than 76% representation in public schools throughout the country, yet, they are not well represented in school administration (U.S. Department of Education, 2015b).

Kanter (1977), who was one of the first women to conduct a large research study about power in organizations, noted, “women populate organizations, but they practically never run them” (p. 16). This remains true in education. While there has been progress in the number of
women holding leadership positions as elementary school principals (from 36.5% in 1991 to 64% in 2012), women have not made the same gains in other leadership positions such as the high school principalship and the superintendency — the highest position one can obtain in K-12 schools (Bitterman, Goldring & Gray, 2013; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Hammer & Rohr, 1994; McGee, 2010). Recent research shows that women represent 30% of all high school principals (Bitterman et al., 2013) and 27% of all superintendents in America (Ellerson et al., 2015).

**Barriers and Challenges for Women Leaders**

Several contributing factors have been identified for the marginal representation of women in top school leadership positions. For example, Litmanovitz (2011) interviewed female leaders in education across the country, including district superintendents, state education commissioners, and former U.S. secretaries of education about their perceptions regarding the low representation of women in school leadership positions. The participants attributed the problem to the shortage of role models, the deficient pipeline for teachers to become administrators, and the struggles women often face when trying to balance work and family obligations. Key factors highlighted for their success in obtaining leadership positions were having a mentor who supported them along the way to get promotions, having role models to give them a sense of hope, and having a strong support system at home to help balance personal responsibilities.

A different and less documented factor to consider is the pattern of women arriving later to the level of administration than their male counterparts (Ellerson et al., 2015). For example, Munoz, Pankake, Simonsson, & Mills (2012) surveyed 248 central office school administrators and found that women tend to stay in the classroom longer than men, thereby delaying their rise to the level of school leadership. In their study, male participants had fewer years of
instructional experience compared to females. Specifically, only 37% of the male survey respondents reported ten or more years of classroom experience, while 49% of female survey participants reported at least that many years in the classroom. The researchers also found that the career paths of male and female leaders were similar, starting with their roles as classroom teachers, then promotion school principals, and ultimately becoming superintendents.

Researchers have argued that there are other factors associated with women’s later arrival to school administration and particularly to the superintendency that can be attributed to their professional career. Brunner and Kim (2010) analyzed two large national studies of the superintendency by Grogan and Brunner (2005) and Glass (2000) to identify the most common role progression career paths of females and males. Female paths included roles of elementary teacher/secondary advisor, elementary principal, director/coordinator, assistant/associate superintendent, and superintendent. Conversely, males had a different path, which often included secondary teacher, athletic coach, assistant secondary principal, secondary principal, and superintendent. Many males start as high school teachers, then move to the high school principalship, which is the most common direct path to the superintendency for males. However, most women start their administrative careers at the elementary school level, deviating from what has been denoted as the direct path to the superintendency, which ultimately narrows or extends the time required to attain the superintendent position (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Tallerico, 2000; McGee, 2010).

Scholars have explored similar questions related to women in educational leadership. For example, McGee (2010) conducted a survey of 90 female school leaders from the Florida public school system including superintendents, assistant superintendents, school principals and assistant principals. Survey respondents identified challenges associated with balancing a career
and personal responsibilities, the existence of a “good-old-boys network” and limited access to social networks and mentors as major barriers to professional advancement. Additionally, they also expressed being frequently excluded from after work informal network gatherings such as sporting events.

Shifting reasons related to the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency were found by Derrington and Sharratt (2009) when they compared results from surveys administered to female school leaders’ in 1993 and again in 2007 about perceptions of leadership over time. In 1993 survey women cited gender stereotyping and sex discrimination as key factors in the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. However, in 2007, they reported self-imposed barriers associated with the delegation of household tasks, motherhood, and the unwillingness of women to relocate their families, which is often required to attain leadership positions such as the superintendency.

Women’s desire to stay in the classroom longer and the difficulty balancing a family and a career has emerged as a particularly widespread challenge women face. Yet, these so-called “self-imposed” obstacles cannot fully explain the current gender-based leadership gap in education. Other salient explanatory factors included the assumption of male/female stereotypes such as “males are better leaders” and “women do not possess strong leadership abilities.” Additionally, the limited access to role models, mentors, and social networks was frequently identified as an influential cause of the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.

Jean-Marie and Martinez (2013) explored the stereotypes faced by 15 female school leaders. The participants mentioned facing gender biases and the assumption that men, by default, are better leaders than women. The participants also indicated that limited access to
social networks and connections was a prominent part of the problem. In a related study, Eagly and Carli (2009) analyzed the relationship between social networks and gender in the workplace. They concluded that women felt unwanted in predominantly male networks and, for that reason, they preferred to network with other women than with men. While this may be a useful approach to establishing a network of social support, it is a less successful strategy for professional advancement when men are responsible for the decision-making process and running organizations.

Similar external barriers were identified by Dominici et al. (2009) after interviewing 27 female faculty members of institutions of higher education. The participants, who were faculty members from different disciplines holding positions ranging from department chairs to provost, reported that women tend to move at a slower pace toward leadership positions than men because women were not properly recruited into leadership positions. They also reported that women were not being recognized in the same manner as male leaders within institutions. Further, they described that restricted access to mentoring and social networks for women was a prevented them from reaching leadership positions, arguing, “Women are more often excluded from the informal network of intellectual leadership than men…the decreased access to informal networks appears likely to reduce mentoring and increase marginalization” (Dominici et al., 2009, p. 3). The authors thus stressed the need to implement policy changes and better practices to hire and retain women leaders.

**Latinas and School Leadership**

The scarcity of women leaders mirrors the underrepresentation of minority teachers in American classrooms, particularly Latinas. While researchers have explored this phenomenon for a long time (Carnegie Corp. of New York, 1986; Dometrius & Sigelman, 1988; Kuchar,
1999), it has gained momentum more recently as a result of the rapid growth of minority students throughout the United States, especially in areas that were previously exclusively White.

Conversely, projections about the diversification of American teachers have remained stagnant and show no sign of improvement. Putman, Hansen, Walsh, and Quintero (2016) call the disparities in the proportions of the number of minority students versus the number of minority teachers in public schools “the diversity gap.”

The small number of Latina school teachers, in turn, creates a smaller pipeline of Latina school leaders since most applicants for school leadership positions come directly from the teaching pool (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009). According to the latest information from the NCES, Latinos/as only represent 8% of all public school teachers and 7% of all public school principals (Taie & Goldring, 2017). The benefits associated with increasing the number of minority teachers in American classrooms have been documented in research studies that found minority teachers act as role models for minority students and particularly for those in high poverty schools (Villegas & Lucas, 2004).

Cherng and Halpin (2016) analyzed components of the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) study which collected student data from 317 schools in six U.S. school districts from 2009 to 2011. The study reviewed information from more than 157,081 students from grades 4-9. However, the researchers focused the analysis on the responses of students in grades 6-9 who shared their perceptions of teachers’ behavior. The study showed students reported more positive perceptions of and higher levels of likability for minority teachers than White teachers. In general, Latino teachers were well-regarded by students. Additional studies have found minority teachers place higher expectations on students (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ochoa, 2007). Moreover, the presence of minority teachers has been associated with increased student
achievement (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010) and higher levels of multicultural understanding among students (Brooks et al., 2012).

Likewise, research shows students benefit from the leadership of minority administrators. For example, González (1998) found that Latino/a principals were able to understand Latino students culturally and linguistically and have mentioned bilingualism as a positive tool that enhances student learning and fosters the value of diverse cultures and languages. In addition, having role models helps students improve their academic achievement (Magdaleno, 2006) thereby preventing high school dropouts (Fry, 2003). The literature has also explained that the shared cultural understanding between minority teachers and minority students often provides opportunities for social justice (McKenzie et al., 2008).

Researchers have found Latina administrators including superintendents are predominately employed in southwestern states, working under challenging conditions, in schools in need of improvement, and with populations of mostly minority students who live in poverty (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Ortiz, 2001). It is unclear whether Latinas lean toward employment in urban areas or if they are unable to find employment in other environments. While Latinas have been able to succeed in challenging schools, they should not be assumed to be effective leaders in urban school districts only, as constructing this norm exacerbates their ability to get promotions beyond building level positions (Hernandez, Murakami, Méndez-Morse, Byrne-Jiménez, & McPhetres, 2016).

The literature also provides some insight into their experiences once attaining leadership positions. Though highly regarded as positive role models who are well-educated as they often exceed the educational requirements for their positions by holding doctorate degrees (Grogan &
Shakeshaft, 2011), they struggle to retain their positions as educational leaders, particularly at the upper-echelons of organizations. Ortiz (2001) investigated the experiences of three Latina school superintendents obtaining and retaining their leadership positions. She found that two of the participants were appointed as a result of their community ties with teachers, parents, and board members who supported their appointments. On the opposite end, one of the superintendents, although qualified, was unable to retain her position as a result of lack of social capital and sponsorship from the community including parents and teachers. Ortiz (2001) concluded that mentoring is a crucial component to help women understand how to make contacts and learn to work with the community to establish the social capital needed to retain these leadership positions.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Social Capital**

In reviewing the literature, one of the salient reasons for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions was the exclusion of women from social networks, defined as the social connections between entities (Hezlett & Gibson, 2007). Social network is a concept ingrained in the theory of social capital, one of the theories associated with career advancement. Social capital was introduced to the academic world in the 1980s by sociologists James Coleman in the United States and Pierre Bourdieu in France. Coleman (1988) theorized social capital as the investment in social relations with expectation of positive returns that make possible things that otherwise would not be possible. Coleman’s theory emphasized the significance of trust, norms, sanctions and the mutual expectations and obligations that individuals or groups create in their surroundings. Moreover, he made the distinction between social capital and human capital, describing the latter as “the changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make
them able to act in new ways” (Coleman, 1988, p. 101). Contrary to social capital, which is the result of relationships between people and among people, human capital is often gained over time by the level of education an individual achieves or by the experience one obtains in the workplace (Coleman, 1988).

At the same time in Europe, Bourdieu worked to advance a different conception of social capital (Lin, 2001). He conceptualized social capital as a resource embedded in society and part of the networks and social connections of the dominant class, particularly beneficial to those economically privileged and in the high hierarchy of social networks (Bourdieu, 1983; Bourdieu, 1986). In his book *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) exposed the ways in which culture and social class relations impact the middle and upper classes, and how the middle and upper classes attempt to identify themselves as worthy of those below them on the social ladder. Bourdieu also introduced the term “cultural capital,” which he used to describe the ways people use cultural knowledge (how they speak, look, dress) to move up the hierarchy; this is what keeps elite groups on top. In addition, he positioned social capital as an explanation for social inequality and the limitations inherited by less privileged and less affluent groups in society.

More recently, Putnam (1995) expanded the notion of social capital by arguing that the decline of social capital in the United States was the result of the overuse of technology, excessive workloads, and generational change. Putnam (2001) expanded the idea of social capital by including the concepts of bonding and bridging capital initially presented by Gittell and Vidal (1998) and similarly advanced by Granovetter (1973) with his notion of weak and strong ties as important components of the healthy development of social capital. Putnam (2001) introduced the idea of bonding capital as the socialization of people of the same race, gender, age, religion among others, and bridging capital as the opposite or the socialization of people of
different ages, races, religions, etc. He argues, “frequent interaction among a diverse set of people tends to produce a norm of generalized reciprocity” (Putnam, 2001, p. 21).

**Theories of Social Capital**

Social capital is a broad concept mainly rooted in economics and sociology which expands to several areas. However, in relation to career success and advancement, there are three main theoretical approaches to understanding social capital: Weak Tie Theory (Granovetter, 1973), Structural Hole Theory (Burt, 1992) and Social Resource Theory (Lin, 1999). Weak Tie Theory (Granovetter, 1973) denotes the power of acquaintances rather than close friends and family members (strong ties) and their influence as a source of information and resources particularly for those looking for a job.

Granovetter (1973) one of the main proponents of Weak Tie Theory, conducted a research study with a random sample of 282 men from professional, technical, and managerial jobs in a Boston suburb. He surveyed and interviewed participants about their job search experiences and inquired about those who provided them with the information about the job openings. He concluded that weak ties rather than strong ties were strongly connected to having provided solid bases of information about job openings to the individuals he interviewed. He argued, “Those to whom we are weakly tied are more likely to move in circles different from our own and will thus have access to information different from that which we receive” (p. 1371).

Similarly embedded in the way people interact with different contacts, Burt (1992) presented Structural Hole Theory which asserts that structural holes exist between contacts who are not connected with each other and are not strongly associated with one another. Structural Hole Theory is concerned with understanding how to establish primary and secondary contacts
and how to expand the network of information and timely access to job opportunities without redundancies. Burt (1992) called this relationship a social bridge: “the hole is a buffer, like an insulator in an electric circuit. As a result of the hole between them, the two contacts provide network benefits that are to some degree additive rather than overlapping” (p. 18). Although they share some similarities, the weak tie theory and Structural Hole Theory differ in that Burt considered weak tie theory a correlation, not a cause. He argued that Structural Hole Theory provided an explanation for how to obtain information as a result of differentiating and grouping contacts.

In contrast to Weak Tie Theory and Structural Hole Theory, both of which are concerned with the structure of ties, Social Resource Theory is focused on the characteristics and the resources provided by social connections. Moreover, Social Resource Theory is related to questions about how an individual can have access to social connections and the extent of those networks to gain benefits such as a job (Lin, 2001). This theory is mainly associated with social networks. Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn (1981) explored the importance of the contact’s position in the hierarchical structure of an organization to increase the possibilities of positive outcomes. They interviewed working males ages 21-64 about their personal resources and how they attained the professional positions. They found that “when seeking a job an individual will gain more by contacting someone upward in the hierarchal structure, who has, in other words, greater social resources” (p. 395). In recent years, researchers have started to examine social capital in relation to mentoring relationships as both theories are associated with promotions and career advancement.
Theory of Mentoring

Mentoring is defined as the relationship between a less experienced person and a person in power who can teach, encourage, and facilitate the advancement of the less experienced person who is also known as a protégée (Kram, 1983; Levinson et al., 1978). Mentors are typically regarded as individuals with advanced experience who offer career development such as exposure, protection, sponsorship, coaching, visibility, leadership (Kram, 1983), and provide psychosocial benefits related to self-esteem, confidence, sense of capability and acceptance of younger individuals at the beginning of their careers (Archard, 2012; Kram, 1983).

Mentoring was first presented in Greek Mythology, in Homer’s book Odyssey when Odysseus, King of Ithaca assigned his friend Mentor to guide and protect his son Telemachus while he was fighting in the Trojan War (Bynum, 2015; Ragins & Kram, 2007). In the research literature, the theory of mentoring was introduced to the academic world through the work of Levinson et al. (1978) in The Seasons of a Man’s Life. Levinson et al. interviewed 40 adult males who worked in different industries including corporations, universities, writing, and factories to capture the different sectors of society. Levinson et al. argued the mentor/protégée relationship usually takes place at work and described it as the most important one in a young man’s life because it provides the fundamental tools to enhance his sense of confidence and capability early on. Levinson et al. also accentuated and enhanced the role and importance of the mentor representing a father/friend figure, stating, “the mentor represents a mixture of parent and peer; he must be both and not purely either one…he is experienced as responsible, admirable, older sibling” (p. 99).

Alderfer (2014) accentuated the importance of distinguishing between the term mentor and other similar definitions such as boss, sponsor, and coach. For example, the word boss refers
to the person in charge of an organizational hierarchy. Often the boss has the power to promote, increase salary or deny a promotion to a subordinate. A sponsor is an individual who can improve the visibility of employees by assigning them complex tasks to prepare them for future promotions. A coach “in the original sense teaches players how to play their positions…as the term is used in management consulting…the role of the coach is to help managers to improve their performance” (p.7). Nonetheless, in reviewing the literature, I found these terms were often used in the same context and interchangeably in research studies.

**Phases of Mentoring**

Mentoring is not an overnight process; it is a reciprocal relationship that develops over time which involves trust, commitment, and several interactions (Haggard, 2012). Kram (1988) explored, in depth, the importance and progression of mentoring. She expanded on the work of Levinson et al. (1978) by developing a conceptual model of mentoring. Her study was related to the relationships formed between junior and senior managers in a corporation to understand how mentoring relationships were established in organizations. To complete her study, she interviewed eighteen pairs of managers and their mentors at a large company to explore how they fostered their relationships over time. Her research concluded the protégé/mentor relationship is embedded in four phases: the initiating phase, cultivation phase, separation phase and redefinition phase.

The initial phase of mentoring usually starts when the mentee is generally forming his/her professional identity as well as setting goals and aspirations. It ranges from 6 to 12 months and evolves as a result of appreciation and respect for a more senior manager who is often admired by the mentee. The interaction between the mentor and mentee typically starts through a hiring interview, interactions completing work tasks or as a result of recommendations from peers. “In
most cases there is a balance of initiative on both sides; the young manager begins to look
toward the senior manager for support and guidance, and the senior manager begins to provide
developmental opportunities” (Kram, 1988, p. 52). During the initial phase, the protégé feels
secure and protected by the mentor.

The second phase is called cultivation. During the cultivation phase (2 to 5 years), the
mentor provides the mentee with exposure, protection, and visibility. In addition, the
relationship is expanded to be more open and reciprocal. The mentee increases his/her
confidence and learns the “ropes” of the organization “for a senior manager, this phase of the
relationship produced substantial satisfaction in knowing that he had positively influenced a
younger individual’s development” (Kram, 1988, p. 54).

After the cultivation phase comes the separation phase. In this phase, the
mentor/relationship changes, the mentee finds more independence and assurance, and the
relationship weakens as the mentee’s ability to perform well without the guidance of the mentor.
Career advancement and structural separation often lead to the separation phase. Both mentor
and mentee express that the relationship is different from what it was during the cultivation
phase. “The young manager experiences new independence and autonomy, and both managers
reassess the value of the relationship” (Kram, 1988, p. 56). During this time the mentee still
struggles with the desire to seek the mentor’s help. On the other hand, the mentor is usually less
affected by the separation though continues to monitor the mentee’s professional progress.

The final phase is called redefinition and is mainly when the relationship changes to
become a friendship or eventually ends. Mentor and mentee continue to have some contact but
with different intensity than the initial and cultivation phases because the mentee is now
comfortable making decisions autonomously. The mentee sees the mentor as an equal and not a superior. The mentor finds benefits from the relationship by feeling a part of the career advancement and upward mobility of the mentee. Kram (1988) explains, “over time, these developmental relationships may continue as distant friendships or gradually fade into positive memories” (p. 63). The mentee can function without the immediate support of the mentor and has increased his or her confidence. On the other hand, the mentor feels satisfied with the advancement of the mentee.

**Women and Mentoring**

Research studies have found that women do not engage in mentoring relationships throughout their careers as men do (Gardiner et al., 2000; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015). The limitations of not having a mentor, particularly regarding the career advancement of women, was studied by Edson (1995) in a longitudinal study of 142 females aspiring to obtain the position of school principal. He found that 42% of the participants who had mentoring relationships early in their careers were able to obtain the desired position, whereas; only 17% of participants who did not have a mentor were able to attain the same position. Researchers have found the lack of mentors has limited the career advancement of women and considered it to be a factor preventing them from achieving upper management positions in education (Angel, Killacky, & Johnson, 2013; Glass, 2000). Additionally, the scarcity of mentors has also been attributed to the “good-old-boy network” often defined as “older male executives and male professors who typically prefer protégées who are junior versions of themselves…Typically, older white males mentored younger white males” (Gardiner et al., 2000, p. 4)

Women have been found to benefit from informal mentoring more than formal mentoring. Formal mentoring is established when the relationship is formed and assigned by an
organization, while informal mentoring is an organic process that happens naturally and spontaneously without a predetermined agenda (Bynum, 2015). Sherman et al. (2008) interviewed four female assistant superintendents and six superintendents about their experiences with mentoring. Their findings revealed most female participants had mentoring exposure during their careers; however, they struggled to identify specific mentors. Instead, they mentioned having informal mentoring interactions with supervisors who encouraged them to seek administrative positions and believed in their leadership capabilities.

The same findings were supported by Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) when they surveyed 239 female administrators from Tennessee higher-education institutions about their professional mentoring experiences and found 64% of the participants had had a mentor, 90% of the mentoring relationships were informal with mentors in higher ranking positions from the same educational institutions. Moreover, a case study conducted by Peters (2010) found the formal involvement of a mentor and her younger mentee developed as a result of their multiple interactions during their participation in an Administrative Leadership Academy. They were able to connect personally and professionally as a result of their mentoring connection, and both benefited from their relationship, as they were able to provide each other with mutual learning and growth.

Clayton, Sanzo, and Myran (2013) found some benefits related to formal mentoring relationships in the study of eight pairs of mentors/mentees from a university/school partnership to provide formal mentoring to aspiring school leaders. Mentors and mentees met face-to-face once a month and had additional contact three times via email, phone, or video conferencing. Participants reported having difficulty fulfilling the requirements of their formal mentoring interactions as a result of limited time due to their professional and personal responsibilities.
However, the mentors and mentees found their relationship was beneficial when they had the opportunity to work on mutual projects related to their job assignments such as assessment and accountability measures.

**Latinas and Mentoring**

Mentoring has been shown to promote career success (Blickle et al., 2009). Also, mentoring relationships have been found to be an efficient way to show protégées the “ropes” of the organizations and teach them to navigate the political and cultural environment of organizations. Latinas often lack the support of mentors. In two separate studies, Méndez-Morse et al. (2015) and Murakami, Byrne-Jimenez & Hernandez (2015) analyzed the responses of Latina school leaders surveyed by the National Latina Leadership Project regarding their career path and challenges seeking administrative positions. They found that approximately two-thirds of the participants mentioned having mentors or role models who influenced their choice to become administrators and/or their professional development. However, 20% of the participants reported mentoring had little or no impact on their career development and leadership style.

On the other hand, researchers have found Latinas have benefited from mentoring relationships. For example, San Miguel and Kim (2015) interviewed eight Latina scientists and engineers and found they relied on the presence of formal and informal mentors in their careers to support them emotionally, encourage them to seek more responsibilities, and to facilitate their career advancement. The participants pointed out that peer mentoring from an experienced colleague or friend was pivotal to understand the “ropes” of their professions. All participants attested that they were able to advance professionally as a result of informal networking with
other people from the same field. However, the participants did not specify what role their mentors played in accessing social networks.

González-Figueroa & Young (2005) surveyed 103 Latina women with professional roles in business, academia, policy, and politics about their mentoring experiences regarding the race and gender of their mentors. They found the participants identified having mentoring experiences that contradict studies that report minority women have limited access to mentors (e.g., Méndez-Morse et al., 2015). The participants reported having more than one informal mentor, which frequently included their direct supervisor. Additionally, the study found most participants had informal mentors who contributed to their psychosocial development which is consistent with the literature about women and informal mentoring relationships. Although the participants mentioned they had mentors from different ethnicities, they stated a preference for mentors from the same race.

Scholars have found Latinas’ mentors are often family members rather than peers or other professionals. Méndez-Morse (2004) investigated the role of mentors in the career decisions of 13 school administrators in Texas. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups, Méndez-Morse found that the participants experienced non-traditional mentoring relationships. She identified mentors as “someone who actively helped, supported, or taught someone else how to do a job so that someone could succeed” (p. 582). The participants identified their parents, particularly their mothers, as role models who supported them in their career success, Professionally, the participants reported having encountered distant support from their supervisors who granted permission to become involved in various aspects of the school operations autonomously. Additionally, Latinas highlighted finding mentors and role models in their teachers and college professors.
Mentoring as Social Capital

As the marketplace has evolved with the inclusion and high accessibility of technology, new models of mentoring relationships have emerged. Higgins and Kram (2001) introduced a new social network theory linking the concepts of social capital with mentoring called “developmental networks” which they define as “the different social systems and ties they originate from, such as one’s employer, school, community, professional associations, and so on” (p. 269). They created a different framework that proposed having more than one mentor who provides guidance and support than the traditional system of one person. They hypothesized the change in the mentoring model was necessary as a result of the changes in society related to employment terms and competition, technology growth, and the need to learn information faster, in addition to organizational changes and diversity in the workplace. They stated developmental networks are formed as a result of the network diversity, the relationship strength, the developmental network itself, and the type of relationship formed.

Seibert et al. (2001) linked social capital and mentoring in their study of 448 alumni from a large Midwestern university. They asked respondents to list the people who provided them with information related to career opportunities and found that having more contacts people at high organizational levels was associated with increased career patronage and support. Further, participants supported the notion of the positive outcomes associated with having more than one mentor “the larger the mentoring network, the more beneficial it is to the protégé. In essence, the more mentors, the greater the coverage of several types of advice and support” (p.233).

Positive relationships between mentoring and social capital were found in a study conducted by Blickle et al., 2009. They examine 112 employees’ responses about the influence of mentoring and networking in their career success and found mentoring as a predicting factor
for career satisfaction, although networking was the strongest predictor of career success. Participants also attributed their success beyond the mentoring relationship to their mentor’s level of power in the organization. This study demonstrated how mentoring relationships were pivotal to foster social networks that guided and ultimately helped new employees to find career success.

In this chapter, the literature related to mentoring relationship and career advancement has been explored. In addition, the theory of social capital has been examined in relation to promotion and how ties with others can facilitate the career mobility of people. Since the literature merging these two theories continues to emerge as a result of the evolving changes in the marketplace, the current study explored how race, gender, and these two theories are related in the career advancement of the participants. The current study sheds light on how these Latina school leaders engaged in professional mentoring relationships and the role of those relationships in their upward mobility. The next chapter includes the methodology for the current study.
Chapter III: Methodology

Research in educational leadership has extensively examined questions related to the lack of women in leadership positions (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Dominici et al., 2009; Litmanovitz, 2011; Loder & Spillane, 2005; McGee, 2010; Sherman & Beaty, 2010). A separate body of literature identifies the importance of mentoring relationships either formally or informally to obtain skillsets, access to professional opportunities and ultimate career advancement (Blickle et al., 2009; Clayton et al., 2013; DiRenzo et al., 2013; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Ghosh & Reio, 2013; Johnson, 2011; Washington, 2010). However, none of this literature has focused on the underrepresentation of Latina women in leadership positions in education or how they attained those positions. As a result, little is known about how Latinas’ career advancement experiences in school leadership are different from or similar to other women in the same field.

In the state of New Jersey, though a small percentage, some Latinas have been able to attain positions as school administrators including vice-principal, principal, supervisor, director, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. Learning how Latina school leaders ascend into administrative positions contributes to the knowledge of how minority females are able to become educational leaders and sheds light on the role of mentoring in the career mobility of this group of women. In addition, learning about Latina experiences can increase understanding of the reasons Latinas are underrepresented in education — in teaching, as well as in administration.

The purpose of this narrative study was to examine how Latina school administrators in New Jersey progress into leadership positions. Using social capital as the theoretical framework,
this study explored the role of mentoring relationships in the career advancement and promotion of Latina women.

**Research Questions**

The central question guiding this study was: What is the role of mentoring relationships in the professional advancement of Latina school administrators? This study answers that using four research questions:

- How do Latina school administrators develop relationships with mentors?
- What career-advancement-related benefits and resources do Latina school administrators receive from mentoring relationships?
- How have mentors impacted the career decisions of Latina school administrators?
- How have mentors helped Latina school administrators gain access to information and professional opportunities?

**Research Design**

This study was designed to explore the lived-experiences, behaviors, and perspectives of the participants. Therefore, qualitative research methodologies were the most appropriate techniques to answer the research questions presented in this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Patton, 1990). A narrative research design was selected for this study because of the goals of the project. Narrative inquiry collects the stories, narratives, or descriptions of people to understand their lives and experiences (Clandinin, 2007; Wertz et al., 2011; Webster & Mertova, 2007). “Narrative research epistemologically respects the relativity and multiplicity of
truth and relies on the foundational work of such philosophers as Ricoeur, Heidegger, Husserl, Dilthey, Wittgenstein, Bakhtin, Lyotard, MacIntyre, and Gadamer” (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 225). Narrative research is focused on the interpretation of the participant’s perspectives through the lens of a framework; interviews are often used to collect data to analyze the participant’s own words, reflections, and life stories. Though, narrative research can also include the study of written documents (Riessman, 1993; Wertz et al., 2011).

To complete the study, semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary tool for data collection. Latina school leaders were interviewed regarding their experiences and perceptions about the role of mentoring relationships in their career advancement. Prior to the interviews, biographical questionnaires were used to gather general descriptive information about the participants such as country of birth, age, primary language, marital status, household composition and educational experiences. The questions were drafted to answer the research questions by asking for information pertaining to the participant’s educational careers, teaching experiences, mentoring experiences either formally or informally, access to social networks and sponsorship and future career aspirations. Individual interviews were completed face-to-face in each participant’s school during after-school hours unless a different mutually convenient time and location was selected.

Sample Selection

One of the advantages of choosing a qualitative methodology was the ability to select specific participants or actions based on the research questions and the purpose of the study (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). The participants were selected using a criterion sample method (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I chose this sampling method to ensure the participants met the specific criteria necessary to answer each research question.
directly. To be included, prospective participants had to be 1) female, 2) of Hispanic descent, which includes any person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central America, or other Spanish culture or origin (regardless of immigration generation), and 3) currently employed as a school administrator for a public school district in the state of New Jersey.

However, since the population of potential participants was limited, participants were not included or excluded based on other characteristics such as age, years of experience as a school administrator, position, and location of district, although these factors were associated with variation in the experience of Latina school administrators. The sample was limited to public school employees because all public school administrators in New Jersey must be certified by the state. To obtain state certification, all applicants had to meet specific qualifications and education requirements such as attaining at least a master’s degree with a concentration in educational leadership, completing a minimum of five years of educational experience, passing the School Leaders Licensure Assessment, and completing of a minimum of 300 hours of internship in educational leadership (NJDOE, 2015).

Participants

Upon obtaining approval for this research study, I began the process of recruiting participants. I searched for participants by using the NJDOE’s website. The information I found about certified school staff included the gender and race of administrators and teachers, by county and by school district. However, it did not specify their names or emails. I narrowed the content by searching for participants in counties within a 60-mile radius from my home. Next, I browsed the school districts’ websites to find the names of the female staff administrators and obtained the email information of female administrators whose names or last names were indicative of a Hispanic name. A total of 96 emails were collected. I emailed a letter of
solicitation (Appendix B) and copy of the Institutional Review Board approval (Appendix A) to all 96 prospective participants. The same information was also emailed to all members of the Latina University Network Association (LUNA) at Seton University which is a support group of Latinas at Seton Hall University seeking doctorate degrees. The website provides its members with information such as writing tips, research workshops and information about the doctorate process as well as information about current events that are relevant to the Latino/a community. Graduate students in the educational leadership program at Seton Hall University also received an invitation to participate.

A total of twenty women responded to the solicitation and self-identified as meeting the characteristics to participate in the study. A demographic questionnaire (Appendix D) was used to establish preliminary information such as parents’ background and ethnicity, participants’ age, marital status, number of children, years of experience, highest degree attained, number of certificates and level of Spanish fluency. This data revealed that 14 participants were between the ages of 30 and 45 while the other six were between the ages of 46 and 60. Fourteen were second generation Americans, born in the United States, to foreign born parents. The remaining six participants immigrated to the United States between the ages of four and 17 and therefore were categorized as first generation. At the time of the interviews, 17 participants had at least one child, three were divorced, 13 were married and four were single. Additionally, 16 participants self-identified as having native Spanish speaking fluency while four described themselves as having limited fluency only. Table 4 provides the demographic information for each participant in the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
<th>Age moved to US</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Self-Identified Spanish Fluency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vilma</td>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Puerto Rican &amp; Cuban</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolina</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican &amp; Cuban</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivelysse</td>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillia</td>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awilda</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julissa</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Cuban &amp; Irish</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naty</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Dominican &amp; Filipino</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesta</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican &amp; Cuban</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yocasta</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Salvadoran &amp; Honduran</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafaela</td>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Peruvian</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanike</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elly</td>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altagracia</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonsirie</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Dominican</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berenice</td>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the participants were well educated and exceeded the education requirements of the positions they held. For example, mid-management positions require a master’s degree in school leadership and five years of educational experience, yet, 11 participants had attained two master’s degrees, five were seeking doctorate degrees and four had attained a doctoral degree. Eleven had five or more teaching/administrative certificates and the other nine had an average of four certificates. On average, Latina women spent 16 years in the classroom before becoming administrators, which is higher than the national average of 13.9 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Most of the Latina women were employed in urban areas. For example, 14 were working in urban districts with more than 50% of students from low socio-economic backgrounds as measured by the percent of students who received free/reduced lunch. This is similar to the current research about Latinas, which has found Latinos tend to find employment in urban areas serving mostly minority students (Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Ortiz, 2011). The information found on the NJDOE (2017) website supported similar trends as most Latina school administrators were clustered in the nine largest urban districts in the state. Further, 4 of the 6 women working in suburban districts had previously worked at an urban district.

Table 5 shows the education and experience details for each participant. Although I interviewed participants at all grade levels (K-12), most of them were working at the elementary school level. This is congruent with the current research about Latina school administrators which has found that most Latinas school administrators are working at the elementary school level within their organizations (Méndez-Morse et al., 2015). Within the sample, six women were elementary school principals, six were elementary school vice-principals, one was a middle school vice-principal, one was a middle school principal, three were high school vice-principals,
one was an alternative high school principal and one was a director of special education services with district-wide responsibility.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Certificates</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Administrative Experience</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>School Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Elementary Principal</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>HS Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vilma</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>MS Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolina</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Elementary Principal</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Elementary Vice Principal</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivelysse</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Elementary Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillia</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Elementary Principal</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awilda</td>
<td>Seeking</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>HS Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julissa</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>HS Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naty</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>MS Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesta</td>
<td>Seeking</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Elementary Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yocasta</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Elementary Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafaela</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Elementary Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy</td>
<td>Seeking</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Director of Special Ed.</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanike</td>
<td>Seeking</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>HS Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Elementary Principal</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elly</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Alt. Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altagracia</td>
<td>Seeking</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Elementary Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonsirie</td>
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<td>2-5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Elementary Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berenice</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Elementary Vice Principal</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data Collection**

Data was collected through semi-structured, individual, face-to-face interviews. Using guided conversations to obtain information allowed me to learn, with as much detail and depth as possible, about the participants’ perspectives and experiences of being Latina female leaders in educational leadership positions and the impact of mentoring on their professional success (Patton, 1990; Riessman, 1993; Wertz et al., 2011).

The interview protocol (Appendix E) had a total of 20 questions that were grounded in the literature review and the conceptual framework. The questions were pre-tested by two educational experts who did not take part in the study. I revised the questions based on their feedback. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were structured to evolve organically using the parameters detailed in the protocol, but also leaving room for more elaborate responses prompted by probing questions.

Once participants agreed to take participate, I provided them with consent forms (Appendix C) that detailed the extent of their participation, the approximate length of the interviews, details about the confidentiality agreement and measures to protect their identities prior, during and after the study. The consent forms also included information about me as the lead investigator, my mentor as the person overseeing the research and the Institutional Review Board at Seton Hall University. All interviews were recorded using an audio tape device. The recordings were saved to a removable flash drive and was locked and secured file cabinet. To further protect the participant’s identity, the transcribed interviews were anonymized, using pseudonyms for the participants’ names and school districts.
I used a contact summary form after each interview to record my personal reactions as well as any observations not collected in the interviews such as the participant’s description, demeanor, personality, interactions with others, the environment in which they work, and any other data collected and observed from the fieldwork. The contact summary form was converted into expanded write-ups to include personal anecdotes during the analysis process and is available for member checks to ensure validity (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2011; Saldaña 2015).

Data Analysis

The completed interviews were transcribed, verbatim, by a professional transcriber. Once the transcripts were transcribed, I read them while listening to audio to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions. I then read the transcripts a second time to develop a code book by constructing code categories using inductive open coding (Miles et al., 2014). A first cycle of codes using descriptive and in vivo codes was generated. Descriptive codes were used to label the data with descriptive words and in vivo codes were created using the exact words or phrases used by the participants (Miles et al., 2014).

I then created a second cycle of codes derived from the first one using descriptive codes to create categories to group data according to the following three characteristics: the relationship between the codes, the frequencies of the codes, and the meaning of the codes (Miles et al., 2014). To maintain accuracy during the research, I revised and adjusted the code book progressively as needed.

A cross-case analysis was completed by using data summary tables as well as case-level meta-matrices to connect the questions from the interviews with the salient themes in the second coding cycle. By creating case-level meta-matrices, I was able to compare and contrast each
participant’s answers to find commonalities and patterns in their responses (Miles et al., 2014). In addition, the case level meta-matrices helped me answer the research questions by condensing the information provided by each participant into a matrix to complete the data analysis by reading across the rows to find relationships and to make conclusions. The analysis process was completed by clustering data and by using plausibility in the process until I collected enough evidence to draw conclusions to answer the research questions (Miles et al., 2014).

Role of the Researcher

My interest in women in leadership is the result of my observations while attending a professional conference in New York City in my role as a school counselor. Although the majority of the audience was female, the group of superintendents presenting that morning were mostly men. I questioned whether this was a coincidence or simply an oversight on the part of the organizers of the event. However, upon my return from the conference, I conducted a Google search about women in leadership positions. I quickly learned about the gender/racial disparities and underrepresentation of women in management positions in all areas including corporate America, politics, and education. Initially, I was distraught and discouraged upon learning about the underrepresentation of women and particularly Latinas since I was enrolled in a program to become a school leader and I thought my chances of becoming a leader were already limited according to the research.

As time went by, my interest in the topic continued and I developed a pilot research project to interview school administrators about their experience obtaining administrative positions and to identify challenges or difficulties in the process. The study was conducted in a large educational complex in New York City with a sample of ten assistant principals/principals (five females, five males) from six different schools. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews
were conducted to collect data about their journeys seeking management positions. The findings from the pilot study revealed that most of the participants had not encountered any challenges obtaining their leadership positions. Instead, participants emphasized the help and support provided by an informal mentor, often their immediate supervisor, who positioned them to gain entrance into school leadership. From the pilot study, I learned about the influence of mentoring in the career advancement of school administrators.

As a Latina school leader, my personal experience in seeking and becoming an administrator was quite challenging. I spent more than three years applying for supervisory positions outside of my school district. Nonetheless, I was eventually promoted to an administrative rank within the same school district. At the time of my advancement, I had 11 years of experience working in public schools as a teacher as well as a school counselor. Although I encountered informal professional mentoring relationships throughout my career, those relationships did not provide me with key information about job openings. Yet, my experiences finding positions as a teacher and school counselor were the opposite, I found positions easily and without any major challenge, even without the help and support of a mentor. My first teaching position was in an inner-city school in Bronx, New York where I worked as a foreign language teacher until I transitioned into the position of school counselor. After six years, I decided to look for employment closer to my home. I was able to secure a position after applying and interviewing at just one school district.

To complete this study, I decided to explore whether Latina women had similar or different experiences than those who took part in the pilot research. Studying Latinas and their experiences was particularly appealing to me since I share the same cultural background as the women I interviewed. Sharing the same linguistic background facilitated using Spanish as a way
to connect as well as to refer to certain phrases or expressions not easily translated into the English language. In addition, having a similar professional career as the participants was also helpful because I was familiar with the terminology they used in school districts on a day-to-day basis.

At the same time, some of these strengths also presented challenges, as I had to control my personal biases as a result of my personal experiences seeking leadership positions, which led me to become interested in this topic. However, I made every effort to control my subjectivity by monitoring my feelings with personal memos throughout the study (Peshkin, 1988). Additionally, I have also used member checks to ensure other individuals read the information collected during the research including personal memos, contact summary forms and interview transcripts (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Further, I have debriefed with peers and other individuals familiar with this research to find out if their conclusions coincide and agree with my findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990).

**Validity and Trustworthiness**

Validity in qualitative research refers to the strength of the data collected (Patton, 1990; Riessman, 1993; Webster, Mertova, 2007). Validity in narrative studies is atypical to the standards applied to other qualitative methods because narrative inquiry seeks to learn about the perspectives and personal experiences of those who share their stories during the research process. “Approaches commonly applied to qualitative data many not suit narrative inquiry. Triangulation for example, a tool that qualitative researchers use…is not necessarily applicable to storytelling-based research” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 91). Instead, validity in narrative research is provided by the trustworthiness of the data collected and the rigor used to analyze and interpret the transcripts. Validity in this narrative study was achieved by the fidelity of the
contact summary forms, personal memos, and transcripts from the interviews. In addition, validity was achieved through peer debriefing and sharing the transcripts and coding book with other members familiar with the research to ensure the data analysis and findings were similar to those of others reading the data collected. Further, validity was ensured by remaining open to sharing the data with anyone who expressed interest in accessing the transcripts and the analysis process (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

**Limitations**

The findings in this study are limited to Latina school administrators serving as vice-principals, principals, supervisors, and directors working in public schools in the state of New Jersey. The study only included Latina women as the research questions were intended to explore the experiences of Latinas. This study was completed using qualitative methods with a small number of participants. Consequently; the findings cannot be generalized to individuals other than those involved in the process of this investigation. Since the population of potential participants was limited, additional characteristics for participation such as age, years as a school administrator, years of teaching experience, and location of district (urban/suburban) were not included in the selection process. These factors can be associated with variation in the experience of Latina school administrators. This study was in no way intended to reflect or represent the experiences of Latina school administrators in other states as their experiences may be different.

**Summary**

Narrative inquiry was selected as the method to complete this study because it was the best qualitative method to answer the research questions as the purpose of this study was to gain knowledge about the experiences of Latina administrators and the role of mentors in their career.
advancement. The data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each participant. Participation in the study was voluntary using a criteria-based sample. All interviews were recorded and upon completion transcribed verbatim. The information collected was coded into themes and patterns for analysis and discussion. Coding categories were created for further analysis using demographic and cross-case analysis to cross reference the information and to show the analysis in detail.

The next chapter details the findings of this study.
Chapter IV: Research Findings

In this chapter, I present the salient themes and patterns I found through my analysis of the interviews with 20 Latina school administrators about their career trajectories in the field of education. The purpose of this study was to explore how Latina school administrators advanced their career into leadership positions in the state of New Jersey and to explore the role of mentoring in their professional advancement. The participants’ experiences shed light on the ways in which Latina women became interested in the field of education, how they obtained their first teaching position, how they developed mentoring relationships formally and informally and the mentors’ influence on their interest in school administration. In this chapter, I explore their reports of mentors’ actions to provide access to information and to help them obtain promotions within their organization. Finally, I examine the role of mentoring in their future career plans.

Entrance to Education

Latina school administrators entered the field of education in multiple ways. Eight of the 20 participants knew that they wanted to be educators at an early age. Six of the women decided to pursue education careers while in college, after working with children or after having children. The other six chose education as a career path after they had earned their bachelor’s degree in other disciplines. This final group of women gained entrance to jobs in education through the alternative teaching route, which is designed to help individuals who studied majors other than education become teachers.

Women who entered education as a second career had events in their lives that caused them to change their minds. Naty is one example of someone who entered education after graduating college with a degree in another area. She was born in the Dominican Republic but came to the United States when she was thirteen years old. After she completed middle school
and high school, she moved back to the Dominican Republic with her parents. While there, she earned her bachelor’s degree in Business Management and was working for a transnational company until she immigrated back to the United States with her then-fiancé. She realized she was no longer happy working in business and decided to change careers. Some of her friends who were teachers recommended that she try education. She started as a teacher’s assistant at a pre-kindergarten school then became a certified teacher through the alternate route teaching program.

Other participants entered education by coincidence. That was the case for Stephanie who earned a bachelor’s degree in Photography and was unable to support herself by working weekends taking pictures at weddings. She asked her friends for help finding a job and one of her friends mentioned that his mother was in charge of substitute teachers in a school. Stephanie recalled her entrance in education: “I got into it by accident, by a fortunate accident. I loved it and I’ve been doing it now for thirty-four years altogether.” Her first job as a substitute teacher was working with special needs students, which inspired her to complete a teaching program to become a special education teacher. At the time of the interview, she was working as a high school vice-principal in an urban district.

Interactions with students while in college also made some of the interview participants change their initial educational plans. That was the case for Julissa, one of the four Latina school administrators interviewed who was working at the high school level. She was studying political science in college with the intention of becoming a lawyer. She even took her Law School Admission Test and was accepted to several law schools when she made the choice to enter the field of education. Her decision took place after she tutored Korean students one summer. Julissa explains: “I just fell in love with education...to the dismay of my Cuban father, who, still,
to this day, tells people ‘she’s an administrator but she could have been a lawyer.’” Another participant, Awilda, who was finishing her third year as a school administrator at the time of the interview, studied Speech Communication and wanted to be a news reporter. In one of her classes, she was invited by one of her professors to complete an internship doing conflict management and peer mediation at a school. While doing that, she discovered her love for teaching: “I enjoyed being in the classroom with students and from there, I was asked to become a pre-school teacher.” She obtained her teaching certification through the alternate route program and became a kindergarten teacher at a public school soon after.

College professors also influenced Latina women and facilitated their discovery of a passion for education. This was exemplified through the case of Yocasta, a newly appointed elementary school principal. Although she always was inclined toward education, she was studying business in college until one of her college professors told her she was very strong in mathematics and steered her toward a career in education. Yocasta, who started her teaching career as a fourth-grade bilingual teacher in New York City, remembered her experiences as follows:

The more we spoke about it the more I felt like you know, that is something I want to do, I want to make sure I can impact students’ lives but mostly women…because they don’t really go into the math field. (Yocasta)

At the other end of the spectrum were the women who were certain they wanted to be teachers at an early age. For example, Elly, the only high school principal among the interview participants, knew, at an early age, that she wanted to attend college to become a teacher. Her mother had told her during her senior year in high school she was not able to pay for her college.
Yet, Elly managed to attend after winning a full scholarship sponsored by a local newspaper. She studied mathematics and education and started her career working in a parochial school in New York City.

Early life experiences inspired some of the participants to seek careers in education. For Modesta it was working with children as a teenager that spawned her desire for a career in education. A 10-year veteran school administrator, Modesta decided in high school that she wanted to become an educator. She had a part-time job working with children in a daycare and volunteered, teaching Sunday school. Modesta recalled her early years as follows: “I knew I wanted to work with children and then I just naturally said, ‘Well since this is an affinity that I have, and I enjoy working with children, I am going to make it my career.’” She started working as a bilingual teacher at the elementary school level as soon as she finished her bachelor’s degree in education. For Berenice, an educator with 22 years of experience, growing up in a family of teachers made her realize, at an early age, that she wanted to follow the family tradition. She enrolled in college right after moving to the United States from Puerto Rico and studied elementary education and Spanish literature. At the time of the interview, she was working as an elementary school vice-principal in an urban school district.

**Finding Jobs as Teachers**

The process of finding a position as a teacher was relatively easy for most of the participants as nineteen of them found their first employment as a teacher without major challenges. One of the salient themes was that schools were looking for bilingual teachers, and since many of the participants spoke Spanish, they did not encounter difficulty getting hired. Some of them were even offered their position without a formal interview process or right after their first interview. That was the case for Carolina, an elementary school principal who was
able to obtain her first job as an elementary school teacher because the principal was looking for Spanish speaking teachers. Carolina recounted:

I found my first job because they were looking for teachers who spoke Spanish. My Spanish is more of the basic, I don’t have the academic fluent Spanish, but the principal was just looking for anyone who spoke Spanish. So, I was hired on the spot. (Carolina)

Modesta had similar experiences being offered a position because she spoke Spanish. She applied to three different school districts and received offers in two of them. Modesta was able to find a position immediately after completing her bachelor’s degree in education, and she attributed her ease at getting hired to speaking Spanish.

The desire for Spanish-speaking teachers was so strong that some women were offered positions right after their first interview. That was the case of Yocasta, who had been home with her children for several years before she decided to go back to work. She narrowed down her search for schools within close proximity to her home. Yocasta described how easily she was able to secure a position because she was bilingual:

I had my son with me, and I said, you know, I am going to drop it off even though I wasn’t really presentable. I said, ‘I’ll drop it off and see what happens.’ As soon as I walk out the door, I have the principal running after me saying, ‘Are you bilingual? I need someone bilingual. I need someone that can teach Spanish fluently.’ I said, ‘I am not dressed appropriately.’ She said, ‘Don’t worry about it.’ She took me in, they got somebody to take care of my son, they interviewed me and then they offered me the position on the spot. (Yocasta)
Social capital also played a key role in facilitating the women’s ability to obtain positions as teachers. Several participants reported that social ties and relationships were responsible for their entry into jobs. These women were able to access information and eventually obtained teaching positions without major obstacles because they knew someone with decision making power. This is congruent with the theory of social resource, which refers to the access of information and career outcomes related to one person’s social connections and their position in the hierarchical structure in an organization (Lin, 1999; Lin, 2001; Seibert et al., 2001).

Stephanie’s experience offers a clear example of the power of social capital to help secure employment. She was able to find a job without even applying for it. By the time she had completed her teaching program, Stephanie’s cooperating teacher found her a position in a large urban school district as a special education teacher. Stephanie described the situation as follows:

She [cooperating teacher] said to the woman who was in charge, ‘Hey, I have somebody I have a student teacher who is great, why don’t you call her?’ She had my number and they called me up and they said, ‘Listen they want to offer you a job.’ …I never applied for a job here. (Stephanie)

Others contacted their old teachers to get information about job openings. That was the case of Rafaela, an elementary school vice-principal and educator with more than thirty years of experience. She recalled calling her Alma Mater after she received her teaching certificates:

I got a job immediately…I just called my old teachers from my old junior high school to say hi and they said, ‘we need you. Our French teacher is retiring so come right away.’ I was hired right away in Queens. (Rafaela)
The access to information provided by someone she knew gave Rafaela the opportunity to find employment without a challenge.

Currently a newly appointed elementary school vice-principal, Sonsirie used her weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) to find a teaching position after she had applied to multiple districts and was not receiving calls for interviews. She contacted her friends, and her sorority sister’s mother who worked in a large urban district. This woman had access to information about openings and put in a good word for her with a school principal. Soon after, Sonsirie was hired as second grade bilingual teacher in an elementary school district.

Some participants were clear in their desires to work exclusively with minority students in urban settings. Yanike is an example of this. She herself grew up in an urban district and she wanted to come back to her hometown to teach and inspire minority students. Finding a position as a teacher in her old school was not challenging because of the strong relationship she had with someone within the district who had the power to hire her. Her husband’s cousin was the vice principal of the school to which she had applied. She acknowledged how she benefitted from knowing someone internally in the organization and the need for bilingual teachers in urban schools: “As a Latina bilingual in the Garden State district, it was pretty easy, and I also knew someone in the district, which made it even easier.”

**Formal Mentoring**

In the state of New Jersey, all newly appointed administrators must complete a two-year mentoring program upon obtaining an administrative position in a public school. Eighteen of the women interviewed discussed having taken part in a formal mentoring program called Leaders-to-Leaders. (Only one participant entered the ranks of administration before Leaders-to-Leaders
became a mandate.) Leaders-to-Leaders is a state approved program designed to provide ongoing mentoring and professional development to new administrators. School districts are required to register their school administrators upon offering them employment under a certificate of eligibility which permits applicants to seek and accept employment as school administrators in New Jersey.

During the first year of residency, there is a required minimum of forty-five mentoring contact hours; in the second year, only thirty contact hours are needed. Mentoring contact includes the mentor visiting the mentee’s school to conduct observations, peer support meetings with other newly appointed administrators, and participation in professional development opportunities. The one-on-one-contact is designed to guide the mentee during the first two years of his or her administrative career while the peer meetings provide monthly networking opportunities to discuss different topics related to school administration with other school administrators. According to the NJDOE “all individuals who hold a Certificate of Eligibility for Principal and are hired as of July 1, 2005 into positions that require principal certification must complete the State-required two-year Residency” (New Jersey Leaders-to-Leaders, n.d., paragraph 2).

Factors such as gender or ethnicity were not taken into consideration in the mentor matching process and mentees were not able to choose their mentors. The New Jersey Leaders-to-Leaders website shows that mentors were selected according to their leadership experience and expertise. The total cost of Leaders-to-Leaders was $3300. In some cases, the school district that hired the administrator pays the fee and in other cases the participant is entirely responsible for paying the fee. Upon completion, mentees are qualified to obtain their permanent administrative certificate (New Jersey Leaders-to-Leaders, n.d.)
Many Latina women did not find benefit in the Leaders-to-Leaders mentoring component of the program. Only six of the 19 women who participated in it found the mentoring element beneficial. The lack of trust for their mentors was a detrimental factor as they repeatedly mentioned trust as a fundamental element in a mentoring relationship. Trust is the basis to establish strong mentoring relationships which corresponds with the theory of mentoring (Haggard, 2012; Kram, 1988; Levinson et al., 1978). The women who trusted their mentor overall had more satisfaction with the program as they were able to talk honestly with their mentors. For example, Maria’s Leaders-to-Leaders formal mentor was her school principal. He was a registered mentor with the state and since he was supervising and working in the same building as Maria, he was matched as her formal mentor. Maria developed a trusting relationship with him because he was the person who hired her, and he had already been guiding and mentoring her informally. They had a father-daughter relationship that Maria described as follows:

He would literally close the door and ask me how I was doing and how my family was doing. How I thought about a particular situation, and how I was dealing with it emotionally, or how I thought it was handled, you know, kind of being very reflective. You know all the way to things like how I met my first husband. Making sure, you know, he had a daughter my age, so we would talk about our families. He was very explicit in kind of drawing the lines and saying, “I want to talk about this, and I want to know how you are doing with this.” Then we also had similar interests and sometimes we would talk about similar things that we were doing like we had both bought a BMW and so at the time you know it was my first nice car and we would share those experiences. He was almost like a dad, he would tell me I will take you to my guy (referring to a car mechanic). So, there were a lot of very explicit opportunities when we moved away from the residential requirement and really just talked about me being a young lady and assistant principal and living on my own for the very first time. (Maria)

The trust they had developed for one another facilitated the completion of the different structured activities they had to complete for Leaders-to-Leaders. Her mentor had to continually observe and evaluate Maria in her practice and provided her with feedback to improve
professionally. Some of the activities she completed with him as part of the mentoring program involved developing curriculum, revising the teacher evaluation system, learning how to complete purchase-orders, and overseeing different teaching programs.

The mentoring program was also valuable to some participants due to exposure to someone experienced in school leadership. For Awilda, working with someone who was already working as a superintendent and who had the firsthand experience to guide her in her role as a new administrator was important. She found the mentoring relationship beneficial due to the practical insights her mentor shared with her about school leadership. For example, he guided her with reading materials to improve her practice, he advised her on how to become involved in the school, and how to build relationships with other administrators in the building. He was available for her in case she needed help. Awilda mentioned: “I enjoyed it; I had a great chemistry with my mentor. He was excellent; he was very funny, very cool, down to earth…and gave me very good advice because he was already in the position.” Awilda’s mentor was able to suggest different activities to establish a relationship with other school administrators “he would tell me go visit your supervisors in your building. Visit them for an hour; find out what each supervisor is doing, get to know them.”

Not all participants found value in the mentoring component of Leaders-to-Leaders. Those who were not able to establish trust with their formal mentors were unable to progress past a superficial contact. One example of the lack of trust was shared by Ivelysse who mentioned how this element strained her relationship with her mentor:

I would never tell him that there were things going on that I was facing as an administrator because I did not trust him…Because I didn’t know him. I didn’t know
who he connected with politically, so I was not going to share with him. What if he were good friends with my principal? So, the people that I did connect with that took on a role of a sort of friendship of a different rapport that I felt comfortable saying listen I am having a difficult time. (Ivelyssse)

Although Ivelyssse was having a challenging relationship with her principal and would have benefited from mentoring guidance on how to handle the situation, she decided not to share her challenges with her mentor because she did not think it was safe to expose her vulnerability to someone she did not trust. When comparing her formal and informal experiences, she described her informal mentoring relationships as trusted relationships that eventually turned into friendships and the value of these relationships in her professional life.

One of the factors women perceived as a barrier to establishing a strong mentoring relationship was the limited accessibility to their mentors. Some women were not content because they thought they were not able to count on their mentors to deal with internal problems that emerged daily in their schools. They believed that the limited face-to-face contact with their mentors was hindering their ability to establish a strong relationship with them. For example, Rafaela thought she had no support for dealing with her new administrative responsibilities, and she sensed an absence in the mentor-mentee relationship. She detailed her response as follows: “You know, she mentored me but, you know, from afar…I really made a lot of mistakes and I had to work myself through those mistakes my first year. Like I don’t think I had somebody.” The relationship did not progress through the phases of mentoring (Kram, 1988) but instead remained superficial throughout the duration of the two years. Carolina, had similar experiences: she felt her mentor was too busy with his own commitments and responsibilities and that he did not have enough time to dedicate to guiding her. She described her experiences like this: “It
would have been helpful if I’d had a good mentor, but my mentor was so overwhelmed with his own job that we hardly had contact with him.” She mentioned that her mentor came to see her to sign papers and to make sure she was completing activities as part of her residency, but he was not providing her substantial mentoring.

Women also criticized having retired mentors who were no longer experts in their fields. They pointed out that the fast changes in education were outpacing their mentors’ ability to help them with the new mandates and accountability measures. Nelly explained her opinion as follows:

I don’t know if I find my mentor himself to be that valuable of an experience. He is a retired principal. He has been doing a lot of like leave replacements and things along that nature, but I don’t think he fully understands what we do today as opposed to what he did when he left his career. I mean he is helpful in terms of like articles and things for my action research project…I know other people that are currently going through the same thing, the mentoring piece. I don’t know if it’s that valuable. (Nelly)

Some participants even found their mentors to be unethical, citing their mentors’ interest in the financial rewards of being mentors rather than the support they could facilitate. One administrator shared that her mentor was not providing services but was still being paid. Dillia shared her experiences as follows: “The mentor that I had… that mentor was the husband of one of the administrators and all of us became his mentees and we would all pay him a paycheck and that was about it.” Ultimately, this person was eventually reported by someone and he is no longer a mentor. Similarly, Altagracia mentioned her thoughts about her mentor “just coming around to collect a check”:
I have my mentor, I like her, but she’s kind of like non-existent. You know she is a retired superintendent so I just kind of feel like she is there to collect a check. So, the state just says here check off a box we’re going to put this program together. I get better mentoring from my colleagues and my principal here in my district. My division support people at central office. Like she doesn’t help, she is supposed to be coming here doing visits. She comes here signs papers, collects a check and then she leaves. (Altagracia)

The networking aspect of the program allowed participants to create relationships with other school administrators, and, for that reason, they found benefit in it. This part of the program was well received by 17 participants who cited the need to get to know other educational professionals. For example, Carolina found the monthly peer group meetings helpful. She learned about the experiences of other administrators who were also new to the profession. Nelly also found benefit in the monthly peer group meetings because it gave her the opportunity to network with others: “It is good because you get to hear just open conversations about different things that are happening, so that’s good to kind of network.”

The lack of commonalities with people in her peer group made Altagracia the only participant who expressed being discontent with the networking part of Leaders-to-Leaders. Altagracia was dissatisfied with it because she had been paired with administrators who were not from urban school districts. They were from affluent suburban schools, and she did not find the peer support she was expecting. She would have preferred to be matched with people who were familiar with urban schools and whose conversations were more relevant to her practice. She detailed her experiences as follows: “This is a good experience for you but it’s White men from small towns; they have no idea what we have to go through...it was so hard to connect with
anyone from Leaders-to-Leaders.” Table 6 lists the race and gender of the women’s formal mentors.

Table 6

*Participants’ Formal Mentors by Race and Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vilma</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolina</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivelysse</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillia</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awilda</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julissa</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naty</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesta</td>
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<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yocasta</td>
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<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafaela</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
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<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sonsirie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berenice</td>
<td>White</td>
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Informal Mentoring

Though some research studies have found that Latina women do not have access to professional mentors, (Kram, 1988; Ragin & Kram, 2007) all the participants in this study were able to identify at least one informal mentor in their professional careers. Frequently, the informal mentor was their immediate supervisor and the mentoring relationships usually began organically, due to supervisory roles or by working in collaboration to complete a task. Women had different mentors at different times in their careers, and they all played different roles in their professional development and career advancement.

Mentoring relationships were mainly developed through a common professional interest between the mentor and the mentee. That was the case for Daisy who is now a veteran school administrator with more than 17 years of supervisory experience. She established a mentoring relationship with the head of the foreign language department when she was hired as a Spanish teacher. Daisy became invested in learning about curriculum and teaching and her passion for curriculum development allowed establishing a connection with her informal mentor who shared the same passion. Their collaboration facilitated development of trust and strengthened their open communication and honesty. For that reason, Daisy was not afraid to invite her supervisor to observe a challenging class and ask for tips on how to handle difficult situations. Daisy remembered her experiences as follows:

I was the teacher who asked, can you come in and observe me in this class because I have no idea what to do and they are giving me a hard time. Whereas most teachers are afraid to say, ‘I’m struggling, help me, come to my class.’ I was the teacher that would say, ‘Come to my Spanish 1 class because I have no idea what to do with them because they are behaviorally off the wall and I don’t know what to do. What should I do with them?’ And we connected right away, and I always took feedback very well…so we had that mentoring type of non-evaluative — even though she was evaluating me — we had that non-evaluating relationship. (Daisy)
Informal mentoring relationships were also developed through supervisory roles. This was the case for Yocasta, who developed an informal mentoring relationship with her school principal. She had worked for him for five years and during that time, they often cooperated with each other on different projects: “He totally supported what I was doing still under his guidance. I think we complemented each other very well. I was very strong in certain areas and he was strong in certain areas…I did as much as possible to learn what he had to offer.” They collaborated over the summers working on different projects related to curriculum and personnel as they were trying to improve the overall literacy of students in the school. Yocasta credited him with being the person who showed her the role of a school administrator as follows: “I believe, you know, that he did play a very important role in the way that I work as a principal today. I still follow a lot of his theories and a lot of his practices.”

Mentoring relationships emerged at different times in the participant’s professional careers. Julissa, for example, found an influential mentor early in her career while she was completing her internship to become a teacher. Her mentor guided her without reservation and her early mentoring experiences allowed her to develop her teaching practice and provided her the opportunity to work on her areas of improvements. They became colleagues and after he retired, they kept in contact. She met him while looking for someone who would take her as a student teacher. Julissa remembered her first mentor as follows:

He followed me around with a notebook and wrote down everything I did. He is the reason why I am successful. His teaching style does not work for everyone, but it worked for me…I was writing with my back facing the kids like he critiqued every little part…when I came here I was really putting all of the philosophies and everything into
practice and he really afforded me the opportunity to see what I need it to work in.

(Julissa)

Not all women had long-lasting mentoring relationships. Two participants indicated their mentoring relationship changed when they shared with their informal mentors their desire to become school administrators. For example, Nelly had two mentors, her principal, and her vice principal. They were both very reassuring and supportive of her work and they made sure she was learning leadership skills by providing her with professional opportunities to improve her teaching practice. Nelly described her relationships with these two mentors in the following way: “both were very encouraging, offered a lot of opportunities to learn things outside the classroom...they were definitely helping me to progress in my career.” She became a school counselor in the school district, and, soon after, she informed her principal that she was pursuing school administration. Sharing her intentions of becoming a school administrator caused a shift in the way her principal treated her. Nelly commented on the changes as follows: “things became a little rocky, um kind of fell out of an inner circle …I was kind of pushed back a little bit.” Despite her disconnect with the principal, she continued her mentoring relationship with the vice-principal, who keeps in contact with her. However, she moved on and found employment outside the district as an elementary school vice-principal as she realized she was not going to be promoted within the district. She presumed her principal, who held the decision-making power within the organization, would not promoter her to an administrator role.

Another example of an informal mentoring relationship that changed over time was the case of Yanike. She considered her principal an informal mentor because they worked together for several years. After he left his job to become a principal in another district, he offered Yanike a teaching position in his new district. At the time of her hiring, the principal was having
difficulties with his staff and conversely noticed Yanike was well-respected. This caused tension between the two. When she applied for two administrative positions, she was not promoted despite her credentials and many years of experience as an educator. Yanike attributed this to the change in her relationship with the “power broker” at her school: “…the only person I had a connection with was my principal…and for some reason he kind of blocked a lot of my direction when I tried to grow…he even gave me a bad evaluation.” She eventually left the district as she understood she was not going to grow professionally there since she did not have the support of the principal. She reached her goal of becoming a high school vice principal in an urban school district.

**Mentoring, Career Decisions and Social Capital**

Mentors not only helped the mentees with their professional development, they also played influential roles in the mentees’ career advancement. These mentors often recognized the women’s leadership talents, encouraged them to go back to school, and advised them to obtain administrative certificates. Mentors also invited the mentees to apply for leadership positions within their organizations and often were part of the hiring committee.

Carolina’s story exemplifies the influence of mentors in the career decisions of women. She received informal mentoring from her principal who noticed her leadership abilities and requested that she obtain an administrative certificate. Carolina explains, “This person saw the leadership abilities in me. I never really saw it myself, but I had two principals back to back who kept pushing me to get my supervisor’s and principal certificate.” Carolina went back to school to obtain her certification and, although she was hesitant to become an administrator, she was forced to decide when her district made personnel changes and eliminated her literacy coaching position. She was left with two options: to apply for a supervisory role or to go back to the
classroom. Her principal suggested she apply for a supervisory position. She followed that advice and applied, and shortly after, she was hired. In Carolina’s example, her principal not only encouraged her to get her certifications but also was the person who supported her transition into a supervisory role.

Another example of how mentors influence the career decisions of Latina women is represented in Yocasta’s story. She was working one summer when her supervisor told her, “You are really good, you understand a lot, I’ll help you, go get your certificate, get your degree, you know, study to be a principal, you will be a great administrator.” Years later, her immediate supervisor and informal mentor asked her to get her certificate again. Since she had just completed a master’s degree and only needed three classes to obtain the supervisor certificate she took her mentor’s advice and completed the additional classes to get her certificate. She recalled having the support of different administrators along the way as follows: “they persuaded me to seek more, to push myself a little bit more and to you know move up the ranks.” She believed she could become an administrator and made the decision to apply for a leadership position because of the guidance of informal mentors.

Mentors were also pivotal for working mothers to make the decision to enter administration even when having small children at home. For example, Elly was afraid to start a career in administration because she had a young child at home and thought the job was going to be too demanding for her. At the time, Elly had worked closely with her principal for several years and they had developed a close relationship. She considered her an informal mentor because her principal gave her exposure and visibility by allowing her to take active leadership roles in her school, which eventually piqued her interest in school administration. Her principal was the person who encouraged her to obtain her administrative certificate and advised her to
apply for an administrative position despite her personal responsibilities. Elly explained how she made the decision to apply for a vice principal position:

Because I had a little boy at the time I was like afraid of responsibilities, but she encouraged me, she told me do it, do it, do it you’ll be good at it, so that’s when I applied for the vice-principal position. (Elly)

Elly followed her mentor’s advice and became a vice-principal. She then had other mentors who continue to inspire her to become a principal, which she did.

**Social Capital and Entrance into Administration**

Participants shared how having weak ties with people provided them with key information to obtain teaching positions. Although some of them recalled having mentors prior to becoming teachers, their entrance into teaching was not a result of mentoring relationships. On the other hand, when these women made their entrance into school administration the prevalent theme was their mentor being pivotal in their success in gaining access to administrative positions. Social capital was important in the participants’ career advancement, as they were able to attain positions due to the sponsorship of mentors who were influential in their districts. Sixteen participants were promoted from within their organizations. Fourteen of them had the endorsement of their immediate supervisors who encouraged them to seek administrative certificates, provided their mentees with access to information about administrative positions, sponsored them to be the selected as the final candidate and in some instances, their mentors were also part of the interview committee.

Mentors were essential in providing information regarding employment opportunities to their mentees. Vilma for example, had access to information from her principal who wanted her
to become his assistant principal. They developed their informal mentoring relationship when she was assigned to work as an interim assistant principal while another administrator was out sick. When the person for whom she was covering returned to work, Vilma was asked to continue working in the same capacity doing other tasks until a permanent administrative position opened. Her principal informed her that a position was going to be open before it was posted, he encouraged her to apply for the position and was on the hiring committee. When remembering her experiences, Vilma mentioned, “I was lucky because he supported me and because he was the school principal. I knew he wanted me.”

In the same way, Yocasta had a principal who wanted her to be the final candidate for the vice-principal position at his school. Yocasta admitted to being lucky for having the support and sponsorship of the principal as follows:

Mr. Clark who was the principal here at the time. He basically did persuade me and said ‘apply for the position. I want you to stay here with me.’ So that’s how I basically ended up applying for the position. (Yocasta)

The social capital they had developed with someone in a higher position within the organization gave them an advantage over other applicants who did not have the same social capital, and ultimately allowed them to obtain administrative positions.

Some women were not eager to apply for an administrative position, but the support and sponsorship of their mentors changed their minds. That was the case for Rafaela who intentionally decided not to apply when a vice-principal position was posted because she had not been chosen as the final candidate for a similar position in the past. Still, her mentor, who was well-respected and well-known by the principal who had the opening, insisted, and endorsed her
for the position. Rafaela explained how her informal mentor sponsored her to get hired as follows: “She was my cheerleader and all of that and stuck her neck out for me all the time.” She told this principal “Rafaela is your girl. This place would be awesome.” When the principal noticed Rafaela had not applied after the posting was closed, she called Rafaela’s mentor to let her know Rafaela had not applied. Rafaela’s mentor pleaded with her to apply. Rafaela listened to her mentor and applied. Although she thought she would not get hired, she was hired. She was currently working as an elementary school vice-principal.

Other women in the study did not have the sponsorship to obtain positions as a school administrator. For example, Maria knew it was time to leave her district when her principal and longtime informal mentor retired. Instead of applying for her mentor’s position as a school principal, which would have been the normal progression in one’s career, she decided to seek employment outside the district. Maria sensed the district was moving in a different direction. Although her mentor was a Caucasian male, she noticed the lack of openness to diversity from other staff members and felt like an outsider without his help and support,

I always felt that there was this kind of otherness in the district…not a very diverse community in terms of administrators…there were a few incidents that interestingly had to do with mentoring that kind of left a really bad taste in my mouth. It was just time, it was just time. (Maria)

She was referring to a mentoring club that the female school administrators in the district created to support one another, and which she had never been invited to join. On the other hand, her replacement, who was a Caucasian woman, was invited to join the club, “Maybe I was a little bit of an outsider, you know the girl from the Bronx who doesn’t live or have any roots in the
community.” Maria yearned to work with minority students and after leaving that school she was able to work as an elementary school principal in a mostly minority school district.

Whereas all the participants were able to become administrators within their districts or somewhere else, those who did not have the social capital in the form of sponsorship from their immediate supervisor or someone with decision making power within their organizations ultimately had to change school districts. On the other hand, those who counted on the support of their supervisors, who were often the school principals, had different experiences and were hired within their districts.

**Mentoring, Gender, and Race**

All the Latina participants agreed that having formal or informal mentors was beneficial. Opinions were divided, however, when asked about the importance of the gender and the race of the mentor. Some women found the race of the mentor was extremely essential. Others believed mentors did not have to share the same race to be effective. A few women did not consider either gender or race as a limiting factor in their mentoring relationships.

For Carolina, the race and gender of her mentors was fundamental to her professional growth as she felt that having Latina role models in her life inspired her to strive for more and showed her it was possible to be a successful Latina. She never had male mentors and for that reason, she believed in the natural affinity she had with female mentors. In describing her mentoring experiences Carolina stated:

I don’t think I would have gone as far as I did without having seen and learned from Latina women who had already done it…I did not have any males mentor me in any way. It was always women, but it was particularly strong with the Latina women because they
had more invested in me because I was also a Latina…They were all Latinas themselves, so they saw themselves in me and also the fact that I would seek their advice and if they gave me advice I would follow it. (Carolina)

Having a minority mentor was important even when the mentor was not of the same race. This was the case for Sonsirie. She was more comfortable with someone who had certain similitudes because they shared being part of a minority group. She explained: “My mentor that I have professionally, she is African American, and I feel like I can relate to her more than if the mentor was White.” On the other hand, Elly mentioned having a mentor from the same race and gender was ideal because they were easily able to relate due to having the same challenges in life. When explaining the reasons for preferring the same gender and race mentor she explained: “the ties are stronger because the struggles had kind of being the same…someone who isn’t Latina you still have those connections in education, but you just don’t have the same ethnicity relationships.”

Women also shared not finding the race of their mentor as an important factor in the mentor-mentee relationship. They were looking for someone who was willing to help them foster a strong mentoring relationship. An example of this dynamic was presented by Modesta. She stated she had been able to relate to her mentor without sharing the same race. Her informal mentor was a White female who encouraged her to become an administrator. Modesta shared the following: “I don’t necessarily think that the ethnicity or the race of the mentor has a direct impact. I think it is more the mentor’s aptitude and openness and belief system about people.” She acknowledged that while she and her mentor had different upbringings, they were both open-minded and had similar world views which allowed them to create a strong mentoring relationship.
For Maria, neither gender nor ethnicity were important as her two very influential mentors were a White male and an African American female. She accredited her White male mentor as the most influential mentor in her career. She developed a relationship with him that resembled that of a father-daughter relationship. He protected her and guided her in her professional and personal career. On the other hand, her second mentor was a woman of color, but she was not Latina. However, she developed a strong connection with her as well. This is how Maria described her relationship with her female mentor: “My mentoring relationship with her was a little more personal because she was a woman and she was a woman of color.” They also had a more intimate relationship because Maria’s children were students at her mentor’s school and Maria was undergoing a divorce. Maria had a trusting relationship with both mentors and worked closely with them until they retired. Their mentoring relationships eventually became long lasting friendships.

For Yocasta, the values of the mentor mattered more than the race or gender “I think because we shared the same vision and we were passionate about what we do, I think that was something we had in common that really cemented the relationship and made it work.” It was the experiences and the vision that most women presented as valuable to them in a mentoring relationship. They wanted people who were able to relate to them and who were able to understand their challenges as Latina women. Table 7 shows the race and gender of the participants’ informal mentors.
Table 7

Informal mentors by Race and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Latina/o</th>
<th>White</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vilma</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nelly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivelysse</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillia</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awilda</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julissa</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesta</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yocasta</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafaela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yanike</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elly</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altagracia</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonsirie</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berenice</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aIndicates multiple informal mentors in this category
Importance of Mentoring and Future Career Advancement

When asked about the importance of mentoring, the women unanimously agreed that mentoring was very important for their professional development and career growth. Maria expressed her experiences with mentors as follows: “There were so many people that really influenced me and really ensured my success you know just by them being present and just sometimes informal mentoring, formal mentoring, gentle guidance.” Similarly, Daisy supported the importance of mentoring for professional women as follows: “the most important thing you can do is have a strong mentoring relationship. Administrative jobs are very lonely...and you need people to be able to talk to, not just to vent but to process things out.”

The need for more for networking opportunities was prevalent in the responses of Latina women. The consensus response was there were not a lot of opportunities for them to get to know other administrators particularly other Latina school administrators. They were all part of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, but the majority were not actively engaged with the organization at the time of the interviews. However, they recognized the importance and the need for networking. Judy, for example, mentioned the lack of a formal group for Latina administrators as follows: “I found that there was no real organization. I mean, we have business organizations for Latinas, we have all these other organizations, but there was nothing really out there for Latinas in the educational world.” Another participant, Julissa also acknowledged the need for networking opportunities for Latinas as follows:

I feel like the mentoring and networking it’s not there. I go to these meetings for the county and it’s mostly While males, a spattering of White females but I think I might be the only Latina at those meetings…As we go north, it’s mostly the White population so that’s what they see as leadership…It is important that we mentor Latina teachers as an administrator, Latina future leaders and that we have some kind of networking. I am not aware, aside from maybe sororities, I know they network a lot. But as far as education, I
am not familiar with that. The men are doing it, you know, why aren’t we doing it?”
(Julissa)

Women who had attained the principalship felt they had no mentoring. Those who had attained the principalship had limited access to any mentoring at all. The formal mentoring provided by the state was restricted to their first two years of becoming an administrator but since seven of the eight had transitioned from a vice-principal or supervisory role prior to becoming principals they no longer had access to the Leaders-to-Leaders mentoring. In addition, they had limited access to informal mentors because in most cases they had developed mentoring relationships with their immediate supervisors and when they became the person in charge of their buildings, they lost any informal mentoring they had in the past. Another issue was the fact that principals were not working in the same buildings as their superintendents who were now their immediate supervisors, and for that reason they did not have the same access to mentoring that they had when they were vice-principals or supervisors. Only two of the eight school principals identified central office administrators as their informal mentors.

The future career aspirations of the participants varied based on their positions. For example, of the 11 vice-principals interviewed, 10 considered the principalship their next career goal. Stephanie was the only vice-principal who was not interested in seeking the principalship. She was near retirement and looking forward to filling her time doing other things such as cooking.

Of the eight school principals, none were certain they wanted to become superintendents. Many of these women perceived the superintendency as a political position. Elly’s response regarding the superintendency was as follows:
I see all the politics behind it and I’m not a political person, I feel that, um, like I observed instances where I felt that politics drove education instead of the needs of students and teachers and staff so it just turned me off of it…I don’t feel that ethically I can be there because ethically I can’t allow myself those kind of decisions. I just don’t want to compromise my values and my beliefs for a position. (Elly)

Working with the board of education and their different personalities was also a drawback for women. They believed they would have to compromise their values to keep their constituents happy. Julissa expressed her concerns about being a superintendent and her reasons for not seeking that position as follows:

the nine board members you have to deal with…their political affiliations, each of their needs, answering to each of these nine people and keeping a balance between them. That’s the part I hate the most. I don’t think is in the best interest of the kids. (Julissa)

Another reason for Latina women not wanting the superintendency was related to losing contact with children as they perceived that the superintendency was too removed from the children. Naty acknowledged her lack of interest in the superintendency as follows: “I love being in the classroom. I love being with the kids. I am the happiest when I am with the students or in the classroom, watching them learn and I think it would take me too far.” Similarly, Julissa was not interested in losing the firsthand experience of working with children. She explained,

Central office I don’t know if I am interested because I don’t want to lose contact with the kids because I think I can make a bigger impact, but I don’t want to because I think I would lose the vision of what’s going on. (Julissa)
Whereas some women were not interested in the superintendency, others believed they lacked the mentoring necessary to strive for the superintendency and reinforce their belief that they could attain the role. There was a change in dynamics after they became administrators because the Latinas were no longer being encouraged to seek their school administrator certificate with the same urgency their mentors provided when pushing them to obtain their certificates to become administrators. The school administrator certificate is a prerequisite for central office positions such as assistant superintendent or superintendent. At the time of the interviews, only two administrators attained their school administrator certificate and two were in the process of attaining it. Those who were seeking the certificate were encouraged to do so by their assistant superintendents or superintendents. These participants were also motivated to transition into a central office position. For example, Judy mentioned “My superintendent keeps telling me to take the superintendent’s test… I don’t know if that’s really where I want to go… I am going to take the test and you know do what I need to do.” Similarly, Yocasta had been motivated by the assistant superintendent, who was her informal mentor, to seek her school administrator certificate.

Some participants believed there was no pipeline for Latinas to attain leadership positions such as the superintendency and they believed they were not being groomed to become superintendents. Sonsirie stated the following:

So again, what’s the motivation? I don’t know if I am being encouraged? I know I am not being encouraged to be a superintendent. It would have to come from within. It would have to come from me. I know in my environment I am not being motivated or encouraged to be a superintendent. (Sonsirie)
Awilda’s opinion about the lack of Latinas in the superintendency was as follows: It goes back to racism. I really do believe that. You know I am sure the majority of superintendents are all men. I am sure the numbers will quantify that they probably were men that had very little experience in a classroom. So, nepotism maybe, you know, knowing somebody getting into those positions and very few Latinas know somebody that can get them into those positions because you are competing with White men. The field itself being a superintendent is very competitive for a Latina woman. (Awilda)

Latina women were proud to be school administrators and shared that they were able to help families by serving as role models and inspiring children aspire to leadership positions. Yocasta described her gratification as follows:

I have to say I feel satisfied here. When you see the Hispanic parents that come into the school and you introduce yourself as the principal and they see you like, ‘wow,’ you know, you are the principal. It’s nice to be that role model for a lot of our kids but also for the parents. (Yocasta)

Similarly, Maria also shared that she has influenced her mostly minority community, “I think the parents relate to me…I was a young Latina administrator and you know working with students of color and their families I’ve gotten so many hugs they are just so happy to see you.”

When asked about the lack of Latinas in school leadership, the participants exclaimed the need for more Latina school administrators. Rafaela mentioned: “I wish we prepared more Latinas to be administrators, but not so there will be more of us around, but because I think we have unique experiences of impact that can serve our populations better.” However, they did not
want to get positions simply because they were Latinas. They wanted to be acknowledged for their capacity to do the job. Elly shared her experiences as follows:

When I became a middle school principal, I was told the only reason why I got that position was because I was Latina and that made me angry not because I wasn’t proud of being Latina, but because I worked hard for where I am, and I would like to think that it was because I could do the job, and because I had the knowledge and I had the skillset to do it not because I was Latina…I want people to say oh she is Latina but she got the job because she knows what she is doing and she has the intelligence, she has the knowledge, she had the background. (Elly)

The next chapter completes the dissertation with the implications of theory and practice related to Latina women in educational leadership and the recommendations for future research.
Chapter V: Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

Mentors serve multiple professional and personal purposes across different sectors. In this study my goal was to explore the role of mentoring relationships in the participants’ promotion from teaching to school administration positions. The findings of this study suggest mentors were essential for Latina women attainment of leadership positions. In this final chapter, I discuss the theoretical, practical and policy implications of this study. First, I review the problem statement and the research methods I used to complete the investigation. Next, I discuss the findings, the implications for theory, practice, and policy. Finally, I present future research recommendations to further expand the empirical evidence base on this topic.

Overview of the Study

The limited representation of Latinas in teaching and leadership positions does not reflect the rapid growth of Latinos in the United States. Latinos represent the largest minority in the United States, with an estimate of 57.5 million as of July 2016. Currently, Latinos comprise 17.8% of the nation’s total population, and yet, the size of the Latino population is expected to grow to 119 million by 2060 to reach 28.6% of the overall U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). This rapid growth is also occurring among school-age students. In 2013, there were approximately 55.5 million students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools across the country (Hussar & Bailey, 2017). Approximately 12.5 million of these students were Hispanic (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2015a), and this population is expected to increase by 18% by 2025 (Hussar & Bailey, 2017).

In the state of New Jersey, the latest census information has indicated New Jersey’s population was diverse: 55.8% were White, 20% Hispanic, 15% African American and 9.8% Asian. Public schools presented similar demographics to the census. According to the NJDOE
the K-12 student population for the 2016-2017 school year was 45.1% White, 27.1% Hispanic, 15.5% African American, and 9.9% Asian. However, teachers and school administrators were not representative of the students they served. White teachers accounted for 84.0% of all teachers and 77.5% of school administrators in New Jersey. Conversely, Latinos (females and males) represented 6.9% of all teachers and 6.7% of all school administrators respectively.

Researchers have found compelling evidence about the benefits of Latino teachers in U.S. schools. One reason is that Latino teachers are particularly equipped to serve minority students because they can relate to students of color and serve as cultural role models (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). Additionally, schools benefit from having minority teachers and minority school administrators who serve as role models for minority students (González, 1998; Kuchar, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). Additionally, Latino teachers have been shown to be influential in improving student achievement (Salinas & Castro, 2010) and creating higher expectations for minority students (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). Since the prediction is that schools will continue to see an increment in their Latino student population, a study that shed light into how Latina women transitioned from teaching into administrative positions adds to the limited existing literature about Latino/a school leaders.
The following questions guided this study:

- What is role of mentoring relationships in the professional advancement of Latina school administrator?
- How do Latina school administrators develop relationships with mentors?
- What career-advancement-related benefits and resources do Latina school administrators receive from mentoring relationships?
- How have mentors impacted the career decisions of Latina school administrators?
- How have mentors helped Latina school administrators gain access to information and professional opportunities?

To answer the research questions, I used a narrative research design because narrative inquiry collects the stories, narratives, and descriptions of people to understand their lives and experiences (Clandinin, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The main form of data collection was face-to-face semi-structured interviews. A total of twenty Latina school administrators participated in the study. Upon completion of the interviews, the data were analyzed using narrative analysis procedures.

**Discussion of Findings**

The following section includes a discussion of how the study’s findings relate to and extend the existing literature on Latina women in school administrative positions.
Latinas and the Teaching Profession

In this study, all the participants were former teachers. One of the salient patterns was that the participants had no challenges entering the teaching profession. Many of the Latinas interviewed found employment directly after obtaining their teaching certificates; some even found positions without a formal interview or after their first interview. These findings indicate that Latina women who seek teaching positions may face few obstacles in attaining them. This raises the question of whether the underrepresentation of Latinos and Latinas in education is due to them not seeking these opportunities. National statistics show that only 8% of teachers were Latina/o in the United States (Taie & Goldring, 2017). Data from the state of New Jersey Department of Education’s website counted Latinas as 5% of all teachers in the state, which is significantly lower than the percentage of minority students served in the state’s public schools. These results draw attention to the pipeline issue for Latinas in a higher-level position, which is something specific to the field of education, but may be particularly acute (History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, Office of the Historian, 2017; Deloitte & The Alliance for Board Diversity, 2016).

The lack of Latino teachers directly contributes to the low percentage of school administrators since teaching is a prerequisite for most administrator positions. Specifically, in the state of New Jersey, obtaining an administrative certificate as a supervisor requires a minimum of three years of teaching experience; whereas, to obtain a certificate of school principal or school administrator, the requirement is a minimum is five years of teaching experience or any other educational experience. It is important to highlight that more than half of the Latinas interviewed in this study entered education through the alternative teaching route which is different from the traditional teaching path of completing a teaching program in college.
after graduating high school. Instead, they entered education as a second career and obtained their teaching certificates through the state’s alternative path, which allows individuals to start careers in education without a formal teaching preparation background. The alternative path does not limit the ability of individuals to seek careers in school administration as the state teaching and administrative certifications are the same for traditional and alternative route seekers. This was the case for most participants as they never considered a career in education profession until someone mentioned it to them or after they experienced a drastic life event.

One of the problems of the teaching pipeline is that Latino students are often not inclined to seek careers in education. For Hispanic students, attending college is seen as a path to escape the cycle of poverty that many minority students endure (Valadez, 2008). Since education is perceived as a low paying career, students and their families looking for better-remunerated employment opportunities tend to be initially attracted to careers in business or the health professions (Musu-Gillette, et al., 2017). Participants in this study shared experiences in which their families expressed disappointment about their choice to pursue education as a career because it was perceived as a low paying or a less trustworthy career.

Other factors that may contribute to the lack of interest in careers in education include a lack of information and career guidance in high school. In this study, three participants recalled negative interactions with high school counselors who had low expectations for them and who failed to discuss their career choices and opportunities for attending college. School counselors are often responsible for providing career counseling to students and therefore, are at the forefront of helping Latino students consider careers in education. They are uniquely positioned to provide vital information and guidance to young students and their families about the college application process, merit- and need-based college financing opportunities, and various career
options. At the same time, they may also block opportunities for Latino students by not providing enough individual counseling and by setting low expectations for their post-secondary plans (Luti et al., 2009).

**Latinas and Mentoring Relationships**

This study showed that mentoring relationships played an important role in the career advancement of Latina school administrators. The literature about Latina women has shown that Latina women have found mentors primarily outside of professional environments and particularly in their mothers and/or other close family members (Méndez-Morse, 2004). However, all the women in this research study stated they had either formal or informal professional mentoring relationships. Participants found stronger mentoring relationships in informal mentors who showed a personal interest in helping them without any formal process. Most of the informal mentoring relationships were established by working closely with their immediate supervisors; these relationships were developed over time through trust and mutual collaboration. This finding suggests Latina women can create and maintain professional mentoring relationships that are relevant to their career advancement. For most participants, these relationships continued until their mentor retired and eventually ended or became long lasting friendships.

One salient characteristic of mentors was that they were often much older than their mentees and were near retirement. Therefore, they were not competing professionally with their mentees. Instead, they represented a father/mother figure which is consistent with the literature which has found mentors who are much older than their mentees are a mixture of a father/mother figure (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 99). The literature has also shown that not all mentoring relationships end positively as mentoring relationships change over time. Jealousy, on the part of
the mentor, over the success of the mentee is one factor that can change the dynamics of the relationship and make it destructive (Kram, 1988). This was the case with two school administrators whose mentoring relationships with their immediate supervisors collapsed after the mentee expressed their interest in becoming school administrators. The mentees felt that their mentors were jealous of them and afraid of the competition for administrative jobs. Due to their mentor’s personal biases, they were blocked from promotions regardless of the extent to which it would have benefitted the organization. Therefore, it is important to understand that mentoring relationships evolved over time.

Mentors were of different gender, races, and ethnicities than their mentees. A few participants expressed a preference for mentors of the same race and/or gender who served as role models who gave the mentees hope and aspirations to be like them. However, most Latina women expressed interest in finding mentors who were willing and able to help them regardless of their ethnic background or gender. Latina women who previously had male or non-Hispanic mentors indicated that they had been able to establish positive cross-gender and cross-cultural mentoring relationships with their informal mentors due to sharing the same values and/or similar educational experiences. More than half of the participants indicated gender, race and/or ethnicity were not significant factors in their mentoring experiences. This study suggests Latinas can find professional mentoring relationships at work regardless of the gender and ethnicity of their mentors.
Latina Career Decisions and Promotions

Mentors were highly influential in developing Latinas’ interest in applying for, and ultimately obtaining leadership positions. Some participants mentioned they had never considered applying for an administrative position until informal mentors reached out to them and suggested that they apply. They followed their mentors’ advice and applied for leadership positions even when they thought they were not going to be hired. Nonetheless, every time their mentors invited them to apply they were hired. Mentors became a source of social capital to mentees by providing information channels and sponsorship to gain employment as school administrators.

When participants did not have the support and sponsorship of a mentor, their promotions into administrative role took longer than those who had the sponsorship of a mentor. Though mentors were essential to the process of obtaining leadership positions, the findings of this study suggest that mentoring relationships did not play an important factor in the participants’ ability to find teaching jobs because they were able to find those positions almost immediately, without the help and support of mentors. Though they used social capital to find these positions, the social capital was not associated with mentoring relationships. On the contrary, as women transitioned from the role of teachers to become school administrators, it was evident that their strong ties with mentors with decision making power within their organizations became the sources of social capital, which in turn facilitated their entrance into school administration.

When comparing the processes of women looking for teaching positions while outside of the organization, having different networks was crucial for them to access information about where the positions were opened. Whereas, when they were seeking promotions as school administrators it was the mentors from within their schools who were able to mobilize resources.
and the social capital to get hired. The dynamic often revolved around the trust and the political capital of the mentor. In most cases, the mentor wanted to share his/her capital with the mentee.

The mentors were important to career promotions when working within the same organization, which was the case for most women who took part in the study. This is congruent with the Social Resource Network theory of social capital in which the power of the mentor has a positive influence on the career decision and final career outcome of the individual (Lin, 2001).

**Latina School Administrators and Future Career Plans**

All the Latina participants part attained leadership positions and held mid-management positions at the time of the interviews. Some were starting their careers and others were veteran administrators, however, regardless of their years of service, most of were not interested in becoming school superintendents, which is the highest position one can achieve in a K-12 school system.

Participants in the lowest tier of administration, working as vice-principals, aspired to become school principals. Those who held the position for several years explained that they had waited for a long time before seeking the principalship because they were caring for their children, caring for a sick family member, and/or they wanted to complete their advanced degrees before assuming the responsibility of running a building. They understood that becoming a school principal demanded more responsibility and consequentially required more time away from their families. Those who were new to their positions as vice-principal were also eager to one day manage their own buildings.

Latina women represent 1% of all superintendents nationally (Grogan & Brunner 2005; Tallerico, 2000) and the traditional path to the superintendency includes being a teacher and a
school principal (Brunner & Kim, 2010; McGee, 2010). In this study, those participants who had attained the position of school principal were uncertain if they ever wanted to become superintendents. Several of the women were surprised when I asked if they were interested in becoming a superintendent, as if they had never considered it before the interview. They mentioned that those positions were not available to Latina women or were extremely difficult to attain and noted the political aspect of a central office position as a main deterrent for not wanting it. The political aspect of working for board members with different personal agendas and personalities also did not appeal to them.

There were other negative perspectives of the role of the superintendent. For example, participants believed decisions at the top were not always made with the best interest of children in mind and that the position, therefore, conflicted with their own morals and values. Additionally, some women were not interested in losing direct contact with students and their families. Other women never had contact with their superintendents are therefore were not familiar with the role of a district leader. However, there was a consensus that those positions were not available to Latina women and the expectation was that they were not going to attain those positions within their school districts.

Mentoring relationships varied according to the participants’ administrative position. For example, those holding the position of vice-principal mentioned they still had informal mentoring relationships either from their principals and/or peers who continued to push them to become principals and otherwise progress in their careers. Conversely, those who had attained positions as school principals complained of the isolation and lack of mentoring they received once they attained the role of principal because they were often the only administrator in their buildings and in a position to be more of a mentor than to be mentored by others.
Although most participants had several teaching and administrative certificates, only a few participants held the school district leader certificate required to apply for a central office position such as assistant superintendent or superintendent. Those who held the certificate had been mentored and encouraged by either their assistant superintendent or superintendent to seek roles at the district level. These findings highlight the influence of mentoring for Latina school administrators and the psychosocial role they play through encouragement and providing a sense of capability and confidence to Latina women so that they will believe that attaining district leadership positions is possible. By extension these mentors facilitate breaking the stereotype that Latina women are unable to attain these positions.

**Implications for Theory**

In this study two theories were explored, the theory of mentoring and the theory of social capital. The theory of mentoring refers to the relationship between a less experience person and a person in power who can teach, encourage, and facilitate the advancement of the less experienced person (Kram, 1983; Levinson et al., 1978). On the other hand, the theory of social capital is the investment in social relations with expectation of a positive return that makes possible things that otherwise would not be possible (Coleman, 1988). This research expanded the limited literature about mentoring as an explicit form of social capital as both theories have been prevalent in the literature independently. However, there are areas in which mentoring and social capital intertwine. For example, both theories discuss the importance of trust, the pivotal role of sponsorship, and the importance of access to information to career advancement.

In this study, both theories merged as mentors exceeded the expectations of their roles by teaching their mentees the “ropes” of their jobs, encouraging mentees to attain higher education and administrator credentials, and serving as a source of social capital by providing them
information about job opportunities, visibility, and the sponsorship to help mentees gain promotions. Participants who received social capital from their mentors were able to advance professionally within their districts whereas those who did not have the internal social capital were unable to attain leadership positions within their districts and had to seek employment opportunities elsewhere.

The evidence collected in this study suggest that the most successful mentoring relationships emerged from trust between the mentor and the mentee. The concept of trust is well ingrained in the theory of social capital developed by Coleman (1988). In his theory, Coleman referred to social capital as the access to privileged channels of information and resources embedded in social relationships by establishing trust, norms, sanctions, and channels of information (Coleman, 1990). The women in the current study developed trust with their mentors by collaborating with them on different projects, asking for help when they needed it, and believing their informal mentors had an authentic interest in their career growth.

Additionally, the concepts of bonding capital and bridging capital presented by Putnam (2001) were relevant in this study as participants were able to have positive relationships with mentors who were from different races and nationalities and were satisfied with their interactions despite the cultural differences. This highlights the value of forming bonds with people from dissimilar cultures and backgrounds. In so doing, both mentors and mentees gain benefits from the relationship.

This study also has implications resulting from the different sources of social capital women experienced when they attained leadership positions. For example, Latina women had very different experiences when they were seeking jobs as teachers than when they were seeking
jobs as school administrators. Women were able to attain positions as teachers due to having access to information mainly from secondary sources. This type of social capital was aligned with the theory of weak ties conceptualized by Granovetter (1973) which focuses on the strengths of the social ties among people. Granovetter proposed weak ties from people who are not closely tied were more effective for helping someone find information about jobs than strong ties with immediate family and friends. This was congruent with the findings in this study as the participants relied on weak tie to access information about job opportunities when seeking teaching positions.

Women facilitated their entrance into school administration due to the social resources provided by their mentors with whom they had developed trusting relationships. Their mentors had the power to influence decisions and were positioned at high levels within the hierarchy of their organization. This finding is important as most of the women who took part in this study were promoted from within their school districts and therefore, the role of mentors and social capital in their career advancement was evident. Conversely, participants who did not have the social capital and support of their mentors had to seek employment opportunities in other districts. Though they had once had access to positive informal mentoring relationships at some point in their careers, those relationships changed when they expressed their interest in becoming school administrators turning their once flourishing mentoring relationships into destructive and hostile relationships that ended when they found employment in other school districts.

**Implications for Practice**

From a practical point of view, having mentors influenced Latina women’s aspirations to become school leaders and their capacity to see this as a reasonable goal. This study suggests that having mentors can increase Latina women’s interest in careers as school administrators and
therefore, can potentially counteract the pattern of underrepresentation of Latinas in school administrator roles in New Jersey. Creating mentoring and social support systems for potential Latina leaders should be a priority as the existing literature has found Latina leaders serve as role models and can contribute to increasing minority students’ academic achievement (Magdaleno, 2006).

Professional organizations and institutions of higher education can encourage, develop, and foster informal mentoring for aspiring Latina administrators not only for induction but for professional growth throughout their career. This can be achieved by providing facilitated opportunities to network with other educational leaders through professional development workshops. Further, at an early stage, institutions of higher education should educate women of color about the importance of engaging in mentoring relationships in their places of employment, and how mentoring can benefit their careers trajectory.

To increase the number of Latina teachers, at the local level, school districts can provide professional development to their school administrators that educates them about the impact of informal mentoring relationships and explains how their leadership roles provides an ideal context for encouraging and facilitating the professional growth of their staff through informal mentoring. Personnel administrators should encourage school leaders to engage in mentoring relationships by discussing the benefits and sense of fulfillment mentoring brings to mentors for helping the development and career advancement of mentees (Jonson, 2002). Establishing informal mentoring relationships within school organizations can facilitate a positive school culture and foster collaboration among individuals. For participants of the current study, collaboration was found the catalyst for establishing informal mentoring relationships. Thus, one way to encourage such formation of informal mentoring relationships is by grouping school
administrators with potential school leaders to collaborate on projects that capitalize on their specific strengths.

Another practical recommendation is to educate Latina high school students about the importance of teachers of color and the job opportunities afforded to them through a career in education. If students become educators, they would add to the pool of teachers and consequentially increase the pool of potential school leaders. A viable method for encouraging students to explore careers in teaching is the creation of high-school teaching apprenticeship that provide in-depth, hands-on experience with teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, or school administrators, so that student understand the reality of those roles.

Colleges and Universities are partnering with high schools to recruit future minority teachers. For example, Seton Hall University has a program called the “Teachers for Tomorrow” in which they provide minority high school students with the opportunity to visit the college campus and provide them with financial incentives, academic support, career guidance, workshops, network opportunities and job placements upon graduating college. The University of Louisville has a similar program called “Minority Teacher Recruitment Project” this program recruits middle school and high school students of color who might be interested in pursuing careers in education. They provide students with a grant of $2500 dollars to pay for tuition; they also provide them with academic support and recruit students from community colleges to make sure they transition to four-year colleges to complete their teaching degrees. Although these programs are helping minority students attain careers in education, not all states have minority teacher recruitment programs. Therefore, it would be appropriate to create a policy at the national level to ensure all states have programs that promote diversity in the teaching profession.
Since the findings of this study suggest that the most influential relationships were informal relationships with supervisors, school districts can implement their own in-house mentoring program to assist new administrators with the responsibilities of their new position. This would be valuable because most participants did not find value in the Leaders-to-Leaders mandated mentoring program; therefore, providing mentoring within school districts and particularly to newly appointed school principals would be helpful.

**Implications for Policy**

Historically students of color, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, have performed lower on standardized assessments. Thus, one factor that contributes to the lack of teachers is the state certification test that all teachers must pass to teach in public schools (Barmone, 2016). Yet, research studies have not demonstrated that passing these assessments impact subject area teaching performance (Boyd, Lankford & Wyckoff, 2007). States can develop other criteria for hiring the strongest teaching candidates. One change states can make is the replacement of performance assessments with portfolio-based assessments that measure teachers’ ability to craft meaningful lessons.

In this research, several flaws were found in the state’s mandatory 2-year formal mentoring program. Mentors were not matched based on the needs of the participants. Therefore, many women were disappointed that they had to work with mentors who were unfamiliar or who had limited experience with their working environments. For future iterations of the program, state officials need to match formal mentors based on the needs of the mentee. One possible approach is to match mentors based on educational context, experiences, and areas of expertise. These include location type (urban, suburban, rural) and school level (elementary, middle, high school). Another solution is to allow mentees to specify the areas where they
would like to receive the most mentoring and guidance. For example, a mentee may need more guidance for the managerial aspect of the profession than curriculum implementation or budgeting.

Although only small number of participants preferred mentors of the same race and/or gender. For those participants, the gender/race match was extremely important. Therefore, the Leaders-to-Leaders program should make an effort to recruit mentors from all gender and ethnic backgrounds to allow mentees to specify their preference for the race and gender of their mentors. Moreover, mentees should be able to evaluate their mentors to create a system of accountability. This would also provide a pathway for measuring the effectiveness of the mentoring program. In the future, the organizers of the mentoring program should ensure mentors are evaluated over the duration of the program. If a mentor or mentee is uncomfortable with the match, they should be able to request a change within a reasonable time.

One of the most critiqued policies of this program was that the program was limited to the first two years for new school administrators instead of the first two years of each administrative position. As a result, school principals, who held at least one other administrative position prior to the principalship received very little mentoring and support after assuming the principal role. School districts should provide support to newly appointed school principals by providing access to informal mentoring opportunities that will help these to administrators learn about the school culture, power dynamics and organizational structures that are necessary to successfully run a school. This can be achieved by arranging networking meetings to facilitate the process of identifying informal mentors, given the needs of the mentee.
Future Research

The findings of this study suggest that Latina women were able to find informal mentors in their immediate supervisors, who were pivotal to their success in attaining leadership positions. This study was limited to women who held administrative positions as vice-principal, principal, or director. Since this study did not include Latina school leaders who held central office positions, future research studies should include that group of Latinas including, but not limited to, assistant superintendents and superintendents, to determine if their experiences with mentors were similar or different from the mid-management participants of this study. Future research studies should also explore how they central office administrators attained their positions, what motivated them to seek those positions, the role of mentoring in attaining those positions and how, they developed relationships with mentors. The superintendency is the highest position one can attain in a K-12 setting and the Latina representation in those positions is almost non-existent. Therefore, exploring the experiences of Latina leaders who were able to attain central office positions would be beneficial to other Latinas interested in seeking positions at that level.

Participants in this research mentioned that having Latina role models influenced their motivation to become school administrators and their confidence in their ability to attain the position. For that reason, investigating the role of indirect or direct cultural modeling in the career advancement of Latina teachers may help determine whether ethnic and racial matching in a mentoring relationship impacts attainment of leadership positions. Further, exploring how the presence of Latina women in leadership positions impact other Latinas’ decision to pursue administrator positions would also enhance our understanding of the impact of cultural modeling for Latina teachers.
It is also important for future research is to explore the experiences of Latino men as they transition into school leadership positions. It would be particularly beneficial to determine compare the impact of mentoring experiences on Latino men to the mentoring experiences of Latina women. In the state of New Jersey, Latino men represented 1.4% of teachers and 2.6% of school leaders. One can infer that those few who enter the teaching profession were able to transition into administration. For that reason, it would be important to learn about their experiences with mentoring relationships and to what extent mentors facilitated their transition into administration.

Future research studies should build on this study through a longitudinal approach with the same participants for, at least, the next five years to see how they careers evolve and whether their perspectives change over time.
References


McGee, J. M. (2010). To climb or not to climb: The probing of self-imposed barriers that delay or deny career aspirations to be an administrator in a public school system. *Forum on Public Policy Online, 2010*(2),


Appendix A: IRB Approval

January 25, 2017

Ligia Veronica Alberto

Dear Ms. Alberto,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved as submitted under expedited review your research proposal entitled “Mentoring Relationships as Social Capital in the Career Advancement of Latina School Administrators”. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of this stamped form.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for you cooperation.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzek, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj
Appendix B: Letter of Solicitation

January, 2017

Dear School Administrator:

My name is Ligia Alberto. I am a doctoral student in the College of Education, Department of Education Leadership at Seton Hall University.

I am seeking participants to take part in a research study to explore how Latina school administrators in New Jersey move through the ranks to reach leadership positions.

Interested participants will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview to talk about their professional experiences and the role of mentoring in their career advancement. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will be recorded with an audio recording device.

Participants willing to take part in the study must meet the following criteria: be a Latina/Hispanic woman working under a supervisor, principal, or director certificate in a public school district in the state of New Jersey.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Individuals may skip questions they don’t feel comfortable answering, and refusal to participate or discontinue participation will not involve any penalties.

The information obtained in connection with this study will be kept confidential. To protect the participant’s identity, pseudonyms will be used at all times. In addition, information related to name and place of employment will not be revealed at any time.

All recordings will be stored on a flash drive device and locked in a secure location.
Please review this information carefully and feel free to ask any questions before accepting or declining participation in this study. An informed consent form is also included in this email with more information. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via email at ligia.alberto@student.shu.edu or at 347-386-4030. Thank you in advance for your time and interest to participate in this study.

Ligia Alberto
Principal Investigator
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Ligia Alberto, a doctoral candidate in the College of Education and Human Services, Department of Education Leadership at Seton Hall University is conducting a study about Latina school leaders in New Jersey.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to examine how Latina school administrators in New Jersey move through the ranks to reach leadership positions, and to explore the role of mentoring relationships in the career advancement and promotions of Latina women.

Procedures

Participants willing to take part in this study must meet the following criteria: be a Latina woman working under a supervisor, principal or director certificate in a public school district in the state of New Jersey. A total of 20 Latina school administrators are expected to take part in this study.

Individuals who agree to take part in this study will be required to complete a biographical questionnaire with questions requesting information about country of origin, marital status, children (if any) and years of experience as an educator.

The main source of data collection will be semi-structured interviews which will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be documented using an audio recorder device. All recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet and will be disposed of three years after the completion of this study.

The nature of the interviews will be to explore Latina school leaders’ experiences finding administrative positions. The questions will be mainly about how, if at all, mentoring relationships (either formal or informal) provided participants with key information or resources to obtain positions as school administrators.

Participation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participants may skip questions they don’t feel comfortable answering.
Confidentiality

Any information obtained in connection with this study will be anonymous. To protect the identity of the partakers the researcher will use pseudonyms names. In addition, the researcher will not disclose the participant's place of employment or any other information that may in any way potentially expose their identity. All sensitive information such as school name and location will be replaced with a code. The list of the linking codes will be securely kept in a separate location from the research data.

All recordings will be stored in a flash drive device and locked in a secured location. All recordings will only be heard by the lead researcher and the faculty chairperson.

Publications and presentations that result from this study will not include personal recognizable information about the participants.

Risks

This study involves no more than minimal risk. Discomforts associated with this study are not greater than those of daily life.

Benefits

There are no direct or indirect benefits either monetarily or in any other way to people who participate in this study.

Compensation

There is no cost or final incentive to participate in this study. Individuals will not be paid for their participation in this study. In addition, no out of pocket expenses will be paid.

Questions or Concerns:

All questions about this research project should be directed to the lead researcher Ligia Alberto at 347-386-4030 or via email at ligia.alberto@student.shu.edu. You may also contact the faculty chairperson Dr. Sattin-Bajaj at (973) 275-2846 or at Carolyn.Sattinbajaj@shu.edu. Questions about participants' rights in human subjects research should be directed to the Seton Hall University IRB office at (973) 313-6314 or irb@shu.edu.
Statement of Consent

I have read the consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I understand I can withdraw at any time. My signature also indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Print Name: ________________________________ Date ______________

Signature: ________________________________

I agree to have my interview recorded using a digital recording device

Print Name: ________________________________ Date ______________

Signature: ________________________________

Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board

JAN 25 2017

Approval Date
Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Participant # ______________.

2. Are you currently working in an urban/suburban district?

3. (circle one): urban. suburban.


5. Country of birth_________________ (If born in the United States, please indicate your ethnic background______________________).

6. If not born in the United States, please indicate at what age you moved to the United States______. 


10. Do you live/care for members of the family other than children/stepchildren/spouse? If so, who? ________________

11. How long have worked as an educator? (Circle one): Less than five years. Five to ten years. More than 10 years.

12. Education (circle one): Graduate degree. Doctoral degree

13. How many teaching/administrative certificates do you have? (Circle one): 1-3. 2-5. 5+
Appendix E: Interview Protocol

1. How did you enter the field of education?
   a. Can you tell me about how you first decided to pursue a teaching career?

2. Tell me about your professional roles prior to becoming an administrator.
   a. How many teaching positions did you hold prior to becoming an administrator?
   b. How many schools/districts did you work for? If applicable, why did you change schools?
   c. What can you tell me about your experiences as teacher/school counselor/other?

   What do you miss about being a teacher? What don’t you miss?

3. What was your experience like when looking for a teaching position?
   a. Did you encounter challenges finding a teaching position?

4. How did you become interested in school administration?

5. Was there any person(s) who played a role in your decision to pursue school administration? If so, who?

6. Have you had any formal or informal mentoring experiences?
   a. How did you meet your mentor?
   b. What did you do with your mentor?
   c. What did you discuss with your mentor?
   d. What specific advice, tips or strategies did your mentor give you about professional (or personal) life?
   e. How helpful did you find your mentor? About what specifically?

7. Can you give an example of a way that your mentor influenced your career interest, promotion, and advancement?
8. Were there other things you would have wanted from your mentor that you did not get in terms of professional (or personal) support?

9. How did you secure your current position? Can you tell me about the process of finding a position, applying for it, being interviewed, and ultimately obtaining it?
   a. How many years were you looking for a position?
   b. How many districts did you apply to?
   c. Were you promoted from within your current school? If so, did anyone internally support your interest in pursuing an administrative role in your district? If so, who?

10. Tell me about your first administrative position (if the current one isn’t the first)?
   a. Did anyone sponsor you to obtain your first administrative position and if so, can you tell me how?

11. Have you experienced any challenges while seeking administrative positions? Can you give a specific example of a time when you faced a challenge? How did you respond?

12. Can you tell me about your experiences with the formal mentoring provided by the state of New Jersey?

13. How was your relationship with your mentor?
   a. Can you tell me to what extent if all, he/she provided you with social network opportunities or access to his/her professional contacts?
   b. Can tell me the race/gender of your professional mentor?
   c. How if at all, do you think the race/gender of your mentor influenced your relationship with him/her?

14. What are your future aspirations?
15. How do you think you will get there?

16. Why do you think there are so few Latina school administrators in New Jersey?

17. What are your thoughts about the role of the superintendent?
   a. Why do you think there are so few Latina school superintendents?

18. What are your thoughts on the role of mentoring in the career advancement of Latinas?
   a. How do you think the ethnicity/race of the mentor factors into the potential success of the mentoring relationship?

19. How do you think your background /ethnicity if at all, played a role in your career advancement to school administration?

20. Is there anything else you think I should know about your experiences as a Latina school administrator?