

“I Couldn’t Say My Own Name:” Identity Narratives of Dominican American Women

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to speak directly to the paucity of research regarding Dominican American women and identity narratives. To do so, this article uses the Listening Guide Method of Qualitative Inquiry (Gilligan, et al., 2006) to explore how 1.5 and second-generation Dominican American women narrated their experiences of individual identity within American cultural contexts and constructs. The results draw from the emergence of themes across six participant interviews and showed two distinct voices: The Voice of Cultural Explanation and the Tides of Dominican American Female Identity. Narrative examples from five participants are offered to illustrate where 1.5 and second-generation Dominican American women negotiate their identity narratives at the intersection of their Dominican and American selves. The article offers two conclusions. One, that participant women use the Voice of Cultural Explanation in order to discuss their identity as reflected within the broad cultural tensions of their daily lives. Two, that the Tides of Dominican American Female Identity are used to express strong emotions that manifest within their personal narratives as the unwanted distance from either the Dominican or American parts of their person.

KEYWORDS: Dominican American, women, identity, the Listening Guide, narratives.

Broadly, existing research and scholarship on Dominican American identity is subsumed by competing ideas. First, dominant cultural labels (such as Latine) and racial labels (such as Black or African American) often obscure the complexities of Dominican American identity narratives (González Rodríguez, 2021; Ramos, 2020; Salas Pujos, 2020). Second, specific focus on Dominican American identity narratives is often gendered male, creating an absence of female and non-binary identity narratives (Adames et al., 2021; Butler, 1988; Graziano & Pelc, 2020; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1989; Gilligan & Eddy, 2021; Perez & Taylor, 2016). At the intersection of these two broad and flawed concepts and constructs, there is an absence of voices and identity narratives generated by Dominican American women (Alba & Waters, 2011; Kouyoumdjian et al., 2017; Josselson, 2023; Torres-Saillant & Hernández, 1998; Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

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Identity narratives that embody dominant social and political discourses and cultural practices allow individuals to understand their person in relationship to cultural contexts (Cruz, 2021; Graziano et al., 2018; Tolman & Head, 2021; White, 1989). Yet, these individual narratives are absent within scholarship (Bamberg, 2006; Graziano et al., 2018). Speaking to this absence, the following utilizes Gilligan’s Listening Guide Method of Qualitative Inquiry (the Listening Guide, 1992, 2006, 2023; Josselson, 2023) to interview six 1.5 and second-generation Dominican American women about the ways in which they communicate their identity narratives as they navigate through dominant American contexts and constructs (Cruz, 2021; Graziano et al., 2018; González Rodríguez, 2021; Salas Pujos, 2020).

The Listening Guide is well suited for the study of individual identity narratives because of the value placed by the method on human connection over control, explanation, and quantification (Bochner, 2012; Dawani & Loots, 2021; Gilligan & Eddy, 2021; Josselson, 2023; Squire, 2012; White, 1989). Further, the Listening Guide’s emphasis on discovery and exploration allows researchers to speak directly to the absence of studies pertaining to Dominican American women and their identity narratives (Fine, 1994; Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

The use of the Listening Guide to study Dominican American women and their identity narratives offers both a conceptual and theoretical contribution. Conceptually, the sharing of identity narratives challenges fear and discrimination while simultaneously giving voice to marginalized groups (Cruz, 2020; Josselson, 2023; Mazanderani & Papparini, 2015; Tolman & Head, 2021). These conceptual representations are not easily captured within quantitative methods (Cruz, 2021; Dawani & Loots, 2021). Theoretically, the Listening Guide centers qualitative-ready Narrative Theory and Feminist Methods as crucial to informing scientific inquiry by working to ensure that the focus remains on stigma within research. Thus, if choosing to study those populations that continue to be marginalized by dominant cultural contexts and constructs, researchers must use concepts and theories that give voice to those silenced by mainstream methods (Stutterheim & Ratcliffe, 2021; Woodcock, 2016).

The following describes the process and application of the Listening Guide to qualitative data. Excerpts from interviews with five Dominican American women are provided as examples. These excerpts are highlighted to explain and expand upon the voices that emerged across all six-participant women in the exploration of their Dominican and American identity narratives (Mahler & Pessar, 2001).

Dominican Americans

Dominican Americans account for four percent of the U.S. Latine population, making them the fourth largest group (tied with Cubans) of Latine immigrants in the United States and the largest immigrant group from the Hispanophone Caribbean (L. M. Brown & Patten, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Eighty percent of Dominican Americans live in the Northeastern U.S., with half living in just five states: Florida, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania (A. Brown & Patten, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Half of Dominican Americans are foreign born and fewer than half are U.S. citizens. The 2020 U.S. Census indicated that the number of individuals identifying as Dominican increased from the 2010 census by 781,373 to 2,196,076. This accounted for a 55% increase in those identifying as Dominican American (A. Brown & Patten, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

Because of historic slave trade ties, the Dominican Republic, along with neighboring Haiti, is often called the “cradle of Blackness in the Americas” (Torres-Saillant, 1998, p. 126). Yet, within the United States, where Whiteness is the normalized standard, and Blackness is the racialized other, the arrival of Dominicans and other Latine groups challenged entrenched ideas about racial

and ethnic identity (Aquino, 2021; Chavez, 2013). As a result, many Dominicans had to “choose among options that their historical experience has not prepared them to recognize” (Torres-Saillant, 1998, p. 142). This historical, cultural, racial, and transnational identity had a deep, profound effect on how individuals assessed their own social, cultural, economic, and political selves and expressed identity narratives (Adames et al., 2021; Dicker, 2008; Guarnizo et al., 2003; Layton, 2006; Ramos, 2020; Salas Pujos, 2020).

Foundational Narrative Frameworks

While this article focuses on the unique experiences of Dominican American women, the concepts for understanding their identity narratives are deeply embedded within narrative theory and scholarship (Bruner, 1990, 2002; Hammack, 2011). Available scholarship notes that the messages inherent within dominant American contexts and constructs dictate how an individual shares their identity narratives (Bruner, 1990; Dillon, 1990). In turn, when these narratives are shared, their dominant cultural interpretations may be skewed, silenced, or dismissed (Adichie, 2009; Bhpoal, 2010; Gilligan, 1995; 2023; Graziano et al., 2018; Graziano & Pelc 2020).

This phenomenon is well documented in research focused on marginalized narratives (Bhpoal, 2010; Graziano et al., 2018; Mahler & Pessar, 2001; Pessar, 1999). For example, Hammack (2011) notes that individual narratives “are made and remade as individual(s) navigate the discursive waters... and make decisions about which aspects to appropriate and which to repudiate” (pp. 312-313). The making and remaking of individual narratives in the face of oppression from dominant cultural contexts and constructs often serves to maintain status quo social conditions (Bruner, 1990). This maintenance of the status quo means marginalized individual narratives must conform, reflect, assimilate, or covertly resist dominant cultural contexts and constructs that are seen as compulsory and true (Bamberg, 2006; Bruner, 2002; Gilligan, 2023; Hammack, 2011).

However, these marginalized narratives *do* exist within dominant cultural contexts and constructs, and, as these individual narratives accumulate over time, their pattern or purpose reveal points of reflection, assimilation, and covert resistance (Bamberg, 2006; Dillon, 1990; Graziano et al., 2018). In short, these narratives begin to reveal what Gilligan (1993, 2023) would term a “Voice” (Gilligan, 1993, p. xvi) as they clap back at dominant cultural contexts and constructs. The emergence of this voice is powerful, the acknowledgment of its place within research fruitful. Simply, it reveals a challenge and resistance to the dominant cultural contexts and constructs that come to subsume individual identity narratives (Bamberg, 2006; Bruner, 1990; Gilligan, 1993, 2023).

Method

Participant Sampling and Selection

Snowball sampling with a skip-step was used to recruit participants (Robins Sadler et al., 2010). Specifically, the contacts obtained from participants provided referrals but were not interviewed. The inclusion of a skip-step increased the likelihood of diversifying the sample of individual narratives beyond a single social network (Robins Sadler, et al., 2010). As a method of recruitment, snowball sampling with a skip-step allowed us to build a 1-1 relationship with participants, with referrals determined by the trust and empathy built during the interview process (Josselson, 2013; Noy, 2008). This continuous activation of existing social networks allowed us to

overcome the impossibility of having a research team that is representative of the community being studied (England, 1994; Noy, 2008; Robins Sadler et al., 2010).

The goal of the Listening Guide Method is to find a sample size that facilitates an “authentic and resonant interview relationship” (Gilligan, Kreider, & O’Neill, 1995, p. 803). Thus, when using the Listening Guide, there must be a deliberate, purposeful, and necessary choice of a small sample (L. M. Brown, 2000). To facilitate this relationship, we employed a multi-step, collaborative, and labor-intensive method of analysis (Kayser, et al., 2007). A sample of six was chosen as a reflection and acknowledgment of the multi-step, collaborative, and labor-intensive nature of the method and the ability of our small research team (the principal investigator plus three members) to use the method deliberately, purposefully, and effectively (Bhopal, 2006; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017).

Participants in this study were six (N=6) 1.5 and second-generation Dominican American women, aged from mid-20’s to mid-30’s (Table 1). Within this article, 1.5-generation immigrants are defined as those who entered the United States from their country of origin at a young age (0-6) (Louie, 2001). Second-generation immigrants are defined as the U.S.-born children of immigrants (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Both 1.5- and second-generation were chosen as a site of study as it ensured; (a) The culture of one or both parents differed from that of the American-reared participant; and (b) participants attended schools in the US (Graziano et al., 2018; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

Within this study, emphasis was placed on education, occupation, exposure, and acculturation to the U.S. education system. This emphasis facilitated the movement away from the use of generations as organizing categories and towards the well-documented similarities in educational attainment between 1.5 and second-generation immigrants as an organizing principle (Boyd & Tian, 2016; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2017; Pike & Kuh, 2016; Rumbaut, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008).

All participants were raised in New York City or its suburbs. Socioeconomic status varied across participants. Participant women were raised in varying environments, from low-income urban centers within or near New York City to middle or upper-middle-class suburbs within the New York City Metropolitan Area. Half of the participant women were reared in single-parent households; all participants had siblings. All participant women attended and graduated from American K-12 public schools and American colleges. All participant women graduated from college within four years and were employed or seeking an advanced degree. All participant women attended public or private universities in the Mid-Atlantic or New England region of the United States.

During the recruitment and informed consent process, we provided an explanation of the study’s aims and methodology. Participants were informed of the study purpose and our desire to understand their identity narratives as they relate to ethnicity, gender, immigration, and race in the United States. After recruitment, all participants completed a 1-1.5 hour long, IRB-approved, in-depth interview. All interviews were completed in person after we determined the potential concessions or drawbacks of online interviews could prove too great a detriment to rapport building (Josselson, 2013; Oliffe et al., 2021).

The unstructured interview included questions about family, social, and intimate relationships, and was designed to best understand participant Dominican American identity narratives within dominant American contexts and constructs. Consistent with the Listening Guide Method, this article is built around a singular research question, or, “Real Question” (Gilligan, 1989, p. 9). Gilligan (1989) defines a real question as one that requires us to have a desire for an answer and a need to enter into a conversation with another person. Within this article, the question posed to the participant women was: *How do you understand your individual identity narrative as*

a Dominican American woman? For us, this question spoke to the multiple, individual narratives of these participant women (Gilligan, 1989, 2011).

Procedure

The Listening Guide Method centers on the uncovering and analysis of the associated, empathetic voice of individual identity as it communicates with dominant cultural constructs (Graziano et al., 2018). Furthermore, this method acknowledges the uneasy communication of relationship between individual identity narratives and dominant American cultural narratives, which are often guided by stereotype (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). An outcome of this uneasy relationship is the understanding that individual narratives are shaped by dominant American cultural contexts and constructs and work to respond to the stereotypes that threaten their identity erasure (Gilligan, 1995; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017; Graziano et al., 2018).

As a method of discovery, generalizability is not the goal of the Listening Guide, and, “no claims are made about the origins of the differences described or their distribution in a wider population across cultures, or through time” (Gilligan, 1993, p. 2; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). The goal, then, is to uncover the “complexities of humans through attention to voice,” as it travels across time (Woodcock, 2016 p. 1). In order to do this, the Listening Guide asks us to look for locations within individual narratives where associations, dissociations, social linkages, and the use of the first person are catalysts to challenge or resist dominant cultural narratives (Squire, 2012; Woodcock, 2010, 2016).

Focus on changes in tone, cadence, language, and rhythm of first-person voices across time are crucial to the Listening Guide (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017; Gilligan, et al, 2006; Taylor et al., 1997). As a method, the Listening Guide allows us to “hear the difference between a voice that is an open channel—connected physically with breath and sound, psychologically with feelings and thoughts, and culturally with a resource of language—and a voice that is impeded or blocked” (Gilligan, 1993, p. xvi). In showing the complexity of the exploration of a first-person voice, the examples used to illustrate associations, disassociations, social linkages, and first-person voice will be reapplied here to illustrate the concepts of tone, cadence, language, and rhythm.

Data Analysis

To explore a first-person voice that is connected and open, the Listening Guide follows four discrete steps: (a) Interview transcription, (b) listening for the plot; (c) the creation of i poems; and (d) the creation of contrapuntal voices (Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). The use of four discrete steps leaves the method less vulnerable to errors and provides providing cross-data validity checks (Patton, 1999).

Listening for the Plot

During this first step after transcription, we asked several questions. What is happening? What themes dominate? What is not being said? In order to answer these questions effectively, we approached Listening for the Plot in two ways: (a) Through researcher self-reflexivity and (b) Attention to the voice of the participant in relationships to the researcher (Gilligan, 1993; Graziano et al., 2018).

Researcher reflexivity required us to assume a subjective stance, one where the participant is encouraged to communicate what they know (Gilligan, 1993, 2011, 2015; Taylor et al., 1997; Woodcock, 2016). Researcher reflexivity also acknowledged our strengths and limitations, as well

as our interpretation of these data (Garofalo & Graziano, 2023; Graziano et al., 2018). As Gilligan and Eddy (2021) note, listening *must* create trust, meaning “a practice driven by a genuine curiosity or desire to know and a willingness to take into yourself ways of conceiving the world that may fundamentally differ from and potentially challenge your own” (p. 145). Within, we accepted that the listenings created between us and the participants within this iteration of understanding would, could (and should) change given a different set of researchers (Gilligan, 2011; Graziano et al., 2018). In this way, the method is additive, not exhaustive, within its conceptualization and re-conceptualization of participant voices (Gilligan et al., 1995; Graziano et al., 2018).

For the method to be effective, we must be self-reflexive, acknowledging our person-in-context(s) and those places within our lives that bias might affect these data. We individually documented responses to the transcribed interviews, and we further documented how our experiences affected analysis (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2006). We recognized that the combination of individual experiences offered a more powerful qualitative analysis, and that our differences in interpretation needed to be discussed openly and curiously (Graziano et al., 2018; Woodcock, 2010).

In Listening for the Plot, we worked to gain an intimate understanding of what the interview is saying (Gilligan, 1992, 1993; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). It required us to be aware of our countertransference, noting the reactions, thoughts and feelings that emerged as they read (Graziano et al., 2018). As such, we focused on the places within the transcribed interview that participants felt both connected to and disconnected from the text (Gilligan, 2011; Graziano et al., 2018; Garofalo & Graziano, 2023). Additionally, we worked to understand how our identity and the research/participant context impacted the first-person voice of the interviewee and the resultant narrative (Gilligan, 1992).

Creation of I Poems

To further elucidate the first-person voice of the participant, we returned to the transcript for the creation of the I Poems (Gilligan, 1992, 1993). As defined by Gilligan, I Poems are composed of every “I” statement linked with a verb, and our kept in the order in which they appeared in the text (Gilligan, 1989). Additionally, relevant words beyond the “I” statement and verb can be included. We focused on the cadences and rhythms of the first-person voice since the method uncovers how the participant speaks to themselves (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2006). As example, one participant stated, “So I only knew Claudía, and when they said [my name], they were like, “Claudiadiadia what?” (Laughs). So, it became Claudia. I became Claudia, and I still am.” Here is the corresponding I Poem.

I only knew Claudía/ I became Claudia/ I still am

Unimpeded by the interview’s narrative structure, I Poem stanzas do not follow breaks within the interview transcript. Instead, we looked for shifts in tone, voice, rhythm, and pauses within the first-person stream of consciousness.

Creation of Contrapuntal Voices

We returned to the transcript with the compiled data, including the interview summary with the associated responses and the I Poems, listening for voices in relation to each other (Gilligan, 2011; Graziano et al., 2018). Specifically, we attended to locations in which the voices of the participants were in concert or in tension (Gilligan, 1992, 1993). The contrapuntal voices that

emerged from these data were then used as the framework for thematically discussing the results (Graziano et al., 2018; Randez, 2023).

It is the emergence of Contrapuntal Voices—after hours of labor-intensive collaboration and discussion between us, with our different identity markers, our unique, distinct, personal sound, cadence, and rhythm, that differentiates the Listening Guide, a method of first-person voice analysis, from a method of thematic analysis (Graziano et al., 2018; Gilligan, 1992, 1993). As a method of individual voice analysis, the creation and application of Contrapuntal Voices through the Listening Guide uncovered how these individual narratives communicated with larger dominant cultural narratives (Taylor et al., 1997). The complexity of this relationship and connection is heard through the careful analysis of changes in tone, shifts in voice, and variations in stance or perspective (Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017).

Results

Voice of Cultural Explanation

The *Voice of Cultural Explanation* was used by participant women when they shifted the discussion away from their Dominican American individual identity and centered narrative examples on lived experiences that communicated racial, ethnic, and gendered tensions within American contexts and constructs. These narrated lived experiences were centered on tensions created between the participants' individual understandings of Dominican American identity as they came in conflict with stereotyped American understandings of Dominican American identity.

Participant women narrated this conflict in several ways. First, participant women subtly shifted their language to explain their understandings of Dominican American identity. Beatrice's language shifted when faced with American stereotypes about Dominican food (bananas versus plantains). Claudia's language shifted when faced with American stereotypes about Dominican women and sexuality (Claudia versus Claudía). These subtle but powerful shifts in language were strongly aligned to both associations and dissociations within individual identity narratives and were used to create distance between Dominican and American selves. These associations and dissociations had strong social linkages, often to places of business or educational institutions. By centering their individual narratives within these social locations, participant women compared and contrasted their understandings of their Dominican American identity.

Early into Beatrice's college career, they realized many of the associations and dissociations embedded within individual understandings of Dominican American identity and the dominant cultural contexts and constructs of Dominican Americans. Beatrice framed this dissonance of Dominican American identity through food.

I was at [State University]. Um, once I became an art major, you know, they gave you a curriculum—these are the classes you have to take. Um, I had to take a nutrition class, so I was sitting there, and I don't remember what came up, but I remember what came up, but I remember the teacher saying something about bananas and how, um, you don't digest them well, or something like that. And I said, um—you know I raised my hand—and I was like, um, what about green bananas cuz we cook them. And this girl stood up, like very rude, and they said, 'You mean plantains.' And I said, no, bananas. And they was like, 'I think you mean plantains.' And I was like, no plantains are one thing and green bananas are another. And I realized that they, like, they didn't have to be rude to say it. Like, they was

almost looking down on me to say it. Like, I didn't know my own food or culture or how we call it.

As Beatrice attempted to assert their Dominican American narrative (We eat green bananas) within the university classroom, they were confronted with the stereotyped, cultural narratives and identity constructs of Dominicans held by American culture writ large (“Dominicans eat plantains” and, “to insist otherwise is ignorant”). At the intersection of Beatrice’s individual Dominican American identity narratives and American cultural identity narratives, their individual voice was challenged by stereotypes about Dominican culture. This stereotypical, dominant cultural challenge to Beatrice served four purposes: (a) To invalidate or disassociate Beatrice from their individual identity narrative; (b) to undermine their individual understanding of their Dominican American identity; (c) to maintain the cultural status quo through association by reinforcing dominant cultural understandings of Dominican culture through American stereotype; and (d) to flatten the Dominican American experience.

As evidence of this invalidation, Beatrice’s understanding of their Dominican American culture strained under pressure from the onslaught of the stereotyped American cultural constructs for Dominican Americans, vacillating between association/acceptance of this narrative (“I remember”) and disassociation/rejection with this narrative (“I said/I was”).

*I was/ I became/ I had/ I was
 I don't remember/ I remember/ I remember
 I said/ I raised/ I was/ I said / I was
 I said/ I was
 I realized/ I didn't*

Beatrice’s I Poems illustrated how their identity narrative moved from a confident past (I was/ I/ I/ I was), through a stereotyped challenge from American cultural narratives about Dominican Americans (I don’t remember/ I remember /I remember), to a forceful I response by Beatrice to this stereotyped challenge to their individual identity (I said/ I/ I was).

Beatrice's identity narrative and I Poems highlighted: (a) The struggle to maintain their individual Dominican American narrative in the face of strong American cultural resistance; and (b) assertion and defense of identity at the individual level: *I said I was* Dominican American. Their offered narrative, then associated with and dissociated from the stereotyped American constructs of Dominican identity. Said differently, the stereotyped American constructs of Dominican identity are essential, and centered in order for Beatrice to narrate how their individual narrative identity was markedly different from dominant, stereotyped American cultural contexts and constructs.

Claudia, drawn towards a career in advertising, found herself employed at a Hispanic marketing firm. Recalling this time, Claudia’s narrative addressed how working within a Hispanic organization exposed associations and dissociations within their identity at the intersection of their Dominican and American selves.

I didn't really experience anything. I work at a—talk about being sheltered—I work not by choice, by luck and coincidence—the place I finally got a job in cause I was sending my resume everywhere was a multiple dual advertising agency. So, we did Latino advertising. So, if anything, I started my process of retro-acculturation at that point because I started telling people my name is, well—my name is even still to my siblings—Claudia. Like, when you go out to a town that is predominantly

Black, Claudía doesn't. So I only knew Claudía, and when they said [my name], they were like, 'Claudiadiadia what?' (Laughs). So, it became Claudia. I became Claudia, and I still am for many people that I grew up, so I imagine me, a receptionist at a Hispanic agency, 'Thanks for calling, this is Claudia speaking.' My coworkers were like, 'What! Your mother would be ashamed cause your name is Claudía and you tell people it's Claudia.' So you need to learn how to say it. I couldn't say my own name for years cause I have lost it. Cause, like, Claudía with the 'í,' it took me—cause it's funny—cause I was, like, retraining yourself—so I went through a process of like, holy shit!—I'm in a, like, identity crisis. So, like, the time I spent at the agency—which was only, like, six months—was so good for me because it made me think about race and culture and, um, and why my hair being curly isn't so bad in a professional setting. Isn't so bad; it's who I am and everything—everything.

The shift in their name, from the Anglicized—Claudia ('klɔ:di:ə)—to the Latine—Claudía (klɔ:də)—was a powerful example of language, association, and disassociation informing individual and cultural identity narratives. Through language, in this case pronunciation, the intersection of Claudía's Dominican and American selves was revealed, since both names, although spelled nearly identical, are heard—and received—by the dominant American cultural contexts and constructs in different ways, each spelling having different roots and different privileged and marginalized social linkages.

Claudía further narrated this association and dissociation through changes in their appearance. Before working at the Hispanic marketing agency, there was Claudia, the woman with straightened hair. At the Hispanic marketing agency, there was Claudía, the woman with curly hair. This change in appearance read as both a powerful individual narrative of Dominican American identity and a response to dominant American cultural demands placed on Dominican American women, specifically, and women of color, broadly. While Claudía's narrative about their first professional experiences at the Hispanic agency spoke to their change from Claudia to Claudía, their I Poems told a strikingly different story.

*I didn't/ I work/ I work/ I finally/ I was/ I started
I only knew Claudía ('klɔ:di:ə)/ I became Claudia (klɔ:də)/ I still am
I grew/ I imagine me/ I couldn't say my own name
I have/ I was/ I went
I'm/ I spent/ I am/ I went*

Claudía's I Poem reflected the movement of identity from their Dominican to American self: They didn't know (what they were doing)/ they started work (at the Hispanic agency)/ they grew (professionally). Yet, a subset of the poem captured the internal tension for Claudía in defining identity at the intersection of individual and dominant cultural narratives about Dominican Americans.

*I only knew Claudía/ I became Claudia/ I still am
I grew up/ I imagine me/ I couldn't say my own name*

Embedded within Claudía's individual narrative is an I Poem that captured the tension of association, dissociation, and social linkage, with their I voice coming to rest definitively on dominant cultural identity narratives (I became Claudia/ I still am). The pairing of the narrative text with the I Poems calls attention to the complexity of this intersection; Claudía navigated the line between their Dominican and American selves, with their narrative aligned with Claudía, but their I Poems aligned with Claudia. In doing so, they vacillated between association with and disassociating from their Dominican American identity. This is particularly acute when their identity was linked to employment.

After discussing their name transformation, Claudía discussed moving from a Hispanic agency to a non-Hispanic agency and discussed racism. Their discussion of racism emerged simply and directly (I went to work at a general market agency and that's where I felt racism) and their I Poem supported this straightforward interpretation.

I went/ I felt racism

To illustrate the depth of the racism they experienced in this non-Hispanic agency—and its profound influence on their Dominican American identity—Claudía provided a detailed, lengthy narrative, one that clearly links their Dominican and American selves. Throughout the narrative, Claudía's voice revealed the complexity of emotions elicited by the racism they experienced and their attempts to protect the salient parts of their Dominican American identity.

I'm 22 years old and I'm very... I mean, I won't say anything. I was going to say, I am very aware, but aware in my telling. Um, so it wasn't, like, racism was a part of my life and I had not seen it. It was just that really never was a part of my life, um, directly in front of me, at least. So, I get this job and that's where I learned to say Claudia instead of Claudía cause Claudia is a lot easier on the Caucasian tongue. Actually, so one of my bosses, I introduced myself as Claudia for a long time—and he's like Claudía—and I'm like, oh shit, that's awesome! So yeah, that's who I am today. Um, I was there for probably—well, I stood out. I think there was... no diversity in the agency and I didn't really feel like—whatever. There literally were no—there was one other Latino and he worked in a different department. I introduced myself as Claudía. And of course we gravitated towards each other and actually dated at some point (three second pause), but it was fine until the day—six months into my job [my boss] wanted to give me a review—like an impromptu review. So he takes me out to lunch, or a light meal I should say. Nice guy; he hired me. Um, he always looked out for me. He always (stutters)... I always had to believe that he had my best interest in mind. Um, he takes me out to lunch and he says 'you know, you're great. You're smart; you're going to make it far in the industry because you get it. You're a hard worker...' Blah blah blah—all these great things. He goes, 'what I wanted to talk to you about—or the reason why I brought you out of the agency is because I wanted to talk to you about something that I would probably get fired if HR knew that I was saying this.' And I was like, Ok. And he's like 'here's the thing. You're young. You're a good-looking girl. And the thing you have to realize is that in that agency, you stick out like a sore thumb.' He's like, 'when you walk into a meeting room, you grab attention. Not doing anything besides being there.

Because of that, you have to be really careful.’ He’s like ‘I know that the others girls, they wear tight pants—and it’s normal in the industry—but you have to realize, on you, they’re different.’ He’s like, ‘they can wear it cause they have no body, but you, you’re curvy. And I’ve seen how the older white women look at you when you walk into a room. Like, they look at you and it’s almost like, to this date, they just look away. You know, after you get into the meeting and see that you’re smart and deny that, it is what it is. Like, impressions are important, but maybe you should consider wearing your hair straight and the clothes that you wear...’ Yeah. And he’s like, ‘I’m not racist. I know I’m not racist—not that you’re taking this—but I’m saying to you, in your best interest. In my town, where I grew up, Cincinnati, there was one black guy and he was one of my best friends.’ And I’m like, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I’m 22, ok? And in my heart of hearts—not because this is the only time I’m experiencing this—but because I’ve been given no reason to believe that he meant any ill. I really felt like he was doing me a favor. So we get done with the meeting, and I was just broken inside. And I couldn’t tell for a while. And I was dating [the counselor] again—and this was after being off for a while—and now we’re back on and I went back to his apartment and I just couldn’t. And he was like ‘do you realize what’s happening?’ And I was like, what? What!? And he’s like, ‘it’s eating you up inside! You don’t see what is in front of your face! He’s being racist towards you! It doesn’t matter if his intentions were good, it was still racism!’ So I called my best friend and I was talking to their about it. I started crying—and I couldn’t believe this was happening—and at that point I resolved to leave that agency because I wanted to pull away from that world. I went back to another Hispanic agency for three years. And, you know, the three years, they were three important years of my life. And I grew a lot during the process. Eventually, I realized that I was running away from the problem.

Initially, Claudía appeared to acquiesce, their voice of Dominican American identity shrank in size next to their American (White) male supervisor. Only later, when their male partner framed the experience as racism and they expressed emotion, did the gravity of the event weigh on them: A gendered, sexualized, stereotyped narrative of their Dominican American identity was imposed on them and pitted against an understanding of self as a professional.

Professional Claudia—with straight hair and plain clothes—was used against Claudía, the curly-haired Dominican American woman who flaunts their curves and sexuality. As the tension between Claudía’s individual narrative and stereotyped American narratives tried to dissociate them from their understanding of self, they moved away from the marketing agency, broke this social link, left “that world” and, by extension, returned to a Dominican American identity and understanding of self. Claudía’s I Poems reflect the tension of association and dissociation:

*I’m/ I’m/ I mean/ I won’t/ I was/ I am/ I had/ I get/ I learned/ I introduced/
I’m/ I am/ I was
I stood out
I think/ I didn’t
I introduced/ I should/ I always/ I was
I’m/ I’m / I’m experiencing/ I’ve / I really/ I was*

*I couldn't/ I was
 I went/ I just/ I was
 I called/ I was
 I started/ I couldn't
 I resolved/ I wanted/ I went
 I grew
 I realized/ I was*

As Claudía reflected on who they were, their I Poems became even more powerful (I only knew Claudía/ I became Claudia/ I still am). However, when Claudía resolved to leave this agency for a Hispanic agency (I resolved/ I wanted/ I went), it highlighted not just a rejection of their racist and sexist supervisor, but a dissolving of the social linkages from the negative dominant cultural narratives used to define their person. Armed with the perspective of time, Claudía reflected on how they came to associate this experience with individual Dominican American identity narrative.

Afterwards, we stayed in touch—he followed my career and he was my reference on jobs cause, I thought, in my heart of hearts, he meant well. But then, one day, I just woke up and I was like fuck you! You're older. You should've known better. Now, I know. I know after how long that it was fucked up. And it was probably his opinion and no one else's... so I cut him off at that point. Took him off my Facebook, took off of everything. Except LinkedIn cause it was a professional thing and I did work for him, so whatever. Um, it was a really hard pill to swallow. It was a slap in the face.

Within, Claudía spoke forcefully (I was like fuck you!), firmly (I cut him off at that point), and emotionally (It was a slap in the face). At first, Claudía associated; they remained in touch with their supervisor to conform to expectations about what it means to be a professional. However, embedded within Claudía's individual narrative is the dissociative resistance to this dominant cultural narrative. Claudía was aware of what they thought and who they were. The repeated assertion of their first-person voice (I know, I know, I cut him off, I did) was a dissociation from allowing dominant cultural understandings of female Dominican American identity to define their person. Claudía continues:

I think I became a lot more aware. I think the tunnel vision that I had my whole life—up to that point—just, like, disappeared. I was like, it's real, it's definitely out there, even though afterwards—for a long time—I was saying, it was just him. Just one person out of everyone there. Um, but then I think you start to think about—you start to wonder—and you start to read into what people say. You know, I did start noticing at that point, like, how people looked, or what people said, or, you know, whatever. I think you just become a lot more aware. And that's it. I would never hold one dumb person's point of view against an entire race. It's not like I became a hateful person. I just became really aware.

Claudía's thinking led to a deeper awareness of the intersection of their Dominican American identity:

I think
I became/ I think
I had/ I was/ I was/ I was/ I think
I did/ I think
I would/ I became/ I just became

This is evidenced by both their communicated awareness (I think I became a lot more aware) as well as awareness within their “I” voice (I became/I think; I became/ I just became). Within, Claudia’s deeper understanding allowed them to make choices that supported their Dominican American identity.

Tides of Dominican American Female Identity

The *Tides of Dominican American Female Identity* emerged at two different points during the interview. The first was in early childhood; the second was several years into work or graduate school. The *Tides of Dominican American Female Identity* emerged when participant women discussed individual identity narratives that marked them as different from the dominant American cultural contexts and constructs in which they operated. Like a rhythmic tide, the *Tides of Dominican American Female Identity* took on a recognizable tone and cadence as they flowed through the offered individual identity narratives of these participant women.

Tina articulated this cultural ebb and flow at the earliest point among the participant women, yet the individual narratives of all six Dominican American women voiced the *Tides of Dominican American Female Identity*. Tina discussed their difficult childhood experience of moving from the Dominican American neighborhood of Washington Heights in New York City to a racially White, middle-class suburban township in Northern New Jersey. Speaking about the struggles of understanding their physical appearance in this new social location, they discussed a shift in their identity narrative through the *Tides of Dominican American Female Identity*.

I remember all that stuff because I was terrified (laughs). Um, when we first moved here, this town was predominantly, I wanna say, white. Um, there weren't that many Asians and if there were, there were few, so I remember—and I remember that vividly—and there's stuff I remember before kindergarten that my parents, they like, 'How the heck do you remember this'—and how—cause it was traumatizing! Hello, you don't forget those things. Um, I remember going to class and I was—I used to be tall—cause everybody used to like... I was a tall kid for a kindergartener and then I was—my skin, complexion, my hair, and everybody around me was light skinned, either blue eyes and pin straight hair. And I have this Afro, curly hair (laughs touching hair) so it was... it was different. And then I was speaking more Spanish than English so that was part of the other issues. So I had to do, like, ESL (English as a Second Language) and stuff like that.

Tina fell into a rhythm of laughter when providing this personal identity narrative (I was terrified (laughs)/ I have this Afro, curly hair (laughs touching hair)). Here, the rhythmic laughter set Tina's identity apart (My skin, complexion, my hair; I have this Afro) from their peers (Everybody around me was light-skinned; either blue eyes and pin straight hair). The image of a dark-skinned, dark-eyed girl with an Afro awash in a sea of light-skinned, light-eyed children with

pin straight hair was powerful. Tina's I Poems revealed why they remember these experiences some two decades later:

*I remember
 I was terrified/ I wanna/ I remember
 I remember/ I remember/ I remember*

Here, the rolling cadence of remembering emphasized the significance of the memory and the emotions embedded within it. Even in kindergarten, Tina recognized their identity narrative as different, carrying the differences uncovered within their individual narrative into adulthood (You don't forget those things).

Renee lived with their Dominican American husband and two sons in a mostly white, upper-middle-class suburb. Renee's individual narrative addressed their role as a mother of two elementary school aged children and how they believed their Dominican American individual narratives were interpreted by the dominant culture.

I don't because my kids. They, um, I—they're dressed, like, very regular. They don't act, you know, my son's not like, "yo, what's up?" He doesn't talk like that. He's—they're very neutral. I feel like they're very neutral. They don't...I, they're just very neutral. Like, my son realizes, yes, you know that, ok, fine, he's Dominican. My daughter, I don't know if they still accepts it, but, they're just very neutral. They're friends with everybody.

Renee's repeated and rhythmic use of the word neutral (They're just very neutral) implied—at least for their children—an inherent value in being perceived as neutral (They're friends with everybody). Yet, for Renee to accept that there is value in neutral individual identity implied that Dominican American narratives are charged. Renee implied as much when they used social linkages to stereotypes about Latine identity. Renee did this when they narrated what their children are not (They don't act—you know my son's not like, 'yo, what's up?' He doesn't talk like that). Renee eventually concluded that it does not matter whether they are aware of their Dominican American identity because they are neutral (Like, my son realizes, yes, you know that, ok, fine, he's Dominican. My daughter, I don't know if they still accepts it, but, they're just very neutral.)

In the context of their narrative, Renee used neutrality to signal the racial and ethnic ambiguity of their children and a perceived fluidity of identity between a Dominican and an American self. For example, despite asserting fluid neutrality and acceptance for their children (They are friends with everybody.), Renee took pains to explain how their identity does not fit into their community.

I just feel it with me and my husband, we walk to somewhere where there's a lot of parents and then, I just feel, like, they look at us, like, kids. Because... we're a good ten years younger than most of them and that's very—I, I—most of them are in their mid, mid and upper 40's. So I don't, I am a member of the PTA, but I don't go to the meetings (laughs). Because I'm afraid that, like, I'm going to walk in, I've seen some of them and I'm like... no way. No way. These moms just look... I'm like I can't. So, I don't even; I don't. But my husband is the opposite. My husband is very involved. With my son's sports, he's there, and I don't know. He's very, like, there. I

mean he loves it. I'm the opposite. I'm like, um, I don't know about these moms. I don't... I guess, so I, I stay away. But my husband, everybody, if it wasn't for him—I like—people know me through him. He's very involved; he knows all the people. He's on the field—he's totally in. I'm...on the bleachers like, yeah... that, like people don't even know that's my husband and my son. I don't mingle with the other moms.

Renee, sitting in silence on the bleachers, receded into a sea of white PTA mothers a decade their senior while their husband advanced onto the playing field, is a powerful, comparative image. This contrast communicated the ebb and flow at the intersection of ethnicity, race, and gender. Renee's individual narrative indicated that their husband is *allowed to advance despite* his ethnicity and gender, while Renee *receded into a sea of white mothers because* of their ethnicity and gender. A similar dynamic—one where Dominican American men are included and women excluded, is powerfully echoed in the ebbs and flows of available research and scholarship. When Renee's related I Poems are placed in relationship to this narrative, the rhythm and cadence of Renee's individual narrative became visible.

*I don't
I—/ I feel/ I—/ I don't
I just feel/ I just feel/ —I/ I— / I don't
I am/ I don't
I'm afraid/ I'm/ I've/ I'm/ I'm/ I can't
I don't/ I don't/ I don't
I mean/ I'm/ I'm/ I don't
I don't
I guess/ I—/ I stay way/ I like/ I'm/ I don't*

The rhythm of Renee's I Poems always came to rest on the refrain of, "I don't." When the I Poems are paired with the full narrative, it is clear that, "I don't" reflected both Renee's want for their children to be neutral—I *don't* want my children to be seen as Dominican American—and, unlike their husband, their own difficulty fitting in with the other mothers—I *don't* belong with the neutral moms. Said differently, the narrated neutrality of their children allowed Renee to advance, while their own narrated Dominican American female identity means they receded.

As further evidence, the following is Renee's narrative for their husband (He and Husband statements). This form of He Poems was crucial to capture the narrated differences of gender and further illuminate a blind spot in research and scholarship for women.

He's/ He's/ He loves/ He's/ He knows/ He's on/ He's totally in

Like in research and scholarship, it becomes clear that Renee's husband occupied a different social and cultural location, and this is further evidence of how this same rhythm and cadence worked for those who are included. When placed together, Renee did not belong (receding) while their husband was totally in (advancing).

The rhythm and cadence of Marla's identity changed as they changed contexts. During the interview, Marla discussed the locations within their individual narrative where they felt they must acquiesce to the dominant American cultural contexts and constructs. During the interview, Marla spoke in plain language about a resistance to this acclimation, and, in particular, to what being American meant for their individual Dominican American identity narrative.

You get questioned a lot about your culture, or I—it's almost like they expect you to acclimate more to being more American and to identify—I will not identify—like, I was born here and I'm a US citizen, and I absolutely love the USA—red, white, and blue... go America—whatever, um... but everyone always like, I—some people would ask me, like, why don't you ever say you're American? You were born here—cause I identify myself as being Dominican. I, it's just... how I grew up. I speak Spanish; I speak English, both with ease. It's not—I don't say it to offend anybody, but I don't consider myself, like, for me saying American is like saying I'm white. Yeah, I don't know.

For Marla, to be American was to be white (American is like saying I'm white). After this assertion, Marla was asked what it meant to be Dominican American. In response:

I just—the culture, the food, the music—even in the, um, the slang like you—I can, if I hear someone talk Spanish, I can tell when you're Dominican (laughs). I think just overall, in general, somebody who's American—I've noticed all—like, I hang out a lot with my family, that's a very big thing for us. Like, I go out a lot, but it's not like I'm out with friends. Everyone I hang with is like 'this is my cousin,' I'm, like too, oh well, this is my cousin and this is my other cousin, and this is also my cousin and this is my cousin, too. And I don't see that with a lot of my other friends, even with different races, not just American or African American or however they identify themselves as. Um, we're very family-oriented—which I don't see a lot anymore outside Dominican friends that I have, which makes me a little bit sad, but, if that's your life then that's your life and that's fine. Um, food is a big thing that goes along with the whole, um, family. Um, I just even, I don't know—social activities and stuff like that.

The I Poems followed a familiar rhythm and cadence:

*I/I will/I was/ I'm a US citizen/ I absolutely love the USA
 I/I identify myself as being Dominican/I/ I grew
 I speak Spanish/ I speak English/ I don't
 I don't
 I'm/ I don't
 I just/ I can/ I hear/ I can/ I think/ I've/ I hang/ I go/ I'm/ I hang/ I'm/ I
 don't
 I don't
 I have/ I just/ I don't*

As with Renee, the same cadence and rhythm, where the I Poems end on “I don't” emerged. For Marla, there was a distancing from American identity—I don't identify as American. In other words, embedded within Marla's I Poems was a resistance to dominant American identity contexts and constructs. This resistance was heard through their identification with those tenets of Dominican American culture that set their identity apart from their American peers (understanding of language, social circles, and concepts of family).

Limitations and Discussion

Limitations

This analysis is not without limits. It was notably limited by both participation requirements and the methodology chosen for analysis. Participation requirements related to education excluded women who did not attend college, limiting a large number of Dominican American experiences, and particularly limiting socioeconomic diversity. Further, the exclusion of Dominican American men and non-binary individuals from the sample, while appropriate given the paucity of research about Dominican American women, further limits the simple generalizability of these data.

While the goal of the Listening Guide Method of Qualitative Inquiry is not generalizability, the method itself, with its requirements of intense collaboration, multiple readings, acceptance of multiple perspectives, creation of, and agreement on, themes or voices, is cumbersome, greatly exceeding the amount time required of similar qualitative methods of inquiry. Further, the amount of time required for analysis using this method greatly limits the sampling size. However, with the limitations of the Listening Guide Method noted, we believe this to be the most appropriate method for the study of the individual identity narratives included within this study. As a method, the Listening Guide is successful in allowing for the analysis of individual narratives that inform the discourse between those in the margins and those in the seat of political and social privilege.

Discussion

Drawing from themes across these six participant interviews, two distinct voices, *the Voice of Cultural Explanation* and the *Tides of Dominican American Female Identity*, emerged from these data. Collectively, participant voices illuminated locations within personal and cultural narratives that forced 1.5- and second-generation, Dominican American women to communicate how they balanced identity narratives at the intersection of Dominican and American selves (Gilligan, 1989, 1992, 1995, 2023; Gilligan & Eddy, 2021; Jones et. al, 2012; Randez, 2023; Tolman & Head, 2021).

When the Dominican American participant women used the *Voice of Cultural Explanation*, the discussion of their identity reflected broad cultural tensions in their daily lives. Central to this voice was the use of association, dissociation, and social linkage to reject or embrace stereotyped ideas of Dominican American identity (Cruz, 2021; González Rodríguez, 2021). The offered examples, culled from two participant women, illustrate how Dominican American women navigated through the contradictions and tensions present between an understanding of self as a Dominican American woman and how dominant American contexts and constructs understand this same identity (Cruz, 2021; Hammack, 2011; Tolman & Head, 2021). Consistent with the literature, this tension often resulted in the silencing or dismissal of some or all individual narratives of Dominican American identity (Bochner, 2012; Gilligan, 2023; Gilligan, Kreider, & O'Neill, 1995).

This silencing and/or dismissal was communicated to the participant women through: (a) American revision or insistence of a different Dominican American cultural narrative (Dominicans eat plantains); (b) questioning of place or role within dominant cultural contexts or constructs (I grew up/ I imagine/ I couldn't say my own name) and; (c) challenging of stereotype-driven dominant narratives about Dominican American culture (I know/I know/I cut him off/I did). Importantly, the silencing and dismissal expressed by the participant women is reflected in the research, which continues to focus on broader racial categories of study or Dominican American

men (Butler, 1988; Cruz, 2021; Gilligan, 2011, 2023; González Rodríguez, 2021; Graziano et al., 2018).

Dominican American participant women used the *Tides of Dominican American Female Identity* to express strong emotions that manifested within their personal narratives as unwanted distance from either the Dominican or American parts of their person. Central to this voice was a rhythm and cadence of expression (laughter) or language (I don't). The offered examples, culled from three women, illustrated an ebb and flow, one of receding or advancing, with participants coming to reject and embrace parts of their Dominican and American selves (Ramos, 2020; Graziano et al., 2018; Randez, 2023; Tolman & Head, 2021).

The ebb and flow surfaced within these data when: (a) Changes in social location challenged existing ideas about individual identity (Everybody around me was light skinned, either blue eyes and pin straight hair; I had to do, like, ESL); (b) current social locations required identity accommodation to dominant cultural contexts and constructs (Like, my son realizes, yes, you know that, ok, fine, he's Dominican. My daughter, I don't know if they still accept it, but, they're just very neutral.); or (c) engaged in cultural contexts or constructs coded by participants as Dominican American (I just—the culture, the food the music—even in the, um, the slang like you—I can, if I hear someone talk Spanish, I can tell when you're Dominican). Within, there is evidence of a tide like an ebb and flow of both feeling (I—/ I feel/ I—/ I don't) or identity (I'm a US citizen/ I absolutely love the USA/ I—/ I identify myself as being Dominican). This voice, too, spoke to available research on Dominican Americans, who are forced to choose identity categories that do not speak to individual understandings of identity (Gilligan, 1992, 1995, 2023; Gilligan & Eddy, 2021; Tolman & Head, 2021).

Taken together, these voices reflected the aversive racism and sexism that saturates the dominant American narrative (and, more specifically, available research and scholarship). Broadly, a white, male-centric narrative of the American meritocracy and egalitarianism (Cruz, 2021; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Further, the voices reflected the emotional toll of navigating and reconciling individual identity in the face of near-constant microaggressions and microinsults (Guarnizo et al., 2003; Ramos, 2020; Squire, 2012).

Future Directions and Conclusion

Future Directions

The social, academic, and psychological difficulties associated with trying to define a hyphenated self through the social and political culture are well documented (Chavez, 2013; Dawani & Loots, 2021; Dillon, 1990; Gilligan & Eddy, 2021; Squire, 2012). Yet, at the core of the individual narrative struggling to find meaning and identity within the self is the ability of research to acknowledge the power that same individual brings to challenging and resisting dominant American contexts and constructs (Chavez, 2013; Dawani & Loots, 2021; Tolman & Head, 2021). Challenging these assumptions, these data reveal that the historic—and continued—reliance on binary constructions within research will inevitably exclude complex and intersecting individual narratives (Josselson, 2023; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). It seems the privileging of control, explanation, and quantification over human connection has come at a price within research, one that needs to be identified (Gilligan, 1995, 2011, 2023; Gilligan, Kreider, & O'Neill, 1995; Graziano et al., 2018). Reflective of this method: it needs to be given voice (Gilligan, 2023; Taylor et al., 1995; Tolman & Head, 2021).

Through our recognition of the power individual narratives bring to the challenging of dominant cultural contexts and constructs, we offer three implications for which these data and resulting analysis can serve future research.

1. Explore complex and intersecting individual narratives as a vehicle by which to critique dominant cultural contexts and constructs, both within the United States and internationally.
2. Shift away from binary and hyphenated constructions within research that inevitably exclude complex and intersecting individual narratives.
3. Engage social science research in ways that promote researchers as agents for change who support the inherent strength of individual identity narratives to help guide research toward addressing complex cultural issues.

Conclusion

As a method, the Listening Guide is successful in allowing for the analysis of individual narratives that inform the discourse between those with marginalized identities and those in the seat of political and social privilege. Further, the Listening Guide, as a feminist methodology, is well-suited to the investigation of a group relatively silenced and dismissed within research and scholarship. Yet, within these data, a singular identity narrative in relationship to dominant American contexts and constructs was unable to explain the narratives of these participant women. While this certainly supports the history of Dominican Americans in the United States, with their arrival challenging binary ideas of identity, the complexity of the expressed narratives of these participant women is notable.

Participant women challenged and resisted the posed “Real Question” by shifting to social contexts and constructs that more appropriately captured the multidimensional nature of their narratives. Further, participant women narrated multiple cultural, internal, and global tensions of individual identity narratives as they worked in relationship to the dominant American cultural contexts and constructs.

This method, as intended, continued to address gender in relationship to the patriarchy. This was most clearly evidenced by Claudía’s identity narrative. When their male supervisor asserted that they are smart, going to make it in the industry, and are a hard worker, it is assumed that these qualities are atypical within Dominican American identity. Later, when their male supervisor stated they are a young, good-looking girl, their tight pants are different, and that older white women judge they are being defined by American identity narratives that reinforce racial, ethnic, and gender-driven stereotypes. Deploying these stereotypes, their male supervisor used white women as a shield from patriarchy-driven dominant American identity narratives about Dominican women, specifically, and Latine women, generally. Claudía is forced to incorporate American racist and sexist identity narratives of Dominican American women at odds with their understanding of self.

However, the application of The Listening Guide and its understanding of different voices must shift away from a singular voice about gender in relationship to the patriarchy (as the method originally intended). Evidence of this shift in method, one designed to capture cultural contexts and constructs, is seen through the inclusion of the He Poems for Renee’s husband. This shift in stance away from the I Voice served as another powerful tool to better understand what is being said within the context that frames the narratives of these Dominican American women. Thus, just as Renee used their first-person voice to address tense spaces between how the dominant culture treats them versus their husband, the method *must* shift towards a greater understanding of the multidimensional voice(s) narrating the tense space *between* the individual voice and dominant

cultural contexts and constructs. Renee’s powerful individual narrative was data in support of this shift; this additional perspective illustrated that their husband is *allowed* to participate *despite* his ethnicity, while they remain quite literally sidelined *because* of their ethnicity *and* gender. Future studies using the Listening Guide should apply this currently underutilized tool of cultural analysis.

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Notes on Contributors

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