

St. John's University

**St. John's Scholar**

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

2024

**THE JOURNEY OF DOMINICAN WOMEN AS ADMINISTRATIVE  
LEADERS IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION**

Kelba M. Sosa

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholar.stjohns.edu/theses\\_dissertations](https://scholar.stjohns.edu/theses_dissertations)



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

---

THE JOURNEY OF DOMINICAN WOMEN AS ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS IN  
U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

to the faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

of

THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

at

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

New York

by

Kelba M. Sosa

Date Submitted November 29, 2023

Date Approved January 31, 2024

---

Kelba M. Sosa

---

Dr. Katherine Aquino

**© Copyright by Kelba M. Sosa 2024**

**All Rights Reserved**

## ABSTRACT

### THE JOURNEY OF DOMINICAN WOMEN AS ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

Kelba M. Sosa

This qualitative narrative study delved into the experiences and journeys of Dominican women ascending to administrative leadership positions within U.S. higher education institutions. The main purpose was to explore the challenges and successes encountered by these women, addressing the identified issue of their underrepresentation in such roles. Participants, comprising 13 Dominican women, held positions ranging from Directors and Faculty/Professors to Vice Presidents, Chief of Staff, and Presidents. Their ages spanned from 45 to 75, representing a diverse range of experiences and perspectives. The research methodology embraced a qualitative approach with a narrative design, aligning with the study's theoretical framework rooted in Critical Race Theory aligned with (LatCrit). Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and participant journaling, drawing on the narrative inquiry model proposed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990). This approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of the personal and professional trajectories of these women in their leadership roles. The study's significance lies in its diversity and representation within higher education leadership, specifically for Dominican women. Their narrative sheds light on systemic barriers and provided insights. The study calls for institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion, emphasizing the need for policies and practices that foster equitable opportunities for leadership across higher education for specifically Dominican women.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mom, Gloria aka “Loria”. Her spirit, dedication, sacrifices and her devotion have been the alignment throughout my academic journey and research.

In the face of cultural barriers and the insidious imposter syndrome, which many Latinas possess, she selflessly devoted her life to raising her four children, forgoing her own educational aspirations, despite battling with the challenges of life, she always displayed unparalleled strength and resilience.

At the early age of 30, my mom was confronted with a daunting adversary, breast cancer. She embarked on a courageous battle that lasted a decade. Throughout this period, her determination, fortitude, resilience and enduring optimism left an indelible mark on those around her...especially for me.

Her legacy, however, lives on in the lessons she imparted and the sacrifices she made for the well-being of her family. This dissertation stands as a tribute to her memory, a testament to the extraordinary woman who, despite facing insurmountable odds, instilled in me the resilience to pursue knowledge and overcome adversity.

In honoring my mom, I acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to her, whose sacrifices paved the way for my ability to be resilient, always persevere and to continue to “keep going” in any aspects of my life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing my doctoral program has been a transformative journey, and I am profoundly grateful to everyone who has played a role in this significant achievement. First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the courageous participants of my study. Their willingness to share their life stories as Dominicanas in leadership roles was instrumental in shaping the study of my research. Their resilience and openness illuminated the hardships and barriers faced, contributing valuable insights to the academic discourse.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my mentor, Dr. Katherine Aquino. Her guidance was monumental throughout my doctoral journey. Your unwavering support and encouragement reassured me that I could overcome any challenge. Thank you for being not just a mentor but a source of inspiration. To my esteemed committee members, Dr. Stephen Kotok and Dr. Katherine DiMartino, your wisdom and insightfulness were indispensable. Dr. Kotok's shared passion for my Eagles brought an extra layer of connection, and Dr. DiMartino's support and motivation were pivotal in propelling me forward. Their belief in me and my passion for my research topic fueled my confidence.

A special acknowledgment goes to my doctoral program cohort members, each of whom has contributed to making this journey truly amazing. I am so lucky and grateful to have shared this experience and journey with all of them. A special Thank You to Marsha Milan Bethel, your encouragement and insistence on productivity during challenging times were a lifeline. I do not know where I would be if you did not drag me to the Iona library to start writing. I am forever grateful for your insistence, assistance and friendship. My gratitude extends to my dear friends and fellow doctoral classmates, Nelson Izquierdo

and Maria Cano. Your everlasting support, encouraging conversations, shared laughs, and late nights at campus were invaluable throughout this journey. You were my go-to when I was stuck, and you never let me down. I will forever be grateful and love you forever!

To my genuine friends that have supported me through this program, I am forever grateful and thankful for supporting and celebrating me. But in particular, my dear friend Keith, a constant source of motivation and support, I am forever indebted. His encouragement during moments of struggle and celebration during moments of triumph have left an indelible mark for me. A day did not go by that he would ask me where was I with my writing. He provided optimism that allowed me to believe that I could do this. Another source of appreciation for the reassurance and encouragement goes to my friend Ernesto. His words of reinforcement, relentless support and faith in me have been instrumental and I am grateful for his invaluable contribution to my success. His infamous words to me “Rock & Roll” Dr. K...I had work to do. Always kept me on my toes and made sure I was on schedule.

To my children, Krysten and Jeremy along with My Chunk, you are my inspiration, my backbone, and my entire world. Your existence has been my driving force behind my pursuit of educational excellence, and I hope to have instilled in you the importance of determination and resilience. Never give up on your goal and dreams and never allow anyone to tell you "no", because everything is achievable, no matter how difficult it may seem, you always “Keep Going”.

Finally, to my family, my siblings, Francis, Ali, Nivi and Jose, we are a strong unit of love and commitment, and I am so grateful for every one of you. My in-laws, Kathy, Quadir, Keni, Wendy, Gina, John, Myrna (RIP), godchildren including my fodchildren,

nieces, nephews, cousins and my Tias', your love and support have been a pillar of strength. I am grateful for the unwavering encouragement from each one of you. I thank you for your love and I am so elated to know that I make you proud. Lastly, but not least, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Jacob for his contribution to me in reaching my goal.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Significance and Importance of the Study.....	7
Research Questions.....	10
Definition of Terms.....	10
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	12
Theoretical Perspective.....	12
Review of the Literature .....	15
Women Leadership .....	16
Latina Women and Leadership .....	18
Women, Leadership, and Higher Education .....	20
Latina, Women, Leadership, and Higher Education.....	21
Dominican Women, Leadership, and Higher Education .....	24
Latina Women's Barriers to Leadership Positions .....	25
Dominican Women and Barriers to Leadership Positions .....	28
Female Barriers to Leadership Positions in Higher Education.....	30

Latina Women's Barriers to Leadership Positions in Higher Education.....	33
Overcoming Barriers to Leadership Positions.....	35
Summary.....	36
CHAPTER 3 METHOD.....	41
Specific Research Questions .....	41
Research Design and Data Analysis .....	42
Setting.....	43
Participants .....	44
Profiles of the Participants.....	45
Data Collection Methods .....	49
Semi-Structured Interviews .....	49
Journaling .....	50
Trustworthiness.....	51
Data Analysis .....	51
Semi-Structured Interviews .....	52
Participant Journaling .....	53
Research Ethics.....	53
Researcher's Role .....	54
Conclusion .....	55
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS .....	56
Data Analysis Process.....	57
Findings .....	61
Theme 1: The Importance of Mentorship and Representation .....	61

Theme 2: Exposure and Inspiration as a Foundation .....	66
Theme 3: The Gift of Positive Cultural Attributes .....	69
Theme 4: Family Responsibilities .....	72
Theme 5: Lower Salaries .....	75
Summary.....	77
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION .....	79
Discussion of Findings .....	79
Connection to Previous Literature .....	80
The Importance of Mentorship and Representation .....	80
Exposure and Inspiration as a Foundation.....	82
Lower Salaries .....	83
Family Responsibilities .....	85
The Gift of Positive Cultural Attributes .....	86
Connections of Findings to the Research Questions .....	87
Connection of Findings to the Theoretical Framework.....	88
Limitations.....	89
Implications for Future Research .....	90
Implications for Practice.....	91
Conclusion .....	93
APPENDIX A Letter of Consent .....	95
APPENDIX B Individual Interview Protocol .....	97
APPENDIX C Participant Journal and Reflective Essay Question.....	99
REFERENCES .....	100

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Participant Demographic Characteristics .....	44
Table 2 Research Questions and Alignment .....	52
Table 3 Initial Codes .....	57
Table 4 Initial Grouping of Thematic Categories .....	58
Table 5 Final Themes .....	59

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Latino Critical Perspective (Huber, 2010).....	7
---	---

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The United States is home to a sizable population of individuals with Hispanic ancestry. There were over 62 million people of Hispanic origin living in the United States as of 2020 (United States Census Bureau, 2021). The public has a propensity to stigmatize people of Hispanic origin since many Hispanics work in jobs that are of perceived lower status, such as those in the cleaning, agriculture/farming, construction, and manufacturing industries (Browne et al., 2021). Because of these stereotypes, there are not nearly enough opportunities for Hispanics to obtain positions that are both more prestigious and financially rewarding (Flores, 2017). Additionally, there is a shortage of Hispanics holding leadership roles in educational institutions of higher learning, with only 22% of administrators identifying as Hispanic holding leadership positions (Martínez & Fernández, 2018). In relation to Latina women, they also experience limited leadership positions, at times more than other minority groups due to socioeconomic disadvantages (Burkham, 2019; Jang, 2019).

Latina women can experience more challenges than other minority groups regarding their careers. For example, Latinas are more likely to be at an educational disadvantage than other ethnic groups (Burkham, 2019) due to a greater probability of living in poverty (Jang, 2019), lower average levels of parental education (Arbona et al., 2018), pervading changes that have affected affirmative action (Collins, 2018), and cutbacks to financial aid opportunities (Mitchell et al., 2018). When considering Latina women's role in higher education leadership, although women hold six out of ten higher education positions, only one out of five are held by non-White women, demonstrating such grave underrepresentation (Whitford, 2020). Although there is a wealth of literature

highlighting various factors that limit the postsecondary success of this student group, it is assumed that this could be the reason for the lack of leadership within higher education represented by Latina women (Martinez et al., 2020).

Dominicans are the Hispanic immigrant group with the fourth-largest population in the United States, behind Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Cubans. Since 2010, the number of Dominicans living in the United States, including those born in other countries but not in the Dominican Republic, has increased by 33%, bringing the total number of Dominicans to 1.2 million. For the past decades, the number of Dominican women currently residing in the United States has remained consistently more significant than that of Dominican men (Portes & Guarnizo, 2019). Dicker (2006) reported that many Dominican women living in the United States experience language difficulties when interacting with higher education institutions. Dicker's (2006) study highlighted one barrier for Dominican women who moved to the United States. That was, the lack of strong language instruction which acted as barriers throughout all educational levels.

In addition, there is also an educational disparity between Latinas, women, and men that has not been addressed, even though the gap between themselves and their male counterparts nationally in terms of the number of bachelor's and master's degrees has narrowed (Guillen et al., 2020). Satori (2020) conducted research in the Dominican Republic studying women's perceptions and experiences in obtaining leadership positions at higher education institutions. The researcher found that the Dominican women reported that their pathway into leadership positions was a growth journey. The participants also reported that the challenges they experienced were due to age and gender. For example, Satori found that Dominican culture had been recognized as

relatively sexist, where women are committed to being stay-at-home moms and wives. From a cultural perspective, men are perceived as the leaders, while women are the mere followers (Salusky & Tull, 2021). Most middle-class and upper-class women in the Dominican Republic are expected to underperform or be less capable of performing jobs because they are expected to stay at home and be housemakers (Smith, 2020). Suppose the culture trademarks women as incompetent and unable to achieve success at the same level as men. In that case, it has become the general culture of people not to consider women equal.

It is unclear whether Dominican women in America are experiencing the same sentiments or patterns as they try to embark on becoming educational leaders. This was the gap that the current study was designed to close. Although studies have been completed within the Dominican Republic, few studies focused on Dominican women residing and working in the United States. Therefore, this proposed study explored Dominican women's perceptions and experiences concerning leadership positions in higher education in the United States. Previous research, such as that conducted by Satori (2020) focused on women's perceptions and experiences in obtaining leadership positions at higher education institutions in the Dominican Republic. Satori's study was generalized to one specific geographical region; therefore, this study bridged this gap by understanding the perceptions and experiences concerning leadership positions in higher education of Dominican women who had immigrated to the United States.



## **Purpose of the Study**

This qualitative narrative study explored the journey of Dominican women into administrative leadership positions within U.S. higher education institutions. A secondary purpose sought to explore their experiences and perceptions of accessing and obtaining postsecondary leadership positions. The purpose of this study was aligned with the identified problem that Dominican women were underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education in the United States (Martínez & Fernández, 2018). Dominican women navigating the educational environment often experience a struggle between beliefs imposed by the dominant culture and those of their ethnic background (Sartori, 2020). The crossing between these two worldviews is unclear, and their impacts have remained minimally studied, especially within the United States.

Kim and O'Brien (2018) discussed how women of color have reported experiencing sexism and racism regarding their careers compared to their White counterparts. However, the authors reported that Latina women are more affected by financial barriers that limit their ability to attend college, receive higher education, and obtain leadership positions at academic institutions. Additionally, Martinez et al. (2020) reported that it is essential to provide opportunities to Latina women in K-12 leadership positions due to the increasing number of Latina students wanting to experience a complete education. Martinez et al. conducted a qualitative study that explored the lived experiences of four Latina school women and found that to be successful in leadership positions, Latina women must clearly confront gender roles and expectations of motherhood, find strong mentorship experiences, appropriately confront sexism and racism, and use their bilingualism as a tool to empower themselves and students.

Currently, it was unknown how Dominican women working in leadership positions within the United States experienced the four factors of (a) gender roles, (b) mentorship experiences, (c) sexism and racism, and (d) bilingualism, which by conducting this study could assist in understanding their pathways to higher education leadership positions and how they had worked to overcome any challenges.

For many generations, women have been required to exert much time and effort to demonstrate that they are capable employees and possess both intellect and values (Rahim et al., 2018). Even while a substantial amount of work has been completed over the years, there is still much room for improvement for many women who have had very few choices (Rahim et al., 2018). In the United States, there has been notable growth in the number of women entering the labor field and obtaining degrees from colleges and universities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

According to information provided by the United States Census Bureau (2018), approximately 23.4% of all American women belonged to one of the minority groups in 2017. More than half of those women had a bachelor's degree or higher (Warner & Corley, 2017). Moreover, even though women are joining the workforce increasingly, there has been a glaring absence of women in leadership roles throughout a wide range of businesses. In 2017, just 27% of college presidents and 31% of full professors were female (Warner & Corley, 2017). There are still disparities in leadership positions in higher education for women from ethnic or racial backgrounds other than European Americans. Furthermore, there is a slow pace of progress for women in general. In 2018, Hispanic women held 3.5% of positions, Asian women had 2.3% of posts, Pacific

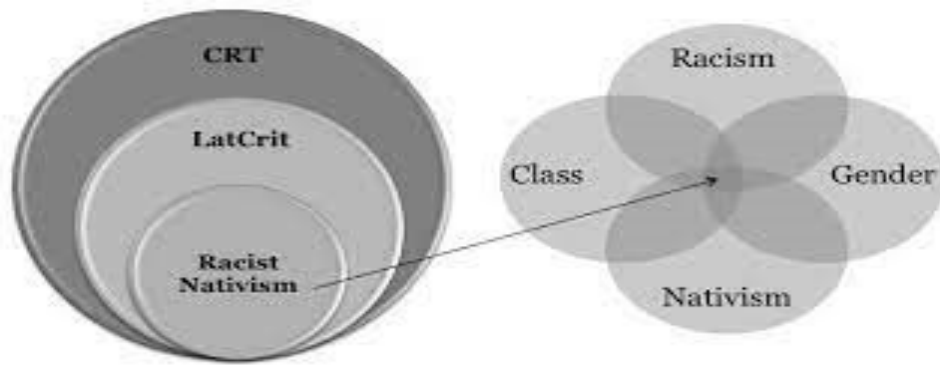
Islander women had 0.07% of positions, and American Indian and Alaska Native women had 0.29% of positions.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the critical race theory (CRT), as CRT aims to understand race and culture through different institutions (Gonlin, 2022). Critical race theory purports that individuals have multiple ways to self-identify; this awareness and acknowledgment of multiple identities and cultures (Gonlin, 2022). CRT believes that addressing the aspect of identity without considering multiple perspectives is futile (Aronson & Meyers, 2020). However, it was also essential to use LatCrit in this study, as it focused on Dominican women residing in the United States. LatCrit is more specific to Latinx individuals residing in the United States. It attempts to address the racial and minority barriers that Hispanic women may have faced, particularly those that lead to under-representation, oppression, and discrimination (Shelton, 2018).

## Figure 1

*Latino Critical Perspective (Huber, 2010)*



As depicted in Figure 1, Huber (2010) reports that the Latino critical perspective and the critical race theory are aligned. However, having Latina individuals provide their perspectives allows for a more robust understanding of a particular culture concerning racism, gender, class, and experiences of nativism. Nativism is defined as policies that tend to support the dominant culture of a country, versus that of immigrants or minority groups (Betz, 2019). Therefore, this theory aligned with the study as I examined the journey of Dominican women in administrative leadership positions in higher education in the US and understand their perceptions of perceived obstacles to access and succeed in postsecondary leadership positions. This theory allowed for the flexibility of Dominican women to share their perceptions and lived experiences in higher education.

### **Significance and Importance of the Study**

The study is significant as it can add to the exploration of Latina women in leadership positions in higher education. However, this study is further significant because it is more specific to Dominican women, as both areas lack research when it

comes to higher education and leadership positions. Additionally, the results of this study can lead to the identification of challenges that Dominican women have faced and how they have worked to overcome these challenges. My intent is not to compare Dominican women to men or other females of different cultures but instead to find shared experiences among these women so that the next generation of Dominican women can be provided with information and support so that they can achieve success, thereby assisting in increasing the number of Dominican women in higher education leadership positions.

Taking into consideration the barriers that could restrict Dominican women's participation and success in higher education in conjunction with the limited research surrounding this topic and the concerns at hand, it becomes evident that this study is necessary to generate insight and opportunities while increasing the pathway of Dominican women in the quest of a career path in leadership roles in higher education. Additionally, the factors that contribute to or hinder the leadership capabilities of women, Dominican women are faced with the additional role that culture plays in their lives (Satori, 2020). Even for Dominican women who reside and work in the United States, including those who immigrated and are US citizens with Latin American heritage, the cultural factor is an innate part of their character. Latinos continue to be the fastest-growing ethnic group in the US (Blancero et al., 2018).

The significance of this study is to increase the capacity of academic research on Dominican women's barriers to obtaining and working in leadership positions within the field of higher education. Acknowledging the aspects that Dominican culture has towards women, and their work in leadership roles can assist in determining how changes are necessary for both studying degrees in

higher education and working within leadership roles in higher education institutions. This study will allow for a more robust understanding of the barriers that Dominican women have experienced and how they have worked to overcome them within their leadership roles. This information can be provided to other Dominican women so that they can not only understand potential barriers but also be provided with resources and support.

Blancero et al. (2018) reported that Latina women would continue to be a significant part of the workforce in the United States. Additionally, individuals from the Dominican Republic have immigrated to the US at an increased rate of 33% between 2010 and 2019 (Babich & Batalova, 2021), demonstrating the need to understand this population. Although there are little to no studies that have focused on the aspects of leadership of Dominican women and the difficulties they face, it seems appropriate to address this subject and offer some insights on the perception of the Dominican population about Dominican women leaders' profile for those residing in the US.

While the topic for my study struggles with describing the experiences Dominican women encounter with the leadership trajectory in higher education, Creswell and Poth (2018) have asserted that qualitative studies are essential when researching issues comparable to this proposed study. Therefore, conducting a qualitative narrative study will allow me to collect rich data where the participants can provide their perceptions and experiences in their own words, highlighting their world views in their own voice, and through a strong narrative construct. This worldview can help higher education institutions understand the obstacles that Dominican women face while also providing them with resources and higher levels of support to succeed in their leadership positions.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** What are the experiences of Dominican women entering into leadership positions in the higher education environment?

**RQ2:** How do Dominican women who are higher education leaders perceive racial and cultural factors creating opportunities/obstacles when being promoted into leadership positions?

## **Definition of Terms**

### *Critical Race Theory*

Critical race theory (CRT) aims to understand race and culture through different institutions (Gonlin, 2022). Critical race theory purports that individuals have multiple ways to self-identify; this awareness and acknowledgment of multiple identities and cultures (Gonlin, 2022). CRT believes that addressing the aspect of identity without considering multiple perspectives is futile (Aronson & Meyers, 2020).

### *Dominican*

In this study, a Dominican referred to an individual who identified as a native or inhabitant of the Dominican Republic (Satori, 2020).

### *Higher Education*

Higher education was defined as education that goes beyond high school, such as a college or university (Panchenko et al., 2022).

### *Latina*

In this study, a Latina was defined as a female who identified as of Latin American origin or descent (Dinzey-Flores et al., 2019).

### *Latino Critical Perspective*

The Latino critical perspective (LatCrit) is a subset of critical race theory. It is more specific to Latinx individuals residing in the United States. It attempts to address the racial and minority barriers that Hispanic women may have faced, particularly those that lead to under-representation, oppression, and discrimination (Shelton, 2018).

### *Leadership Position*

In this study, a leadership position was defined as a position that a Dominican woman was working at in a higher educational institution, including but not limited to provost, chief academic officer, college or university president, Dean of students, or department chair.

### *Nativism*

Nativism was defined as policies or schools of thought that tended to support the dominant culture of a country, versus that of immigrants or minority groups (Betz, 2019).



## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This qualitative, narrative study explored Dominican women's journey in administrative leadership positions in higher education in the US. Dominican women navigating the educational environment often experience a struggle between beliefs imposed by the dominant culture and those of their ethnic background (Sartori, 2020). The crossing between these two worldviews is unclear, and their impacts have remained minimally studied, especially within the United States.

This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the literature regarding the topic being discussed. The chapter will begin by highlighting the importance of utilizing the Latino Critical Perspective in this study by providing insight on how it has guided other research studies similar to mine. The review of the literature will be the next section of this chapter, where I will discuss research that has previously focused on Latina and Dominican women and leadership positions, and how they have experienced higher education, and the barriers that they have faced when accessing leadership positions in higher education. This review will then conclude with a discussion highlighting studies focusing on how Latina or Dominican women have overcome barriers they have experienced when accessing leadership positions in higher education.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

This study was guided by the critical race theory. The research was predicated on the critical race theory (CRT) and, more significantly, LatCrit, as its primary theoretical basis. In research, CRT unequivocally emphasizes the role that oppressions such as race, class, gender, and sexuality play in determining the academic outcomes of people of color. CRT is an interdisciplinary movement that challenges commonly held beliefs, such

as meritocracy and colorblindness, to demonstrate how they cannot be applied consistently to educational institutions. This paradigm casts doubt on these presumptions by relying on the knowledge of communities of color, the educational experiences of which have been molded by authoritarian institutions and practices. The attempts to combat prejudice in the classroom constitute a purposeful step toward advancing social and racial justice and facilitating the empowerment of communities of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso & Solórzano, 2006). LatCrit was established so that CRT's educational research efforts could be broadened, and this expansion has now taken place. LatCrit can be used to reveal how Latinos understand race, class, gender, and sexuality and acknowledge the Latinx experience with immigration, language, ethnicity, and culture. So, thanks to LatCrit, academics can perform in-depth examinations of the types of oppression that Latinx individuals are subjected to, enabling them to characterize the lived reality of the Latino culture more appropriately (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

LatCrit attempts to address racial and minority barriers Dominican women may have faced, particularly those that lead to under-representation, oppression, and discrimination (Shelton, 2018). Previous studies have utilized the LatCrit perspective when examining women's leadership positions. For example, Larey et al. (2021) used CRT and the LatCrit perspective to understand leadership within institutions of education better. The authors collected data from 15 individuals via semi-structured interviews where they aimed to understand how the participants navigated through institutions that inherently resist traditional ideologies. The authors found that participants in their study, who identified as historically disadvantaged, often overcame such barriers by leaning

heavily on support from family members and close friends while also focusing on community initiatives and school policies that promote equality within the workforce. At the same time, the LatCrit perspective could assist in understanding how the participants could address racial and minority barriers that they had experienced when it came to being underrepresented, oppressed, or discriminated against.

Additionally, Espinoza (2020) used the LatCrit perspective to understand how Latina teachers overcame barriers to experiencing social justice within their careers. The LatCrit perspective highlighted how the participants experienced resilience within their positions by completing specific acts. These acts included building solid relationships, advocating for their minority students, building robust support systems, and gaining the involvement of their students' parents. It was reported that these different acts allowed the teachers to continuously highlight the barriers to social justice that they experienced, which included the lack of training programs to promote classroom pedagogy. Because the Latino participants in the study were not provided with training on updated classroom pedagogies, they could not stay current with information that could be passed on to their minority students. This was highlighted by the LatCrit perspective and the critical race theory.

Rivera (2019) also used the LatCrit perspective under a study that closely aligned with this proposed study. The author aimed to understand the leadership experiences of queer, Chicana/Latina women currently working in leadership positions in higher education. Collecting data from participants via semi-structured interviews, the authors found many barriers women faced when accessing leadership positions in higher education. Rivera reported that the participants viewed themselves as oppressed when

accessing leadership positions. They also reported many phobias they experienced while working on campus. The author concluded that to face these barriers to overcome them, the women leaders reported that they lived and worked from a place of authenticity, especially when interacting with a campus that was "Nosotros," or an environment that men primarily dominate.

In summary, many studies that have utilized the LatCrit perspective have also used CRT. Huber (2010) reported that the Latino critical perspective and the critical race theory are aligned. However, having Latina individuals provide their perspectives allows for a more robust understanding of a particular culture concerning racism, gender, class, and experiences of nativism. Nativism is defined as policies that tend to support the dominant culture of a country versus that of immigrants or minority groups (Betz, 2019). Therefore, this theory aligned with the study as I examined the journey of Dominican women in administrative leadership positions in higher education in the US and understand their perceptions of perceived obstacles to access and succeed in postsecondary leadership positions. This theory allowed for the flexibility of Dominican women to share their perceptions and lived experiences in higher education.

### **Review of the Literature**

This literature review will discuss the most recent literature on the themes found in the phenomenon being explored. Therefore, in this review, I will discuss Latina and Dominican women in leadership positions, how they have operated within the field of higher education, and the barriers they have experienced when working in such positions. The literature review will conclude with a discussion of how they have overcome experienced barriers.

## ***Women Leadership***

Outside of race and ethnic backgrounds, many studies have focused on the barriers that women experience when working in leadership positions. Alqahtani (2019) reported that women are not afforded the same level of leadership positions as their male counterparts due to social and gender stereotypes found within society. For example, from a social and gender stereotype foundation, women are seen to work within the home more so than in a board room; these stereotypes are harmful to women, as they do not allow them to be afforded equal opportunities when it comes to leading organizations or companies (Alqahtani, 2019).

Many women experience the glass ceiling effect, a phenomenon where an individual, who is qualified to advance in the company they work for, does not get the opportunity to move up the hierarchical ranks due to gender or race discrimination (Rahim et al., 2018). Rahim et al. (2018) discussed the glass ceiling effect and reported that women are discriminated against due to the different stereotypes that are found about women in society. To move through the glass ceiling effect and gender discrimination in organizations, women must be provided networking and sponsorship opportunities to progress through the hierarchical ranks. The authors reported that women tend to move up marginally in the ranks of organizations within the United States; however, most of the time, they are stopped from achieving the highest level of leadership within a company, hence why there are so few women CEOs in the workforce.

Studies have been conducted that have focused on the glass ceiling effect. For example, Imadođlu et al. (2020) completed a study that focused on the effects of the glass ceiling on the barriers women experience when aiming for management positions within

organizations. Conducting a qualitative study, the author collected data from 33 women whom they answered a series of open-ended questions in the form of a semi-structured interview. The study's results highlighted that the women who did not receive promotions were due to low motivation. The authors argued that low motivation could be due to the experiences of barriers within the workforce, reducing the level of motivation that women have for their job performance. Additionally, the authors reported that women could be encouraged by low levels of motivation to perform higher; therefore, self-efficacy appears to play a role. Therefore, some women can overcome the glass ceiling effect and move up the hierarchical ranks of their company into solid leadership positions.

Eagly and Carli (2018) reported that working around family responsibilities is one of the main barriers women experience when obtaining leadership positions. For example, the authors argued that women are more likely to take time off work, interrupt their careers for childbirth, work part-time, and experience many family responsibilities that fall on their shoulders. Because of this reduced productivity because of family responsibilities, Eagle and Carli reported that women tend to have less experience, reduced earnings, and fewer hours of experience, which slows their career paths. These exact expectations are not always in alignment with men in the workforce.

Einarsdottir et al. (2018) studied how women middle managers experienced barriers and opportunities within their current positions. The authors collected data via semi-structured interviews with 11 women representing a qualitative design. The study's findings concluded that when working in middle management, the participants perceived that top management was closed to them. The participants reported that top management

positions were more tailored toward men due to excessive responsibilities, which the women reported would almost be impossible to meet due to the other responsibilities that they have in their lives. The study further concluded that the women participants perceived their hard work as unappreciated and that to climb higher in the company, if possible, they would have to resort to displaying more masculine gender roles. These studies have highlighted how the glass ceiling effect is real within the business world; however, outside of gender alone, other minority groups struggle with additional barriers due to their racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds, such as Latina women.

### ***Latina Women and Leadership***

The exposure of women in leadership positions has grown exponentially over the past few decades. However, minority women have continued to experience many barriers in accessing such leadership positions. For example, from a historical perspective, Latina women experience more challenges than other minority groups regarding their careers. For example, Latinas are more likely to be at an educational disadvantage than other ethnic groups (Burkham, 2019) due to a greater probability of living in poverty (Jang, 2019), lower average levels of parental education (Arbona et al., 2018), pervading changes that have affected affirmative action (Collins, 2018), and cutbacks to financial aid opportunities (Mitchell et al., 2018).

SteelFisher et al. (2019) conducted research to highlight the discrimination of minority women in leadership positions. In a quantitative study, the authors collected data from over 1,500 women in the United States to better understand their perceptions of gender discrimination. The study results concluded that many women experienced racial discrimination and harassment, including 18% working in healthcare, 41% reporting that

they were not paid equally to their male counterparts, and 20% reporting discrimination when working in higher education. This study is critical because it demonstrates the foundation of experiences that minority women can experience within the United States. This study demonstrates that discrimination, inequalities, and inequities exist throughout many areas of life within the United States, even more so directly attributed to Latina women.

Bonilla-Santiago (2020) reported that Latina women had gained new ground when accessing leadership positions; however, more work needs to be continued. The author discussed how the feminist movement had ignored minority women, particularly those from a Latino background. This demonstrates critical race theory in action because opportunities appear different for White women than non-White women. Bonilla-Santiago argued that Latina women have been largely ignored by society and, therefore, isolated regarding leadership positions in their careers.

Haber-Curran and Tapia-Fuselier (2020) reported that it is essential to focus on Latina women and leadership before they enter the workforce. Although Latina representation has increased through college degrees and attendance, student leaders must be represented by the Latina community. Haber-Curran and Tapia-Fuselier conducted a study that focused on Latina student leaders where they collected data via semi-structured interviews. The authors' study aimed to understand the leadership approaches of Latina student leaders. The study concluded that student leaders viewed their success as being attributed to their sources of on-campus support, their interactions with the community, and their commitment to making a positive impact from a societal point of view. The authors also reported that the levels of support they receive shape and influence the type



of leadership they will utilize in their position. This study was important to highlight because previous research has indicated that minority women require support to be successful in leadership positions. It is imperative that a more robust understanding of how Dominican women experience such support when accessing leadership positions can help ensure that they are afforded the same opportunities when working in higher education.

### ***Women, Leadership, and Higher Education***

Women have been studied within the field of higher education for decades, highlighting hiring practices that are discriminatory as most leadership positions within institutions of higher education are held by men. For example, Eliadis (2018) reported that women are underrepresented in leadership positions within both the corporate and higher education worlds, depicting a major problem that is continuing today. Additionally, women are not afforded the same opportunities of accessing leadership positions, mentorship opportunities, and professional development practices, making it difficult for them to be successful (Wegner, 2018). Ghouralal (2019) reported that women in leadership positions in institutions of higher education has been extensively studied for over 30 years; however, little has changed within this time. For example, the author argued that in 2017 only 30% of women occupied college president positions in the United States; only 5% of these women identified as women of color. In addition, the author reported that it has been slow moving when it comes to increasing the representation of women in higher education leadership over the years. Ghouralal reported that over the course of 30 years there has only been a 10% increase in the number of women occupying senior level positions in higher education, as 10% of

women worked in such positions in 1986. There also appears to be a lack of opportunities and access for women working in higher education. For example, in 2011, women made up 50% of assistant professors, 38% of associate professors, 26% full professors, and 23% presidents (Ghouralal, 2019). As higher ranks within a college or university system are examined, women are continuing to be highly underrepresented. When looking at the lack of women that hold positions in higher education, it is even lower for women of color, such as Latina and Dominican women.

### ***Latina Women, Leadership, and Higher Education***

Many studies have been conducted that have focused on Latina women and higher education, especially when working in institutions of higher education. For example, Sánchez et al. (2020) completed a study that focused on Latina women in higher education leadership positions to understand better the barriers they experienced when working within the field. A qualitative study found that the participants felt they had to downplay their race and ethnicity while also being impacted by intersecting identities. In the study, the authors reported that the multiple roles women experienced impacted their ability to thrive in such an environment. The authors found that due to downplaying their racial and ethnic backgrounds, the women found it difficult to operate within their true authentic selves. Previous research has indicated how they became resilient in their leadership positions (Bonilla-Santiago, 2020; Rivera, 2019).

Crespo (2013) reported that Latina women are not fully represented within the population of higher education institutions, even though the demographics of Latinx individuals are increasing on many campuses. The author conducted a qualitative study to understand Latina women's experiences in higher education and found some interesting

results. The participants in Crespo's study reported that they entered the field of higher education because of their love of teaching; however, many reported that they experienced racialized instances while working on campuses. To succeed in higher education institutions, the researcher concluded that many Latina women lean on supporting family members, colleagues, supervisors, and close friends. Institutions of higher education must continue working to develop Latina women's leadership abilities to be more successful in their administrative roles.

Eiden-Dillow et al. (2022) reported that Latinas represent one of the smallest populations of leaders, highlighting an essential need for continued future research. Conducting a qualitative study, the authors collected data via semi-structured interviews with senior-level Latina leaders and found some interesting results. For example, the participants could highlight specific inequities they experienced when navigating higher education leadership positions. These inequities included the leaders reporting that although their institution of higher education had a large Latino population, women leaders did not align with the institution's demographics. Barriers experienced by Latino women included the lack of mentorship and support and the experience of tokenism, where institutions hire small numbers of minority groups to give the appearance of equality. Due to these experiences, the authors concluded that Latino students and women are not represented appropriately on university campuses, thereby not providing a holistic and robust approach to equality in both learning and leadership opportunities for minority women.

To demonstrate how Latinas experience oppression in higher education, it is essential to understand their experiences of college attendance. Kiyama (2018) reported

that oppression could begin for Latina women due to their experiences of attending colleges, such as navigating cultural stereotypes, financial constraints, and family responsibilities. However, the author also reported that it is difficult for Latina women to be provided equality and equity within higher education because they also experience campuses that are inherently racist and cultural incongruities. Despite these experiences, it has been the experiences of Latina women to continue to work toward their academic and career goals, highlighting how resilience and grit play an essential part in their experiences within higher education.

Selzer and Robles (2020) conducted research that focused specifically on women's leadership in higher education. Although their study focused specifically on women of all races and ethnic backgrounds, it is imperative to highlight due to the results that were found. The authors aimed to understand the reflections of women working in leadership positions. They found that they reported that it is essential that women understand the business of higher education and ensure that they are visible within the organization. Additionally, the authors' study confirmed that the participants reported that women must be prepared to navigate through the bureaucracy found within higher institutions, as well as politics and budgetary constraints. The authors also found that it is essential for women to find endorsements from other female leaders who can act as mentors. The findings of Selzer and Robles can be problematic, primarily since they focused on women without including race or ethnic backgrounds. The problem with the results of their study, in conjunction with previous literature, is that Latina women, being one of the highest underrepresented groups in higher education, would find it challenging to find endorsement and mentorship within institutions. Additionally, according to critical

race theory and the LatCrit perspective, because of inherent racism found in higher education institutions, they could continue to experience discrimination from a White leader due to navigating the university's bureaucracy. These results continue to highlight the need for future research to explore how there can be a more substantial alignment between women's cultural and ethnic backgrounds in such leadership positions.

### ***Dominican Women, Leadership, and Higher Education***

Minimal studies have been conducted that have focused on Dominican women and their leadership experiences within institutions of higher education. Most studies focused on Dominican women have been completed within the Dominican Republic, not the United States; however, it is imperative to discuss these studies from a cultural and ethnic standpoint to understand the challenges that Dominican women explicitly experience. Outside of higher education, Canaán and Corcino (2015) reported that within the Dominican Republic, women are not always seen as leaders simply due to their cultural backgrounds. For example, the authors highlighted how Dominican women are "molded to be housewives, obey men, and not to interfere with men's issues/matters" (Canaán & Corcino, 2015, p. 2). The authors conducted a study to understand citizen views of how effective women can be as leaders within the Dominican Republic. Collecting data via a survey and conducting a quantitative study, Canaán and Corcino found that most participants rated women to be effective as leaders 8.3 out of 10; the respondents also reported that when working as leaders, women tend to be better planners than their male counterparts. The downside of the results was highlighted when 86% of the respondents reported that women felt the need to be attractive and good-looking to gain vital leadership employment opportunities.

One of the primary studies highlighted within the literature that focuses on Dominican women in leadership positions was conducted by Satori (2020). Satori aimed to understand Dominican women living in the Dominican Republic and how they experience leadership positions in higher education institutions. Completing a qualitative study, the author reported that women are not fully represented within the Dominican Republic when working in leadership positions within higher education institutions. Collecting data from five participants currently working as dean or vice chancellor, the author found some interesting results that align with studies conducted on Latina women in the United States. Satori (2020) reported that the participants perceived that they experienced issues related to gender and age, meaning that they had to prove their capabilities to others constantly.

Additionally, the participants reported that leadership roles were challenging as well because of the culture of *machismo*, where men were looked at for more leadership roles than women. The author also concluded that a Dominican woman's religion could influence their chance of being promoted to a leadership position because men are perceived to have power over women from a social standpoint due to religious influences. These different influences highlight how Dominican women experience leadership in higher education, mandating future research to continue in this field.

### ***Latina Women's Barriers to Leadership Positions***

Latina women experience a plethora of barriers to leadership positions. Outside of the glass ceiling effect, where women are discriminated against in the workplace due to their gender, Latina women must navigate additional barriers due to their experience of the double glass ceiling effect; individuals will be discriminated against due to their

gender, race, ethnicity, or cultural background (Welch et al., 2021). Welch et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study to understand the double glass ceiling effect for ethnic minority women working in collegiate sports. The authors aimed to understand these women's experiences and the barriers they experienced when working within their positions. The study results concluded that the participants perceived they always had to prove themselves due to their gender and ethnic background and always had to be questioned about their levels of competence. The study participants reported that they required higher support from the company they worked for. One interesting finding was that the women perceived barriers to exist more because of their gender than their ethnic backgrounds.

Ayab et al. (2019) also examined the double glass ceiling effect and found similar results. For example, the author aimed to understand whether the double glass ceiling or personal barriers caused the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions. Completing a qualitative study that collected data via semi-structured interviews, the authors found that the participants perceived the double glass ceiling and personal characteristics that contributed to their underrepresentation within senior leadership positions. The authors examined glass ceiling barriers within the study, including social pressures, perceptions, and the organization's environment. The authors also examined personal characteristics that included lack of confidence, psychological pressures, emotional behaviors, lack of experience, and flexibility to relocate—a combination of all these characteristics attributed to the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions.

Avalos and Salgado (2016) focused on barriers Latina women face when seeking leadership positions. The authors highlighted four different barriers that Latina women face in achieving leadership positions that, include (a) a lack of professional networks, (b) a lack of professional mentoring, (c) systemic barriers, and (d) a balance of professional and cultural expectations. Avalos and Salgado reported that many Latina women feel excluded and isolated from their work environments due to a lack of professional networks. Many businesses in the United States fail to provide women, and Latina women, a strong network of other women working in leadership positions due to a lack of diversity concerning gender, race, and ethnicity in typical management positions. The lack of strong professional networks can damage a Latina woman's career, as she cannot share ideas, obtain support, and gather contacts in the field to help bring her career to the next level. In addition, Latina women also experience a lack of professional mentoring. Avalos and Salgado discussed that because Latina women are underrepresented in leadership positions, they find it challenging to find an experienced mentor that can guide them through their career experiences. Instead, Latina women find mentors outside their career field, which does not help them navigate a business environment with as much support and confidence (Avalos & Salgado, 2016).

Avalos and Salgado (2016) also reported numerous systemic barriers that Latina women in leadership positions experience. The authors argued that in today's workforce, sexism and racism still exist and are displayed by many organizations when hiring individuals for leadership positions. Additionally, it has been argued that Latina women are plagued by stereotypes, which act as a barrier, because hiring practices of leadership positions in many organizations and companies are based upon the recruitment of White



males. Finally, Avalos and Salgado discussed how a balance of professional and cultural expectations could be a barrier. For example, the authors reported that in many instances, women, especially minority women, are not always seen as developers of ideas; more so, they are seen as passive and needy and are therefore placed in supportive roles within organizations (Avalos & Salgado, 2016). Other cultural expectations can act as barriers to leadership positions because Latina women are typically seen through a cultural lens as tending to the family and not necessarily involved in leadership.

### ***Dominican Women and Barriers to Leadership Positions***

Although there appear to be limited studies focusing on Dominican women specifically, some studies have discussed how they have experienced leadership. For example, Canaán and Corcino (2015) conducted a study that focused on the perception of Dominican women concerning the citizens of the Dominican Republic. The authors discussed how Dominican women have traditionally been seen as housewives and are taught to obey their husbands and not to interfere with their position as the man of the house. Following a qualitative design, Canaán and Corcino collected data via semi-structured interviews. The results concluded that the Dominican population perceives their women as homemakers and are there primarily to take care of their children and families. However, most individuals within the population scored Dominican women an 8.3 out of 10 when asked how effective they could be when working as a leader.

Rodriguez (2013) also discussed Dominican women in leadership roles. The author reported that Dominican women only represent approximately 33% of the Dominican labor market, facing many barriers when navigating into leadership positions. Rodriguez found interesting findings related to why women cannot consistently achieve

and work within leadership positions in the Dominican Republic, and they cited that it has to do primarily with the thoughts and actions of men. For example, the author highlighted that men find it challenging to take directions from women, as many men have the cultural expectation of women running the household and taking care of the children and family. Therefore, this may be difficult for some men to be exposed to within the workforce.

It is also worth mentioning that there is a growing population of second-generation Dominican Latinos that are ready to take on these leadership positions and probably face the same barriers and issues, given the differences in their outlook from their parents or the first-generation Dominicans with African American descent (Bailey, 2001). At present however, this is not a group that is extensively studied, more so Dominican Afro-Latinas. What is known about this group is that the first Dominicans tend to see themselves less as Black and more European White (Bailey, 2001). Unlike in the United States, where the historical 'one-drop' rule classifies "Black" as anyone who claims any perceived, recorded, or imagined African ancestry, the Dominican Republic has a very different 'one-drop' rule: any claim of perceived or imagined European ancestry automatically classifies a non-black, regardless of their skin and their African ancestry (Bailey, 2001). Yet, the second generation's social categorizations reflect their upbringing in a United States culture where distinct racial and ethnic hierarchies are fundamental to social grouping. Many people of the second generation have a strong sense of camaraderie with African Americans since they share similar experiences of servitude and discrimination, even if their parents did not (Bailey, 2001).

In summary, this section highlights the many barriers that Latina women face when working toward or within leadership positions. Limited studies have focused on Dominican women; however, the studies that have been completed appear to have been conducted within the United States. No matter where the studies have been conducted and whether they have focused directly on Dominican or Latina women, research has depicted many barriers women face when operating within leadership positions. These barriers include a lack of professional networking, a lack of mentorship, the experiences of stereotypes, systemic barriers, and having to balance professional and cultural expectations simultaneously. The following section will discuss barriers women have experienced when working as leaders within high education.

### ***Female Barriers to Leadership Positions in Higher Education***

The higher education field is dominated by men, especially in leadership positions (Udin et al., 2019). Although the previous sections of this literature review have demonstrated barriers aligned with women and Latina women's experiences in leadership roles, this section will discuss barriers specific to higher education. Domingo et al. (2022) conducted a study that focused on barriers women experience in higher education and found some interesting results. Following a quantitative study that spanned three years, the authors aimed to determine racialized and gendered imbalances within higher education institutions regarding women's advancement. The study's results concluded that women in higher education faced many barriers, especially when navigating into leadership positions. These barriers included inequitable advancement opportunities, where women take on roles within higher education institutions with little to no rewards. Additional barriers included a lack of clarity or consistency regarding their roles and how

women experience retention, tenure, and promotions. Although recent, this study appears in alignment with previous studies, where women tend to be undervalued and not the first choice when advancing in the workforce.

Because previous studies have concluded that women lack substantial mentorship opportunities when taking on leadership roles within the workforce, studies have also examined mentorship opportunities within higher education institutions. For example, Cross et al. (2019) conducted a literature review synthesis focusing on understanding women's barriers when working in the academic field. Collecting data from studies completed between 2000 and 2018, the authors reported that barriers have not only been continuously identified but have also appeared to stay relatively similar over two decades. The authors' literature review concluded that women working within higher education tend to experience a lack of mentorship, which can be detrimental to their careers. A lack of mentorship can decrease a woman's satisfaction level with her career while negatively impacting her productivity, career development, and retention levels (Cross et al., 2019).

Research has also appeared consistent over time. For example, from a historical perspective, Nguyen (2013) conducted a study in Vietnam examining women's leadership in higher education regarding the barriers they experienced when working toward a dean position. Collecting data from women in a dean position, the authors also aimed to understand how they experienced advancement in the workforce. The study's results concluded that the main barriers to leadership in higher education included family obligations, harmful gender stereotypes of female leaders, and an unwillingness of female academics to take on such management positions. Many of the participants in the study

reported that they were unwilling to move into management positions because of the barriers they experienced, including the gender discrimination that could occur within the institutions. Additionally, the participants also discussed how their dean position was facilitated. The participants reported that they could be successful in their positions because of their intense levels of self-effort, increased family support, and how they perceived themselves as lucky to be considered or secure such a high position within higher education. Also, from a historical perspective, Diehl (2014) conducted a study where they attempted to make meaning out of barriers experienced by women working within higher education institutions. Following a qualitative research design, the author collected data from 26 women in senior leadership positions and found that they experienced many barriers. The main barrier included gender stereotypes found within the institutions of higher education. Furthermore, the author also aimed to understand how women leaders experienced adversity. The results demonstrated that when experiencing barriers within higher education, women leaders' experienced adverse effects on their self-esteem, the power they demonstrated in their positions, their connections with others, and their entire worldview.

Howe-Walsh and Turnbull (2016) also examined women leaders in academia, particularly those working in science and technology. The authors completed a qualitative study that collected data through semi-structured interviews and found that many barriers women experienced included temporary work arrangements, male-dominated networks, and intimidation and harassment. Like Diehl's (2014) study, the authors found that exposure to such barriers in the workforce decreased their self-esteem, confidence, and how they navigated through the institution.

In summary, women experience many barriers within the field of higher education when working in leadership positions. These barriers include gender-based discrimination practices such as intimidation and harassment, navigating a male-dominated network, and balancing family and other life responsibilities. The effects of these barriers tend to promote lower self-esteem and confidence levels, affecting how women navigate their careers in leadership positions. The following section will discuss Latina and Dominican women and the barriers they have experienced while working in leadership positions within higher education institutions.

### ***Latina Women's Barriers to Leadership Positions in Higher Education***

Latina women experience many barriers while working in leadership positions within higher education; however, these women are underrepresented in the field, as they struggle to obtain such seniority compared to their White male counterparts. Although a plethora of research has been completed that has focused on Latina women and the barriers experienced when working in higher education, minimal studies have focused on Dominican women, which is the identified gap that makes this current study viable. For example, from a historical perspective, De Los Santos (2008) conducted a qualitative ethnographic study that focused on Hispanic female administrators working within higher education institutions. The authors concluded that the participants perceived the glass ceiling effect as one of the main barriers to navigating gender and racism stereotypes. Additionally, the participants also reported that institutions of higher education work must increase the educational experiences of all staff on women's issues, cultural and racial differences, diversity, and Hispanic cultural studies.

Similarly, Pertuz (2017) examined mid-level administrators working in higher education to understand their journeys and the barriers they experienced throughout their careers. The author reported that the participants were working within student affairs and perceived that they were a strong fit when first entering their positions but felt that they were perceived as the token that allowed them to be considered for their positions. A token is a symbolic effort that organizations make to hire a few individuals that are a part of a minority community or an underrepresented group (Pertuz, 2017). Pertuz reported that at the end of their study, the participants reported that representing a token within institutions made them experience microaggressions, denied opportunities for advancement, and felt that they were only boxed into roles that demonstrated diversity within the organization. The participants did not feel they were a substantial part of the administrative team, decreasing their self-esteem and confidence in their careers.

Muñoz (2009) conducted a mixed methods study that explored the Latina community college presidents. The author aimed to explore the career paths of Latina women and found some interesting results. The study participants reported that they experienced many barriers when attempting to enter leadership positions within higher education. The participants stated that they had to work harder than other groups to prepare for their leadership roles. The results also indicated that the participants reported that the trustees play a significant role in increasing the diversity of female leaders. This is where future research should be directed.

It appeared that more studies were identified concerning Latina women and leadership positions within higher education that was historical, as more recent studies appear to be focusing on Latinx students and increasing diversity on college campuses.

One of the few studies focused on Dominican women's female leadership appears to have been completed by Satori (2020). Satori conducted research in the Dominican Republic studying women's perceptions and experiences in obtaining leadership positions at higher education institutions. The researcher found that the Dominican women reported that their pathway into leadership positions was a growth journey. The participants also reported that the challenges they experienced were due to age and gender. For example, Satori found Dominican culture had been recognized as relatively sexist, where women are committed to being stay-at-home moms and wives.

### ***Overcoming Barriers to Leadership Positions***

Studies have also explored how Latina women have overcome barriers to leadership positions when working within higher education. One of the first areas discussed within this section will include mentorship experiences. Most Latina women navigating leadership positions in higher education do not have a Latina mentor. Instead, they are provided with mentors that are White or of different gender (Indira Barrón, 2020). Indira Barrón (2020) reported that many Latina women only have mentors because they are interested in their line of work or have similar hobbies, not because they want them to advance in the workforce. Therefore, many Latina women have had to build their mentor and support groups. For example, Sánchez et al. (2020) reported that many Latina leaders must work towards making themselves act Whiter in the workplace so that they are not bombarded with the experience as many barriers. However, Latina women have demonstrated resilience by finding mentors of the same ethnic background. Many women can succeed in their leadership roles by creating mentorship opportunities outside the higher education institution.



Another critical area to discuss when it comes to overcoming barriers to leadership positions is their family's role. Latina women draw considerable strength from their families, and it is imperative that the Latina culture is considered in the success of these women leaders. For example, because family is significant within Latina culture, many Latina leaders have reported that to overcome barriers, it is essential to stay true to one's cultural background and personal beliefs, continuously receive education and professional development opportunities and remember why one wanted to enter the field of higher education (Avalos & Salgado, 2016).

### **Summary**

This qualitative, narrative study explored Dominican women's journey in administrative leadership positions in higher education in the US. A secondary purpose sought to understand better their perceptions of perceived obstacles to access and succeed in postsecondary leadership positions. The purpose of this study was aligned with the problem where Dominican women are underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education (Martínez & Fernández, 2018). Dominican women navigating the educational environment often experience a struggle between beliefs imposed by the dominant culture and those of their ethnic background (Sartori, 2020). The crossing between these two worldviews was unclear, and their impacts had remained minimally studied, especially within the United States.

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the literature regarding the topic being discussed. The chapter began by providing an overview of how I searched for peer reviewed articles and other information in this review. I then highlighted the importance of utilizing the Latino Critical Perspective in this study by providing insight

on how it has guided other research studies similar to mine. The review of the literature was the next section of this chapter, where I discussed research that had previously focused on Latina women and leadership positions, Dominican women and leadership positions, how Latina and Dominican women had experienced higher education, and the barriers that these women experienced when accessing leadership positions in higher education. This review then concluded with a discussion highlighting studies focusing on how Latina or Dominican women have overcome barriers they experienced when accessing leadership positions in higher education.

The literature review provided an overview of the theoretical framework that will guide this study: the Latino critical perspective. The Latino critical perspective is similar to critical race theory. Critical race theory purports that individuals have multiple ways to self-identify; this awareness and acknowledgment of multiple identities and cultures (Gonlin, 2022). CRT believes that addressing the aspect of identity without considering multiple perspectives is futile (Aronson & Meyers, 2020). However, it is essential to use LatCrit in this study, as it focuses on Dominican women residing in the United States. Many studies have utilized the LatCrit perspective and the critical race theory. Huber (2010) reported that the Latino critical perspective and the critical race theories are aligned. However, having Latina individuals provide their perspectives allows for a more robust understanding of a particular culture concerning racism, gender, class, and experiences of nativism. Nativism is defined as policies that tend to support the dominant culture of a country versus that of immigrants or minority groups (Betz, 2019). Therefore, this theory aligns with the proposed study as I aim to examine the journey of Dominican women in administrative leadership positions in higher education in the US and

understand their perceptions of perceived obstacles to access and succeed in postsecondary leadership positions.

This review of the literature discussed the most recent literature on the themes found in the phenomenon being explored. Therefore, in this review, I discussed Latina and Dominican women in leadership positions, how they have operated within the field of higher education, and the barriers they have experienced when working in such positions. The literature review concluded with a discussion of how they have overcome experienced barriers. The exposure of women in leadership positions has grown exponentially over the past few decades. However, minority women have continued to experience many barriers in accessing such leadership positions. Latina women experience more challenges than other minority groups regarding their careers. For example, Latinas are more likely to be at an educational disadvantage than other ethnic groups (Burkham, 2019) due to a greater probability of living in poverty (Jang, 2019), lower average levels of parental education (Arbona et al., 2018), pervading changes that have affected affirmative action (Collins, 2018), and cutbacks to financial aid opportunities (Mitchell et al., 2018).

Many studies have been conducted that have focused on Latina women and higher education, especially when working in institutions of higher education. The results have concluded that leaders report that although their institution of higher education had a large Latino population, women leaders did not align with the institution's demographics. Barriers experienced by Latina women included the lack of mentorship and support and the experience of tokenism, where institutions hire small numbers of minority groups to give the appearance of equality.

Minimal studies have been conducted that have focused on Dominican women and their leadership experiences within institutions of higher education. Most studies focused on Dominican women have been completed within the Dominican Republic, not the United States. Outside of higher education, Canaán and Corcino (2015) reported that within the Dominican Republic, women are not always seen as leaders simply due to their cultural backgrounds. For example, the authors highlighted how Dominican women are "molded to be housewives, obey men, and not interfere with men's issues/matters" (Canaán & Corcino, 2015, p. 2). Additionally, women are not fully represented within the Dominican Republic when working in leadership positions within institutions of higher education (Satori, 2020). Latina and Dominican women have perceived that they experienced issues related to gender and age, meaning that they had to prove their capabilities to others constantly.

Additionally, Latina leaders have reported that leadership roles were challenging as well because of the culture of *machismo*, where men were looked at for more leadership roles than women. Satori (2020) reported that a Dominican woman's religion could also influence their chance of being promoted to a leadership position because men are perceived to have power over women from a social standpoint due to religious influences. These different influences highlight how Dominican women experience leadership in higher education, mandating future research to continue in this field.

Studies have also explored how Latina women have overcome barriers to leadership positions when working within higher education. Most Latina women navigating leadership positions in higher education do not have a Latina mentor. Instead, they are provided with mentors that are White or of different gender (Indira Barrón,

2020). Therefore, they must work to find their mentor and support group. Other ways that Latina and Dominican women can overcome barriers to success are staying true to their cultural background and personal beliefs, continuously receiving education and professional development opportunities, and remembering why they wanted to enter the field of higher education (Avalos & Salgado, 2016). The next chapter is Chapter 3, which will provide an overview of this proposed study's methodology.

## CHAPTER 3 METHOD

The concept being explored is that Dominican women navigating the educational environment in the US often experienced a struggle between beliefs imposed by the dominant culture and those of their ethnic background (Sartori, 2020). Therefore, this qualitative narrative study explored the journey of Dominican women in administrative leadership positions in higher education in the US. A secondary purpose was to understand better their perceptions of perceived obstacles to access and succeed in postsecondary leadership positions. This chapter will provide an overview of the study's method. This chapter includes a restatement of the study's research question and discussion of the study's research design and data analysis plan. It also includes a description of the target participants and the study's sample size, the methodology to be undertaken to collect data and the procedures to be carried out in analyzing the data. This chapter will then conclude with an overview of the research ethics I will follow when conducting this study.

### **Specific Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** What are the experiences of Dominican women entering into leadership positions in the higher education environment?

**RQ2:** How do Dominican women who are higher education leaders perceive racial and cultural factors creating opportunities/obstacles when being promoted into leadership positions?

## Research Design and Data Analysis

This study followed a qualitative method that utilized a narrative design. A qualitative method was selected to align with the purpose of the study, as this study explored the narrative journey of Dominican women, which can only be completed through a qualitative method (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Qualitative research aims to uncover individuals' perceptions and lived experiences regarding a phenomenon, exploring the *why* of an issue versus the *what* (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A quantitative method was considered for this study but ultimately rejected, as it did not fit with the purpose of this study. This study examined and explored the journey of Dominican women. Therefore, quantitative research was out of alignment as its purpose is to predict or understand relationships between variables via statistical, mathematical, and computational techniques (Fryer et al., 2018).

I also selected a narrative design for this study as narrative research aims to collect raw data by having participants tell their story or journey of a phenomenon (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). One of the main benefits of a narrative design included my ability to collect data that explored the meaning of human behavior and experience within a phenomenon that is constructed through a strong narrative. Another benefit of a narrative design is to also provide the participants with a strong voice that allows them to reveal their truth and experiences of a topic (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Therefore, this design aligned with the purpose of the study, as it allowed me to examine and explore the journey of Dominican women in administrative leadership positions in higher education in the US and better understand their perceptions of perceived obstacles to access and succeed in postsecondary institutions.

Data were collected by semi-structured interviews and participant journaling. These two data collection methods were most aligned with narrative designs because it allowed the researcher to conduct a qualitative content analysis. A qualitative content analysis was the best analytical approach in a narrative design, as it allowed me to focus on large bodies of text. Smith (2000) reported that content analyses allow researchers to analyze data that is verbal in nature, as narrative studies typically deal with large bodies of transcribed text.

### **Setting**

When recruiting individuals for this study, I obtained permission from a university system located in New York. The university served over 500,000 students and had a diverse leadership staff of Dominican women who spanned over five different higher education institutions. These institutions of higher education included (a) University A, (b) University B, (c) Community College A, (d) Community College B, and (e) University C. After receiving permission from the university system, I reached out to 12 to 15 Dominican women who currently worked in leadership roles. These leadership roles included directors, deans, faculty members, and the university's President. This setting was needed because it catered to a diverse leadership staff of Dominican women. Additionally, the setting was important for this study because the institution represented five different higher education institutions which provided a more diverse collection of data. This was because, although each institution was part of a university system, each higher education institution provided their own diverse subgroup of Dominican women who were currently working in leadership positions.



## Participants

The participants in this study included between 12 Dominican women who were currently working in higher education leadership positions in the United States. I followed purposive and snowball sampling methods to obtain my sample. Purposive sampling allowed me to recruit individuals following specific criteria, and snowball sampling allowed me to have individuals be referred to the study (Campbell et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2019). To participate in this study, individuals met the following criteria:

1. Each participant identified as a female.
2. Each participant identified as a Dominican.
3. Each participant was currently working in a leadership position.
4. Each participant was currently working at University A, located in New York.
5. Each participant had worked in their position for a minimum of six months.

The participants in this study all presented to their semi-structured interviews with a variety of demographic characteristics as highlighted in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographic Characteristics*

	Age	Position	Education	Experience
Adriana	45	Director	PhD	15
Sofie	50-55	Director	PhD	5.5
Dora	60-64	Chief of Staff	Masters	33
Ellie	50-55	Director	Masters	25

Eva	56	Vice President	PhD.	11
Ilene	45-50	Administrator	Masters	15
Mariana	52	Director	EdD	26
Martina	50-55	President	PhD	25
Darlene	70-75	President	PhD	50
Raquel	50-55	Director	Masters	30
Susan	55-60	Faculty	Masters	30
Carina	45-50	Faculty	PhD	30

### **Profiles of the Participants**

Adriana, served as the Black Studies Coordinator from 2019 to the present, concurrently holding the position of Humanities Chairperson for the academic year 2022-2023. With a comprehensive background in higher education spanning 14 years, they worked as a full-time professor at Indian River State College and Hostos Community College. She also contributed as a Teaching Assistant and Graduate Student at Syracuse University for two years and Buffalo University for five years. Growing up as one of five siblings, her childhood was marked by the loss of two siblings, an experience that profoundly influenced their perspective on resilience and the significance of creating opportunities for others. At the age of 45, Adrianna drew strength from her Dominican heritage. She lived with their fiancé and three-year-old son, remaining steadfast in her commitment to building a legacy of excellence and inclusivity in her professional and personal lives.

Sofie served as the Research Programs Director (Higher Education Officer) for 5.5 years. Living independently and single after an extended divorce, Sofie embraced and

appreciated the freedom that allowed her to pursue her career. Her 21-year-old son has embarked on his journey, and her mother resides in a nursing home. In this phase of life, Sofie reported finding solace and self-discovery, experiencing a unique opportunity for personal growth and empowerment that proved fulfilling.

Dora, aged 60-64, with a master's degree, devoted 33 years to Higher Education as the Chancellor's Chief of Staff. Remaining single without children provided flexibility for both professional and family commitments. Despite not having children, she actively supports and guides her nieces and nephews. Additionally, caring for her elderly parents, aged 92 and 88, presents distinctive challenges and rewards. Balancing personal and professional demands marks a noteworthy aspect of Dora's journey.

Ellie, aged 55-50, holds a master's degree and has over 25 years of experience in Higher Education, serving as the Cancer Research Board Director. Her journey reflects cultural strength and resilience, marked by professional achievements and personal triumphs over cancer battles. With three accomplished daughters, ongoing family support from her husband, and the responsibility of raising her late brother's son, pursuing pre-med studies in New York, Ellie's life is enriched. The companionship of their faithful dog adds to the fulfilling dimensions of her journey.

Eva, aged 56 with a Ph.D., serves as the Vice President of Higher Ed with over 11 years of direct experience and a lifelong connection to the field. Balancing her role as a wife and mother to four children, aged 30, 27, 24, and 17, adds a distinctive mix of professional achievement and personal fulfillment. Collaborating with her supportive husband, they foster a dynamic household where the values of education and leadership are emphasized in Eva's career and instilled in the upbringing of their four children.

Ilene, aged 40-50 and holding a master's degree, served as a Development Officer with 15 or more years of experience in Higher Education. Successfully raising two grown children independently, each forging their careers, Ilene takes pride in education's role in shaping her paths. As she continues to contribute to the field, the accomplishments of her children stand as a testament to the values instilled in her family and the enduring impact of education across generations.

Mariana, aged 52 with an EdD, serves as the Director of College Discovery with 26 years of experience in Higher Education. As a Dominican woman in a leadership role, her journey is marked by a dedication to professional excellence and familial responsibilities. Balancing the intricate roles of guiding her 13-year-old son through adolescence and providing care for her 90-year-old father underscores the intersectionality of Mariana's responsibilities. Embracing her Dominican heritage, she draws strength from the rich cultural tapestry that informs her leadership style in academia and the nurturing of her family.

Martina, aged 50-55 with a Ph.D., currently holds the position of President, bringing over 25 years of experience in Higher Education. Growing up in New York City as the daughter of Dominican immigrants who did not complete grade school, Martina carries a profound and personal understanding of education's transformative power and significance. Her journey is a testament to the potential for education to break generational cycles and empower individuals to create positive change in their lives and communities.

Darlene, aged 70-75 with a PhD, currently holds the position of President with over 50 years of experience in Higher Education. Married for over 55 years, her enduring

partnership has been a source of support and inspiration throughout her extensive professional journey. Raising three sons adds a familial dimension to Darlene's leadership journey, emphasizing the significance of education and community engagement in shaping the next generation's lives.

Raquel, aged 50-55 with a master's degree, currently serves as the Director of Finance with over 30 years of experience in Higher Education. As a Dominican woman in a leadership role, her journey is deeply rooted in the proud tapestry of her cultural heritage. Celebrating 18 years of marriage to her husband, Rey, Raquel's blended family, including one son and three daughters aged between 30 and 36, stands as a testament to the strength of familial bonds. Together, they cherish their four beautiful grandchildren, a lively group of boys aged 7 to 1, whose laughter and joy bring immeasurable richness to their lives.

Susan, aged 55-60 with a master's degree, holds the Faculty in Library Sciences position with over 30 years of experience in Higher Education. As a Dominican immigrant woman and the sole faculty librarian, her journey in Higher Education is a testament to the pursuit of knowledge and the resilience of immigrant communities. Balancing the responsibilities of a career, a marriage spanning numerous years, and caring for her 89-year-old mother underscores the intricate tapestry of Susan's life. With one son at 16, her roles as a professional, mother, and caretaker intersect, creating a rich and dynamic narrative of familial and academic dedication.

Carina, aged 45-50 and holding a PhD, is a faculty member in the Social Sciences, bringing over 30 years of experience to Higher Education. Embracing her identity as a Dominican woman, Carina skillfully balances her professional commitment and roles as a

wife and mother. Her two children, a 21-year-old daughter in her fourth year of college and an 18-year-old son about to graduate high school, infuse Carina's life with dynamic complexity. Adding to the richness, their household warmly welcomes her mother-in-law every other week, creating a supportive and intergenerational environment that echoes the importance of family in both Carina's personal and professional journey.

### **Data Collection Methods**

To collect data for this study, I did so via semi-structured interviews and journaling. These two data collection methods supported the narrative approach that I was using within this study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

#### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

The first data collection method that I used included semi-structured interviews. Semistructured interviews allowed me to ask the participants a series of open-ended questions, which they answered in any manner that they saw fit (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Each participant was asked 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix C). I developed each semi-structured interview question and ensured that they aligned with the study's problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology (Yeong et al., 2018). Because I was following a qualitative study, researcher bias could have occurred and had to be addressed throughout the study. Researcher bias is a phenomenon when a researcher injects their thoughts, values, and opinions into a study, possibly affecting the results (Wadams & Park, 2018).

Therefore, to limit researcher bias in this study, I employed the assistance of a panel of experts. The panel of experts included three individuals who had similar professional and educational experiences as myself. These three individuals reviewed the

initial 10 open-ended questions and provided me with feedback on the alignment with the study's problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology. Any feedback that I received from the panel members would have allowed me to realign the semi-structured interview questions while reducing any instances of researcher bias (Yeong et al., 2018). It is important to note that none of the panel members found any misalignment between the semi-structured research questions and the study's problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology. Each participant was asked the same 10 open-ended questions, and each semistructured interview occurred via Webex video conferencing. Webex aligned with the social distancing measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Webex allowed me to record each interview so that the data could be transcribed in preparation for data analysis. When conducting the semi-structured interviews, I included two or more interview points for each participant.

### ***Journaling***

The second data collection method that I used was journaling. Journaling was used by the participants. To collect data via journaling with the participants, I provided them with one open-ended question that encouraged them to journal about their perceptions and lived experiences throughout their careers when it came to different racial and cultural factors. The participants were required to write a minimum of one page when responding to the open-ended question. Before sending the single open-ended question to the participants, I had the same panel of experts review the question to ensure that it was in alignment with my study. The benefit of having participants provide a response in the form of a journal is that it allowed them quietly to reflect on the issues at

hand and spend time to provide me with quality and rich data (Fritz & Vandermause, 2018).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is defined as the confidence in the level of quality that a research study contains (Kynge et al., 2020). In this study, I maintained trustworthiness in many ways. The first way that trustworthiness was maintained was through the employment of a panel of experts, who reviewed the semi-structured interview questions to ensure alignment and reduce instances of researcher bias. Another way that trustworthiness was maintained was through member checking. Member checking occurred when I had the participants of the study review their interview transcripts to ensure that they reflected exactly what they said. A final demonstration of trustworthiness in this study was that I provided specific steps that could be replicated for future studies, where researchers can explore the same phenomenon with other populations and geographical regions. This was because the results of this study may not be necessarily generalized to other contexts.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed the data following a qualitative content analysis. A qualitative content analysis was the most appropriate analytical technique for this study, as Smith (2000) reported that content analyses allow researchers to analyze data that is verbal in nature, as narrative studies typically deal with large bodies of transcribed text. When completing data analysis, I followed a qualitative content analysis for each of the data collection methods. Additionally, I ensured that the research questions were in alignment with the study's theoretical framework: Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) as depicted in Table 2 below.



**Table 2**

*Research Questions and Alignment*

---

Research Question	Alignment to LatCrit
RQ1: What are the experiences of Dominican women entering into leadership positions in the higher education environment?	Critical race theory purports that individuals have multiple ways to self-identify; this awareness and acknowledgment of multiple identities and cultures (Gonlin, 2022).
RQ2: What opportunities and barriers do Dominican women experience within administrative leadership positions?	LatCrit is more specific to Latinx individuals residing in the United States, as it attempts to address racial and minority barriers Dominican women may have faced, particularly those that lead to underrepresentation, oppression, and discrimination (Shelton, 2018).
RQ3: How, if at all, do Dominican women perceive racial and cultural factors in accessing and participating in higher education leadership positions?	Having Latina individuals provide their perspectives allows for a more robust understanding of a particular culture concerning racism, gender, class, and experiences of nativism. Nativism is defined as policies that tend to support the dominant culture of a country, versus that of immigrants or minority groups (Betz, 2019).

---

***Semi-Structured Interviews***

When completing the analysis on the semi-structured interviews, I followed a qualitative content analysis. Before beginning the coding process, I ensured that each of the participants' interviews were transcribed appropriately and reflected exactly what each participant said. A content analysis allowed me to interpret qualitative data via coding. Coding was a process where I identified the participants' commonly used words,

phrases, and ideas (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). While coding, I continuously identified words, phrases, and ideas and continued the process until they were developed into thematic categories. Identified themes acted as the findings of this study. When completing the data analysis, I used the assistance of NVivo Pro and a qualitative codebook. NVivo Pro is a qualitative data management system used at most research universities and assists in coding. Additionally, a qualitative codebook allows me to identify the thematic categories from the data while highlighting the participants who contributed to each finding.

### ***Participant Journaling***

When completing the analysis for the participants' journal reflections, I also used a qualitative content analysis. Like the semi-structured interviews, I identified the participants' commonly used words, phrases, and ideas (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). While coding, I continuously identified words, phrases, and ideas and continued the process until they were developed into thematic categories. Identified themes of the participant journals acted as the findings of this study. When completing the data analysis on the participants' journaling, I also used the assistance of NVivo Pro and a qualitative codebook.

### **Research Ethics**

Research ethics were followed in this study. The first ethical consideration that was followed included receiving permission to conduct this study from both my university's IRB and the research site. I did not begin this study or contact participants until such permissions had been received. Another consideration of ethics included the protection of the participants. I had each participant sign an informed consent form that

highlighted the purpose of the study, what was expected of them, how they could remove themselves from the study at any time and without any repercussions, how confidentiality would be maintained, and the level of risk associated with participation. Individuals were not allowed to participate until they had signed the informed consent.

Confidentiality was another significant ethical concern in this study, and I worked to protect the confidentiality of all participants. To do this, I reported minimal identifying information on the participants or the place of their employment. For example, I referred to all participants using pseudonyms, and I will refer to their place of employment alphabetically (e.g., Community College A, University B, etc.). I stored all paper documents in a locked filing cabinet inside my residence and all electronic files on a password-protected flash drive. I was the only individual who had immediate access to the information. After three years, I will delete all information and data aligned with my university's IRB policies and procedures.

### **Researcher's Role**

There are different roles that I followed when conducting this research. The first role was that I worked to protect the participants of this study. Because this study used human participants, it was imperative that I ensured that they were always protected. I worked to protect the participants of this study by maintaining confidentiality, ensuring that they understood their rights, and could remove themselves from the study at any time. If any participants, at any time, had any questions regarding the study, I provided them with my contact information so that they could reach out to me immediately.

Another role that I played in this study was that I acted as an instrument of data collection. Because I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant, it was

important that I followed an interview protocol, asking the same open-ended questions in the same manner to each of the participants. I was also able to ask the participants follow-up questions, to increase my understanding of their answers or to encourage them to expand on the information that they have provided to the questions. It was imperative that I decreased instances of researcher bias in this study. Researcher bias could have occurred when I injected my personal thoughts, feelings, and opinions into the study, which could have affected the results. In this study, I have guarded against researcher bias by employing a panel of experts to review the questions that I asked each participant, as well as having the participants review their transcripts to ensure that they were accurate.

## **Conclusion**

This qualitative narrative study examined the journey of Dominican women in administrative leadership positions in higher education in the US. A secondary purpose was to understand better their perceptions of perceived obstacles to access and succeed in postsecondary leadership positions. This chapter provided an overview of the study's method. This chapter included a restatement of the study's research questions and discussion of the study's research design and data analysis plan. It also included a description of the target participants and the study's sample size, the methodology to be undertaken to collect data and the procedures to be carried out in analyzing the data. This chapter then concluded with an overview of the research ethics I will follow when conducting this study, as well as my positionality as the researcher. The next chapter is that of Chapter 4 that will report this study's results.

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The problem being studied was the underrepresentation of Dominican women in leadership positions within higher education institutions in the United States (Martínez & Fernández, 2018). To address this issue, a qualitative narrative study was conducted to explore the journey undertaken by Dominican women as they strove to attain administrative leadership roles in these institutions. The study also investigated their experiences and perceptions of accessing and obtaining postsecondary leadership positions. It is important to note that Dominican women navigating the educational environment often face a challenge reconciling the beliefs imposed by the dominant culture with those rooted in their ethnic background (Sartori, 2020). However, the impact of this intersection of worldviews has received limited research attention, particularly within the context of the United States. The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** What are the experiences of Dominican women entering into leadership positions in the higher education environment?

**RQ2:** How do Dominican women who are higher education leaders perceive racial and cultural factors creating opportunities/obstacles when being promoted into leadership positions?

This chapter will present the study's findings. The chapter will begin with the restatement of the data collection procedures and the demographic composition of the participants. Then, I will provide an overview of how the data were analyzed, followed by the findings. When reporting this study's findings, I will discuss each theme of the findings and provide direct participant quotations supporting each thematic category.

## Data Analysis Process

When completing data analysis, I followed a qualitative content analysis for each of the data collection methods. Before beginning the coding process, I ensured that each of the participants' interviews were transcribed appropriately and reflected exactly what each participant said. A content analysis allowed me to interpret qualitative data via coding. Coding was a process where I identified the participants' commonly used words, phrases, and ideas (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). While coding, I continuously identified words, phrases, and ideas and continued the process until they were developed into thematic categories. Table 3 below highlights the initial codes that represented this process. These codes were derived via inductive coding, which is where I highlighted commonly used words, phrases, and ideas without any preconceived notion (Chandra et al., 2019).

**Table 3**

*Initial Codes*

---

Advocate	Family comes first	Manager
Charismatic	Family responsibilities	Mentors
Commitment	Family-oriented	Mentorship
Community service	Focus on the family	More listening
Cultural attributes	Foundation	More mentoring
Cultural capital	Get paid	Multi-task
Culture	Hardworking	Network
Dedication	Inspiration	Powerful positions
Develop our network	Labor	Share our experiences
Dominican women	Lack of experience	Social capital
Encouragement	Leadership roles	Supervisor
Exposure	Less-value	
Exposure	Lower salaries	
Family	Management	

---

After identifying the initial codes, I then began to break them down into thematic categories, as depicted in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Initial Grouping of Thematic Categories*

Codes	Frequency	Initial Thematic Category
Mentors	32	Mentoring and Representation
Mentorship	32	
Dominican women	30	
Network	22	
Exposure	19	
Supervisor	15	
Representation	12	
Develop our network	10	
Share our experiences	10	
Powerful positions	8	
More mentoring	8	
More listening	5	
Leadership roles	10	Exposure and Inspiration
Providing mentorship	10	
Advocate	9	
Foundation	8	
Encouragement	7	
Exposure	6	
Inspiration	6	
Management	4	
Dedication	7	Cultural Attributes
Culture	6	
Commitment	6	
Cultural capital	5	
Cultural attributes	4	
Social capital	4	
Charismatic	3	
Hardworking	3	
Multi-task	3	

Family	10	Family
Family responsibilities	8	
Family-oriented	7	
Family comes first	6	
Focus on the family	5	
<hr/>		
Labor	5	Low Salaries
Less-value	5	
Get paid	4	
Lower salaries	4	
Lack of experience	3	
Community service	3	

Identified themes acted as the findings of this study. However, after I had initially placed them into thematic categories, I continued to review the interview transcripts and reflections to determine definitions of the codes in relation to the participants' direct quotations. This can be seen in Table 5 below.

**Table 5**

*Final Themes*

<b>Initial Thematic Category</b>	<b>Definition of Code</b>	<b>Final Theme</b>
Mentoring and Representation	“I'm not here to be coddled at all. But there must be more mentoring and more listening to the up and coming so that you can incentivize and motivate. It is really hard to do when part of the requirement is to get yourself a higher degree.” (Eva)	<b><i>The importance of mentorship and representation</i></b>



Cultural Attributes

“I think we are so hardworking that we can multitask. You know, could be doing the laundry, doing your homework, watching something on TV for your school. At the same time, you're taking care of an elderly parent or whatever. We can multitask. So that has been something that has been helpful.” (Dora)

*The gift of positive cultural attributes*

Family

“I think that overall, a Dominican woman has a almost instinctual, like domestic preoccupation or so just having that familial and also that domestic orientation is really important for a Dominican woman. I would say probably any, most Latinx individuals or individuals with Latinx background, where it's just having responsibilities beyond the realm of work where I have. And then it also, when you have family in the city where you work, I think that that's also a challenge.” (Adriana)

*Family responsibilities*

Low Salaries

“And so, I think that my opportunities are limited and that my labor is expected to be of less value or free. And I refuse to do that not just for myself, but for the women that come behind me and my three daughters.” (Ellie)

*Lower salaries*

As highlighted in Table 5 above, five themes acted as the findings: (a) the importance of mentorship and representation, (b) exposure and inspiration as a foundation, (c) the gift of positive cultural attributes; (d) family responsibilities; and (e) lower salaries. The next section will discuss each theme and highlight direct participant quotations.

## **Findings**

Within this study, five themes were included in the findings: (a) the importance of mentorship and representation, (b) exposure and inspiration as a foundation, (c) the gift of positive cultural attributes; (d) family responsibilities; and (e) lower salaries. This section will discuss each theme and how the participants contributed by their direct experiences and perceptions under each of the research questions.

### ***Theme 1: The Importance of Mentorship and Representation***

The first theme highlighted how the participants perceived mentorship and representation of their culture, race, and ethnic background as being important. For example, Sofie discussed how she had a mentor that helped her enter higher education to become a leader. Sofie discussed how her mentor was able to guide her to complete specific continuing education classes to provide herself with additional exposure to the field. Sofie stated:

I had really an amazing supervisor who we're still friends today that really taught me how to manage up. She was such an amazing supervisor and manager, and she always encouraged me to get training in different things because she always says, Cindy, you never know where you might need this. You never know. You never

know. And so, I would do continuing education classes and different things just to give myself exposure.

And then I sought out intentional mentors. That isn't something that I grew up with. This was after being in the career already that I sought out people to support me. It wasn't until, let's say 2018, so I, I had just turned 40, I guess, and I had just met my first Latina mentor in higher education that we connected and vibe, and she supported my dissertation work and supported all the things that I'm doing.

(Sofia)

In addition, Dora discussed how there was a lack of mentorship available because it coincided with a lack of Dominican leaders. Dora was able to report:

No, not enough. Not enough. But we have so many Dominicans nationwide and we don't have enough Dominican women in powerful positions. I know female Dominican presidents; you may have maybe five or six in the whole nation. And some of them I think I've noticed that have left higher education to go into the business sector or go into consulting. (Dora)

Dora was able to continue to discuss the importance of mentoring and networking within the field of higher education for Dominican women. Dora stated:

I think we need to develop our network. I think a lot of other ethnic groups have their identities have that they're networking projects or events. I think we need to have more networking events. Let's say with Dominicans here at [university name], we can identify, let's say we may have 25, do many kinds of leadership positions. We should have some kind of a platform where we can share our

experiences and knowledge with the next generation. Coming up and do some social events, I think is an easy way to get started.

(Dora)

Ellie also discussed the importance of representation and the power that can be experienced when walking into a room and seeing a Dominican woman working in a leadership position, especially in higher education. Ellie reported:

I think that's where representation comes in. When you walk in a room, there's always a look of shock. I've never had a Dominican, I've never had a Dominican faculty member ever. But I, I think I met a nurse practitioner that was functioning as a primary care physician and I was like, holy, holy, wait a minute. I was like, you look, you could be Dominican. She was like, I am. And I was like, yes. Or even when there's the Juno Diaz or whoever, when you start to think of how important that was to see that actual person, it's just so, it shouldn't be so alien because all the people in our world look like us or in our families. (Ellie)

Eva also appeared to agree with the other participants, as she reported that without mentorship opportunities it could be difficult to succeed, especially when organizations are asking for high qualifications. Eva stated:

I'm not here to be coddled at all. But there must be more mentoring and more listening to the up and coming so that you can incentivize and motivate. It is really hard to do when part of the requirement is to get yourself a higher degree.

(Eva)

Ilene was able to reflect how stronger mentorship and representation opportunities would have benefited her, as she reported that oftentimes she would feel like an imposter;

having stronger support could have made her experiences smoother and more comfortable:

So, in my case, even though I would say lucky to find people that saw a talent on me, it was also very hard for me to basically the imposter syndrome and to prove myself and to prove others, especially when you have an accent, when English is your second language. I found myself in positions where I was trying to explain something and the people that were in the room that didn't know me, that sometimes people think that you're not smart just because you cannot stress yourself. So that's one of the biggest challenges; I never had any mentorship opportunities. So basically, I was my own motivation. (Ilene) Mariana was also able to report that due to her experience with a lack of mentorship, she oftentimes found herself giving back to the community and providing for others what was not necessarily provided for her. Mariana discussed:

Always help another person along the way. Help another woman give, were good advice. Tell her how to get to the next step, right? Because when we help each other, then you're going to see more women in leadership groom one another. You have a higher position and you that this somebody's mentor, right? Because usually that's another thing that is lacking, right? Mentorship. But I cannot ask you to be mentor. That's another thing we don't advocate. So, knowing that if you are in a higher position, just become somebody's mentor without people asking you just say, Hey Kelba, do you have aspiration to become something else? Because if you do, let me advise you what you should be doing. Unsolicited advice, give unsolicited advice when it comes to change. Give unsolicited advice

for anything else but unsolicited advice on how to make your life better. How to get to the next level. Give it generously. (Mariana)

In contrast, Martina was able to provide an example of the benefits of having strong mentorship within their career:

Eventually my journey, you know, to a doctoral program was really full of mentors besides my family, who really took that belief in me and that encouragement, that build on the foundation that they gave me. And so, my journey, uh, comes from that. (Martina) Finally, Carina discussed how she had never experienced a mentorship opportunity in her professional career; however, she did report that she would oftentimes look up to her supervisors or managers. The participant reported that it is not the same as seeing a Dominican woman in the role, which would have been more resourceful and powerful:

I think that providing mentorship is important, particularly for women. I can't say that I have ever had a mentor in my professional development, although I've always looked up to my supervisors and I guess in some way received some informal mentoring as they helped guide me as I did my work. But I think mentorship is very important and seeing other Dominican women in these roles, but providing a support where women can come together and share the challenges that they're facing in their work. And even applying for specific leadership roles, encouraging one another to believe in themselves, to be able to apply for leadership roles. So by providing opportunities for mentorship and encouragement and networking and role modeling is very important. And providing those opportunities within the workplace so that Dominican women can

see we are all here and we can support each other and encourage one another to take that next step in our career path. (Carina)

This theme revolved around mentorship and representation within higher education for individuals of Dominican descent. Participants expressed the crucial role of mentorship, with one participant discussing how it guided them into higher education. Several participants highlighted the scarcity of Dominican leaders in the field and advocated for more robust networking and mentoring initiatives, while others emphasized the power of representation, underscoring the impact of seeing Dominican women in leadership roles. The participants also highlighted the difficulties they faced, including imposter syndrome and the absence of mentorship opportunities, and shared the importance of women supporting each other through advice and encouragement. The participants emphasized the need for mentorship, networking, and representation to empower Dominican women in higher education.

### ***Theme 2: Exposure and Inspiration as a Foundation***

The second theme that was included in the findings highlighted how the participants perceived that previous exposure to different roles and other life circumstances acted as inspiration and a foundation to their careers in higher education. For example, Adriana discussed how she had always worked for a woman, which acted as a source of inspiration; Adriana stated that she was inspired by what she had accomplished and the path that she had travelled. Adriana discussed:

Almost every position that I've had, I've worked for an executive director who was in a leadership role, a woman, sometimes they were a woman of color, sometimes they were a white woman, but it was always a woman. And I was always inspired by

what they had accomplished, whether, for example, I worked for the executive director of Global kids, and she actually founded that organization. She developed it in her mid-fifties, and she developed this organization and working with her as director of development, I just was really impressed by what she had accomplished and how she was able to just start a nonprofit and run it and be able to impact so many young people. And they were all minority students that we were serving across different high schools in New York City and engaged them in learning about global issues because that was her passion. (Ana) Similarly, Sofie discussed her journey into higher education and how exposure had acted as inspiration and foundation to where she is currently working:

So, when I did my master's, it was a one-year advanced standing program. And so while I was there, I had such a great experience of doing management internships and then decided that I wanted to do a fellowship program that it was called the Center for Women and Government and Public Policy because I wanted to then understand policy and government because I wasn't sure if that was the avenue that I wanted to take, but I'm the type of person that I like to get exposed to different things for the experience to see if that's something that I would want to do. Right. (Sofie)

Dora also reported that exposure led her to her current role; however, not through her undergraduate degree. Dora reported:

I wasn't super passionate about my degree in my undergraduate degree, although I was proud of myself. It was more because I was a Columbia employee and I wanted to be able to tap into those benefits and wanted to have, I was mentored by a Columbia student when I was like, I don't know, 10 or nine or I don't know how old I was but wanted to get



a degree from Columbia. And so, I did it. And then two years later, I had applied many years in the past for, I think it was for the school of general studies at Columbia. Didn't get in and then tried again after I had my bachelor's degree and had a ton of experience. This was a degree in health education. And at the time I was teaching, leading a facilitating and founded a wellness program, bilingual free wellness program. (Dora) Eva reported that her working exposure right out of college acted as her foundation and inspiration to her current path in higher education leadership. Eva discussed:

I owe my leadership to having work as a young woman straight out of college at a nonprofit called the Valley. They're no longer around and John Best is no longer around, but he was the executive director. And at 2022 I was put in leadership positions. I was entrusted to run summer youth programs. I was entrusted to run dropout prevention programs. So, my training was sort of here you're in charge. And he took us around the nation talking to people about what we were doing and thus we were a leader in our own.

So, I owe that foundation. (Eva)

Mariana also reported that her love for learning acted as a strong foundation and inspiration for her current role as a higher education leader:

[company names] offered me a lot of opportunities to learn to prepare from lawyers about representing students during fair hearing in 60 Center Street. I was always there advocating, learning, growing. She actually saw that, and I was doing it because I love learning. (Mariana)

Finally, Martina reflected on how her mentors guided her to different experiences and pathways that acted as a strong foundation to her career in higher education:

I really paid attention, uh, to my mentors with regard to, you know, the opportunities both that they provided, but also the guidance, um, that, uh, they provided to help me, uh, improve and to grow. Uh, and then also, uh, to put myself, you know, out there and push myself to take on some, some challenges that, you know, maybe I didn't think I was prepared [00:11:00] for. And then surprised myself that in fact I was mm-hmm.

<affirmative>. (Martina)

The second theme underscores how exposure to diverse experiences and sources of inspiration has served as the foundation for participants' careers in higher education. The participants reported that they draw motivation from working with women in leadership roles, exploring different avenues, benefiting from mentorship, and valuing early work experiences, all contributing to their journeys in higher education. These experiences shaped their perspectives and provided the impetus for their leadership roles in higher education.

### ***Theme 3: The Gift of Positive Cultural Attributes***

The third theme that was included in the findings highlighted how the participants perceived that Dominican cultural attributes could act as an opportunity when being promoted into leadership positions. For example, Ana discussed how Dominicans tend to be charismatic and outgoing, which can create many opportunities when working in leadership positions:

I think Dominican women are, they tend to be outgoing, charismatic, very personable. And that's part very giving and have an attention to details and

attention to also creating a sense of warmth and connectiveness with others. So that's really an asset. All those things are assets. (Adriana)

Sofie reported that with other racial movements happening in the country, the attributes of Dominican culture can help bring more insight, awareness, and contributions to women working in leadership roles. Sofie stated:

Our culture is complicated. When you think about [inaudible] and the crazy anti-black stuff that was going on. When you think about the stuff that was happening in regards to the African religious traditions and how those were being sort of knocked down, I feel like we're at a moment in time where I feel like more and more I'm seeing more Dominican women, especially embracing the Afro-Latina lot, embracing all the complexities of our culture, the nurturing, the support, but also the politics and the leadership. I feel like we have a lot of that and there's an opportunity for us to harness that at this moment. (Sofie)

Similarly, Dora also discussed attributes of Dominican culture that can create

opportunities: I think we are so hardworking that we can multitask. You know, could be doing the laundry, doing your homework, watching something on TV for your school. At the same time, you're taking care of an elderly parent or whatever. We can multitask. So that has been something that has been helpful. (Dora)

Eva also reported that the many cultural attributes have been passed down from generation to generation, acting as opportunities, especially for women working or aspiring to work in leadership positions. Eva stated:

We do have a cultural perspective that is an asset. And I do think that our views are different because they are shaped not just by the culture, but also by the generational handoff of the culture, if you will, that get passed on. So, we have all these different perspectives. And then some of us have been, we might have been born here, but I still traveled over there. So, I have passed on a lot of things to my children. We still travel a lot back to our homeland or wherever they come from, their descendancy. So, we pass on, we enrich in a way that is beyond diversity. I mean, it's the diaspora that we're talking about and that's what we bring to the table. The diaspora comes with us. So, it's not that simple. And while it's more complicated and it can be even more complicated, but it's still rich. It's still very rich. Right. (Eva)

Martina agreed with Eva and further discussed how her cultural reality acted as an opportunity: I think that our social capital and our cultural capital is a, is a foundation for us to be able, uh, now to be assets to our institutions because we can give, uh, perspectives and we could give, um, ideas about how to make our work, uh, be as fulsome as possible, and also to share with colleagues sometimes, you know, what is it that Latinx students experience here? You know, so that, that's part of the cultural reality. (Martina) Finally, Carina reported that commitment, passion, and dedication to her work are cultural attributes of Dominican women that aided her in being successful in leadership roles:

I think I would say we bring definitely a lot of commitment and dedication to the work. And I say that just from my experience working here and from just working in other nonprofit organizations, there's definite, we bring that passion for helping

people, for helping people to meet their needs. We bring love. I think that's very important. And it's something that perhaps in higher education or workplace setting is not considered as an important factor. But I think being able to love people genuinely and authentically will help people connect with you. (Carina)

In summary, the third theme focused on the positive cultural attributes of Dominican women, which participants perceived as opportunities when pursuing leadership positions in higher education. They emphasized attributes such as being outgoing, charismatic, hardworking, and able to multitask as valuable assets. Additionally, participants believed that embracing the complexity of Dominican culture, including Afro-Latinx heritage, could provide insights and awareness to contribute to leadership roles. They highlighted the richness and diversity of the Dominican diaspora, with cultural capital that enriches perspectives in educational institutions. Furthermore, commitment, dedication, passion, and genuine care for people were cultural strengths that contributed to success in leadership positions. These attributes were viewed positively and as beneficial assets for Dominican women aspiring to leadership roles in higher education.

#### ***Theme 4: Family Responsibilities***

The fourth theme that was included in the findings highlighted how the participants perceived family responsibilities at times, as creating an obstacle in being promoted into leadership positions. For example, Ana was able to discuss how this can be seen as a cultural issue, as family is an important component of life. Adriana stated:

I think that overall, a Dominican woman has an almost instinctual, like domestic preoccupation or so just having that familial and also that domestic orientation is

really important for a Dominican woman. I would say probably any, most Latinx individuals or individuals with Latinx background, where it's just having responsibilities beyond the realm of work where I have. And then it also, when you have family in the city where you work, I think that that's also a challenge.

(Adriana)

Dora appeared to agree with Adriana as she were also able to report the cultural aspect of the importance of family:

We are so family oriented, and I think it's the right thing. Family comes first. Your job comes second. But sometimes family takes, it makes you wonder is should I focus more on my family, or should I focus on my career? So, it's like a challenge. You always challenging yourself and always like, I'm not good enough. It's like I must keep working harder and harder because you want to be a good mother, good parent, but at the same time. (Dora)

In contrast, Ilene was able to provide a specific example in her life where family responsibilities created a challenge to be promoted into a leadership position. Ilene stated:

When I was going to get my first promotion in career services, I remember that my former boss, she was like, oh, we're going to open this position and I want you to apply it. Basically, it's for you. But my father got sick with cancer, so I remember that I told her I cannot take it because I don't know when I'm going to, most likely I'm going to have to go back to Dominican Republic and I have to take care of my father. I was like, you always feel guilty. It's like you feel guilty to be successful, especially have to neglect someone in your family. When the president offered me the opportunity to go for a full scholarship and to a medical

school, I was like, my babies, what am I going to do with my babies? I can't do that. Same thing when the, my career services asked me and I say, no, no, I cannot take it because most likely I'm going to have to leave. My father's very sick. But thankfully she said, I will wait for you. So, she was like, take your time, go do what you need to do, and when you come back, we're going to do the interviews. So sometimes, you know, find people in your life that are very opportunities, they cannot wait. So, I think that's one of the challenges. (Ilene)

Finally, Carina also agreed with the other participants that family could play a role as a cultural barrier in being promoted into a higher education leadership position. Carina reflected: Challenges in terms of, I think one being a woman and the stereotype that women will not be as committed because they have a focus on their family. And in our Dominican culture, being there for our family. And if you're not there for your family, then you are not considered a good woman, a good mother. And so, I know for myself that being committed to your family and meeting the needs of your family is of primary concern. And so that can be a challenge because others may be, oh, this person might take time off to either deal with their children or with their parents or other family members. And they will be fully committed to this role. (Carina)

The fourth theme highlighted the perception that family responsibilities can sometimes hinder career advancement into leadership positions. Participants discussed the cultural importance of family and domestic roles, with some expressing the challenge of balancing family and career ambitions. One participant shared a personal experience where family responsibilities impacted her career decisions. Overall, the theme

underscores the cultural and personal considerations that Dominican women face regarding family responsibilities and career advancement in higher education.

***Theme 5: Lower Salaries***

The fifth theme that was included in the findings was that the participants perceived that they were paid lower salaries than their counterparts, describing that they felt less worth. For example, Sofie discussed that she had to take a pay cut to take a leadership role as she was the first Dominican women:

I was the first Latina ever to take that role. And they started me on a contract where it was unheard of. No one else had this experience, but because I knew who I was and whose I was, and I knew that I was on journey, I was like, okay, I'm going to take this job, but I'm going to be full-time in a minute because this is ridiculous. So, I went from working full-time as a school social worker. I took a pay cut going into that job. Then they had me working four days a week to do the job. (Sofie)

Similarly, Dora discussed how, alongside lower wages, Dominican women may also struggle to reach tenure in their positions, as well as having to work harder to demonstrate their worth. Dora stated:

I don't have any experience as a faculty member, but from what I saw from the outside looking in, I know of Dominican faculty who were going for tenure on promotion. I think from what I was able to observe that they had to prove themselves twice as much. It was never enough articles written. It was never enough. The research, because a lot of times we know that to get the faculty to get full professorship or whatever, they must do the research, the teaching and the



service. And I think a lot of Latino and Latinas and especially Dominican women, we tend to do more community service. Do service. And then perhaps the research part that is weighed a lot more when you go for tenure. I think it suffers because we don't know when to say, no, I would love to do this, but I, I think it's easier for men or to just say no. But I, I've experienced that. It's hard for me to say no because I would say, yeah, I could do this, I could do this. And you keep adding more and more and then there comes a time when it's like enough already.

(Dora)

Ellie also agreed with the other participants as she discussed how she was perceived being worth less in terms of salary compared to her counterparts:

And so, I think that my opportunities are limited and that my labor is expected to be of less value or free. And I refuse to do that not just for myself, but for the women that come behind me and my three daughters. (Ellie)

In contrast, Ilene was able to specifically discuss the pay gap that she had experienced: Well, that especially we get paid, I think it's 69%. So, I don't want to, don't know how much I can say, but no, and again, it's not a perception, it's a fact. And I see it all the time, even in this institution, I mean, lament, if they have, let's say that it's a line that the salary is practice for 95 to 1 25. If it's a woman, they're going to go to the lower. (Ilene) Finally, Mariana also discussed salaries and how many higher education institutions have created a culture that does not promote transparency, especially when discussing salaries:

They have taught us to not discuss salary. Right? Don't talk about salary. It's like politics and religion. Talk salary about, and finally they have the transparency act that now they have to show on the salary range. Finally, that's an improvement,

right? Because oftentimes you will apply to a position, you will go to a second interview and there was nothing, you don't even know what salary you were going to. And that's when they were local people because depending on your color, they could say, I know this position, I really had it for 90, but she's Dominican, right? She's a woman in Dominican. Let's have it for 60, right? But if you give me a range now, guess what? You're going to have to keep that range. So, the transparency act was the best thing that I feel that we have done, especially for women. I mean it's good for everybody, but especially also, let's talk about salary, right? (Mariana)

In summary, the fifth theme revealed participants' perceptions of being paid lower salaries compared to their peers, leading to feelings of undervaluation. The participants also shared instances of pay cuts, the struggle for tenure, and the gender pay gap. Some participants also discussed the lack of transparency in salary discussions within higher education institutions, advocating for change and equal pay for women.

### **Summary**

The problem being studied was the underrepresentation of Dominican women in leadership positions within higher education institutions in the United States (Martínez & Fernández, 2018). To address this issue, a qualitative narrative study was conducted to explore the journey undertaken by Dominican women as they strove to attain administrative leadership roles in these institutions. The study also investigated their experiences and perceptions of accessing and obtaining postsecondary leadership positions. It is important to note that Dominican women navigating the educational environment often face a challenge reconciling the beliefs imposed by the dominant

culture with those rooted in their ethnic background (Sartori, 2020). However, the impact of this intersection of worldviews has received limited research attention, particularly within the context of the United States.

This chapter presented this study's findings. The chapter began with the restatement of the data collection procedures and the demographic composition of the participants. Then, I provided an overview of how the data were analyzed, followed by the findings. Within this study, five themes were included in the findings: (a) the importance of mentorship and representation, (b) exposure and inspiration as a foundation, (c) the gift of positive cultural attributes; (d) family responsibilities; and (e) lower salaries. When reporting this study's findings, I discussed each theme and provided direct participant quotations supporting each thematic category. The next chapter is Chapter 5 that will conclude this dissertation. Within Chapter 5, I will interpret the results, identify key implications, and discuss experienced limitations and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

This study addressed the significant underrepresentation of Dominican women in leadership roles in U.S. higher education, drawing on a qualitative narrative method and design. The research explored the challenges faced by Dominican women in obtaining administrative positions, especially the struggle to reconcile cultural norms from both dominant and ethnic backgrounds. Five themes acted as the findings of this study, as the participants discussed: (a) the importance of mentorship and representation, (b) exposure and inspiration as a foundation, (c) the gift of positive cultural attributes; (d) family responsibilities; and (e) lower salaries. This chapter will conclude the study and will begin by synthesizing findings. I will connect the findings to existing literature, address the research questions, and discuss the findings under the theoretical framework. I will conclude this chapter by discussing practical implications for future research and institutional practices, offering recommendations for fostering inclusivity in educational leadership and future research. In essence, this chapter will contribute to academic understanding and practical changes in the representation of Dominican women in higher education leadership roles.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** What are the experiences of Dominican women entering into leadership positions in the higher education environment?

**RQ2:** How do Dominican women who are higher education leaders perceive racial and cultural factors creating opportunities/obstacles when being promoted into leadership positions?

Five themes acted as the findings of this study:

1. The importance of mentorship and representation
2. Exposure and inspiration as a foundation
3. Lower salaries
4. Family responsibilities
5. The gift of positive cultural attributes

Within this section, I will connect the themes to previous literature, answer the research questions, and then connect the findings to the theoretical framework that guided this study.

### **Connection to Previous Literature**

In this section, I will discuss each theme concerning previous literature to highlight the alignment or lack of alignment with previous findings.

#### ***The Importance of Mentorship and Representation***

The finding concerning the importance of mentorship and representation aligns with and extends previous literature examining the role of mentorship in fostering leadership development, particularly among underrepresented groups. Studies by Shellock et al. (2022), DaLuz (2022), and Smith-Adams (2022) have emphasized the positive impact of mentorship programs in breaking down barriers for women and minorities aspiring to leadership positions within academia. Mentorship programs wield a range of positive impacts in dismantling barriers for women and minorities aspiring to leadership roles within academia. One of the fundamental advantages lies in providing guidance and support, offering mentees insights into navigating the intricate terrain of

academic careers (Schriever & Grainger, 2019). This is especially crucial for women and minorities who may encounter unique challenges in their professional journeys.

Additionally, mentorship programs catalyze networking opportunities, enabling mentees to forge connections with seasoned professionals, establish relationships, and access valuable resources—essential for career advancement (Brown et al., 2019). Beyond networking, mentors have been found to significantly increase skill development, nurturing the competencies necessary for leadership positions, including effective communication, negotiation skills, and project management (Harrison et al., 2022). Moreover, mentorship enhances visibility, as mentors often advocate for their mentees, create platforms for showcasing their work, and facilitate entry into professional networks (Sotirin & Goltz, 2023). Mentorship relationships address implicit bias by providing tailored support and fostering a more individualized approach to career development.

These multifaceted benefits underscore the pivotal role of mentorship programs in creating pathways for Dominican women to ascend to academic leadership positions. The identified theme in this study reinforces the notion that mentorship provides guidance and support and plays a pivotal role in shaping the career aspirations of Dominican women in higher education leadership. Additionally, the significance of representation echoes findings from Brooms (2019), highlighting that seeing individuals with similar backgrounds in leadership positions is a powerful motivator and contributes to a sense of belonging. Therefore, this current study not only aligns with but also builds upon existing literature by emphasizing the interconnected roles of mentorship and representation in the leadership journeys of Dominican women in higher education.

### ***Exposure and Inspiration as a Foundation***

The theme of exposure and inspiration as a foundation highlights a critical aspect of the academic journey, resonating with and extending insights from prior literature. Research by Roopaei et al. (2021) and Hernandez et al. (2020) has illuminated the transformative impact of early exposure to diverse academic role models and inspirational figures. These studies depict the profound influence that encounters with individuals who mirror one's ethnic background or experiences can have on shaping career aspirations, especially in academia. In alignment with existing literature, this study emphasized that exposure to leaders who share the ethnic background of Dominican women in higher education serves as a foundational element for their leadership aspirations. It recognizes that early exposure to diverse and inspirational figures can plant the seeds of ambition, fostering a sense of possibility and potential in the minds of aspiring academics. This exposure impacts individual career trajectories and contributes to broader aspirations for leadership roles within academic institutions.

Furthermore, this theme highlights the importance of creating environments facilitating such exposure. By delving into the experiences of Dominican women, this study sheds light on the pivotal role that early encounters and inspirational figures play in shaping their academic and professional aspirations. This insight provides valuable context for educational institutions seeking to foster diverse leadership by understanding and addressing the foundational elements that influence career choices. This theme builds upon the existing literature by emphasizing that exposure and inspiration are not merely incidental aspects of academic development but foundational elements that significantly contribute to cultivating leadership aspirations. It calls for a deliberate and sustained

effort to create inclusive environments that provide diverse role models, ensuring that aspiring academics, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, are inspired and empowered to envision leadership roles as integral parts of their academic journeys.

### ***Lower Salaries***

The theme of *lower salaries* in the context of Dominican women aspiring to leadership positions within academia is a critical aspect that aligns with and extends findings from previous literature on gender and ethnic pay disparities. Studies by Salmi and D'Addio (2021) and Lee and Won (2014) have highlighted the persistent challenges faced by women, especially those from minority backgrounds, in achieving salary parity within the academic sector. This present study not only echoes these findings but delves deeper into the specific experiences of Dominican women, emphasizing the complex intersectionality of gender and ethnicity. In alignment with existing literature, the theme of lower salaries underscores the structural inequalities embedded in academic institutions. This theme draws attention to the broader issue of pay disparities and how they disproportionately affect women, particularly those from Dominican backgrounds. The study builds on prior research by providing a nuanced exploration of how these disparities manifest in the experiences of Dominican women, shedding light on the unique challenges they face in negotiating and navigating salary expectations in pursuit of leadership roles.

Furthermore, this theme prompts a broader conversation about the systemic changes required within academia to address these disparities. It highlights the existence of lower salaries and encourages a deeper examination of the institutional practices, policies, and cultural factors that contribute to this phenomenon (Lee & Won, 2014). This



theme underscores the urgent need for institutions to confront and rectify the systemic issues contributing to salary disparities, fostering environments that prioritize equitable compensation for women, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, in leadership positions within academia.

Moreover, empowering Dominican women with higher salaries holds profound significance across various dimensions of individual and societal advancement. By providing financial independence, increased salaries grant women the autonomy to make decisions about their lives, education, and healthcare, reducing dependence on others (Miller et al., 2023).

Moreover, higher salaries contribute to empowerment and gender equality, recognizing women's skills and contributions on par with their male counterparts. Financial resources derived from improved salaries also open avenues for educational opportunities, fostering personal growth and professional development (Grubb, 2009). The positive impact also extends to health and wellbeing, as women with better financial resources can access improved healthcare and nutrition, benefiting themselves and their families. Closing the gender pay gap reduces economic disparities and empowers communities by encouraging women to invest in local businesses and initiatives.

Additionally, economic empowerment enhances women's social and political influence, enabling their active participation in decision-making processes and policy advocacy (Reshi & Sudha, 2023). Beyond individual benefits, higher salaries for women are pivotal in breaking the cycle of poverty, offering better prospects for the next generation. Therefore, empowering Dominican women through improved salaries is

crucial to fostering a more just, equitable, and prosperous society where women can shape their destinies and contribute significantly to community and national development.

### ***Family Responsibilities***

The theme of family responsibilities in the context of Dominican women aspiring to leadership roles within academia aligns with and extends findings from existing literature on the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, and familial obligations. Research by Maxwell et al. (2019) and Bender et al. (2022) has concluded how family responsibilities often intersect with gendered expectations, impacting women's career trajectories. This present study not only reinforces these broader findings but delves into the specific experiences of Dominican women, highlighting the unique challenges they face in navigating familial and professional responsibilities when working in higher education. In alignment with existing literature, family responsibilities emphasize the complex interplay between cultural expectations, gender roles, and career aspirations (Bullough et al., 2022). This theme underscores the intricate balancing act that women, especially those from Dominican backgrounds, often engage in as they navigate their academic journeys while fulfilling familial duties (Rezaei & França Marques, 2021).

Furthermore, this theme prompts a deeper reflection on the need for family-friendly policies within academic institutions (Bodkin & Fleming, 2021). It highlights the challenges of family responsibilities and advocates for institutional support systems that accommodate the diverse needs of women pursuing leadership roles. By focusing on the experiences of Dominican women, the study contributes valuable insights to the broader conversation on the intersection of family responsibilities, gender, and ethnicity in academic leadership.

### *The Gift of Positive Cultural Attributes*

The theme of the gift of positive cultural attributes introduces a nuanced perspective on the experiences of Dominican women aspiring to leadership roles within academia, building upon and resonating with existing literature on the strengths and resilience derived from cultural identity. Research by Anandavalli (2021) had previously highlighted the positive aspects of cultural identity in fostering resilience and empowerment within minority communities. This study not only aligns with such findings but delves into the specific experiences of Dominican women, shedding light on how cultural attributes act as sources of strength in their pursuit of leadership roles.

In alignment with existing literature, this theme emphasizes the role of cultural attributes in shaping the mindset and resilience of individuals. It underscores cultural identity's positive impact on the professional journey, providing empowerment amidst challenges. By focusing on the experiences of Dominican women, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the specific cultural attributes that act as gifts—assets that aid in overcoming barriers and navigating the complexities of leadership roles within academia. Furthermore, the theme prompts a broader discussion on recognizing and valuing cultural diversity within academic institutions. It highlights the positive cultural attributes and advocates for environments that actively appreciate and integrate the diverse strengths that individuals from different backgrounds bring to leadership positions. Acknowledging the gift of positive cultural attributes, the study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on fostering inclusive and culturally competent leadership within academia.

### ***Connections of Findings to the Research Questions***

When connecting the findings to the research questions, I could answer each question based on the themes. Concerning RQ1, the participants discussed themes that provided insight into the diverse experiences of Dominican women ascending to leadership roles in higher education:

1. The participants emphasized mentorship and how being fully represented in the field underscores mentors' pivotal role and the impact of seeing individuals with similar backgrounds in leadership positions. This theme highlighted how these women often navigate their career trajectories with invaluable support and inspiration.
2. The theme of exposure and inspiration reveals the foundational influence of early encounters and influential figures in shaping the aspirations of Dominican women for leadership positions.
3. The theme of lower salaries draws attention to the economic challenges these women may encounter as they progress in their careers.

Two key themes were identified concerning RQ2, which delves into the perceptions of Dominican women in higher education leadership regarding racial and cultural factors as opportunities or obstacles. The theme of family responsibilities uncovered the intersectionality of gender and cultural expectations, exposing Dominican women's challenges and responsibilities within their familial contexts. Additionally, the theme of *the gift of positive cultural attributes* signifies that Dominican women derive strength from their cultural attributes, serving as a source of resilience and empowerment in their pursuit of leadership roles. Together, these themes offer a more robust

understanding of the complex dynamics shaping the experiences and perceptions of Dominican women in leadership roles within the realm of higher education.

### ***Connection of Findings to the Theoretical Framework***

The findings of this study align strongly with the fundamental tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Latino Critical Perspective (LatCrit), offering valuable frameworks to comprehend the experiences of Dominican women in leadership roles within higher education. Critical Race Theory, rooted in examining race as a social construct and exploring systemic racism, proves particularly pertinent considering the identified themes (Taylor, 2023). Notably, the theme of lower salaries aligns with CRT's focus on structural inequalities, exposing the interconnection of economic disparities with racial dynamics. Moreover, the emphasis on the significance of mentorship and representation speaks to CRT's recognition of the importance of counter-narratives and the necessity for diverse role models to challenge prevailing narratives sustaining racial hierarchies. In addition, CRT emphasizes the importance of counter-narratives and the need for diverse representation (Taylor, 2023). The theme of mentorship and representation in this study resonates with this aspect of CRT. The theory argues that challenging dominant narratives and stereotypes is crucial for dismantling racial hierarchies (Taylor, 2023). This study's recognition of the significance of mentors and role models in shaping the experiences of Dominican women aligns with the CRT perspective, highlighting the importance of representation in leadership roles as a means of challenging and transforming prevailing racial narratives.

The Latino Critical Perspective (LatCrit), as an extension of CRT within the Latino context, contributes an additional layer of insight. The theme of family

responsibilities, integral to the Latina experience, strongly resonates with LatCrit's emphasis on intersectionality (Franco, 2021). This study's revelation of the challenges faced by Dominican women in balancing familial and professional duties aligns with LatCrit's acknowledgment of how multiple social identities intersect and influence individuals' experiences within the broader societal framework (Franco, 2021). Moreover, the theme of *the gift of positive cultural attributes* also aligns with LatCrit's exploration of cultural strengths and resilience within Latino communities. The finding highlighting how the Dominican women drew strength from their cultural attributes aligns with the LatCrit perspective, depicting the importance of recognizing and valuing the positive aspects of cultural identity (Franco, 2021). In essence, this study not only highlights the experiences of Dominican women but also enriches the broader discourse on the application of critical frameworks in understanding the complex interplay of race, culture, and leadership within academic settings.

### **Limitations**

While the exploration of the underrepresentation of Dominican women in leadership roles within U.S. higher education institutions is an important focus, this study exhibits certain limitations that warrant consideration. While rich in contextual insights, utilizing a qualitative narrative approach could raise concerns about the generalizability of findings, as the participants' experiences may not fully influence the broader population of Dominican women in academia (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The exclusive focus on Dominican women may inadvertently overlook intersecting factors contributing to underrepresentation, such as socio-economic diversity or varying educational backgrounds. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported data within a qualitative framework

introduces potential participant bias and subjectivity, influencing the conclusions' robustness (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The acknowledgment of limited research attention to the intersection of cultural beliefs imposed by the dominant culture and those rooted in the ethnic background of Dominican women highlights a broader gap in the existing literature. This suggests that this study may not have fully captured the intricate challenges faced by these individuals. Finally, this study's recognition of a knowledge gap emphasizes the need for additional research to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in addressing underrepresentation and fostering diversity in higher education leadership.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This in-depth exploration of the experiences of Dominican women in leadership roles within higher education not only yields valuable insights into the current landscape but also lays the groundwork for prospective research endeavors. A crucial avenue for future investigations involves broadening the focus to encompass various intersectional identities. While this study focused on the challenges faced by Dominican women, future research could explore how women from various ethnic backgrounds navigate their leadership journeys in conjunction with factors such as socioeconomic status, educational background, or immigration status. Such an approach would contribute to a more holistic comprehension of the intricate dynamics shaping women's trajectories in academic leadership.

Moreover, future research could embrace a longitudinal perspective to track Dominican women's trajectories and career paths in higher education leadership over an extended period. This longitudinal approach would empower researchers to capture the

evolving nature of challenges and opportunities, providing insights into the factors that either facilitate or impede career progression. Uncovering the enduring impact of mentorship, representation, and cultural attributes on leadership aspirations and achievements would significantly enrich the existing literature on women in educational leadership. Additionally, there exists an opportunity for comparative research to investigate how the experiences of Dominican women in leadership roles within higher education compare to those of women from other Latina backgrounds or different ethnic groups. A comparative approach can illuminate distinct challenges and strengths within various ethnic groups, fostering a more robust understanding of the intersectionality of gender, race, and culture in educational leadership.

Lastly, future research could explore institutional policies and practices that either facilitate or hinder the advancement of women in leadership roles. By scrutinizing the role of organizational culture, diversity initiatives, and mentorship programs, researchers could offer practical insights for institutions seeking to address underrepresentation and actively promote diversity in leadership.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study carry significant implications for practice within higher education institutions, particularly in shaping policies and practices that foster a more inclusive and equitable environment for women, specifically Dominican women, in leadership roles. One practical implication is recognizing the pivotal role of mentorship and representation. Institutions should actively encourage mentorship programs connecting aspiring Dominican women leaders with experienced mentors who can provide guidance, support, and insights from their leadership journeys. A commitment to



diverse representation in leadership positions is also crucial. Institutions should prioritize creating a leadership team that reflects the diversity of the student and faculty population, acknowledging the importance of role models in challenging and reshaping dominant narratives.

Moreover, understanding the economic challenges faced by Dominican women, as highlighted by the theme of lower salaries, calls for practical interventions. Institutions should conduct thorough salary equity audits to identify and rectify disparities based on gender, ethnicity, or other relevant factors. This proactive approach aligns to ensure fair compensation and foster an inclusive work environment. The theme of family responsibilities emphasizes the need for family-friendly policies within academic institutions. Implementing flexible work schedules, parental leave policies, and support systems for women managing both professional and familial responsibilities can significantly contribute to creating an environment where women, including Dominican women, can thrive in leadership positions without undue stress or compromise. Furthermore, recognizing and valuing the positive cultural attributes, as revealed by this study, suggests the importance of cultivating an inclusive organizational culture that embraces and celebrates diversity. This includes creating spaces for cultural exchange, awareness programs, and initiatives that promote cultural understanding and appreciation within the academic community.

Finally, community engagement initiatives can further support the positive cultural attributes highlighted in this study. Building partnerships with local communities and creating platforms for cultural exchange not only enriches educational career experiences but also provides a supportive network for individuals from diverse

backgrounds. By implementing these implications for practice, higher education institutions can take concrete steps toward fostering inclusive, equitable environments that promote the professional development and success of women, particularly Dominican women, in leadership roles.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the experiences of Dominican women in leadership roles within higher education, unveiling pivotal themes that shape their professional journeys. The significance of mentorship and representation emerges as a guiding light, highlighting the transformative impact of supportive networks and diverse role models. Concurrently, the challenges of lower salaries and family responsibilities illuminate systemic barriers that hinder women's leadership progression. As this study serves as both a reflective mirror and a forwardlooking compass for the future of higher education, it calls for a deeper engagement in research exploring the intersectionality of identities. Recognizing that the identified themes are interconnected threads in a larger tapestry of diversity, equity, and inclusion, this study is a testament to the need for comprehensive understanding.

The findings of this study have highlighted the need for institutional action. Beyond academic discourse, this study issues a call for transformative practices. Institutions are urged to move beyond the acknowledgment of diversity to the active cultivation of inclusive environments. The prescription is clear—establish mentorship programs that nurture leadership potential, adopt inclusive hiring practices that recognize the value of diverse perspectives, advocate for pay equity as a measure of fairness, and embrace flexible leadership models that accommodate the complex interplay of

professional and familial responsibilities. The powerful narrative of this study can recommend that higher education institutions actively contribute to reshaping the leadership landscape. It is essential to envision a future where diversity is not a checkbox but an ingrained principle, where inclusivity is not an ideal but a lived reality. The success of Dominican women in leadership positions within this vision becomes emblematic of a progressive, resilient, and thriving higher education institution—one that fosters an environment where every voice, regardless of background, is heard and celebrated.

## APPENDIX A Letter of Consent



Dear participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate the journey of Dominican women as administrative leaders in U.S. higher education. This study will be conducted by Kelba M. Sosa, a third-year doctoral student at St. John's University, The School of Education, Queens, NY, Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership. Your participation will contribute to this research and to the literature on Dominican women in leadership roles in higher education.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an individual remote interview that would last approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview will consist of a series of 8-10 open-ended questions. The interview will be video recorded using Webex to help the researcher capture your dialogue and feedback. The recording will not be shared with anyone else; it will only be used by the researcher. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate at any time during the study.

Your identity as a participant will remain confidential. To protect your identity, the researcher will not use your name in any written reports. Pseudonyms will be used instead. This consent form is the only document identifying you as a participant. This consent form will be stored securely on a password-protected computer in the researcher's home. Any electronic or digital data (Video-recordings) will be written down and analyzed, and the recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study. If this study is published only pseudonyms or aggregated results will show in the study.

If you have questions about the purpose of this research study, you may contact the principal investigator, Kelba M. Sosa, at [kelba.sosa18@my.stjohns.edu](mailto:kelba.sosa18@my.stjohns.edu) or call me at (914) 8432902. If you have questions concerning your rights as a human participant, you may contact the University's Human Subject Review Board at St. John's University at 718-990-1440, at [irb@stjhons.edu](mailto:irb@stjhons.edu), or the research committee mentor, Katherine Aquino, at 718-990-2136, or [czadoaqk@stjohns.edu](mailto:czadoaqk@stjohns.edu).

### **Agreement to Participate in this Study:**

To participate in this study, I meet the following criteria:

1. I identify as female.
2. I identify as being Dominican.
3. I currently work in a leadership position.
4. I currently am employed at University, located in New York.
5. I have worked in my position for a minimum of six months.

Your signature acknowledges receipt of a copy of this consent form and your willingness to participate. Remember that you are free to withdraw your participation in this study without penalty.

**Name and Signature of Participant:**

Please print your name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Your signature for permission to be audio and video recorded during interview sessions. Your signature below indicates that you agree to be audio and video recorded during the interviews for this study, with the understanding that you are free to withdraw your participation in this study at any point without penalty. If you withdraw, all recordings of the interviews will be destroyed.

Check both boxes

I consent to be audio recorded during the interviews for this study. I consent to be video recorded during the interviews for this study.

Please print your name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Date

**Principal Investigator**

Kelba M. Sosa

Kelba.sosa18@my.stjohns.edu

**Doctoral Mentor**

Dr. Katherine Aquino

czadoaqk@stjohns.edu

## **APPENDIX B Individual Interview Protocol**

### **(Script) Welcome participants**

- Thank you for choosing to participate in this interview. This study will explore the journey of Dominican women as administrative leaders in U.S. higher education. My name is Kelba Sosa, and I am the primary researcher in this study. Currently, I am a third-year doctoral student at St. John's University.

### **Purpose of the Study**

- The purpose of the study is to understand the challenges Dominican women have obtaining leadership positions in higher education institutions. Explore the journey of Dominican women into administrative leadership positions within U.S. higher education institutions. In addition to their experiences and perceptions of accessing and obtaining postsecondary leadership positions. Identifying the problem that Dominican women are underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education in the United States.

### **Individual interview**

- As an interviewee, you will be asked 9 short-ended questions. The session should take approximately 30-45 minutes and will be videotaped using Webex. The recording will not be shared with anyone else. The recording will only be used by the researcher. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

You can refuse to participate at any time during the study.

### **Participants rights**

- Please be reminded that you may withdraw from this interview at any time without explanation or penalty. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential throughout this study. Your name and your school will not be disclosed or included in any forms, transcriptions, data analysis, or research findings. Pseudonyms will be used when discussing the research.

### **The interview will begin now**

1. Tell me about your background as a higher educational professional.

2. How have you prepared yourself for leadership roles in institutions of higher education?
3. How has your or prior HE institutions prepared you for leadership roles?
4. How do you feel about opportunities for you to attain leadership roles in your institution?
5. What racial or cultural factors create opportunities for Dominican women to be promoted into leadership positions within your higher education institution?
6. What racial or cultural factors create challenges for Dominican women to be promoted into leadership positions within your higher education institution?
7. Why should Latinas be in leadership positions? What do Latinas bring to the table?
8. Tell me about how Latina faculty and administrators are treated at your institution.
9. Do you believe there is a representative number of Latinas in significant leadership roles in Higher Education across the United States? Why or why not? If no, how can this situation be improved?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share?

We have come to the end of the interview. I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Do you have any questions for me?

**Close the interview**

- Thank you once again for participating in this focus interview. Your contribution and feedback are greatly appreciated and will be useful for this study. If you don't mind, I will share this interview session with you once it is transcribed for you to check for the accuracy of the details and interpretations. This will also test the validity of the study.

## **APPENDIX C Participant Journal and Reflective Essay Question**

Please write a minimum of one page that answers the following question:

Discuss how your institution of higher education has supported or hindered your promotion into leadership positions.



## REFERENCES

- Alqahtani, T. (2019). Barriers to Women's leadership. *Granite Journal: A Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Journal*, 3(2), 34-41.
- Anandavalli, S. (2021). Strengths-based counseling with international students of color: A community cultural wealth approach. *Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling*, 11(1), 111-124.
- Avalos, M., & Salgado, Y. (2016). Legacy of hope: Latinas overcoming barriers to success. In *National Forum of Educational Administration & Supervision Journal* (Vol. 34).
- Ayub, M., Khan, R. A., & Khushnood, M. (2019). Glass ceiling or personal barriers: A study of underrepresentation of women in senior management. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 4(4), 126-134.
- Bailey, B. (2001). Dominican-American Ethnic/Racial Identities and United States Social Categories. *International Migration Review*, 35(3), 677-708
- Bender, S., Brown, K. S., Hensley Kasitz, D. L., & Vega, O. (2022). Academic women and their children: Parenting during COVID-19 and the impact on scholarly productivity. *Family Relations*, 71(1), 46-67.
- Bodkin, C. P., & Fleming, C. J. (2021). Supporting women scholars' paths to academia: An examination of family-friendly policies of public affairs doctoral programs. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 27(3), 301-325.
- Bonilla-Santiago, G. (2020). Hispanic women breaking new ground through leadership.

- In *Latina Issues* (pp. 217-235). Routledge.
- Brooms, D. R. (2019). Not in this alone: Black men's bonding, learning, and sense of belonging in Black male initiative programs. *The Urban Review*, 51(5), 748-767.
- Brower, R. L., Schwartz, R. A., & Bertrand Jones, T. (2019). "Is it because I'm a woman?" Gender-based attributional ambiguity in higher education administration. *Gender & Education*, 31(1), 117-135. doi:10.1080/09540253.2017.1324131.
- Brown, R., Desai, S., & Elliott, C. (2019). *Identity-conscious supervision in student affairs: Building relationships and transforming systems*. Routledge.
- Browne, I., Tatum, K., & Gonzalez, B. (2021). Presumed Mexican until proven otherwise: Identity work and intersectional typicality among middle-class Dominican and Mexican immigrants. *Social Problems*, 68(1), 80-99.
- Bullough, A., Guelich, U., Manolova, T. S., & Schjoedt, L. (2022). Women's entrepreneurship and culture: gender role expectations and identities, societal culture, and the entrepreneurial environment. *Small Business Economics*, 58(2), 985-996.
- Canaán, J., & Corcino, G. (2015). Dominican women: Their perception as leaders by the Dominican population.
- Clark, K. R., & Vealé, B. L. (2018). Strategies to enhance data collection and analysis in qualitative research. *Radiologic technology*, 89(5), 482CT-485CT.
- Costello, L. A. (2017). Standing up and standing together: Feminist teaching and collaborative mentoring. *Feminist Teacher: A Journal of the Practices, Theories, and Scholarship of*

- Feminist Teaching*, 26(1), 1–28. doi:10.5406/femteacher.26.1.0001.
- Crespo, N. (2013). *Latina women: How they succeed factors that influence the career advancement of Latina women in higher education*. University of Pennsylvania.
- Cross, M., Lee, S., Bridgman, H., Thapa, D. K., Cleary, M., & Kornhaber, R. (2019). Benefits, barriers, and enablers of mentoring female health academics: an integrative review. *PLoS One*, 14(4), e0215319.
- DaLuz, F. (2022). Finding “your” people: The impact of mentoring relationships in overcoming barriers to academic achievement in underrepresented student populations. *Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 2(3).
- De Los Santos, R. (2008). *A qualitative ethnographic study of barriers experienced by Hispanic female administrators in higher education* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix).
- Diehl, A. B. (2014). Making meaning of barriers and adversity: Experiences of women leaders in higher education. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 34, 54-63.
- Domingo, C. R., Gerber, N. C., Harris, D., Mamo, L., Pasion, S. G., Rebanal, R. D., & Rosser, S. V. (2022). More service or more advancement: Institutional barriers to academic success for women and women of color faculty at a large public comprehensive minority-serving state university. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 15(3), 365.
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2018). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. In *Contemporary issues in leadership* (pp. 147-162). Routledge.
- Eiden-Dillow, L., & Best, N. (2022). Senior-level leadership in higher education: The Latina experience. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 6(2), 93-107.

- Einarsdottir, U. D., Christiansen, T. H., & Kristjansdottir, E. S. (2018). “It’s a man who runs the show”: How women middle-managers experience their professional position, opportunities, and barriers. *Sage Open*, 8(1), 2158244017753989.
- Eliadis, A. (2018). Women and leadership in higher education. Leadership (Thesis: Fielding Graduate University).
- Espinoza, P. (2020). *Latinx teacher advocates engaged in social justice agendas: A LatCrit perspective*. Kansas State University.
- Fischer, S., Barnes, R. K., & Kilpatrick, S. (2019). Equipping parents to support their children’s higher education aspirations: A design and evaluation Tool. *Educational Review*, 71(2), 198–217. doi:10.1080/00131911.2017.1379472.
- Flores, A. (2017). How the U.S. Hispanic population is changing. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/18/howthe-u-s-hispanicpopulation-is-changing/>.
- Franco, D. (2021). Revisiting cultural diversity in social work education through Latino critical race theory testimonio. *Social Work Education*, 40(4), 522-534.
- Frechette, J., Bitzas, V., Aubry, M., Kilpatrick, K., & Lavoie-Tremblay, M. (2020). Capturing lived experience: Methodological considerations for interpretive phenomenological inquiry. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1609406920907254.
- Fritz, R. L., & Vandermause, R. (2018). Data collection via in-depth email interviewing: Lessons from the field. *Qualitative health research*, 28(10), 1640-1649.

- Ghouralal, S. L. (2019). Mere cracks in the academic glass ceiling: Why are women so underrepresented in higher education leadership. *Engaged Sociology*, 211-229.
- Grubb, W. N. (2009). *The money myth: School resources, outcomes, and equity*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Guillen, M. A. (2020). *Hearing Their Voices: The educational experiences and journey of Latina doctoral graduates* (Doctoral dissertation, Northern Illinois University).
- Haber-Curran, P., & Tapia-Fuselier, N. (2020). Elevating Latina voices of leadership:: Latina student leaders' beliefs, approaches, and influences on leadership. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 19(4).
- Harrison, M., Tran, D. N., Pena, A., Iyengar, S., Abubakar, A. A., Hoernke, K., ... & Weinberg, J. L. (2022). Strategies to improve women's leadership preparation for early career global health professionals: suggestions from two working groups. *Annals of global health*, 88(1).
- Hernandez, P. R., Adams, A. S., Barnes, R. T., Bloodhart, B., Burt, M., Clinton, S. M., ... & Fischer, E. V. (2020). Inspiration, inoculation, and introductions are all critical to successful mentorship for undergraduate women pursuing geoscience careers. *Communications Earth & Environment*, 1(1), 7.
- Howe-Walsh, L., & Turnbull, S. (2016). Barriers to women leaders in academia: tales from science and technology. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(3), 415-428.
- Imadoğlu, T., Kurşuncu, R. S., & Çavuş, M. F. (2020). The effect of glass ceiling syndrome on women's career barriers in management and job motivation. *HOLISTICA—Journal of Business and Public Administration*, 11(2), 85-99.

- Indira Barrón, D. (Ed.). (2020). *Hispanic women/Latina leaders overcoming barriers in higher education*. IGI Global.
- Kiyama, J. M. (2018). “We’re serious about our education”: A collective testimonio from college-going Latinas to college personnel. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 17*(4), 415-429.
- Kyngäs, H., Kääriäinen, M., & Elo, S. (2020). The trustworthiness of content analysis. In *The application of content analysis in nursing science research* (pp. 41-48). Springer, Cham.
- Larey, D. P., Le Roux, A., & Jacobs, L. (2021). Evoking edupreneurial leadership towards social justice among historically disadvantaged communities. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 1-17*.
- Lee, Y. J., & Won, D. (2014). Trailblazing women in academia: Representation of women in senior faculty and the gender gap in junior faculty's salaries in higher educational institutions. *The Social Science Journal, 51*(3), 331-340.
- Martinez, M. A., Rivera, M., & Marquez, J. (2020). Learning from the experiences and development of Latina school leaders. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 56*(3), 472-498
- Maxwell, N., Connolly, L., & Ní Laoire, C. (2019). Informality, emotion and gendered career paths: The hidden toll of maternity leave on female academics and researchers. *Gender, Work & Organization, 26*(2), 140-157.

- Mejia, S. B., & Gushue, G. V. (2017). Latina/o college students' perceptions of career barriers: Influence of ethnic identity, acculturation, and self-efficacy. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 95*(2), 145–155. doi:10.1002/jcad.12127.
- Miller, A., Yamamori, T., & Zelleke, A. (2023). The gender effects of a basic income. *The Palgrave international handbook of basic income, 175-197*.
- Muñoz, M. (2009). In their own words and by the numbers: A mixed-methods study of Latina community college presidents. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34*(1-2), 153-174.
- Najarro, I. (2021). The vast majority of school boards lack Latino voices. What can be done about it? Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-vast-majority-of-schoolboards-lack-latino-voices-what-can-be-done-about-it/2021/12>.
- Nguyen, T. L. H. (2013). Barriers to and facilitators of female Deans' career advancement in higher education: An exploratory study in Vietnam. *Higher education, 66*(1), 123-138.
- Pertuz, S. B. (2017). *The chosen tokens: Exploring the work experiences and career aspirations of Latina midlevel student affairs administrators in higher education*. Seton Hall University.
- Portes, A., & Guarnizo, L. E. (2019). Tropical capitalists: US-bound immigration and smallenterprise development in the Dominican Republic. In *Migration, remittances, and small business development* (pp. 101-131). Routledge.
- Rahim, G., Akintunde, O., Afolabi, A., & Okikiola, O. (2018). The glass ceiling conundrum:

Illusory belief or barriers that impede women's career advancement in the workplace.

*Journal of Evolutionary Studies in Business*, 3(1), 137-166.  
doi:10.1344/jesb2018.1.j040.

Reshi, I. A., & Sudha, T. (2023). Economic empowerment of women: A review of current research. *International Journal of Educational Review, Law And Social Sciences (IJERLAS)*, 3(2), 601-605.

Rezaei, S., & França Marques, D. H. (2021). Female entrepreneurship in Latin America and the key role of informal institutions in the reproduction of gender asymmetries. In *The Emerald handbook of women and entrepreneurship in developing economies* (pp. 73-90). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Rivera, C. (2019). *Testimonios of leadership: Experiences of queer Chicana/Latina administrators in higher education* (Doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University).

Rodriguez, J. K. (2013). Joining the dark side: Women in management in the Dominican Republic. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 20(1), 1-19.

Roopaei, M., Horst, J., Klaas, E., Foster, G., Salmon-Stephens, T. J., & Grunow, J. (2021, May). Women in AI: Barriers and solutions. In *2021 IEEE World AI IoT Congress (AIIoT)* (pp. 0497-0503). IEEE.

Salmi, J., & D'Addio, A. (2021). Policies for achieving inclusion in higher education. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 5(1), 47-72.



- San Miguel, A. M., & Kim, M. M. (2015). Successful Latina scientists and engineers: Their lived mentoring experiences and career development. *Journal of Career Development, 42*, 133-148. doi:10.1177/0894845314542248.
- Sánchez, B., Salazar, C., & Guerra, J. (2020). “I feel like I have to be the Whitest version of myself”: Experiences of early career Latina higher education administrators. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*.
- Schriever, V., & Grainger, P. (2019). Mentoring an early career researcher: insider perspectives from the mentee and mentor. *Reflective Practice, 20*(6), 720-731.
- Selzer, R. A., & Robles, R. (2019). Every woman has a story to tell: Experiential reflections on leadership in higher education. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education, 12*(1), 106-124.
- Shellock, R. J., Cvitanovic, C., Mackay, M., McKinnon, M. C., Blythe, J., Kelly, R., ... & Wisz, M. S. (2022). Breaking down barriers: the identification of actions to promote gender equality in interdisciplinary marine research institutions. *One Earth, 5*(6), 687-708.
- Smith-Adams, C. (2022). Path to college presidency: Being African American and female. In *Black female leaders in academia: Eliminating the glass ceiling with efficacy, exuberance, and excellence* (pp. 213-232). IGI Global.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban education, 36*(3), 308-342.

- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counterstorytelling. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 14(4), 471-495.
- Sotirin, P., & Goltz, S. M. (2023). Mid-career faculty peer mentoring: Rationale and program design. *New Directions for Higher Education*.
- SteelFisher, G. K., Findling, M. G., Bleich, S. N., Casey, L. S., Blendon, R. J., Benson, J. M., ... & Miller, C. (2019). Gender discrimination in the United States: Experiences of women. *Health Services Research*, 54, 1442-1453.
- Taylor, E. (2023). The Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education An Introduction. In *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (pp. 1-10). Routledge.
- Udin, U., Handayani, S., Yuniawan, A., & Rahardja, E. (2019). Leadership styles and communication skills at Indonesian higher education: Patterns, influences, and applications for organization. *Organizations and Markets in Emerging Economies*, 10(1), 111-131.
- Warner, J., & Corley, D. (2017). *The women's leadership gap*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2017/05/21/432758/wo>.
- Wegner, J. (2018). Lessons from Women Leaders: The Impact of Professional Development. *The Vermont Connection*, 39(1). <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/tvc/vol39/iss1/15>
- Welch, N. M., Siegele, J. L., & Hardin, R. (2021). Double punch to the glass ceiling: Career experiences and challenges of ethnic minority female athletic directors. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 29(1), 20-28.

Yosso, T. J., & Solórzano, D. G. (2006). Leaks in the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline. Latino Policy & Issues Brief. Number 13. *UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (NJI)*.

## Vita

Name	<i>Kelba M. Sosa</i>
Baccalaureate Degree	<i>Bachelor of Arts, State of Purchase, State University of New York, College of Purchase, Purchase NY Major: Liberal Arts</i>
Date Graduated	<i>June, 2012</i>
Other Degrees and certificates	<i>Master of Public Administration, Long Island University, New York Major: Public Administration</i>
Date Graduated	<i>May, 2014</i>