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Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development has been peer-reviewed by CAPEA and endorsed by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership as a significant contribution to the preparation and practice of education leaders.

Notes from the Volume 34 Editors

Noni Mendoza Reis and Becky Sumbera

This year marks the 34th publication of *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development: The Journal of the California Association of Professors of Educational Administration (CAPEA)*. Volume 34 of the CAPEA journal pursued the publication of articles in four focal areas including preparing educational leaders, diversity and social justice, technology racial data justice and advocacy. After a double-blind and rigorous review process, the editors accepted a very strong set of contributions. Volume 34 also includes a book review, and a very special "In Memoriam" essay of Dr. Louis Wildman, a founding member of the CAPEA organization.

As those with the responsibility of preparing future school leaders, we recognize the vulnerability of public education to political trends and the need to continue to advocate for schools that are just and equitable. Aspiring school leaders face academic inequities aggravated by the pandemic and on-going threats by ideological extremists that, if not resolutely engaged, may result in a *public education industrial complex*. Such a system will only exacerbate a tiered classification of education that will further marginalize students from families situated in poverty and racialized communities. In this volume, we offer articles that address leadership preparation and development for equitable schools.

In the first section on preparing educational leaders, the article *The Four R's of Leader Efficacy in Challenging Times*, reports current principals and graduates of an Ed.D. program regarding their perceptions of what contributes to the development of leader self-efficacy and how programs can develop leadership self-efficacy. The researcher used Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and Paglis and Green's three-dimensional construct for LSE served as the conceptual framework.

The next section includes two articles on diversity and social justice. In *The Latina Superintendent's Ethical Problem Solving for Equity and Social Justice*, the author used Chicana feminist theory to analyze how six Latina school leaders solved ethical problems while advocating for equitable education for minoritized students. The article, *Lessons from the Field: Understanding Equity Through the Pandemic from the Perspectives of Female Leaders*, examined female superintendents' experiences with ensuring equity at the beginning of the pandemic.

In the third section on technology and racial data justice, the article *The Internet isn't a Luxury Anymore: How Educational Leaders Can Promote Equitable Digital Access for all Students*, focuses on the digital divide that persists among students and how the gap grew during COVID-19. This paper considers the other ways that leaders can support digital access.

The fourth section on advocacy includes the article, *Can You Hear Me? Imperative Conversations on the Amplification of Marginalized Student Voices to Ensure Student Agency*. Using the findings from studies on Arab American youth as well as migrant youth in America, this qualitative exploratory study examines the factors that can better equip our schools, administrators, and teachers to help minority youth succeed. Also included in this section is the article, *Discipline disproportionality in Rural Schools in the South*. This study examined principal responses to their schools' disproportionate discipline data.

Volume 34 concludes with two additional submissions - a book review and special memoriam to Dr. Louis Wildman.

Dr. Christine Clayton from PACE University reviewed, *Community-Owned Knowledge: The Promise of Collaborative Action by Gilberto Arriaza and Lyn Scott*. The review notes the central argument of the text, "the power of knowledge owned and produced through the process of collaborative research and focused on solving community problems". We close Volume 34 with a tribute to Dr. Louis Wildman, a founding member of the CAPEA organization. Thank you, Dr. Wayne Padover, for representing CAPEA members in honoring Dr. Wildman's legacy.

Finally, this volume would not have been possible without the efforts of numerous people. We thank all of the authors who contributed manuscripts. A very special thank you is offered to the editors, reviewers and copy editor who worked tirelessly in the review and editing of all submissions. Finally, this journal would not exist without the support of ICPEL and ICPEL Publications, especially Brad Bizell, who has been an invaluable member of the team.

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The Four Rs of Leader Efficacy

Lori Kall
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Self-efficacy is considered a key component for successful leadership; however, educational leadership doctoral programs do not often focus on leader self-efficacy (LSE) for principals. The purpose of this study was to understand perceptions of Ed.D. alumni who are currently principals regarding what contributed to the development of leader self-efficacy (LSE) and how programs can develop LSE. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and Paglis and Green's three-dimensional construct for LSE served as the conceptual framework. The results of this study may provide insights for programs into how LSE can be developed in a doctorate and thereby improve student academic outcomes.

Keywords: leader self-efficacy, principalship, Education Doctorate, self-efficacy, leadership

The leader of a K-12 school has many challenges and responsibilities to lead its teachers, staff, and students towards success. To lead successfully, a principal has been found to be a catalyst for change to enhance and transform the culture of the school positively towards the outcome of improved student learning (McKinney et al., 2015; Tingle et al., 2019). The effective leadership of a principal has been found to improve overall school performance (Fullan, 2014; Mesterova et al., 2015) as well as enhance the performance of troubled schools (Cordeiro & Cunningham, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004; Mattar, 2012). Self-efficacy was found to be a key element in successful leadership (Dwyer, 2019). According to the claims of the social cognitive theory, when a principal has high self-efficacy, they engage in challenging responsibilities and tasks, and even more important, they persist through barriers (Bandura, 1986; Paglis & Green, 2002). Self-efficacy has been found to be a crucial perspective for a leader, to be able to view oneself in a principal's role, and therefore, motivate themselves as well as others to make the right choices and decisions (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Fowler et al., 2020). As the principalship is a complicated and challenging role, preparation can build the self-efficacy and competence necessary to fulfill the role (Allen, 2020). Principal preparation programs, professional development within schools and districts, leadership programs, and doctoral programs have all been a part of the preparation landscape for principals over the years in the United States. Principals prepared in doctoral programs have been found to be more effective in developing high-quality teacher teams resulting in greater student learning gains (Allen, 2020; Fuller et al., 2011; Ni et al., 2017). However, principal preparation programs and doctoral programs have been critiqued for a lack of rigor and effectiveness to prepare leaders for success (Levine, 2005; Mango et al., 2019; Pérez & Breault, 2018; Perrone & Tucker, 2019). Many studies have researched what a successful school leader does (Gurr, 2017; Leithwood, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2017; Leithwood, 2019), but not how they learn and develop leader self-efficacy in a doctoral program. This study will explore the perspectives of doctoral graduates and their development of leader self-efficacy as a K- 12 principal within their program.

Problem and Purpose

The research problem is that educational leadership programs have not intentionally focused on leader self-efficacy as a program outcome (Seibert et al., 2017), although self-efficacy is considered a key component for successful leaders (Dwyer, 2019). The connection between participating in a doctoral program and building leader self-efficacy is not understood and limited in research. McCormick et al. (2002) found that leadership self-efficacy predicted leadership behavior and distinguished leaders in different fields from non-leaders. Leader self-efficacy can be developed, and leadership development programs may be more effective if more was understood about the development of leadership self-efficacy (Mango et al., 2019). This study may help fill a gap in the research by exploring the perceptions of doctoral program alumni regarding how their educational leadership program supported the development of their leader self-efficacy in their current role as a K-12 leader. The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to understand graduates' perceptions of their education doctoral program and how their participation in their program developed their leader self- efficacy as a current school leader as well as suggestions they had for how doctoral programs can develop leader self-efficacy in school leaders.

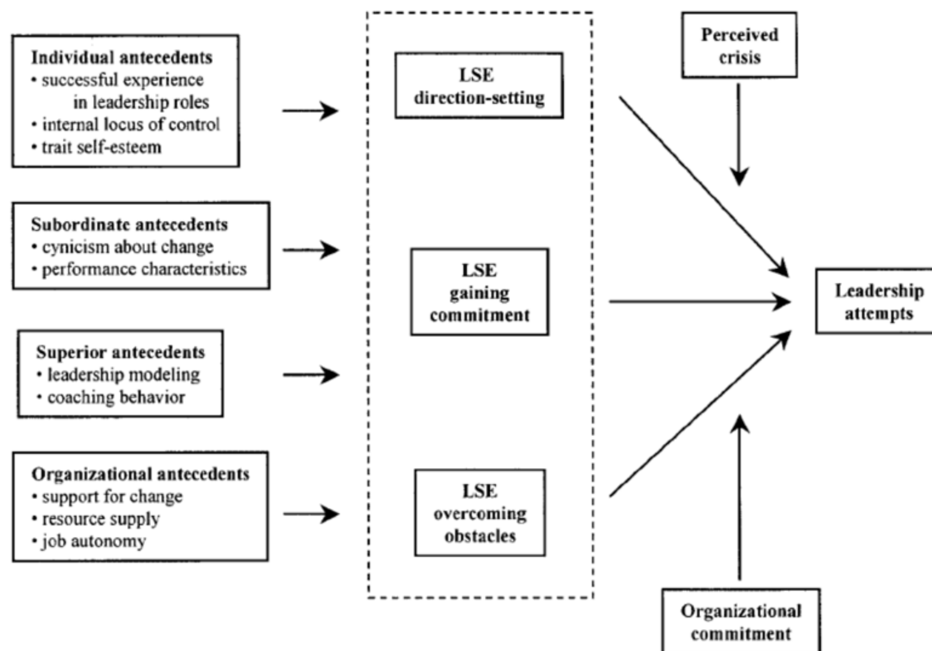
Research Question

What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how their program developed their leader self-efficacy to navigate challenges as a current leader/principal?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was drawn from Bandura's theory (1977) of self-efficacy as well as Paglis and Green's (2002) three-dimensional construct for leader self-efficacy (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



Bandura asserted that expectations of personal efficacy determined the initiation of coping behavior, how much work would be expended, and for how long. Paglis and Green defined the construct of leadership self-efficacy and developed a three-dimensional measurement used in their study based on Bandura's social cognitive theory. Paglis and Green's study tested their leadership self-efficacy model that focused on manager's motivation for attempting the leadership of change. The assessment included direction-setting, gaining commitment, and overcoming obstacles. These three dimensions of Paglis and Green and Bandura's theory guided interview questions and probes.

Methods

The criteria for participation in this study was current K-12 leaders in districts with at least 3-7 years of leadership experience who have also graduated from a doctoral education leadership program in California. Saturation was reached with 10 qualified participants who agreed to participate were interviewed. To address the research questions, I relied on a

qualitative research design and focused on interviews with 10 school leaders, 2 male and 3 female with four to 16 years of experience as principals in a California school, having reached saturation. Two of the 10 participants were Hispanic, one was Asian, and the remaining were Caucasian and included both high school and elementary school site principals. Participant's doctoral programs were completed at either a private university or a state school (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Institution	Specialization
Eric	Public	EdD in Educational Leadership
Karen	Private	EdD
Justin	Private	EdD in Organizational Leadership
Anita	Private	EdD in Educational Leadership
Cathy	Private	EdD
Caroline	Private	EdD in Organizational Leadership
Janet	Private	EdD in Organizational Leadership
John	Private	EdD in Organizational Leadership
Elizabeth	Private	EdD in Educational Leadership
Loren	Private	EdD in Educational Leadership

Data was analyzed through thematic analysis across six steps: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and writing up the results (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Keywords were used for coding and then codes were categorized to highlight keywords across all interviews. I formed categories related to themes and completed several reviews of the transcripts to check for themes overlooked (see Table 2).

Table 2

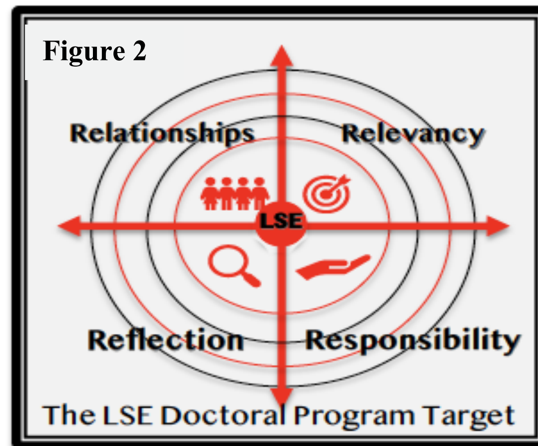
Overview of Thematic Structure

	Theme	Subthemes	Codes
RQ1 RQ2	Relationships	Faculty, cohorts	Family feel, connections, conversations, communication, feedback, observations, role-play, intentional, tribe, transparency, collaboration, encouragement, accountability, support, chair, faculty, networking, mentor, cohorts, group work
RQ1 RQ2	Relevancy	Practical & real-world scenarios,	Ethics, practitioner, dissertation, data analysis, leadership

		dissertation process	framework/theory, systems analysis, political leadership, cerebral view, practical, real-world practice
RQ1 RQ2	Reflection		Imposter syndrome, strengths/weaknesses, emotional health, mental health, feedback, practices, self-exploration, problem-solving
RQ1 RQ2	Responsibility	Self-care, importance of the job, resilience	Self-care, organization, balance, priorities, navigate, importance of job, follow-up, well- being of others, resilience, time management

Findings

Initial results of analysis of participants' perspectives of their experiences in their doctoral program that impacted their leader's self-efficacy supported Bandura's research related to his social cognitive theory. Overall, four themes emerged related to the development of leader self-efficacy through a doctoral program. These themes, displayed relationally in Figure 2, are relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility.



Relationships

The first theme of relationships included the participation in cohorts with colleagues and faculty through projects that required collaboration, accountability, and support. The repeated references to the impact of relationships on participants' LSE were coded 259 times, more frequently than any of the codes for the other three themes. Relationships and impact related to faculty were coded 155 times, and those related to relationships in cohorts were coded 109 times. The theme of relationships appeared in response to all the interview questions. The theme of relationships was the most dominant and was related to all participants' perceptions of the impact

of the participation in cohorts through collaboration with fellow students and faculty as well as other colleagues outside of their program who provided accountability and support that all participants perceived increased their LSE.

Faculty

Relationships with faculty and chairs were the most impactful on their LSE, as reported by nine out of the 10 participants. Anita was especially impacted by relationships with faculty.

> And when I was going to be the principal, they [the faculty] wrote my letters of recommendation and they're my…Those are the guys that did it. You know what I mean? So, it…Yes. I mean sure. Does that have an impact? Absolutely. The fact that there are two sitting superintendents on my dissertation committee telling me, "You got this, this is great. You're good to go. This is just the beginning." Yes. …. It helps your belief system, right?

Elizabeth shared the impact of the level of engagement faculty had with students, herself included, that increased her LSE.

> But they would know who you were, they would remember the papers you had written, they would ask you about your topic for your dissertation, they would know specifics about your ... project and how it was going. And just like their investment in me and my successes really made me feel like, "Oh, okay. If they think I can do it, I must be able to do it. Right?"

Cohorts

Cohorts were the second most impactful relationship, as perceived among the 10 participants. Only for one participant of the 10, where cohorts were more important than faculty relationships. All programs attended by the participants were cohort-based.
Cohorts were of varying sizes from five to 10 and were usually assigned by the university in the four programs represented by the participants, and for all participants their cohort became their support and encouragement through the program. Eight out of 10 participants shared the perspective that the support and encouragement was also impactful to their development as a leader in the program. Eric has suggested to other leaders, the importance of finding support as a leader whether in schoolwork or as a principal and said,

> I always advise them to get a tribe. Get a tribe and don't do this alone. Do this with a group. You might have two separate industries, it could be separate, my dissertation topic and yours are not even at the same ballpark, but if we could sit in the library and write together that's helpful. Or we can drive to school together and just vent about how my wife wants to kill me. Those things are really helpful.

John reflected on the importance of cohorts to his schoolwork and leadership,

> And you need those other people there, along with you that are saying, "You got this, here's where I am in the process." It helps me to be able to help other people

in my cohort, helped me to be able to help them with an assignment and probably helped some with that self-efficacy of doing the right leadership work.

Some university programs attended by participants offered the option of a dissertation capstone which allowed cohorts to work together writing their dissertation all focused on the same topic. Cohorts would work together to write Chapter 1 and 2 collectively, then split off to collect their data targeted on a specific population, different from their cohort members. This proved to be an impactful choice with impact on their LSE for eight of the 10 participants, including Elizabeth who, when given the option at a workshop, said

> We had gone to one [workshop] that was specific to...[the] dissertation, and I'm like, 'This is the way to go!' Like, why would we not divide and conquer? We already know we work so well together. We trust each other. We all have very similar interests and what we would want to research.

Several participants mentioned the importance of relationships in cohorts and its impact on their group collective efficacy that led to LSE. Karen referred to her experience with others as,

> That family feel, and [we] went through the cohort and classes together and they spent a lot of time together. They had study groups, they were encouraged to hold study groups outside of class…being that close knit and again hearing each other's stories, leaning on each other. It was almost like a collective group efficacy.

Top coded for relationships included faculty and cohorts with categories of support, encouragement, conversations, observation, and communication that were important within those relationships. The most impactful relationship, in the perception of six of the participants, was relationships with faculty and chairs.

Relevancy

The second theme of relevancy addressed activities, projects, collaboration, and coursework they perceived as relevant to participants' current and future leadership placements. Of the 109 codes within this theme, practical experiences, real-world practice, and the dissertation proces*s* were most frequently evident in the interviews and are addressed below as subthemes. Nine out of 10 participants shared that relevancy of their doctoral program to their current role as a leader impacted their LSE.

Practical and Real-World Scenarios

Participants reported on the value of practical and real-world scenarios shared in their doctoral program. They described listening to the experiences of faculty or other leaders or acting out real-world situations with other students with guidance from faculty. Loren shared an example,

> Being placed in a rigorous environment where you have to come up with answers quickly and then refine your answers. So that was something that we did, was, "Okay, you said that this way, let's try and say it this way." Or hearing somebody

> else say it in a better way really helped me kind of imprint and have a model for how I wanted to speak as a principal and how I wanted to portray myself. So that's one thing that I feel really grateful for from the program. I don't think I would have received otherwise.

Loren also reflected upon the real-time impact this activity had on her leadership during a school emergency due to floods in the area.

> I was just so grateful that I had been forced into these scenario types of conversations because I had ... NBC News come and show up at my school the day before we were evacuating and asked me, "So tell me about the floods and where are you going? And are the students going to be safe going to school here?" All these questions and talk about self-efficacy, I felt so comfortable just answering. I knew what not to say, because I'd been through this whole seminar about kind of what they're trying to get at, right? They're looking for anything that would be juicy that they repeat over and over again, right? And the idea of sharing the message that you want to share, whatever they ask.

Several participants shared that class time and conversations with other students and faculty generated examples and ideas for use in real-time. Janet said, "I can do this. I'm going to take all this stuff and implement it. And you know this is going to be great for my team. And I would get tons of ideas from those [conversations]."

An aspect of the curriculum considered impactful by all five participants from the same university was a project, separate from the capstone dissertation, that followed students through their program and was developed further each semester, building to a final presentation to share the impact of their change implemented on their campus. Loren explained the project as students needing to,

> Pick something within your organization that you would like to change, not just transactionally, not to just shift, but transform and so that is sort of what I'm referring to. We had to do it in other areas with needs assessment in the strategic plan, but that was something that we worked on for the whole 3 years, identifying needs and actually implementing the change and then showing the results of that change within your system. So being forced to actually select an area that you can have impact on and see it all the way through to fruition. And of course, if it's transformational change it's going to take years and years.

Loren also reflected that the project, "created a huge sense of self-efficacy…". At one university, immersions were held every 3 months with a cohort of students and faculty all together for an entire weekend with speakers, workshops, and networking. These immersions were separate from the project and separate from the dissertation capstone. Cohorts rotated each immersion event to assure networking with new people each time. A faculty member served as a cohort mentor and followed the cohort through the program. Many talked about the fact that these times were stressful because of engaging with new people and practicing networking, but integral to their growth.

Curricular Elements

Curricular elements considered most impactful to participants' LSE included the immersions, and a change project mentioned previously, but the dissertation process the work towards the final product was considered the most impactful. During immersions, the five participants who graduated from the same program, had the opportunity presented for them to choose to complete a dissertation together and was offered in a workshop. Others shared how motivated they were by researching a topic of great interest to them and that would directly impact their school site and community building their LSE. Loren said, "But I think the actual time researching and paying attention to the leaders that I was researching I feel like that for me, that was the biggest growth. And then that leads to the self-efficacy." Although the stress of her final oral dissertation was great, Caroline felt the practice of presenting her research was impactful to her LSE and said, "Doing that made me, that was an opportunity to realize, 'I know this stuff, I know this research. I know what I'm doing here.' So, just things like that that I could generalize to a greater sense of self-efficacy."

John expressed the impact of collecting his dissertation data through interviews with exemplary principals and that it was, "a great learning process for me and gave me ideas on what to change [in my school]." He also noted about his literature review,

> Doing all the research for that Chapter 2 of the dissertation kind of the collective body of research was impactful along with the interviews of the 10 principals. I mean that's something that I think is probably some of the best professional development I've actually ever done.

Reflection

The third theme pertains to the importance of reflection and self-exploration as mentioned by all 10 participants as impactful on their LSE. Each participant mentioned some learning more about their strengths and weaknesses and how to use them effectively as a leader. Anita valued the Gallup Organization Strengths Finder assessment and that learning more about herself was, "…life-changing because I find myself anytime, in difficult situations, going back to those strengths." Anita also shared that the assessment helped her to, "use those strengths every single day to create positive content, to reach people, to make connections." In reflecting on the difficulty of the last year during the pandemic and school closures, Anita also shared that she,

> Felt very useful in a time where…I think as a principal, it could have been very dark in feeling un-useful, you know what I mean? And so, I felt very useful and felt very in control and I felt like I was creating a story, a narrative, by communications, right. That I had control over, and that was positive and beneficial to others.

Three of the 10 participants said that they used the strengths assessment with their own staff to build community and self-efficacy in their teams.

Reflection as a practitioner was mentioned by all 10 participants as part of their growth and development during their program towards more confidence as a leader. All programs required participants to complete regular written reflection followed by collaborative face-to-face sharing. This was reported to aid in learning from others and in building confidence. Six out

of 10 participants expressed reflecting on doubts in their ability to complete a doctorate, but soon, through conversations with others and hearing their encouragement, were able to move forward and complete their program and capstone.

All participants reported that reflection was also used to work through emotional and mental health issues as well as problem solving. One participant, Caroline, shared a time when she reflected on her responsibility as a cohort member and its impact on her LSE.

> And other people were just so invested and ready to do whatever that it did cause me to stop and reflect like, “Why am I the person that's holding up this process? Why am I the person that is giving everybody a hard time in the grand scheme of things, it's one day.” And so, it caused me to question, I guess, whether or not I could always be up for anything and I'm not sure if that's reasonable. I think everybody gets to have moments where they feel grumpy and everything else. But it was more witnessing other people having strong leadership in the moment and exhibiting positive behaviors where I didn't feel like I was and that decreased my self-efficacy because I thought that I'm not being a leader right now. I'm being grumpy.

Responsibility

The final theme of responsibility was represented in comments from all participants, either related to developing their skills as a responsible leader or learning to be responsible for the challenging job of working on their doctorate as well as being a principal and balancing homelife. Analysis of data found responsibility included leaders practicing and understanding responsibility as a school leader through coursework, faculty mentorships, learning from experts, and watching the success and responsibility of other leaders and peers in the doctoral program. There were 76 codes related to responsibility and subthemes with the codes most often mentioned were: follow through, the importance of the job, and resilience.

Follow Through

Seven out of 10 participants mentioned follow through in response to stress as critical to being a responsible leader and building LSE. Many challenges were mentioned as creators of stress while completing a doctorate while leading, including academic challenges, on the job and family commitments, and feelings of being overwhelmed in general. To remain responsible and face those challenges, follow through was reported as important to increase in LSE. To mitigate stress, follow through was shown through being organized, finding balance, focusing on priorities, understanding the importance of the job, following up on those in their care, time management, knowing when a break was needed to step away, and seeking the support and encouragement of others. All 10 participants completed their doctorate while in positions of leadership as a principal.

Although each participant was faced with a moment of either feeling overwhelmed or self-doubt, all shared experiences of employing follow through to help them push through. The main support for their capacity to follow through for all 10 participants was the support of others. Anita noted how a buddy helped her follow through,

> That's what really got me through, was having a buddy to do it with. That was…And he's in a different doctoral program than me. We were just doing our dissertations at the same time. And so, it was just better, to be honest, to be able to meet somebody, because I don't know if I could have kept going every night to get everything done.

Justin mentioned, "sharing with folks that have life experiences knowing that you're going through similar things and then some of them things were worse...so, to be able to share with other students the experience of the coursework and the grind of it all. I think it was super helpful."

The Importance of the Job

Each participant mentioned in one way or another the impact on them of understanding the weight and importance of the job as a principal during the time they were a doctoral student. This was observed in many ways by watching others above them in leadership and teachers and staff on their campus that looked to them to lead. This realization pushed two of the 10 to get their doctorate with Justin noting, "I didn't know the rules of the game." One of the participants, Elizabeth, reflected on whether the importance of the job was for her,

> And so, I think, there were some points in time, where I was like, "If this is what being a leader feels like, I don't know that this is what I really want for myself." I don't know if this amount of stress, this amount of time commitment, this amount of people depending on me to make these huge decisions, I don't know if that's what I want if I can't find balance in my life, I don't know if it's worth it.' So, there were times where just the stress became so much. I don't know if it was the I didn't think I could do it, but I didn't know if I wanted to do it.

However, Elizabeth shared that through her cohort, she was able to get through these doubts and develop LSE. "And so, even with the girls in my cohort, we all found success in leading...and so, as the more successes you have, the more your kind of built up in your self-efficacy and feeling like, 'Yeah, I can do this.'"

Resilience

Five of the 10 participants mentioned resilience as a strategy for being responsible and developing LSE for their school site, family, and doctorate, including the resilience to complete a task and how that completion impacted their self-efficacy. Anita said,

> And so, I think the fact that I could finish [the doctorate] and do well in the coursework and complete all of it, for me gave me a tone of confidence in that I can do anything. Because, if I can survive this, being a full-time AP, a full-time parent, coaching my kids' sports, doing all that and finishing my doctorate, then it was...I can do anything. There is nothing anybody can say is too much work. I just don't believe it. There's not...

Elizabeth reported the impact of resilience and the completion of her program on her LSE after completion,

> So, it wasn't one specific event, but program over all that really had such a huge impact on my self-efficacy, that, in reflecting on that, and what I thought going in, I did. I thought going into it, 'I'm investing this money now, so that I can have the title, so that I'll be ready for a promotion later on down the road and that's how it's going to pay for itself.' I didn't really expect it to prepare me to be in a better position to coach future leaders coming up. Those were all parts of my self-efficacy that were impacted by the program as a whole.

John referred to it as grit, "hone in on the grit and the determination that anything's possible." Eric referred to resilience to make it through his program as impactful on his LSE, "...being able to navigate [my program], that was insurmountable in terms of preparing me for increased leadership and having to work full-time at my job and still putting the work in to complete this." John mentioned watching the resilience of others through difficulties as impactful.

Discussion & Implications

A leader's relationship quality with subordinates has been connected positively to LSE (Paglis & Green, 2002). The findings of this study support the claim of Paglis & Green (2002) that leadership attempts develop LSE and provide direction setting, commitment to the task, and the ability to overcome obstacles. Many scholars have drawn on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, including McCormick et al. (2002), who used it to develop the concepts of LSE and LSE development. LSE was used by Paglis (2010) to explore the concept more deeply, linking LSE with leaders' individual performance and collective efficacy in their schools and performance. All participants in the current study noted improved LSE, with the development of LSE related to their completion of a doctoral program being most mentioned. Participants noted that relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility impacted their LSE. Each participant shared in their responses the impact of the four themes on the development of LSE and that other university programs should make them central parts of preparation programs and doctoral programs. Candidate recommendations for doctoral programs will be the focus of future work.

The experiences of principal participants in this study developed LSE through this construct and the impact of relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility. The task of developing leaders for schools today is an extraordinary and urgent need for the success of students across the United States, especially after the recent impact of COVID-19 on student learning. Preparing leaders for success is an investment. School leaders may develop leader self-efficacy in many ways including through district programs, credentialing programs, professional development, and collaboration. A graduate degree, such as an Ed.D, is also an avenue that school leaders can develop LSE, but research is limited related to the advanced degree's impact on LSE. Understanding how a doctoral program can develop and should develop LSE could be impactful on the success of completing leaders. Through understanding what post graduate programs can do to increase leader self-efficacy in school leaders, leaders can be better prepared for success to impact teacher's efficacy and that of their students. School leaders will need to be ready to face challenges never faced before in education. The development of leader self-efficacy in

professional development programs may be one of the keys to building back lost learning for students of all needs and demographics.

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The Latina Superintendent's Ethical Problem Solving for Equity and Justice

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American schools have been dealt a blow that included a pandemic, economic crisis, as well as racial unrest, initiating an energized charge for social justice advocacy. Our superintendents are currently facing an unprecedented challenge in ensuring that the campus community lives in a fair, inclusive, and opportunity-rich society. However, school systems are notorious for resisting change. This causes moral and ethical dilemmas for the school district leader seeking social justice within all school settings. The equity minded leader's mission is to make a difference in all students lives, but ethical dilemmas heighten as social issues become divisive and combative among communities. In this chapter, the ethical decision making of Latina superintendents are highlighted as they share their experiences of ethical dilemmas related to historical oppressive practices and educational injustices. Some of these ethical dilemmas surfaced when they encountered conflicts among school board members who they perceived as losing focus on best practices for student needs. Each of these women expressed a desire to make systematic changes to historically inequitable school systems. These Latinas were able to remain true to their personal professional standards while confronting adversity. These stories will assist Latina leaders harness their power within, while continuing their crucial activist work for equity.

Keywords: Ethical dilemmas, Latina leader, superintendent, equitable leadership

The origin of power aligns with the construction of social norms which have restricted leadership roles to women in fields that have been masculinized. White males have historically dominated the top leadership positions in school organizations within a vertical and patriarchal model; where the White man is at the top of the organizational structure and minority groups at the bottom (Brunner, 1999, 2000, 2002; Blount, 1996;

Grogan, 1996, 2005; Galloway, 2006; Tallerico, 2005). The number of women in represented in leadership roles remains scarce, even though, research supports the notion that leadership based on women's way of knowing can facilitate equity and more inclusive school environments (Irby & Brown, 2002). Furthermore, studies have indicated the importance of promoting leaders of color who can serve as role models for students of color (Jackson, 1999; Nicholson, 1999; Ortiz, 1999). Historically, research on educational administration has often been written by men about men while research on female superintendents has not been extensive (Brunner, 2002; Grogan, 2000; Tallerico, 1999). Most of the research on women in educational leadership spotlights White female administrators and women of color have been unnoticed. Researchers examining school leaders have paid relatively little attention to the life experiences and careers of ethnic minority women and there are fewer researchers of color who explore leadership characteristics of Mexican American female superintendents.

Latinas in leadership have shared personal stories of ethical problem solving when advocating for equitable education (Rodriguez, 2014). This paper provides insight on Latina leadership as it relates to Mexican American cultural identity and ethical dilemmas in educational leadership. The stories of six Mexican American female superintendents are portrayed. These women took charge of their career goals, dared to take risks in educational leadership and are an exclusive group of Mexican American women in a profession that has been governed by White males. Their stories will inoculate other women to overcome the conventional barriers that exist in schools and understand the value of "self" to take charge of their professional goals while making ethical decisions.

Framework

Qualitative feminist research has differentiated ideologies with varying and complex views (Olesen, 1994). Female experiences differ and women of color have experienced complex oppressions, which are not always "understood by white feminists" (Olesen, 1994, p. 160). The theoretical framework for this presentation is grounded in a Chicana feminist perspective which acknowledges that social inequalities exist based on ethnicity and gender. Chicana feminism contradicts the stereotype of the passive Mexican woman and expanded the "Chicano nationalism to include the role of assertive strong Chicanas" (Garcia, 1997, p. 18). Feminist research gives voice to marginalized groups and scholars such as Sprague (2005) contend that gender "in interaction with many other areas like race/ethnicity, class, and ability is a key organizer of social life" and understanding how things work allows feminists to "take action to make the social world more equitable" (p. 3).

Chicana feminist theory recognizes that the intersection of race and gender play a crucial role when it comes to women breaking the glass ceiling (Rodriguez, 2014).

Alston (2005) suggests that researchers consider race and gender as a "lens to investigate the intersectionality of lived experiences" (p.684). Research on Mexican American women exposes barriers associated to ethnicity and gender for women seeking top educational administrative positions (Carrion-Mendez, 2009). Mendez- Morse (2000) identified historical

descriptions of successful Latina leaders and contradicted the atypical stereo types of Mexican American women. Women of color are aware of the disparities they will face because of the color of their skin (Rodriguez, 2014). Chicana inquiry focuses on giving voice to the voiceless and narrating the experiences of women who have been absent from research.

Cultural Suppression

This chapter provides insight on Latina leadership as it relates to Mexican American cultural identity and ethical dilemmas in educational leadership.

The underlying assumption of this study was grounded in feminist theory and viewed through the lens of Chicana feminist thought. The framework of Chicana feminism "looks at inequalities along lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality as they affect women of Mexican descent in the United States" (Gallardo, 1996, p. 1). Texas has sustained a history of individual social injustices stemming from discrimination against persons of color (Valencia, 1991). These were common practices in school systems.

The participants' stories of personal educational oppression and inequalities exemplifies Valencia's (1991) concept of Mexican American oppression within an educational system that has historically failed to adequately meet the needs of second language learners. These stories are all too common among other individuals from traditional oppressed groups. These personal narratives give understandings through the Chicana lens and provides a distinguishing perception of ethical problem solving and decision making. These unique stories can influence ethical practices and offers the equity minded leader with the tools to shape equitable practices in school systems.

Social justice principles call attention to these matters and provide groundwork for solving moral dilemmas in the daily practice of equitable outcomes. Sprague (2005) asserted that the interaction of gender, race/ethnicity, and class "is a key organizer of social life" and understanding of how these interactions work will "allow feminists to make the social world more equitable" (p.3). Conversations about race and gender are difficult and uncomfortable for some people, but until these conversations begin, the status quo will remain the same and women of color will continue to face challenges when confronting ethical decision making.

Ethical Encounters

All six superintendents spoke of encountering issues related to the historical segregation and the educational injustices because of the past segregation policies. Historically Mexican American's have experienced discrimination in the United States and schools have sustained a history of longstanding customary beliefs that have led to discriminatory practices against Mexican American students (Samora & Simon, 1977). Chicano students have persistent language suppression and cultural segregation (Valencia, 1991). The institutional practice of restricting the use of Spanish as a curricular vehicle was "intended to ensure the dominance of the English language and Anglo culture" (p. 6). Rita's story exemplifies accepted practice of the historical injustices Mexican American students experienced. Rita described her personal experience of being a Spanish speaker in her formative years and recounted significant events that impacted her personal educational experiences.

> I was labeled mentally retarded, yeah… My first language was Spanish. There was no bilingual education then, it did not exist...so, I believed that I was retarded…so I started acting like that [she laughs]. Then they call my mother and my grandmother to the school and tell them I am retarded…mi abuelita, dijo, la única retardada aquí es usted! Mi nieta no tiene nada y la voy a sacar de aquí, [she got up, my grandmother, and said, the only retarded one is you, there is nothing wrong with my granddaughter. I am taking her out of here]. (R. Chavez, personal communication, October, 2012).

The obstacles related to language and the educational inequalities that Rita encountered impacted her desire to work with school districts that matched her cultural experiences and was the motivating factor for their quest to pursue the superintendency. These historic systematic issues of Pk-12 schools were innate motives for improving educational opportunities for all children because they wanted to "make a difference" and do "what is best for children" when faced with ethical dilemmas and problem solving.

Latina Activism

There are distinct patterns in the types of schools Latinas lead. These women asserted themselves as competent change agents. They acknowledged their desire to lead school districts that had historically experienced segregation based on ethnicity and social class. These superintendents demonstrated determination and were willing to endure whatever ethical challenges the position presented. They had developed a strong sense of self-efficacy as they ascended a multifaceted educational career ladder and were determined to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Each of the women recounted personal experiences of oppression and ethnic biases which was the springboard for their internal aspiration to promote equity in schools. These are their stories as they confronted ethical decision making.

Rita Chavez was entering her 3rd year as superintendent of schools in a small school district with approximately a 350-student enrollment. She was in a small Mexico border town that had a high poverty rate. She was leading a school that had a majority Hispanic student enrollment 98%. She shared that she had not sought out this position but was recruited by the school board president. She who was in her first superintendency, when she spoke of the community that she was serving, she said, "Prejudice still exists, *hay muncho Mexicana probé y ignórate* [ignorant and poor] …for those of who say it does not exist, they are lying, it exists."

Dr. Gabriella Evans was beginning her 2nd year of her second superintendency and was located at a rural school district with a majority Hispanic student population, 93%. She shared the need for improving student success "This audit says for the last 12 years nothing good has happened".

Catherine Garcia was serving her 11th year as the superintendent of schools at a small city school district approximately thirty miles south of a large metropolitan city. The student enrollment had a majority Hispanic population, 78%. She said, "I am right in the middle of a community that was racist for so long…it used to be all about the Anglos."

Dr. Irma Gonzales in her 9th year as Superintendent of Schools at a rural school district. The majority student population was Hispanic (65.9%) with the remaining students divided between Anglo (26.7%) and African American (5.7%). Dr. Gonzales disclosed that over her tenure with the school district the student population profile has shifted from an Anglo majority

to a Hispanic majority. Irma talked about the history of segregation in the school district she was leading She said, "Our community has experienced several years of segregation that has taken place and it influences and impacts generations of families as a result of those experiences."

Rebecca Robertson was the superintendent of a large urban school district with a majority Hispanic student population 97%. She was ending her first school year as the Superintendent of Schools with a school district that had a reputation of being in turmoil. She explained:

> If you know the history, this is a very volatile district and in fact when I applied people are like 'estas loca "[are you crazy]! I am just like yeah; I am up for the challenge. I like challenges. They [school board members] were constantly in the newspaper. I swear to God, before I got it. (R. Robertson, personal communication, April, 2013)

Dr. Isabel Salinas was the superintendent of a larger suburban school district and was in her 3rd superintendent role. She actively sought a school district that needed improvement. She said "I needed to be challenged. I wanted to learn more… I had been there. I had done that, blue ribbon school, now it is time to move on." She was leading a school district near the Mexico border with a majority Hispanic population at 99% and 80% economically disadvantaged.

Each of these women expressed a desire to make systematic changes to historically inequitable school systems. They encountered personal dilemmas associated with adverse values, despite that, these Latinas were able to remain true to their personal professional standards while confronting ethical decisions.

Internal ethical conflicts existed within these extraordinary women, as they promoted equitable education for all. These ethical dilemmas surfaced when they encountered conflicts among school board members who the perceived as losing focus on best practices for student needs. School board policy decisions have internal and external functions. The internal function ensures administrative control for the superintendent regarding fiscal decisions about budgets and academic policy and district outputs. Externally, the school board decisions should act in the community's best interest (Kowalski, 2006). Kowalski stated, "When board members elect to assume administrative duties, conflict between the superintendent and board members becomes highly probable" (p. 125).

Latina Values

Ethical standards "are open to interpretation" and "seldom is there one right answer to complex ethical dilemmas" (Stone, 2107, p. 19). Each of these superintendents demonstrated aptitudes that align with Kitchener's (1984) five moral principles, autonomy, justice, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and fidelity. These principles establish a foundation for ethical decision making. Two characteristics that were predominately shared among the Mexican American female superintendents were beneficence, promoting good for others and justice, which implies that anyone is entitled to equal treatment regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, or cultural background. (Stone, 2017, pg. 19).

Rita conceded that she had been given directives by school board members that conflicted with her ethical beliefs during her first year as the Superintendent. She declared that these directives were not in the best interest of the children or the community. Rita expressed her discontent with the school board members by saying. "They wanted a puppet and they saw a deer blinded. *Ponte a pensar* [think about it]. You know a woman, over the hill." She had been

directed by the school board to fire some staff and the motive for this action was “because they did not vote for them. I don’t care what anybody says they buy the votes, they buy the votes, it's nothing about children, its’ about power”.

At the time of this interview, Rita no longer saw herself as a “puppet.” She had been able to empower herself and begin to contest directives that contradicted her values and that she considered unethical. She said, “Deep down in my heart, I knew what they were doing, but I was too eager. Once I knew better, I put a stop to it.” The board members who had caused her contention were replaced by new board members. She said, “I speak in the past because things have dramatically changed. She eventually redefined her identity as a capable superintendent which empowered her to make efficient decisions which she believed served as the best interest of all students. She was able to successfully navigate the challenges place upon her and effectively increased the school district’s accountability rating.

Rachel encountered unforeseen opposition from some of the district’s school board members in her ongoing efforts to establish comprehensive school improvements. Rachel disclosed that the challenges that had surface were not new to the community. She divulged that when she first began her role as the Superintendent of schools, members of the community advised her that behaviors of some of the school board members were known to be antagonistic, and controversial. It was not in Rachel’s character to avoid conflict and she said, “I had people from the community tell me ‘Don’t take sides, *mieja*, [dear] don’t take sides, you are doing a great job’. I don’t believe in keeping my head down. That is who I am!”

She expressed that the opinions and governance of specific school board members were interfering with ethical decision making:

> I swear to God, and it happened so fast. We had worked very hard to establish our relationships, getting them to focus on education [the school board]. It's about the kids… By April, it was just full-blown politics! I mean it! They forgot about the kids, forgot about everything. It all became ‘me, me, and me’ in just a matter of a week, just like that; it just self-destructed, and I was like oh my, gosh! It was so crazy! (R. Robertson, personal communication, April, 2013)

Rachel described her stance of ethical decision making by stating:

> I have my integrity; the day I lose my integrity I might as well get out of here… I follow the law. I follow the rules. I do not do anything immoral or illegal… I will not do things that I am not supposed to do… The day they ask me to do that, we need to part ways. (R. Robertson, personal communication, April, 2013)

It is important to note, that Rachel resigned from her position as the Superintendent the following month.

These women demonstrated a strong sense of self-efficacy toward ethical problem solving and through their words and actions exhibited the characteristics of Kitchener’s (1984) five moral principles, autonomy, justice, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and fidelity.

Equitable Outcomes

A common vision that existed among the women was making systematic changes to "troubled," "broken," or "shattered" school districts. They each expressed their dedication and commitment in improving educational opportunities for students in school districts that had experienced low student performance because of ineffective school systems. The participants had strong backgrounds in curriculum and each one of them expressed their confidence in their ability to improve educational programs for all students. Rita said, "I will tell you I am good at what I do when it comes to curriculum, I know what to do." Gabriella stated, "I had excellent curriculum experience… I know what I am doing." Rachel described the drastic changes that needed to occur in her district to be able to improve student performance and meet state accountability standards.

> Coming into the district it wasn't broken, it was shattered, it was not to the point that we could grab pieces and try to glue them together. It was literally knocking it down completely and starting from scratch. (R. Robertson, personal communication, April, 2013)

Irma talked about the expectations she required from all her district staff members:

> I always tell folks you make decisions in the best interest of kids, regardless of the pressures that come along with it. You are here to represent kids and do what is in their best interest…that has to remain at the central point of everything that we do. (I. Gonzalez, March, 2013).

Each participant spoke of removing staff members because of their inefficiency or inability to fulfill the job requirements. These were difficult decisions for them, but they perceived these actions as a professional moral obligation in their role as an educational leader for educational equity. Each superintendent shared "what is best for kids" were their non-negotiable expectations for administrators, teachers, and all staff members.

Irma said, "You are not going to keep everybody happy. You have to be a risk taker to create change and with change and risk taking comes differences of opinion. That is OK and you got to be comfortable with that."

Catherine described the administrative changes that have occurred during her superintendency, and she communicated the importance of hiring other administrators who share her philosophy about education.

> Over the years I have been able to hire administrators… I knew that there were some administrators that I was not willing to continue working with in this district. I did what I had to do to make sure they went on their merry way…I was very fortunate to bring in administrators of my choosing… and really make sound decisions for children. (C. Garcia, personal communication, March, 2013).

These women were successful in overcoming the adversities in schools that have impeded equity for all. Their voices speak of encounters with customary oppression. Consequently, they challenged organizations' resistant to change and have made a significant presence in leadership roles while suppressing ethical dilemmas when advocating for social

justice in schools. These voices of these exceptional Mexican American female superintendents provide a unique insight of some of the ethical dilemmas that Latina leaders encounter as they purposely lead schools that have been identified as challenging. Their stories will empower other women who aspire to lead schools and whose vision is to be change agents for school improvement.

Intersectionality

Leadership is a continual evolving process, but the integration of external influences can influence the attitude and shaping of the activist seeking to transform perceptions of equitable schools. The study reveals issues of intersectionality of gender and ethnicity that Latinas encounter while advancing into educational leadership positions and for some ethical dilemmas occur when defying systems that have historically marginalized certain groups. This study revealed that Latina leadership is matched to restricted contexts. The notion of "politics of fit" define the environments that Latinas lead, and Latina school leaders are placed in a community that are comparable to their cultural and life experiences. The customary perception of right fit which is commonly used in educational leadership are one dimensional, this measure of fit places limitations on individuals from diverse backgrounds (Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010). Gender and race are "powerful factors in the way women have been formed as individuals" and how they confront ethical dilemmas (Grogan, 1996, p. 90). Benham's, 1997, exploration of leadership practices of women of color revealed ethical dilemmas related to pre-existing overt and passive racism within school systems. As one of his participants stated, "Look at the central office, you can count people of color in decision-making positions on one hand" (p. 295).

This participant added that she had been labeled an "angry Hispanic woman" because of her advocacy for minority children and openly expressing that people of color have limited leadership opportunities in the district (p. 295). These statements affirm ethical dilemmas associated with cultural identity that these five Mexican American superintendents encountered while navigating the educational leadership role. These women forged their cultural identity against mass stereotypes with a strong sense of self.

Latina Culture

Culture is learned and the social environment cultivates one's culture and shapes their identity. Gonzalez and Gandera (2005) draw distinctions between the terms Hispanic and Latino/o. They state that Latino implies the diversity and brownness among persons of Hispanic origin and "most Latinos see themselves primarily in terms of nationalities, Mexican, Cuban and so forth" thus distinctions when referring to Hispanic groups needs to be clarified (p. 396). The women in this chapter are identified as Latina from Mexican American origin and cultural influences. For Latina advocacy, it is important to understand the cultural influences that Latinas encounter and how they struggle to find their own identity within different contexts of ethical decision making.

The Latina's main issue has been self- identity (Flores, 1975; Garcia, 1997; Nieto Gomez, 1974; Nieto, 1974; Riddel, 1974). This integration of different cultural dimensions creates identity conflicts for Latinas. The Chicana have challenged the traditional sex-role expectations that have been governed for many years by tradition where the men had the power (Garcia, 1997, Anzaldua, 1987).

> I think that there are some Mexican Americans, it depends on where you were brought up and how, but women are not raised to be assertive, Mexican American little girls are not brought up to be assertive, to show leadership skills, maybe the boys are, but not the girls. (Quilantan & Ochoa, 2004, p. 193).

Hofstede (2010) defines culture as the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (p. 7).

Hofstede presents aspects of culture as having dimensions, power distance and collectivism versus individualism. Power distance is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 61). In a collectivist society "the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual" (p. 90). Hofstede describes collectivism and individualism social values as opposites. In a collectivist society "the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual" (p. 91). In individualist societies "everyone is expected to look after him or herself" and ties among individuals are "loose" (p. 519).

Latinas are raised with collectivist ideals where a woman's "sense of self is based on affiliation with the group and responsibility to other members of the group, rather than on personal achievement for her own ends" (Trumbull, Rothstein, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001, p. 12). Most people in the world live in collectivist societies, however, the United States has been categorized as an individualist society, where the Latina is cultivated in a traditionally collectivist society. These collective ideals were present in the five Mexican American female superintendents. They expressed that they wanted to "do what was best" for children by working as a "team" and the importance of collaborating with colleagues, school board members, and community members. When decisions by others contradicted their value of collectivism it created morale dilemmas. Rachel spoke of her importance for collective goals and not of focusing on individual goals.

> Everything was a team effort, no one did anything in isolation...this is what we need to attack… then politics happened…I mean they [school board] forgot about the kids…Then it all became about me, me, and me. It was no longer about we. (Robertson, personal communication, April, 2013)

Latina Leadership

Latina activists demonstrate a strong sense of self and determination and are willing to endure challenges to eradicate systematic oppression of others (Rodriguez, 2014). Latina leadership provides voice to the "voiceless" and their differentiating viewpoints cultivates collaboration. However, the voices of Latina activism have been silent in leadership roles and Mexican American women are aware of the disparities they will face in leadership roles that have been dominated by men. The stories of these five unique superintendents offers the real- life experiences, knowledge, and perceptions of Latina leaders who have been able construct resourceful ethical – decision making for positive and conclusive outcomes.

Self - Efficacy and Confidence

These narratives show that personal traits of assertiveness and confidence are advantageous characteristics for Latinas in educational leadership roles. These strategies assisted these Latina leaders with coping with cultural incongruence while navigating ethical dilemmas when handling the politics of school board affairs that contradict best practices (Rodriguez, 2014). The superintendent's role is a complex and multi-faceted position. Kowalski (2006) declared that today's superintendents "must wear several different hats if they are to be effective regardless of the type and size of school district" (p. 50). Considering the complexities of decision making and the role-related demands of the superintendent position, it often takes the ability of being fearless and the willingness to take risks to be competent in ethical decision making. The women in the study displayed the willingness to take risks when making decisions for systematic change. Each of the women exhibited an inherent sense of self- efficacy and expressed confidence in their skills and their ability to make sound ethical decisions in their superintendent role. Bandura (1994) defined self – efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 75).

Gabriella from an early age displayed confidence in her ability to achieve success, even when faced with opposition. The following statements capture the essence of her confidence in self and her ability to persevere.

> I think a very long time ago when I was in high school, I said I was going to get a doctorate degree. I remember the kids would laugh at me when I would tell them that…I said I am going to show them. (G. Evans, March, 2013)

As an adult Gabriella has held on to her sense of self and displays confidence in her abilities to successfully operate within the superintendent role. She demonstrated this during her interview for her current superintendent position. She recalled saying, "I told the board members during my interview, I know what needs to be done and I need you to let me do what needs to be done… I will get you to where we need to go, that's how I am."

Each Mexican American female superintendent expressed confidence in her ability to effectively lead her school district with the commitment to improve education for all children.

Increasing Latina Leadership Capacity

Unshackling the obstacles of Latina leadership is necessary for promoting ethical decision making. A noteworthy cohort of Latinas have successfully reached the upper echelons of administration, political society, and business and have demonstrated the importance of women in today's global development. As more women ascend to senior positions, they are increasingly using their newfound power for a common purpose, to advance other women and advocate for marginalized groups. Networks of women have a profound effect in the increase of presence of women in leadership roles (Rodriguez, 2014). Mexican American superintendents challenge the status quo which is embedded in school systems. They advocate for a better world for all students and question environmental barriers impeding student success (Rodriguez, 2014).

Embracing Latina Leadership

Feminist scholars have argued that women in leadership tend to have power "with" their follower while men tend to have power "over" their followers (Brunner, 1995.) These researchers argue that the genders leadership styles differ, and female leadership comes from socialization. The first and second wave of the feminist movement addressed gender bias and gender role conflicts but was largely a white, middle-class movement. The literature on women of color shows that gender, color, race, and class subordination are experienced simultaneously (Mendez-Morse, 1997, Quilatan, 2002, Rodriguez, 2014). The adversity that women of color face in their lives when confronting social injustices can be daunting. Latina leadership is facilitative and communicative and empowered Latinas understand the value of self when taking charge of ethical decision making (Nieto, 2016, Rodriguez, 2014). Gender research is necessary to end social arrangements which lead women to be viewed as other than and less than.

Conquering Gender Bias

Psychology theory from a de-constructivist position reveals that cultural assumptions are related to social expectations of genders (Hare-Mustin, 1988). These assumptions create social roles based on gender which exists in all societies. The culture of the society determines whether the social determined roles are defined as masculine or feminine. Hofstede, 2010, reported that in most societies "men are supposed to be assertive, competitive, and tough. Women are supposed to be more concerned with taking care of the home, of the children, and take the tender roles" (p. 138). Feminist scholars argue that gender neutrality in the organizations of public school does not exist (Aker, 1992). These gender roles can place dilemmas for women who take on professional roles that have been historically dominated by men.

Mexican American women have overcome the challenge of the traditional sex- role expectations that have been governed for many years by culture and tradition (Quilantan & Ochoa, 2004). The men had the power, and the women were expected to accept the value system created by men and display a subservient role (Anzaldua, 1987). The conversations with these Mexican American women revealed ethical dilemmas related to gender and ethnicity associated to taking on a role that has been customarily masculinized.

Isabel shared her experiences related to gender biases as a woman in a masculinized role. This statement captures her sentiment regarding Latinas in the superintendency:

> You can infiltrate and really get to know the good ole boy system… they are going to think like their own, and they are not as willing to give Latinas an opportunity… is very much male dominated still…I think, I am the exception. (I. Salinas, personal communication, March, 2013)

Rita's story exemplifies her inner conflict regarding gender and ethnicity stereotyping, "I did not sleep my way to the top, that's important for a woman, because everybody thinks that a Latina sleeps her way to the top. We have not proven ourselves"

These women defy the traditional social pre-existing perceptions of gender roles and ethnicity and demonstrate the ability assert themselves as an effective leader in a male dominated profession. These traits of self-efficacy were displayed as they chose to pursue a career that is

typically dominated by White males, while acknowledging pre- existing biases of women of color, nonetheless, this did not impede their pursuit of their career goal.

Navigating Cultural Conflict

Culture is the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede, 2010, p. 7). The social environment cultivates and shapes an individual's identity, and that cultural analysis is the understanding of shared basic norms (Schein, 1992). The voices of the Latina women demonstrate how cultural influences shaped their leadership attributes. Their advice for Latina empowerment is to prepare for an undertaking of an "individualist" approach in their pursuit which means displaying multiple aspects of themselves.

Individualists tend to compartmentalize their relationships and they need detailed background information to get to know new members of their "in-groups" (Hofstede, 2010). Their communication style tends to be brief, direct, and getting their point across. These individualist tactics can contradict the Latina's cultural identity of "collectivism" which has been endorsed by traditional cultural influences. Some Latinas are accustomed to being recognized before speaking, providing ambiguous and indirect responses, focused on preserving harmony and these types of responses to the individualist will appear as not linked to the topic (Hofstede, 2010).

An individualist approach includes displaying a strong sense of self-efficacy and confidence, which can appear boastful in our Latina collectivist culture and tends to be frowned upon. But this attitude is considered an asset in individualist societies (Anzaldúa, 1987; Hofstede, 2010). The five superintendents presented here asserted themselves during their interactions as confident Mexican American women capable of navigating any administrative role they pursued. They were direct in their responses for student advocacy and proclaimed their competence to move school districts forward.

Two examples are Rita and Gabriela, Rita said, "I am good at what I do…I know what to do." Gabriella stated, "I had excellent curriculum experience…I know what I am doing." These women shared attributes of confidence in leadership skills and were able to have a positive mindset for promoting themselves as competent educational leaders.

Their stories are about perseverance and having a strong sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their abilities to inspire and empower others. These Latina leaders expressed their confidence in their ability to advocate and improve educational opportunities for all students. Although the individualist tactics they applied could contradict the Latina's cultural identity of collectivism, the encouragement to other Latinas was "just do it" and "take a leap of faith".

Latina Empowerment

Women of color experience, race, class, and gender subordination simultaneously (Mendez-Morse, 2000, Rodriguez, 2014, Nieto, 2016). The conception of power aligns with the construction of social norms which has placed limited access to leadership roles for Latinas. It is advantageous for Mexican American women to build social capital to overcome traditional systemic barriers, social capital can include networking and mentorship (Rodriguez, 2014). Establishing social capital includes learning to assert yourself within contexts that are not familiar to you.

Research shows that self-efficacy acts as physiological strengthening agent (Schwerdtfeger, Konermann, and Schonhofen, 2010). Bandura (1994) defined self – efficacy as “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 75). Latina empowerment is the ability to practice positive affirmation to increase self-efficacy and adopt an “individualist” approach when pursuing empowerment. Take charge of one’s significance by asserting oneself with positive affirmations and safeguarding your identity. Assertiveness means being open and direct about how you feel without guilt (Singer, 2010). Positive affirmations are specific and positive statements about yourself and not others. Singer’s advice for promoting self is to practice being comfortable about speaking about your talents, utter your strengths with gusto, power, and conviction, and focus on the here and now.

The Latinas in this chapter had a strong sense of self and confidence as they transformed themselves into effective leadership roles. They acquired skills for speaking about their talents with conviction. They were assertive in their quest to for school improvement and displayed directness without quit when they interacted with those who contradicted their ethical standards for improving educational opportunities to all students.

None of the Latinas in this chapter were willing to compromise their integrity when confronted by ethical dilemmas. These women are examples of remaining true to their core beliefs.

These stories of moral convictions have the potential to inspire others to be effective change agents in schools by practicing ethical problem solving when making decisions for efficient student outcomes. Their authenticity during their advocacy validates the use of power for good.

Increasing Social Capital

Putman (1995) defines social capital as “the features of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and social trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 67). The participants of this study had established an extensive network throughout their administrative career from which they utilized as they sought and obtained the superintendency. These networks included, school board members, community members, co-workers, and family. Ortiz (2001) discussed the importance of personal relationships and strong networks in sustaining communities. Aspects of social capital include trust, cooperation, and collective action which serve as resources for individuals. This relates to Hanifan’s concept of social capital (as cited in Putman, 1995) that community problems can be solved by strengthening the networks of solidarity among individuals by producing an accumulation of social capital.

Irma had established herself in the community where she continued to progress throughout her administrative career. She said, “I think when you remain in the same community it can work for you…depending on the success you have and the relationships you have kept, because along the way there are some tough decisions that have to be made.”

The importance of establishing social capital, according to Ortiz (2001), is that the superintendent, school board members, and the community hold each other responsible for the successful delivery of educational services. It was essential for the Mexican American superintendents to build strong community relations as a mechanism for promoting ethical problem solving for equitable outcomes. These Mexican American women have been able to contribute their unique traits, associated with their personal experiences and cultural influences,

and in turn have become an additional resource to the pre-existing social capital of their community and school district.

Mentorship

The women each shared experience of having support from mentors throughout their professional careers. Kowalski's (2006) defines mentorship as providing encouragement, career related advice, friendship, and/or the development of confidence and trust between a person or persons and another individual seeking mentoring; by comparison, sponsorship is the creation of professional opportunities for others by initiating opportunities that help overcome social and political barriers for certain members of a group. The data analysis from studies has revealed that gender or ethnicity did not reduce the effectiveness of mentorship, but rather the form of support is most beneficial in influencing progression within the educational career ladder (Rodriguez, 2014). Ortiz (2001) demonstrated how Latinas applied the use of social capital for networking. Ortiz defines social capital as developing trust and cooperation "through structures of personal relationships and strong networks" (p. 62).

The voices of Latina advocates are important for promoting social justice. Social justice principles call attention to unequitable social matters. Sprague (2005) asserted that the interaction of gender, race/ethnicity, and class "is a key organizer of social life" and understanding of how these interactions work will "allow feminists to make the social world more equitable" (p.3). The call for advocacy is a call for social change.

These change agents' campaign and lead others by bringing attention to system wide barriers that are related to racial, gender, and social biases. Conversations about race and gender are difficult and uncomfortable for some people, but until these conversations begin, the status quo will remain the same and women of color will continue to face challenges in leadership roles. The exposure of unending customary biases that exist within the organizations of schools is needed if gradual transformation is going to occur. The professional standards of the women displayed in this chapter provides examples of ethical problem solving for equitable educational opportunities for marginalized groups of students. The personal traits these Latina leaders shows other women how to embrace their cultural backgrounds, develop a strong sense of self- efficacy to advocate inspire, and take charge.

Take Charge

Emotional core beliefs influence individual decision making. "When faced with ethical dilemmas or new issues individuals must be able to critically evaluate and interpret the relevant codes, as well as evaluate their feelings as appropriate or inappropriate bases for ethical behavior" (Kitchener, 1986, p. 306). The voices of these determined Mexican American women indicate their willingness to be risk takers and just do it. They were given opportunities to acquire leadership roles that allowed them to be efficient in their daily decision making as they increased their social capital that was needed to move forward in their quests. Their stories are the testament of the capacity to challenge the standard perception effective leadership and the politics of fit. Latina advocacy has a clear understanding that perceptions of leadership are "socially constructed" and the use of the term best fit "has remained stagnant" which places barriers Mexican American women (Tooms, et al., 2010, p.102). The women's stories exhibit, relevant data that demonstrates that constraints for leadership roles continue to exist because of ethnicity

and/or gender bias (Carrion-Mendez, 2009, Quilantan, 2004, Duwe & Mendez-Morse, 2010) However, Latina empowerment is about examining our own perceptions of what leadership looks like, embracing our cultural influence, and influencing others to defy the bias perceptions of what effective leadership looks like.

Transforming Power

Transformational leadership is the ability to empower others. The transformational leader has the capacity to shape and enhance the ability of their followers to nourish a common goal and vision in furthering the collective mission of the organization (Dahir, 2016). This power is about enhancing those less power-full of collective problem-solving abilities among organizational members as a means to influence others when advocating for social justice. Once can give voice to the voiceless, by transferring one's power for good, those with power can continue to mentor and sponsor women's advocacy.

Harnessing Power

Mexican American women have overcome the challenge of the traditional sex- role expectations that have been governed for many years by culture and tradition (Quilantan & Ochoa, 2004). The following is an understanding of Latina empowerment. According to Campbell-Evans (1992), "The essence of qualitative research is to explore and understand a situation, issue, or question and to uncover the truth of it. If research is the search for truth and truth in this domain is believed to be a constructed reality, then the interpretation of truth is determined in part by the researcher's view of the world."

Chicana feminists, argue that Latinas face specific cultural barriers which prevent them from gaining all achievements by previous feminist movements. However, recent studies have captured the essence of individual experiences of Latina leadership within the phenomenon and it gives voice to all women (Nieto, 2016, Martinez, 2016,

Rodriguez, 2014). The voices of Latinas include complex intersections of ethnicity, nationality, class, and gender which are contributing factors for to self-identity. This struggle is anchored within the social and political struggles of the Chicano/Latino community at large. Chicana feminists advocate Chicana empowerment. Current Latina leaders have the capacity to empower others by sharing their strategies with mentoring and creating networking opportunities for other women.

Hofstede (2010) presents power distance and gender dimensions in his characterization of culture and defines power distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 61). Societies and the culture of the society determines whether the culturally determined roles are defined as masculine or feminine. In general, "men are supposed to be assertive, competitive, and tough. Women are supposed to be more concerned with taking care of the home, of the children, and take the tender roles" (p. 138).

Chicanaism declares that Mexican American women have also been marginalized by their own culture (Garcia, 1997). The men had the power; the women were expected to accept the value system created by men and display a subservient role (Anzaldua, 1987). The Catholic Church has played a key role in influencing these gender role expectations. Nieto (1997) wrote "It has clearly defined the woman's role as that of wife and mother, requiring obedience to one's

husband" (p. 208). The Mexican American women portrayed in this chapter defied traditional sex role expectations that had been governed for many years by tradition and culture. They accepted challenges associated with the complex role the superintendency and the ethical dilemmas related to pursing equitable education for all. But each woman displayed characteristics of assertive with their decision making and succeeded in making the necessary changes for overall improvements in the school district they led.

The modern Latina have evolved from the stereo-typical submissive role to a more assertive and confident role (Rodriguez, 2014). Ethical problem solving exists within in the Latina advocate's daily practice. These stories will empower those advocates to remain passionate about their mission or purpose regardless of detours or roadblocks and that impede their quest.

Ongoing Research

The review of literature revealed that few scholars have provided data on Latinas in educational leadership and how they contend with ethical dilemmas while navigating ethical problem solving for positive ethical decision-making outcomes. This is an area that requires continual examination for change to occur (Ortiz, 1997, Mendez- Morse, 1997, Gonzales, 2007. Rodriguez, 2014. Nieves, 2016). This chapter provided the stories of 6 Mexican American female superintendents and gave examples of how they confronted ethical problem solving, however, there is much more to learn from other female educational leaders who have efficiently solved moral dilemmas in their daily practice for equitable advocacy.

The voices of groups of women from historically marginalized groups, such as Mexican American women are important when considering recommendations for ethical practice. Further research is needed to confront the overarching themes of biases related to gender and ethnicity so one can gain an understanding of how cultural congruency relates to ethical decision-making practices for Latinas.

Impacting Perceptions of Leadership

The stories of the six women in this chapter signify that there are well qualified Mexican American women who are proficient in performing ethical decision making. Yet, the percentage of women in educational administrative positions does not correspond with the number of women in the educational work force; less than 20% of women hold the superintendent position in the United States, and the representation of Mexican American female superintendents is much smaller than any other ethnic group (Duwe & Mendez-Morse, 2010; Ortiz, 1981). Latina leaders are choses to lead distinct school districts. The women in this chapter were located and clustered in a unique geographic area of the state of Texas, out of 1,144 superintendents in the entire state of Texas only 14 were of Latina. Their accomplishments in the superintendent role are isolated and not exposed to others. The notion of politics of fit needs further investigation to understand how gender and ethnicity impact ethical problem solving when advocating for equitable education.

Conclusion

These narratives applaud the accomplishments of six unique women and credits all they have to offer to other Latinas. Their willingness to participate and share their life stories is a

testament of their commitment and dedication to help others. Their success provides hope to the next generation of Mexican American female school administrators. Their stories demonstrate to other Latinas that their dreams of reaching the highest rank of educational leadership can be a reality. Their notable talents have created a positive outlook for the future. They teach others that perseverance, determination, and conviction pay off. They believe that they as (Latinas) do have the ability to influence future generations of school leaders and who can be the catalyst for equitable education.

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Lessons from the Field: Understanding Equity through the Pandemic from the Perspective of Female Leaders

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It is estimated that 1.6 billion students were displaced from the traditional school building in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (UN, 2022; IMF, 2020). While the drastic change in how society normally functions was a shock for everyone, children and historically marginalized people suffered disproportionately severe impacts (GHO, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). Superintendents played a pivotal role in ensuring that students could continue to learn remotely until the end of the school year. Without the safety net of the school building, a focus on equity was crucial, as those already negatively affected by the status quo were faced with additional burdens. The purpose of the current study was to understand female superintendents' experiences with ensuring equity at the beginning of the pandemic. The researcher found that superintendents leaned on utilizing effective messaging, ensuring access and opportunities to school sponsored programs, leveraging community resources and support, and addressing resistance to changes. The strategies they employed helped them continue the focus on ensuring every family was well situated during the break in school and when schools reopened. This information can be used to inform new practices and policies that will support equity through future school interruptions or traumatic events. Inevitably, this includes ensuring that the culture of the district is aligned with its values and addressing the parts of the system that do not work for all students (Mitchell, 2021).

Keywords: superintendents, equity, women leadership, crisis leadership

It is estimated that 1.6 billion students were displaced from the traditional school building in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2020). While the drastic change in how society normally functions was a shock for everyone, children and historically marginalized people suffered disproportionately severe impacts (GHO, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). School leaders, teachers, and families pivoted to out-of-school or remote learning in March and continued that format for the remainder of the school year. Superintendents played a pivotal role in ensuring that students could continue to learn remotely until the end of the school year. In addition to this basic charge, school leaders also struggled to maintain a level of services for those children who needed additional support for schooling. Without the safety net of the school building, a focus on equity was crucial, as those already negatively affected by the status quo were faced with additional burdens.

Regardless of the additional stresses due to the pandemic, striving for equity is foundational to ensuring that historically marginalized students have equal opportunities to realize their goals. Too often, though, leadership creates or initiates equity-based practices slowly, based on the speed of those who are not ready (Gorski, 2019; Gorski et al., 2022). The fear is that moving too fast will alienate or sabotage outcomes due to resistance. However, it is important to understand and empathize with the students who have borne the brunt of inequitable practices and outcomes for decades (Gorski, 2019; Gorski et al., 2022). The results of intentional or unintentional harmful practices can be seen in the over- and under-representation of students in special programs like special education and gifted and talented (Ford, 1998; Skiba et. al., 2008). The purpose of the current study was to understand female superintendents' experiences with ensuring equity at the beginning of the pandemic. This information can be used to inform new practices and policies that will support equity through future school interruptions or traumatic events.

The Effects of Trauma during the Pandemic

In addition to the pre-existing need for a more intentional focus on equity, the pandemic has had an outsized impact on families of color and/or low-income families (GHO, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). During the period of this study (academic years 2019-2021) not all schools in Texas had returned to in-person learning. But once in-person learning resumed, educational leaders, staff, and faculty had to focus on addressing the past and current effects of trauma resulting from the health, economic, and social justice stressors of the previous school years. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022), adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are experiences that occur before the age of 18 that cause extreme distress and can result in long-term medical, mental health, and behavioral issues. For school leaders, understanding the impact of ACEs in K-12 schools is a social justice imperative. Research shows an “effect between the number of ACEs and risk of poor school attendance, behavioral issues, and failure to meet grade-level academic standards” (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018; Zyromski et.al, 2020, p. 352).

Trauma-informed schools and leadership are even more necessary when considering the widespread exposure to death and turmoil beginning in 2020. Generally, schools have been a constant and stabilizing environment for children, especially for those who are vulnerable (Downey, 2012; Greig, et.al., 2021). However, when school buildings shut down, that constant was lost. It was incumbent upon school leaders and faculty to address the complex needs for schooling, food, specialized support, and counseling of children and families in a virtual environment. In addition, school leaders had to juggle planning for the eventual safe return of kids and teachers into the building.

While research has codified how trauma can manifest in individuals, there is still a lack of research on the effects of trauma on school systems and "how existing school culture can act as an enabler or barrier to embedding whole school approaches, and what that might mean for leading whole-school approaches to address community and childhood trauma" (Greig et al., 2021, p. 67). Understanding trauma from an individual perspective will not be sufficient to address the lived experiences of children, especially in marginalized communities, without looking at the systems in school that may perpetuate inequities that can re-traumatize students. Greig et al. (2021, p. 67,) succinctly summarized the concerns school leaders need to consider:

> Whereas trauma-informed school leadership practices primarily rely on centering intervention on student outcomes (Brunzell et al., 2016; Dorado et al., 2016), this risks drawing attention away from the systems, structures and policies that can serve to entrench or reinforce trauma in schools, which can have the effect of exacerbating trauma exposure, particularly for marginalized communities (Ginwright, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; van Dernoot Lipsky, 2010).

Community-Engaged Leadership during the Pandemic

At the height of the pandemic, educational leaders were faced with the notion that traditional, status quo leadership approaches may not be sufficient in the face of widespread trauma and massive changes in everyday life and in schools. This context required leadership with a more critical, social justice foundation. In every crisis is an opportunity. This moment provided an opportunity for leaders to be relational and collaborative in order to create schools dedicated to social change for and with the communities they serve (Ospina & Foldy, 2010; Priest & Kliewer, 2017).

Educators were tasked with creating new ways for students to learn and interact with the system of education during the pandemic. During this time, leaders focused on equity and socially just practices could also develop "new ways of thinking and capacities required to intervene in established systems [which] calls for a shift in focus from the development and accomplishment of individuals toward collective leadership approaches that are cocreated, participatory, and can account for degrees of social, political, economic, and moral agitation" (Priest & Kliewer, 2017, p. 37). The work and learning required to achieve this change in social dynamics was met with both support and resistance from various constituents.

Responding to Resistance during the Pandemic

Community-engaged work on behalf of social justice and equity will focus on how school systems actively oppress or liberate students and families (Kliewer & Priest, 2017). It will require a paradigm shift, a discussion of values, and collaborative learning about how systems create barriers that education should eradicate (Kliewer & Priest, 2017). Building new capacities, paradigms, and shared experiences during the pandemic is a form of learning and as communities learn new ways of thinking and being, that is also a form of change (Alas & Sharifi, 2002).

Change in any complex organization will be met with resistance from both inside and outside the organization. This can be defined as "perceived as opposing or blocking forces that can redirect, reject, or prevent change" for various reasons (Sabino et al., 2021, p. 269). According to researchers, resistance to change can be attributed to:

> (i) the threats to established resource allocations; (ii) the threat of established power relations; (iii) the threat to specialization; (iv) group inertia; (v) the limited focus of change; (vi) organizational cynicism and skepticism (caused by pessimism about future efforts and lack of trust in the agents of change) and (vii) structural inertia (Blanca & Ramona, 2016; Helvaci & Kilicoglu, 2018; Holt et al., 2007; Sabino et al., 2021, p. 270; Seijts & Roberts, 2011).

Too often, social justice initiatives are focused within school systems (Berkovich, 2014), however, leaders focused on equity and sustainability must engage, communicate, and co-create shared values and capacity within schools and communities despite resistance.

Framework

Social justice leadership is the framework for this study. Social justice leadership is the practice of educational leaders advocating for students and families "by examining current social and educational arrangements and taking actions to promote school initiatives and practices that support justice and equity" (Wang, 2018, p. 471). During the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, superintendents were navigating changing directives, mandates, politics, and public health information. However, amid new and sometimes contradictory information, superintendents had to make quick decisions on how to support their students and families while the school facilities were closed.

While the pandemic was disruptive to the traditional notion of schooling, it was not the first disruption that school leaders had to face over the last few decades. Those leaders focused on social justice leadership and community advocacy were able to recognize the continued unequal circumstances many of their constituents who identify as historically marginalized, English language learners, special needs, and/or low income. Therefore, the leaders in this study and many others had to do the work to understand and attempt to mitigate the effects of school closures continuing to interrupt inequity (Wang, 2018).

Methodology

The researcher used a qualitative phenomenological approach to understand the lived experience of female superintendents during the pandemic. Creswell (2015) noted that qualitative research is ideal when the researcher aims to explore a situation and develop a detailed understanding of the central phenomenon. The researcher conducted one focus group of five female superintendents in the state of Texas who were present during a statewide meeting. Each of the participants served in this role during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. Each of the superintendents self-identified as white, worked in rural schools, and had between 2 and 11 years of experience in the superintendency. The question the researcher sought to answer was: What are the perceptions of female superintendents' equity challenges during the pandemic?

The researcher used a convenience sample, as each of the participants were members of the same leadership organization. The focus group was conducted during the 2021 state-wide meeting. Due to the small sample size, future studies will build on this foundation to include leaders of varied ethnicity, school type, and gender. The focus group questions were semi-structured, open-ended questions that allowed participants to reflect and respond thoroughly based

on their lived experiences. The interview was intended to be semi-structured as the researcher would only have one opportunity to interview the participants during this gathering (Bernard, 2011).

The face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using a computer program. The transcripts were then reviewed for accuracy. Afterward, the researcher studied the data (transcription and observational notes) from the focus group to find patterns. The data were then coded and analyzed for themes related to equity.

Results: Lessons from the Field

Based on the analysis of the focus group, four themes emerged (see Figure 1). These were communication, community, access and opportunity, and resistance.

Figure 1

Four Themes from Focus Group

Lesson One: Utilizing Effective Messaging

Each of the participants in the group were in the process of addressing inequities in the community when the pandemic closed schools in March 2020. When the school buildings were closed, traditional routes for communication became more challenging. The goal was to adapt to the new and temporary environment of learning from home while still pushing forward on initiatives already in progress. In addition, these superintendents addressed how to discuss equity in a way that would communicate the impact and importance of these initiatives in general, but the message became even more complicated because of the Covid-19 crisis. One participant summarized it this way:

> COVID brought to light a lot of things that fall through the cracks when, when they're in the building and when they're not in the building. And then finding ways to reach out to them virtually was difficult. But we tried our best.

Each leader understood the ability to adapt to a constantly changing and fluid environment that year was going to be vital as they still wanted to focus on teacher and student success.

Beyond the health crisis, that summer was also rife with discussions of race inequality that further divided communities. The leaders also hoped to communicate success for each student using equity as a vehicle to ensure that goal for every child in the community without creating further divisions. One superintendent created an equity task force in the fall of that year. During this time, the leader did not want to make this newly formed group public until they were ready to unveil the work. The superintendent stated,

> We launched an equity task force in the fall, but I deliberately kept the work not necessarily secret. There was a strategy behind keeping it quiet for a while until we were ready to really unveil the work cause I was, uh, not sure how the community would respond.

She was intentionally thinking about when and how to communicate the work that would protect the task force during their early deliberations. In addition, she balanced that concern with the understanding the group would still want and need input from the community. As a result, the committee utilized coded language to obtain the information. According to the superintendent, the committee sent out a safety survey to the community, but its questions hinted toward equity practices. Each of these superintendents was fully aware of the differing views about race and equity in their communities and felt they needed to work around those in order to arrive at their desired outcomes. One of the participants stated, "And trying to get them to understand that all of our students don't have the same resources and supports, and don't even know sometimes what they don't know and that that's not their fault."

The literature discusses the connection between communication and crisis leadership (Marshall, et.al., 2020; Jahagirdar, et.al., 2020). Specifically, communication can be more difficult during a crisis when stakeholders are looking to be put at ease that there is a plan to address the issue (Marshall, et. al., 2020). During crisis management, the role of the superintendent is to communicate clearly, effectively, and timely through collaborative channels, or directly with stakeholders (Marshall, et.al., 2020). During the pandemic information was changing rapidly and there was some uncertainty of the immediate future of the students and families due to the virus. Communication channels were altered to favor a higher focus on technology. However, due to the limitations of communication through technology, the message itself can be interpreted or misinterpreted in various ways based on the reader. Leaders must then innovate so knowledge creation and communication are linked with community-engaged strategies that focus on equity.

Lesson Two: Ensuring Access and Opportunities to Various Programs

Each of the participants in the group expressed concern regarding equitable programming during the pandemic. They had a full understanding that access and opportunity to various school programs were problematic before the pandemic. For instance, one participant explained that she had been looking to reduce or sponsor costs for families that could not afford cheerleading or other sports. Extracurricular activities were important, but the participants also addressed how income inequity affected services and outcomes. Some lamented the fact that the populations in their special programs were not representative of the communities they served. One leader addressed her work with dual credit courses as an example. There is a plethora of research that address the over- and under-representation of black and brown learners in programs such as special education,

and gifted and talented due to structural systems like race and socio-economic status (Ford, 1998; Skiba et. al., 2008).

In the end, the leaders were aware of how systems can be a bridge or a barrier to college success based on race, language, and income. One participant stated, “I don’t mean this in a negative way, but truly they were buying their rank because of the weighted grades for honors and advanced placement classes.” Gorski (2019) asserts that if equity is to truly be seen in schools, there must be a fundamental shift in how opportunity and access to resources prioritize historically marginalized populations. One participant fully acknowledged that Covid “brought to light a lot of things that fall through the cracks when, when they’re in the building and when they’re not in the building.”

Taking a critical look at the extent to which school policies and practices are crafted with the lived experiences of students and families as a focal point is a key indicator of the school’s or district's focus on equity. For social justice leaders, this becomes the ideology or the lens through which decisions are made (Gorski, 2019). Thereby, leaders can enact their own form of resistance to the status quo by improving school systems, centering the capacity of staff to build and utilize an equity mindset, and strengthening relationships with the community (Theoharis, 2007).

Lesson Three: Leveraging Community Resources and Support

During the period the study was conducted, economic woes were rampant. Since the pandemic had left many families without work, economic struggles impacted what families could afford in and out of school. Schools are not a closed system, so social, political, and economic concerns in the community also affect what happens in the school building (Sarason, 1997). Schools were also managing an equitable education with dwindling budgets. In some cases, superintendents were able to allocate funds to address some community concerns. However, not all these initiatives to support the community were well received.

There was also the notion that each of the superintendents would need to seek community support and resources. This was the strategy one participant articulated to address the disparity of dual credit courses, “So we went to community organizations, got scholarships, made those available. And as a district said, we’re covering the costs of dual credit courses because our kids need to have equal access.”

Community support in both tangible and intangible forms was vital during this time. In times of crisis, neighbors, friends, and businesspeople may be generous and support each other. While some of the superintendents did experience this, it was not without complications against the backdrop of the racial tensions during the same period. Regardless, despite the socio-political push and pull leaders were experiencing, they were all adamant that support needed to be bi-directional. The district became creative to support families and they also reached out to various stakeholders to support teachers and students.

Lesson Four: Addressing Resistance

Resistance to change is inevitable in any organization. The superintendent as the head of the school system must be able to move the district forward in the face of resistance. During this school year, change (and resistance to it) was rampant. The lives of everyone in the country were upended. Schools and businesses closed their doors or attempted to innovate in various ways to keep business going. Resistance and outrage were also a part of the climate, from resistance to

mask-wearing to resisting harmful and targeted police practices. Schooling and their leadership were not immune to the frustrations, complaints, and resistance that existed throughout this time in the broader national context.

The leaders studied were aware that many of the changes due to the pandemic would not be well received. However, they also acknowledged that some of the resistance was due to prevailing attitudes on race and culture in the community. One participant stated that when attempting to provide hotspots to families so they would be able to fully participate in remote schooling, she would hear feedback like, "They can't afford to have the internet at home. Why should you be giving it to them? Why is the district paying for their internet?"

The participants also lamented how feedback and criticism were shared. Some of the participants led in small rural districts. They stated they would sometimes read concerns and complaints via social media instead of more personal interactions. While effective communication is essential to implementing change (Gilley et al., 2009; Sabino, et. al., 2021) it is incumbent upon the leadership to create, learn, understand, and empathize with the needs of every member of the school and community. The dichotomy of using leadership as a tool to educate and promote social justice values for those that have been marginalized by the system is critical to ensuring the success of students during and after the pandemic.

The "New" Normal

Each of the participants in the study reflected on their current circumstances and how to improve the culture of their district when the school buildings were again safe for children. Inevitably, the results showed a commitment to equity and the barriers that are inherent in achieving that goal. The results of the study highlight lessons and key takeaways for any leader focused on a socially just approach to improving school systems. The recommendations following were based on the research and themes from the focus group.

Be creative and strategic about district messaging and communication. It is important to utilize multiple venues, but also to build relationships and trust with the community. Part of effective messaging is sharing space and creating values with constituents to better connect lived experiences to policies and practices. Without this step, messaging can be ignored, misinterpreted, or devalued.

Take a critical look at the story told by district program data. Which students have the most access and opportunities to participate in all the district has to offer? Look at who is not participating in various programs and what effect may that have on their sense of belonging in the school and community. How does the messaging reach those that are not a valued part of the community? The community is fundamental to the livelihood of the school, especially in times of crisis. A strong community with shared values will be important to the success of the district. As such, the power to create the narrative of the district must be shared with the faculty and staff. However, the leader must ensure that all voices are heard and understood it is truly representative of all facets of the community.

Finally, leaders must be able to withstand resistance to change. Within any system or individual, resistance to change is normal. However, when resistance becomes a barrier to improved academic and social outcomes for students who continue to be oppressed, the leader must be steadfast. Building equitable systems will require system change that will breed discomfort, but black students, indigenous students, and other students of color deserve a leader who will advocate for their success.

Conclusion

Managing an educational system during a crisis is not easy. The superintendent serves as the face of the school district. As such, they are tasked with understanding and implementing the mission and vision of the district (Meier, 2018). Inevitably, this includes ensuring that the culture of the district is aligned with its values and addressing the parts of the system that do not work for all students (Mitchell, 2021). Too often, school leaders adopt an "equity approach [that] coddles the hesitancies of people with the least racial equity investment while punishing people with the most investment" (Gorski, 2019, p. 57).

Based on the research from the focus group of 5 female superintendents, the importance of communicating through effective messaging, leveraging community resources and support, focusing on the continued access and opportunity of programs during and after the crisis, and addressing resistance to encourage forward momentum were important during the pandemic. While Covid-19 was new and unchartered territory, these leaders have been through other crises during their careers. The lessons gleaned from leading during the pandemic are applicable to all leaders as they navigate future difficulties in their leadership roles.

The significance of this study is understanding how the participants adapted their leadership in the wake of the pandemic. Those lessons can shape how current and future leaders think about messaging during emergencies. Leaders will inevitably face resistance on various issues but building a relationship with community members will be valuable support in the midst of a crisis (Theoharis, 2007). Finally, during and beyond the crisis the leader must understand how to meet the needs of those students and families that have been marginalized. The research shows that equity-minded leaders can navigate current events while planning and preparing for more opportunities once the emergency subsides.

The pandemic (or any crisis) is an opportunity for leaders to look critically at the policies and practices of the school that do not serve children and move to eliminate those barriers. It is easy to get lost in the mundane as teachers and students interact with school systems daily. However, those interactions can be oppressive and harmful to the very students who look to schools to promote and protect the public good (Fabionar, 2020). The superintendent must maintain the fortitude to manage the complex political, social, and economic systems at play in the community to realize a truly equitable and excellent education for every student.

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The Internet isn't a Luxury Anymore: How Educational Leaders Can Promote Equitable Digital Access for all Students

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How do we ensure that all students have the tools and resources they need to succeed in today's educational context? In this article, we explore how the right to education generally and to specific educational tools and resources in California have been protected through litigation in the past; how the COVID-19 pandemic revealed technology-based educational inequities in our system that were previously unacknowledged; and, we propose strategies that educational leaders and legislators who seek to provide equality of educational opportunity may consider in the distribution of educational resources moving forward.

Keywords: access, internet, education, COVID-19, leadership

California courts have long recognized education as a fundamental right—one that should not be determined by a student's wealth (Serrano v. Priest, 1971). In furtherance of this principle, in 2000, a group of nearly 100 students in San Francisco County filed a class action lawsuit against the State of California, claiming that the State failed to provide public school students with equal access to instructional materials, safe and appropriate educational facilities, and qualified teachers (*Williams v. State*, 2000). In August 2004, the parties entered into a settlement agreement in which the State agreed to provide all students with the tools they needed to learn—standards-aligned instructional materials and clean and safe schools (ACLU, n.d.). As schools moved to all-virtual instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the definition of equal access to instructional materials shifted, uncovering additional cracks in our educational infrastructure—all students did not have the access they needed to learn in a virtual world.

The broad question motivating this article is: How do we ensure that all students have the tools and resources they need to succeed in today's educational context? Our intent is to contribute to existing research in three ways. First, we discuss how the right to education generally and to specific educational tools and resources in California have been protected through litigation in the past. Second, we unpack how the COVID-19 pandemic revealed technology access-based educational inequities in our system that were previously unaddressed. Finally, informed by California's legal history and our current educational context, we propose strategies that educational leaders and legislators who seek to provide equality of educational opportunity may consider in the distribution of educational resources moving forward.

Frameworks

As it is in all systems, racial inequality is embedded in our nation's school systems (Diamond & Lewis, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative to address equity practices in individual classrooms but also at the systems-level and to "define equity in systemic terms" (Rigby et al., 2019, p. 487). Equity-driven leaders directly confront institutionalized and systematic conditions and processes that "exacerbate social inequities" (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2017, p. 7; Bensimon, 2005). They use their understanding of power and privilege systems to interrupt behaviors and processes that "reinforce historical inequities" (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2017, p. 7; Wilson, Douglas, & Nganga, 2013). In their 2017 study, Galloway and Ishimaru identified eight "high-leverage leadership practices" that "could mitigate disparities between dominant and nondominant students" (p. 7):

> [Engaging in] inclusive development of an equity vision, creating and sustaining an equitable culture, facilitating rigorous and culturally responsive teaching, supervising instruction for equity, equitably allocating resources, authentically collaborating with families and communities, modeling equitable practices, and influencing policy. (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2017, p. 7)

Galloway and Ishimaru (2017) concluded that to break down structural barriers to non-dominant student success, educational leaders must shift their focus from school-site or district-specific issues to a more collective effort of "transforming and creating new cultures and practice" and by revealing "current and historical practices that have maintained inequities, negotiate contradictions that emerge in the process, create new conceptions, and try out radically different practices, policies, and actions" (p. 26). It is through this specific and systems-focused lens of equity-driven

leadership that we examine the issue of digital access during COVID-19 distance learning and the implications for practice as California students head back to in-person instruction.

Our discussion here is also informed by a framework of digital equity. As Hall et al. (2020) note, pre-COVID literature on technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK) often fails to acknowledge how context impacts the integration of technology into instruction. The literature's failure to address the importance of context contributed to a system unprepared to address the digital inequities that were revealed when we shifted to all online learning in the spring of 2020 (Hall et al., 2020; Dolan, 2016). While technology can enhance instruction and allowed for continued instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, it also exacerbated "pre-existing inequities, establish[ed] new ones, and further marginalize[d] communities" (Hall et al., p. 436; Kimons, 2019; Young & Noonoo, 2020). Many students already underserved by educational institutions struggled to access online learning spaces because they lacked appropriate devices and/or internet access to engage in livestreaming and interactive instruction and the digital literacy skills "to fully experience online opportunities and engage in interactions that foster critical thinking about their content and the world around them" (Braverman, 2016, p. 16). Digital equity is particularly complicated in educational spaces because it implicates both access to technology and the ability of students to navigate technology and digital texts (Roswell et al., 2017).

For this discussion, we use Ritzhaupt, Liu, Dawson, and Barron's (2013) multi-level conceptualization of the digital divide, with three levels of access:

1. Does the school system provide equitable access to hardware, software, the Internet, and technology support within schools? (Ritzhaupt et al., 2013, p. 293)
2. How frequently are students and teachers using technology within the classroom and for what purpose they are using technology? (Ritzhaupt et al., 2013, p. 293)
3. Do student users know how to use [information and communication technology] for their personal empowerment? (Ritzhaupt et al., 2013, p. 294)

While the goal is for all students to have the knowledge and skills to use information and communication technology for personal empowerment, Ritzhaupt et al. (2013) note that this is contingent on first addressing access to technology at system (level one) and classroom levels (level two). In other words, to get to the point where we can address the "digital literacy gap", which involves developing more "capital-enhancing modes of adoption and participation" (Watkins, 2018, p. 10), we must first address the "access gap" (Watkins, 2012). Thus, we spend the bulk of our energy in this article focused on the educational system and how it can address the access gap.

Legal History of Equity of Educational Resources in California

California has long recognized equality of educational opportunity as core value protected by the State Constitution. With its 1971 decision in *Serrano v. Priest*, the California Supreme Court positioned the State of California to lead the nation in state-based challenges to equity in public school funding. In *Serrano*, plaintiffs alleged that the school funding system, under which school districts received about 60% of their funding from property taxes, resulted in unconscionable disparities in educational opportunities between students based on geography. The plaintiffs argued that the quality of their educational opportunity was directly tied to the wealth of their community, disproportionately impacting communities of color (Lockard, 2005). Because of

schools' reliance on property taxes, lower-income communities were also faced with higher property tax rates, further exacerbating the inequities. In a six-to-one vote, the California Supreme Court ruled that education was a fundamental right protected under the California Constitution and that wealth-based discrimination would be treated as a suspect class under California law. Specifically, the court further concluded that the state's school funding system "invidiously discriminates against the poor because it makes the quality of a child's education a function of the wealth of his parents and neighbors" (Serrano v. Priest, 1971, p. 1264). The California Supreme Court overruled the lower court's dismissal of plaintiffs' claims and remanded the case to the trial court.

In the wake of the *Serrano* ruling, the California legislature passed a series of legislative reforms in an attempt to improve educational funding equity. In 1972, it passed Senate Bill 90 to increase funding in school districts with low property tax revenue and cap property tax increases. Shortly after the enactment of Senate Bill 90, the *Serrano* trial (remanded from the California Supreme Court) began (*Serrano II*). The trial court was tasked with determining if the state funding formula, after the enactment of Senate Bill 90, met California's constitutional requirements. Between the *Serrano I* ruling and the beginning of the *Serrano II* trial, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its ruling in *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* (1972), concluding that education is not a fundamental right protected by the U.S. Constitution. Therefore, when the trial court in *Serrano* issued its opinion, it struck down the California education funding system based exclusively on its violation of the equal protection provisions of the California Constitution. On appeal, the California Supreme Court upheld the trial court's ruling, noting that "the constraints of federalism…are not applicable to this court in its determination of whether our own state's public school financing system runs afoul of state constitutional provisions" (*Serrano II*, 1976, p. 952). The court further confirmed the trial court's application of strict scrutiny and conclusion that the state's education financing system violated the California equal protection provision (*Serrano II*, 1976). The decision "required the state to eliminate all wealth-related differences in school funding, effectively resulting in a new litmus test: per pupil expenditures could not vary by more than $100 in all the school districts in the state" (Lockard, 2005, p. 389).

Meanwhile, California's property values continued to climb and "anti-tax advocates" pushed for property tax reform (Lockard, 2005, p. 390). Proposition 13, which passed with overwhelming statewide support in June 1978, dramatically changed the property tax structure in California, capping tax rates to one-percent of property value and limiting assessed property increases to two-percent annually. In response to the *Serrano II* ruling and the passage of Proposition 13, the California legislature scrambled to improve educational funding equity. Their efforts included diffusion of property tax revenue to local communities, increases in state-aid to offset the property tax changes, educational spending limits (Proposition 4, also known as Gann Limit), and distribution of lottery receipts into the state education system.

As the legislature attempted to build a more equitable system for funding schools, litigants continued to challenge equitable provision of educational services. In *Hartzell v. Connell* (1984), plaintiffs challenged fees charged by the Santa Barbara School District for students to participate in extracurricular activities. Plaintiffs argued that extracurricular activities were part of the educational experience and that they were part of the "free school" guarantee in the California Constitution. The California Supreme Court held that extracurricular activities were a "fundamental ingredient of the educational process" and were thus included in the "free school" guarantee (*Hartzell*, 1984, p. 42-43).

In another win for education funding advocates, Proposition 98 passed in 1988, setting minimum funding levels for elementary and secondary schools and protecting schools from many state budget cuts (Lockard, 2005). The education funding minimum was further increased with the passage of Proposition 111 in 1990.

Plaintiffs returned to the courtroom in *Butt v. California* (1992), challenging Richmond Unified School District's (RUSD) attempt to end their school year six-weeks early because of funding challenges. Plaintiff parents of RUSD students filed for an injunction to prohibit the district from closing early, arguing that it would deny their children "their fundamental right to an effective public education under the California Constitution" (*Butt*, 1992, p. 1244). On appeal to the California Supreme Court, the court held that while the state did not mandate a particular school year length, having one district close six-weeks early "would cause an extreme and unprecedented disparity in educational service and progress" (*Butt*, 1992, p. 1252). The court required the state to assist RUSD in funding the rest of its academic year, noting:

> [It is] well settled that the California Constitution makes public education uniquely a fundamental concern of the State and prohibits maintenance and operation of the common public school system in a way which denies basic educational equality to the students of particular districts. The State itself bears the ultimate authority and responsibility to ensure that its district-based system of common schools provides basic equality of educational opportunity. *Butt*, 1992, p. 1251

On the 46th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* and in the wake of educational adequacy challenges in state courts across the nation, plaintiffs filed suit in *Williams v. State of California*, alleging that the state failed to meet its responsibility to provide minimal educational services to millions of children, particularly low-income children, immigrant children, and children of color (Oakes, 2004). Plaintiffs claimed that school buildings and access to other educational resources in low-income communities deprived students of "basic educational opportunities available to more privileged children" and their schools lacked "the bare essentials required of a free and common school education" (First Amended Complaint, 2000, p. 6). Specifically, plaintiffs alleged that their schools lacked sufficient classroom space and desks, qualified teachers, and books to support their student enrollment; school facilities were in appalling and unhealthy conditions, many lacking functioning bathroom facilities and/or suffering from insect infestation.

UCLA professor Jeannie Oakes submitted three of the sixteen expert reports examining the state of California's schools for the *Williams* case. In her report summarizing all of the expert reports, she identified the three conditions essential for an adequate education:

> Qualified teachers, relevant instructional materials that students may use in school and at home, and clean, safe, and educationally appropriate facilities….The enable students to learn the knowledge and skills that the state has specified as important. They promote students' chances to compete for good jobs and economic security. They provide students with the tools to engage in civic life as adults. The consequences of not having access to such teachers, materials, and facilities are particularly harsh in California's current high-stakes, standards-based education system. (Oakes, 2002a, p. 1).

In another report, Oakes focused exclusively on student access to textbooks, instructional materials, equipment, and technology (Oakes, 2002b). In this report, Oakes concluded that:

> Many California students do not have access to the number or quality of textbooks, curriculum materials, and technology that are fundamental to all students' learning and are available to a majority of California students. The insufficient supply and poor quality of the textbooks and instructional materials afforded to many students create a significant obstacle for those students as they attempt to meet the content standards the State has set, to pass state tests that are required for grade-to-grade promotion and high school graduation, and to qualify for competitive opportunities in college and the workforce. (Oakes, 2002b, p. 3)

Without sufficient instructional materials, including access to technology, Oakes (2002b) concluded that many students would experience difficulty in meeting minimal educational expectations. In his expert report submitted on behalf of the plaintiffs in Williams, Stanford professor William Koski (2002) agreed with Oakes, noting that "it is not fair to hold students and teachers accountable when they are hamstrung by resource deficiencies….Without the provision of sufficient resources, we argue, standards-based reform cannot live up to its potential" (p. 2).

In August 2004, before the California Supreme Court issued a ruling, the State agreed to settle *Williams*. Then Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger acknowledged the persistent educational inequities plaguing the state, stating "Every child is guaranteed to get equal education, equal quality teachers, equal textbooks, homework materials, all of this stuff ought to be equal but it hasn't been" (Oakes, 2004, p. 1897). The settlement led to significant changes to California's educational system. In addition to providing nearly $1 billion to fix unsatisfactory school conditions, it also led to the passage of five new laws aimed at improving educational sufficiency and equity. For example, in California Education Code Section 60119, governing boards are required to hold public hearings to determine if "each pupil in each school in the district has sufficient textbooks or instructional materials, or both" to enable students to meet state performance standards.

Access to Technology

In 21st-century schools, students need more than just updated textbooks to truly educationally engage—they need access to technology. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed just how real that need is today. With schools providing one of the most reliable places for low-income students to access the internet (Watkins, 2018), schools closing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and moving to online instruction had a devastating impact on low-income students, particularly in Black and Latino communities. While these students have proven adept at using social media and mobile platforms, research indicates that many of these student groups lack reliable home internet access (Watkins, 2018). Scholars have argued that "the digital divide is not a technological problem but a social problem and the consequence of underlying social inequalities" (Fuchs, 2009, p. 45). We agree and argue that, as a social problem, equity-driven leaders must address the digital divide with appropriate social solutions, including policy interventions to address the social inequalities specific to digital access in California's elementary and secondary public schools. In this section, we discuss student access to technology generally and how inequities where exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic; we argue that access to

technology and reliable internet access is no longer a luxury but an educational necessity—no less important that access to textbooks.

Inequitable Access Pre-COVID

Lower income communities may have sporadic access to internet services or no access at all. According to Pew Research Center (2019), only 39% of the median income group ($39,501 to $68,703) and 18% of the lower income group (less than $39,500) has access to internet service and a compatible device. When applied to schools, students in lower-economic communities have less access to both internet access and compatible devices. This gap causes unequal access to what is now a necessary tool for academic success. In 2015, the Hispanic Heritage Foundation conducted a study among students who frequently used the internet as a learning tool. Forty-nine percent of students were unable to complete their assignments due to lack of internet access; 48% of students reported that their grades were negatively affected by the lack of internet access (HHF, 2015).

Homelessness and Access Pre-COVID

The digital access and literacy gaps are even more pronounced for students in the foster care system, those experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied immigrant youths. Students within these subgroups often struggle with stable housing; therefore, stable internet access is another barrier to their academic success. For example, in a pre-COVID study, Kelleher (2012) found that individuals experiencing homelessness relied on libraries as a place to seek shelter during the operating hours, to access the internet, and to charge electronic devices. For students who are homeless, charging electronic devices is particularly challenging. Muggleton (2012) noted that internet access through the libraries is a way to be inclusive and remove the continuous perpetuation of prejudice. However, there are some barriers that homeless and unaccompanied minors may face at libraries. For the majority of libraries, a minor must be accompanied by a parent/guardian and they must have a valid library card (which requires identification, verification of address, and an application signed by a guardian/parent). Therefore, for unhoused minors, libraries may provide resources such as internet access and a power source, however, not without some potential hurdles.

Schools and Access Pre-COVID

Schools provide students with reliable internet access and potentially a place to charge electronic devices. Petko (2012) conducted a study on the correlation between teachers' use of digital media in classrooms and integration in their teaching. Petko (2012) found that there were stronger correlations between teaching and digital media use when there were sufficient resources in the classroom for use. The more resources there are in a classroom, the higher the connection with digital learning (Petko, 2012). Dismissing digital learning in schools is no longer a viable option; our economy relies heavily on technology and digital literacy. The act of dismissing digital learning is dismissing a cultural norm that manages the way interactions occur in social and business interactions. Digital literacy is not a tool used simply for completing tasks, but as David Buckingham (2010) notes, "Digital literacy...is about cultural understanding" (p. 60). Social media functions similarly to colloquial language. Academic language and academic use of computers is

not a language that is simply inherent within students, but is taught at schools. The more practice opportunities that we can provide for students to use digital literacy skills, the more fluent students will become with the navigation of both digital realms and printed text. However, the practice opportunities granted to students must also be one where curiosity and errors are fostered to encourage learning. Rafalow (2020) argues that schools treat each socio-economic class differently, where students of color who are in low to mid-level class are "communicate[d by teachers that] their digital play is not valuable for learning". Similar to where play is part of the social, emotional, and physical developmental growth of a child (Ginsberg, 2007), digital play is part of the development of the digital language. If schools limit or discipline the type of play students can engage in through digital spaces, the digital language is stifled and leads to levels of inaccessibility.

Internet Costs and Access Pre-COVID

While there are students with access to the internet, their access is threatened by rising costs of internet services. As speeds for usage increase, so do the prices of the services. The average cost of internet services in the U.S. is $57.25 per month (McNally, 2020). For those who use streaming services or need to support multiple devices, the cost of internet service is greater. As the prices continue to surge, the number of individuals looking for access alternatives increases. For some, outdated infrastructure hinders necessary improvements. In rural areas, there is not sufficient infrastructure to support even the most basic internet speeds, to the point where most rely on phone calls or text messaging instead of virtual communication (Lee, et. al, 2020). This only creates a larger divide between those with more accessibility and those without. Lack of infrastructure does not rely on whether an individual has the means to afford the access, but instead relies on internet providers continuing to build infrastructure.

Fast food retailers are capitalizing on the demand for internet access by offering free wi-fi for their customers. While this strategy is designed to lure in patrons, it has become the way many Americans access the internet. In 2013, Troianovski reported that many students who lack access to internet services turn to a local McDonald's for wi-fi. For students, this has become a space where assignments may be comfortably completed for the cost of a snack or drink (Troianovski, 2013). Similarly, phone retailers have noted that students often use their in-store display phones and tablets to complete their assignments. For students on a tight budget, these options may be more financially and logistically feasible than paying for home internet access.

Heightened Gap Due to COVID-19

As COVID-19 began to spread, immediate responses were essential. For the sake of safety, the State of California ordered many establishments, including schools, to close their doors for in-person services. This was unprecedented to respond to a crisis of epic proportions. While access to both internet and devices was an issue for some students before the pandemic, the issue became much more dire when students did not have the resources available in the school building, at restaurants, or at libraries. In addition to access issues, teachers, administrators, and aides had to learn how to navigate the virtual realms of teaching; similarly, students and their families were faced with quickly learning how to use the digital classroom.

With restaurants, schools, and libraries closed, many students were forced to find alternative ways to access the internet. Districts and private donors, such as T-Mobile (T-Mobile,

2020), provided hotspots to support students with distance learning. Kern High School District (Buses as Wi-Fi Hotspots, 2020) and Coachella Valley Unified School District mobilized their school buses to serve as a hotspot alternative for their students. While these responses were what was best in the moment and time, it was not sufficient to ensure that all students had appropriate internet connectivity.

It is important to note that while connectivity and access are often used interchangeably, they are different. Access is having the resources at one's disposal and being able to use said resource at any given time. Connectivity in relation to internet services means the strength of the connection and the speed of the services provided (Levin, 2020). While access to the internet is important, students must also have adequate connectivity to access their classes. During the pandemic, many students relied on internet hotspots. However, according to Johnson and Burke (2020), hotspots do not provide sufficient internet access for many homes, particularly those that have multiple simultaneous users. Furthermore, hotspots are not an option in many rural communities because they lack the supporting infrastructure (Perrin, 2019; Park, Freeman, and Middleton, 2019).

Many internet providers grew out of existing telephone companies and have not yet updated their servicing structures to meet current demands. In some areas, the infrastructure set in place by them remains the same as when they only provided telephone services (Park, Freeman, and Middleton, 2019). Levin (2020) points out that while there have been steps towards improvement by existing companies, such as the switch from copper telephone lines over to fiber lines in which bandwidth can increase by 60 times, it does not mean that improvements are seen for all. Rural areas continue to lack the infrastructure needed to connect to internet services despite the updates that companies are making. The updates are beneficial to those in areas in which coverage was already provided, but those who lacked coverage before, continue to have limited to no access (Perrin, 2019).

Homelessness During COVID

Students experiencing homelessness or any housing insecurity were particularly impacted by COVID-related school closures. Closures exacerbated existing inequities well beyond just internet access and connectivity. Students without stable housing may also lack a place to charge their devices, secure access to the internet, or a quiet place to learn. The California Health Care Foundation (2020), estimates the number of individuals experiencing homelessness has increased during the pandemic, with 75% of the homeless population not living in a shelter. According to Oreskes and Smith (2020) from the Los Angeles Times, many shelters closed their doors to limit the spread of COVID-19. Those that have continued to admit residents have faced growing numbers of residents testing positive for COVID-19. Students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in this context are facing an even greater struggle to find stable housing, but also stable connectivity and access. Students facing homelessness or housing insecurity in rural communities may face even greater challenges if their communities do not have an established internet infrastructure. The weight and impact of unspoken damage added to an already marginalized community through improper access and equitable response during this shift is teeming.

Implications of *Williams* Legislation and Proposals for Action

In their 2004 law review article following the *Williams* settlement, Oakes and Lipton noted that the plaintiff's arguments in *Williams* were strikingly similar to those made by Charles Houston and Thurgood Marshall in the cases leading up to *Brown v. Board of Education*: "schools serving different students must be equal in their provision of basic educational conditions and resources" (p. 26). As evidenced above, it is nearly fifty-years later and school districts continue to struggle to provide equitable learning environments, even in the best of circumstances. In cases of emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, some students are practically denied access to education because they do not have the technological resources (tools and training) to engage with digital learning environments. Equity-driven leaders can promote more equitable digital access (both in terms of basic access and connectivity) by focusing on multi-level system changes at the state, the district, and the school community levels. We propose the following changes to educational systems to improve digital access, and eventually, digital literacy.

1. *The state level*: we posit that the most immediate way to improve student internet access and connectivity is to include it in the definition of required "instructional materials" in the Williams legislation. As Oakes (2002) pointed out, nearly twenty years ago, insufficient access to learning spaces and materials make it nearly impossible for some students to succeed. We acknowledge that adding adequate internet access to the list of required resources provided by districts will be an expensive proposition. We certainly do not intend for this to become an unfunded mandate. The state would need to contribute significant resources to help districts make infrastructure upgrades and changes, through either a special grant program and/or the capital improvements program. The state may need to provide additional resources to rural communities to modernize their overall internet infrastructure.

2. *The district level*: The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that our school systems were not prepared to respond to a crisis of an extreme magnitude. While it is difficult to prepare for unforeseen events, health officials predict that we may face more pandemics in the future (Gill, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). Districts can learn from their COVID response how to prepare for future crises, particularly in how they can support all online instruction should that be required in the future. Conducting crisis drills would provide district officials, teachers, parents, and students with opportunities to practice how they will respond in the face of necessary school building closures and to assess whether students have adequate equipment and internet access. Districts can start this process by auditing the devices they currently distribute for student use to ensure that they are updated and appropriate for current learning needs. They can also assess what adequate internet access looks like for all students. For example, many districts provided hotspots for students to use during the pandemic to access online classrooms. However, many districts only distributed one hotspot per household, rather than per student, resulting in slower internet speeds and/or inadequate connectivity.

3. *The school level*: We noted above that connecting to a reliable power source to charge technology devices is a challenge for some students, particularly those experiencing homelessness. Schools can make small changes to address this issue with limited cost.

First, we suggest schools create charging stations somewhere on school grounds where students can charge phones, tablets, and laptops. Administrators should work with teachers to identify a location that will be accessible to students but not distract from classroom instruction or interfere with rules about classroom device use. Adding additional outlets on the exterior of school buildings would ensure student access to a reliable power source 24-hours a day.

Conclusions

One of the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic is that reliable and adequate internet access is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity utility. We rely on the internet for news, social interaction, business transactions, education, and more. Educational leaders and legislators must shift their approach to technology. It is no longer optional in the classroom. We must treat it like what it is -- a learning resource as necessary as textbooks or learning manipulatives . In this article, we call on educational leaders to examine their own spaces, their districts and schools, but also look at greater system changes that we can make to improve digital access and, ultimately, digital literacy for all students.

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Can You Hear Me? Imperative Conversations on the Amplification of Marginalized Student Voices to Ensure Student Agency

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Minority youth are a complex and diverse population in America who are often misunderstood, misclassified and misrepresented. These youth face a school system that has been teaching an inaccurate and negative narrative about who they are and a system that does not understand their unique needs. Using the findings from studies on Arab American youth as well as migrant youth in America, this qualitative exploratory study examines the factors that can better equip our schools, administrators and teachers to help minority youth succeed.

Keywords: marginalized, migrant, Arab American, invisible

Underserved, disregarded, ostracized, invisible - these are only some of the words used to define marginalized student populations in our schools. Coupled with this, discrimination and negative perception of marginalized student minorities permeate across societal boundaries and into schools, blatantly evident today and manifested against our students. Significant emotional stressors put on these populations raises the question of how this is affecting these youth's construction of a cultural identity (Ahmed, Kia-Keating & Tsai, 2011; Khouri, 2016; Kumar et al., 2014) as well as their peers' understanding of who they are. It also begs the question: how do we understand our marginalized youth?

This paper synthesizes the work of two separate, but closely related studies on Arab American youth and migrant youth in our schools. Although the studies focused on two specific marginalized populations, the findings highlighted the ways that both groups of students were struggling in and outside of their classroom, as well as the impact these experiences had on their view towards education.

Specifically, this paper spotlights the ways in which marginalized students feel disconnected from their schools, teachers and peers. It informs the audience on how their invisibility in the curriculum and the gap in knowledge about who they are hindered their ability to make a home/ school connection. Moreover, it showcases how when students receive information regarding their cultural background in school that conflicts with the information they are receiving at home, it creates a dichotomy that can hinder their development of a cultural identity, as well as play an important role in continuing with their education (Britto, 2008). The lack of a strong foundation and its impact on the relationship between students and their education system is one of concern.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the common themes in two separate studies - one focused on Arab American youth cultural identity formation and the other focused on migrant youth needs in our schools. Highlighting these themes allows the authors to and offer a call to action on how leadership and educators can begin to better serve these and all marginalized students on their campuses.

Research Questions

1. How are schools helping to build visibility with a call for action for marginalized minority youth?
2. In what ways can invisible student voices illuminate marginalization in order for educators to create transformative school change?

Conceptual Framework

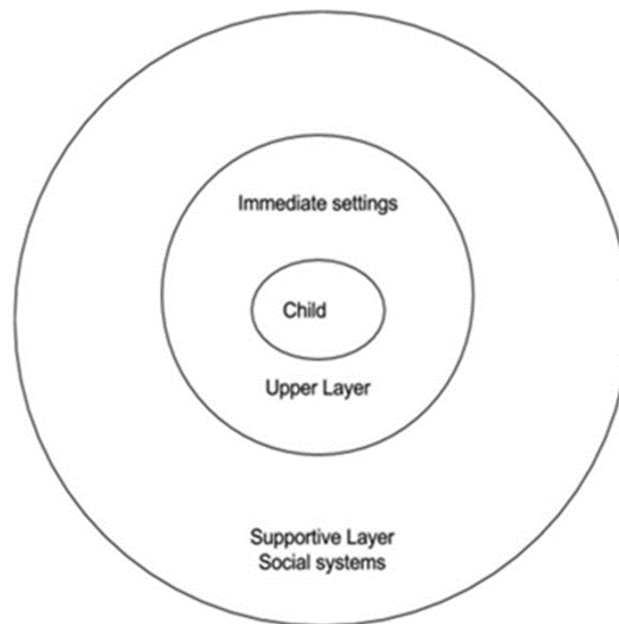
The two studies used in this paper each used a different conceptual framework but both focused on amplifying the needs of our marginalized students by understanding their core needs and values through their student voice.

The first study, which focused on Arab American youth, uses Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development as its conceptual framework. This model underscores the holistic framework assisting the interpretation of youth's perceptions of their own identities. The model

situates identity in the epicenter and factors, or as the theorist calls them, systems in concentric circles outside the epicenter (Hendry et. al, 2007). This framework contributes to the understanding of factors constructing a youth's identity and how they work together in systems to contribute to cultural identity formation (see Figure 1). The model distinguishes between microsystems that are placed closer to the center of the child's identity, such as family, and macrosystems, placed closer to the periphery. This study specifically looks at culture and how it fits into this framework, not as a separate system, but rather a factor within each of the micro and macro systems.

Figure 1

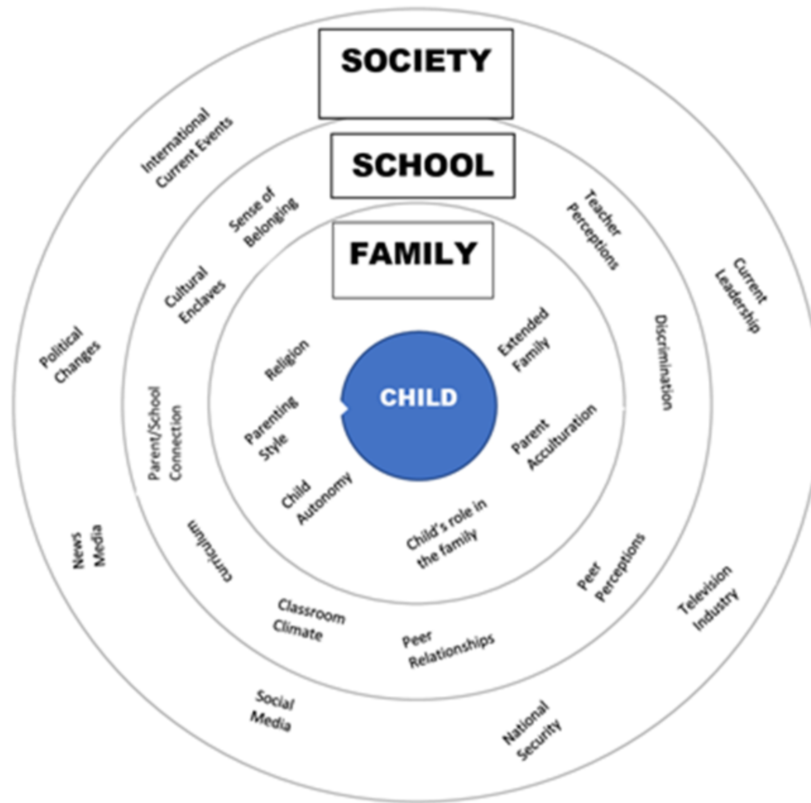
Bronfenbrenner's Original Ecological Model from 1974



Many of this model's original premises were altered to create a conceptual model that examines Arab American youth identity formation. For example, rather than use Bronfenbrenner's macro and micro systems, we developed categories for systems (society, school climate, family). This iteration emerges from the findings in the literature review that highlights these three specific systems as the main contributors to the identity formation in Arab American youth (Jones, 2017; Brown et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2014).
Although all the systems examined within the revised framework are valuable in understanding how to help Arab American youth connect positively to their cultural identity, this paper focuses on the part in the framework that looks at how schools play a role in this system. For example, the study analyzed how variables within the school system, including curriculum, teachers, peers and classroom climate, among others, hindered or helped develop these students' understanding of and connection to their culture.

Figure 2

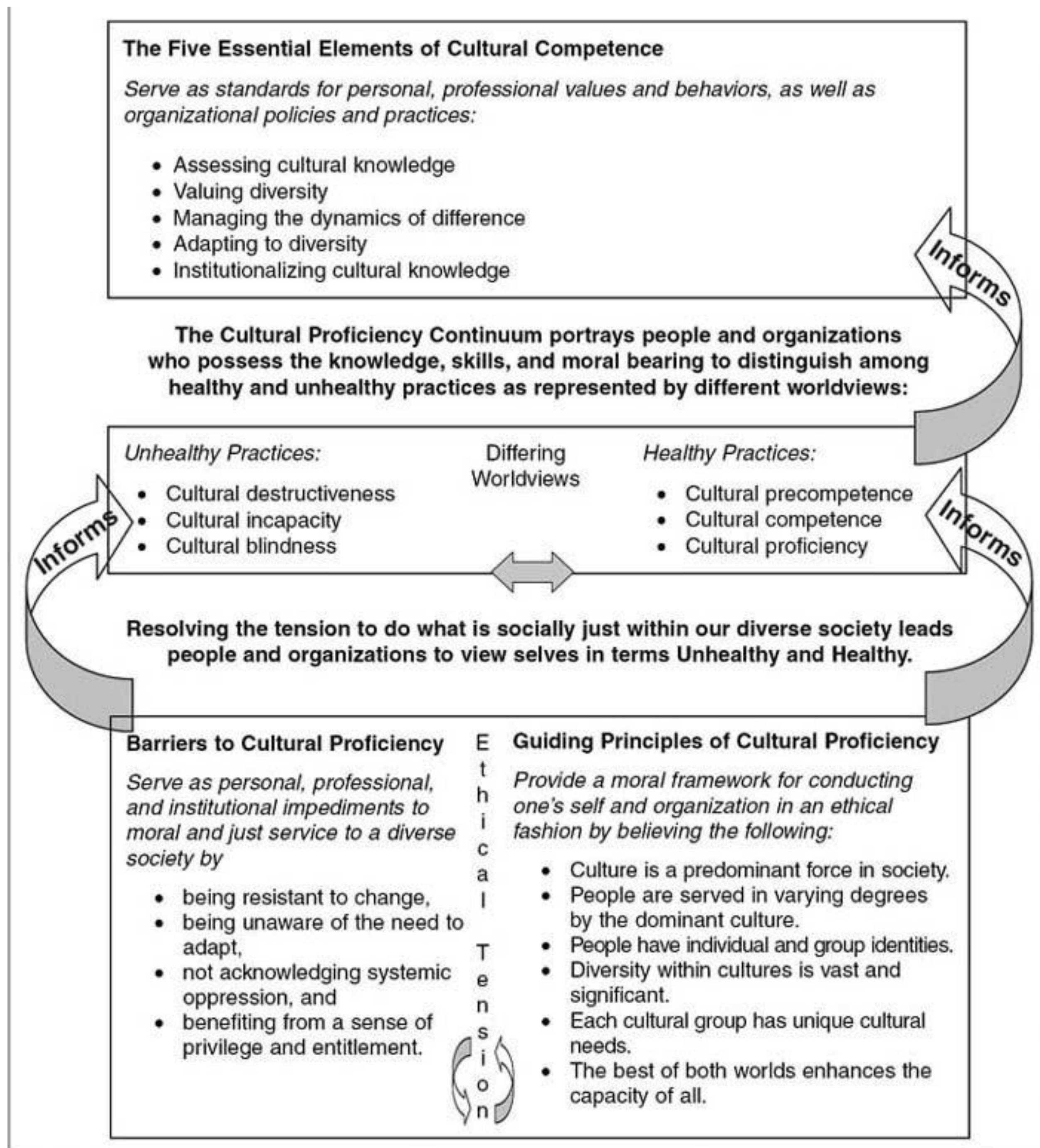
Adapted Conceptual Framework from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



The second study uses Cultural Proficiency as the lens and framework to understand the experience of migrant students. Utilizing the Cultural Proficiency Continuum allows for a way to explain one's values and beliefs associated with actions that manifest in everyday actions. The Framework states that the school system must incorporate cultural knowledge into practice in policy to support students that arrive with a variety of academic foundations and needs (Quezada et al., 2012). Ensuring students' historical context is embraced and amplified is crucial as all students come in with beautiful lived experience whether they are migrant students or Arab American students.

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Educational Practices



The Framework is grounded in the Five Essential Elements as follows: 1) Assessing Cultural Knowledge, 2) Valuing Diversity, 3) Managing the Dynamics of Difference, 4) Adapting to Diversity, and 5) Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge (Lindsey, 2017). Utilizing student voices on their experience guided the understanding of the structures needed to build systems of

academic support for this marginalized population. Although the framework was based on these Five essential Elements the main focus in this study was the following two Essential Elements:

- Assessing Cultural Knowledge: Identification of cultural groups present in the system.

- Valuing Diversity: Developing an appreciation for the differences among and between Groups.

The first Cultural Proficiency element Assessing Cultural Knowledge allowed us to understand the need for educators, administrators, and stakeholders to hear students' voices as they described themselves, their feelings, and goals. This element is defined by (Quezada et al., 2012), us understanding the students' history as a principal factor in understanding the student. Cultural Proficiency refers to the values and behaviors of an individual that enable that person to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment (Quezada et al., 2012).

The second Essential Element of Cultural Proficiency is Valuing Diversity, this element allows us to understand the need for students' voices to be heard by educational leaders as they described who they were and what they valued. Furthermore, it invites an understanding of the supports required for these students to obtain their high school diploma in their new school setting. This element is defined by understanding the students' culture as a vital factor in understanding them (Quezada et al., 2012). The Framework acknowledges the incorporation of cultural knowledge as well as valuing students' diversity and culture. Allowing students to share with their peers and in their schools their culture and diversity will in return allow them to feel welcomed just as who and how they are.

Although the paper utilizes data collected from two frameworks, they are brought together through the lens of social justice and equity for our most marginalized of students. To amplify their voice, needs, and wants in order to feel part and own their educational experience in the end their future. Whereas in the framework examining the cultural identity formation of Arab American students the study looked at factors within the school and home that enabled a positive development of this identity, the framework for migrant students looked at how the school system, in conjunction with family and community, enabled effective supports that allowed for the ultimate success of the student.

Literature Review

When looking at ethnic identity frameworks, most agree that the ethnically related messages and experiences youth have and perceive significantly shape their attitude regarding where they fit in with their cultural group (Rivas Drake, Hughes & Way, 2009). For example, in research on familial ethnic socialization (FES), the study found that Chinese American adolescents connected better with their ethnic identity when there was a high concentration of ethnic group members in their community. Similarly, in findings on Filipino youth, the study found that ethnic socialization is an integral part of the family (Umana Taylor, 2006). In schools, Native American adolescents who reported both high ethnic identity and a lower level of being stereotyped had higher grade point averages than their counterparts (Jaramillo, Wello & Worrell, 2015). Ultimately, research shows that non-White youth in the United States that had a high ethnic affirmation show to have a higher self-esteem and lower depression than youth with a low ethnic affirmation (Romero, Edwards, Fryburg & Orduna, 2014).

Adding on, just as the society and the media characterizes Arab Americans as the enemy, other minorities are also characterized in a negative light. For example, Black males in the United States have been portrayed as docile and hypersexual for centuries and continue to be characterized as such (Gibbs, 1988). This portrayal has stood in the way of a positive identity development for this population, which hinders their ability to do well academically (Nasir, 2012). Moreover, racism influences the lives of Asian American students (Museus & Park, 2015). In fact, members of this population at the college level feel pressured to assimilate to their White campuses (Museus & Park, 2015). In contrast, research has found that when youth have high ethnic affirmation have higher self-esteem and ethnic affirmation. Therefore, the exploration of ethnic and cultural identity can positively contribute to a youth's psychological well-being (Edwards et al., 2014).

Research highlights that discrimination against marginalized students from several facets is negatively affecting their socio-emotional well-being, self-identity and cultural identity formation. Schools are not paying attention to the inequities on their campuses, nor are they addressing the negative effects it has on these students. Notably, the literature alludes to the idea that a child's context, both at home and in their social environment plays a role in helping or hindering their sense of belonging at school and in their community (Shammas, 2015). Youth need to work through the identities they inherit from their family and society and begin to take control over their identity in order to feel satisfied and to resolve their crisis in identity formation (French, 2006). This is important because it allows the adolescent to feel satisfied with their identity, which in turn brings them a feeling of industry and competence, as well as belonging.

Coupled with this, schools need to find ways to help students feel safe in identifying as Arab Americans, migrant students or any other marginalized category of students, as well as support them in navigating through this identity process; as research on the current state in schools shows little to no evidence of this (Tabbah et al., 2012). Ultimately, the distress caused by discrimination against these youth leads to a loss of control in their own lives, which may decrease self-esteem and increase psychological distress (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). Therefore, research on how to help this population positively navigate and develop their cultural identity is pertinent to their social and emotional well-being.

Adding on, for decades immigrants continue their plight to have an opportunity to achieve their American dream (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016). They bring important assets, great optimism, ethics, and faith in the virtues of work, family, and education. As families arrive in this new land, their children become active participants in the education system. Newcomer immigrant adolescent students begin their journey through an educational system that looks different from the one in their native home. This new system requires steps for achieving the American dream, including a high school diploma and skills to be successful after graduation.

Therefore, it is imperative that leaders examine the academic, social, emotional, linguistic, and leadership structures that hold the livelihood of these students' futures and their ability to achieve their American dream. A classroom where inclusion is at the forefront of all actions increases the likelihood of newcomer students to feel part of the school instead of an outsider and one that is invisible. Experiences of alienation often result in disengagement and the formation of racial enclaves. This alienation often serves as the driving force for newcomer immigrant adolescent students to leave school before obtaining their high school diplomas. Throughout history the voices of children have been silenced in decisions about the way their education was provided (Fielding, 2004, Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Smyth, 2006). It is crucial for a student to participate in the creation and implementation of their learning. Personalizing education can have a positive impact on student engagement, as it provides opportunities for students to develop

greater influence and control over their learning (Quinn & Owen, 2014; Roberts & Owen, 2011). Engaging students in their education builds their sense of responsibility and ownership.

Methods

These studies were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board through California State University, San Marcos. Both methodologies utilize semi-structured one-on-one in-depth interviews, which result in a significant amount of qualitative data (Hatch, 2002). The first study focuses on adolescent Arab Americans because cultural identity is an important aspect of adolescents' developmental experiences. It is related to their psychological well-being, academic achievement and psychological adjustment. Notably, we know little about the factors that influence the development of adolescents' cultural identities, which highlights the need for this study (Umana Taylor et al., 2006). The participant population includes seven Arab American youth, 17-21 years old, who are attending secondary or post-secondary school in the U.S. Youth that attend Arabic or Islamic school full time are excluded from this population. The participants come from Christian, Catholic Orthodox or Muslim religious backgrounds. Participants reside in various cities across California and Texas. Although all participants were identified by members of the Arab community as youth that have a strong connection to their Arab cultural identity, they represented a variety of perspectives and experiences of Arab American youth residing in the U.S.

The second study focuses on the experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students as they try to obtain their high school diploma. Specifically, the experiences that contributed to and detracted from their ability to persevere toward graduation. This study aimed to understand these specific experiences and criteria that have an impact on their academic success and social-emotional well-being. The purpose was to understand the collective voice of these students and their experiences, to better recognize what specific contributors support their academic success. The participant population includes five newcomer immigrant adolescent students in grades 10th, 11th, and 12th enrolled in a United States high school for less than 36 months. Participants in this study were born and attended schooling in Mexico or Guatemala before arriving in the United States. Students exceeding the 36-month enrollment mark were excluded from this research. The principal reason for this was because this study aimed to understand the experience of newly arrived immigrant adolescent students as they navigated through their new academic setting in obtaining a high school diploma.

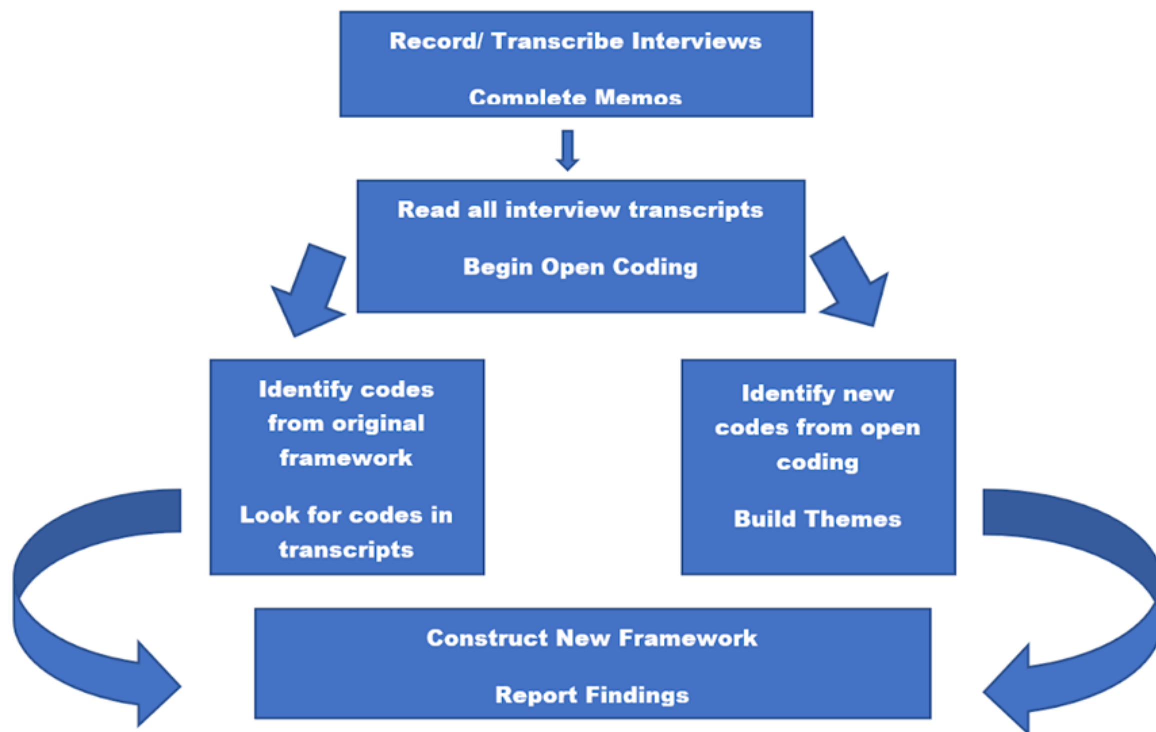
The type of instrumentation used in both studies allows the researchers to enter the world of the participants and to further understand their experience through their own voice (Patton, 2015). It does not allow for a restriction of the views of the participants but is open to open-ended information instead. Interview questions were developed to analyze the ways in which these youth are developing their cultural identities well as how they perceived their learning environment. This measure was developed because there are no established instruments that addressed specific concerns relative to these (Tabbah, Miranda & Wheaton. 2012). The studies use one-on-one individual interviews with the participants. The reason for doing individual interviews is because this allows participants to feel more comfortable sharing some of their responses with the researchers (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti & McKinney, 2012).

Guided by the conceptual framing, and utilizing a two-tier set of analytical questions (including main questions and possible probing questions), the researchers engaged in an analytical process of data analysis (Patton, 2015). Moreover, the studies use a combination of interview approaches including a conversational strategy within an interview guide approach, similar to a semi-

structured interview (Gubrium et al., 2012). This allows for a structured set of interview questions for each participant with the flexibility of probing when appropriate to explore certain topics in more depth for certain interviewees (Patton, 2015). After conducting all interviews via Zoom, the videos are transcribed and checked for accuracy using the Otter.ai add-on application, a feature in Zoom. Interviews were video recorded, transcribed and coded**.** Through open coding, several themes arose.

Figure 4

Flow Chart Representing the Process Used for Data Analysis in this Study on Arab American Youth



Kaiser highlights that researchers need to give greater voice and power to participants in order to steer the direction of the research and dictate the findings (as cited in Gubrium et al., 2014). The design of this research allows for the youth to dictate the findings of this research. Participants in both studies navigated interview questions aimed at understanding how their perceived their education. Secondly, the studies took a more in- depth look at how it contributes to these factors in order to bridge the gap between the home, school and society. The following conclusions focus on the common findings in both studies.

Results and Findings

Although the results and findings of each study were unique to the population of participants and their context, this paper has synthesized the common themes within these findings to offer a more holistic response to the research questions.

Firstly, the curriculum offered in K-higher education has failed these populations and needs to be amended. Participants from both studies discussed the need for schools to educate students on where these marginalized populations are from. One student explains their plight:

"What I feel like kind of sucks about the American education system is that they kind of just... it's really hard to define your Arab identity because like, for example, like the standardized testing, like during like when the ethnic portion like you have to choose what ethnicity you are, we are classified as White and that's really vague. And I think it's very questionable and unfair because...there's so many countries that make up the whole European continent and being White... And so it's really big because like all other races get their own boxes where Arabs aren't acknowledged."

Additionally, when Arabs are mentioned in a classroom context, these examples are minimal and mostly negative. In fact, the historical contributions of Arabs are all written through a deficit lens. As one participant shares, "I definitely felt that growing up like every time I said the word Arab... even today, to some extent, like it's totally ignorant it feels like a very strong word or something I shouldn't be saying or something I should be embarrassed to say or identify with." Therefore, schools must cultivate partnerships with their Arab families and communities and begin to reimagine how to teach about Arabs in order to change the negative narrative being taught for decades about this population.

In regards to migrant students three themes emerged from using the cultural proficiency essential element assessing culture and cultural proficiency essential element valuing diversity: the importance of historical context, family, and community programs. Student voices played a key role in this analysis, allowing students to describe their experiences through their own voice allowed them to describe in its truest form what they experienced, felt, and remember. Understanding their historical context, family, and community programs through their own voice allows one to see the specific gaps that need to be filled to strengthen schools in order to leverage specific support for migrant students.

Data also reveals that understanding students holistically should include the acknowledgement of their life before arrival to the US. As one participant shares his life before arrival, "I looked for work around my pueblo as I knew the quarter fees would be coming soon for enrollment in my classes. In a small pueblo work is nonexistent but I was able to obtain work by picking up and burning old corn husks from the fields. I had worked enough to pay for the upcoming fees." He continues to share that after his sister fell suddenly ill, the money he had collected went to paying for her medication. He shares the pain he felt at that moment and the struggle he endured. Therefore, understanding the students "why" becomes just as crucial as knowing their reading level.

Similar to their Arab American peers, migrant students are invisible and unspoken of. Their plight cannot be found in any curriculum. Often immigration is found as one of the nation's most controversial political issues. This research highlights that we need to change the way students learn about who these marginalized minorities are, then we need to explore how they appear – or do not appear – in our curricula. More importantly, we need to give them a seat at the table by

representing them through the content in our classes. As well as acknowledging their contributions to our society as a whole. That being said, Cutshall (2012) strongly advises language educators to:

> Realize that following a textbook and reading over the cultural points that in the occasional sidebar is not sufficient to impart cultural knowledge to their students. Nor is it enough to offer 'Cultural Fridays' or to think culture is taken care of by celebrating a holiday, learning a few dances, or tasting some authentic food now and then. (p.33).

Research Questions	**Themes**	**Assertions**
How are schools helping to build visibility with a call for action for marginalized minority youth?	Building a sense of belonging. Correcting misconceptions about their culture.	When students are able to feel a sense of belonging in school, they feel confident in sharing and exploring their own culture, therefore developing a closer connection with it.
	Receiving support from peers.	The more supported marginalized youth feel by their peers, the more confident they grow to embrace their cultural identity.
	Acknowledging students' life before arrival as a key factor in understanding who they are as individuals	The more students can share with teachers and peers, who they are as individuals, the stronger sense of trust they were able to build.
	Using community as a foundation for collective unity	As students navigate their sense of belonging it is imperative to include what they hold a strong bond with, family and community.
In what ways can invisible student voices illuminate marginalization in order for educators to create transformative school change?	Connectivity to students past, present, and future	Giving students a voice in the classroom makes them feel empowered and visible, therefore helping them connect positively to their cultural identity.
	Purposeful relationships to achieve goals	Having a structure and taking the time for students to voice their needs will eliminate guessing and wasted time to meet the needs of these students. Asking students who they are, what they need, and where they want to go, will answer important information from this population. This will allow for a stronger sense of purpose for both educator and student allowing a relationship of trust to be built.

Conclusions

Elements that contribute to fostering a more equitable system for these populations are identified in this study. Invisible minority youth seek to advocate for their people by correcting the misconceptions being shared about who they are in their schools. Opportunities to act as the voice for their people are embraced by almost all the participants, adding that it is important that their schools offer them a platform to use their voice to educate others and feel a sense of belonging on their campuses. One participant shares her thoughts about having a voice by explaining the importance of schools giving Arab American students a platform.

"I mean in a space where they give you... they give you the opportunity for your voice to be heard. But also to do so without any judgment. And I think that's the kind of platform that my high school gave me as opposed to my middle school."This will begin to correct some of the stereotypes and discrimination by students and teachers against these populations.

Specifically, supportive systems help invisible minority youth take pride in their culture rather than reject it (Suleiman, 1996). Most notably, teachers have an impact on these youth's experience with cultural identity formation at school. Teachers not only neglect to take action, but also create situations where the youth become vulnerable in their own classrooms. These examples include the anti-Arab content or policy discussions that present negative narratives about migrant students used in the classroom. This also includes instances where these youth are singled out because of their race or religion. Creating space to experience purposeful inclusion by daily activities in school is imperative for students to voice not only their needs but as well who they are and hope to become. As one student describes the power of this opportunity "The feeling there was different; it felt like we were learning something and moving forward. We talked often about our homelands and even shared how to speak our language for the last 10 minutes of the class. We presented in English our favorite traditional foods. The teachers were different, they cared about who we were before coming into their class."

The issue of inequity for marginalized students in schools is one that has not received attention in research and needs to focus on how they are doing socially and emotionally due to the way in which they are perceived and discriminated against in schools. This population is battling a system that consistently silences their voice or highlights misconceptions about them (Albdour et. al, 2016). Moreover, Arab Americans do not see themselves as part of the current Ethnic Studies curriculum across the country. A re-examination of how marginalized students can be integrated into this curriculum is crucial to aid in the process of making these youth visible.

Call to Action

The question all educators need to ask themselves when considering serving and supporting their marginalized students is: How can we create visibility for these students by amplifying their voice and addressing their needs? This begins with courageous conversations between leadership and teachers about the barriers that exist, whether politically motivated or not, that discourage teachers from looking beyond their current curriculum and practices (Suleiman, 1996). It further requires them to truly look at students holistically and listen to what they have to say. To look at their strengths and leverage those strengths at every opportunity possible. By purposefully building connections with our students, it will allow us to build and strengthen their relationship with the love of learning and their education.

More importantly, stakeholders need to have brave conversations with themselves about some of the cognitive biases they hold and the misconceptions they may have surrounding who these populations are (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Most importantly, this calls on educators - teachers and administrators alike, to reflect on how they have learned about these marginalized populations through their own education. What misinformation have they been passing on in their classrooms? When these biases are addressed and confronted is only when one can serve and see these students for who they are and what they bring into our classrooms. Until these biases are addressed students will be viewed through jaded, biased views that contribute to misconceptions of students and their true potential (Singleton & Linton, 2006). If these barriers are not addressed and broken down, they will hamper true growth not only for students but for all adults serving these students. Allowing us to be critical conscious to deeply understand the historic and systemic inequities that shape the lives of racially, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally marginalized youth; the types of knowledge and language that are considered valid in school; and how much of the curricula in schools serves to replicate the power structure in society (Suleiman, 1996). It calls for educators to challenge simple explanations for things like achievement disparities and instead adopt more complex explanations that reflect societal inequities.

The barriers placed upon students have implications that heavily impact students' educational future and view of themselves as learners (Pendergast, Allen, McGregor, & Ronksley-Pavia, 2018). This leads to disengagement in learning and a broken relationship with their educational trajectory. This also leads them to developing a negative perception of their cultural identity or a complete disconnect from it (Tabbah et al., 2012). One call to action is for educators to adopt the liberatory mindset. Liberatory Design is a creative problem-solving approach and practice that centers equity and allows us to build structures and thinking to ensure liberation on all it serves. These mindsets force one to take a deep honest look into their values to ground and focus their design practice. Liberatory Design generates self-awareness to liberate designers from habits that perpetuate inequality, shifts the relationship between the people who hold power to design and those impacted, fosters learning and agency for those involved in and influenced by the design work, and creates conditions for collective liberation (Harvey, 2021). The power of Liberatory Design comes from its ability to help us better understand challenges in highly complex interconnected systems, to see ways systems of oppression are impacting our context, to root our decision-making in our values, to combat status quo behavior with deep self-reflection, and to learn and change in a fast-moving, meaningful way. In situations as complex as equity challenges, the way forward is led by noticing, experimenting, learning, reflecting, and repeating. Liberatory Design is structured to build your equity leadership capacity to create real change with the communities you care deeply about (Hasseler, 2022). The process itself, as well as the outcomes, are building towards greater collective liberation. A liberation that all can benefit from specially our marginalized populations

Notably, COVID has brought to light the inequities present in our current structures that created an even greater barrier for these populations. Access to technology and level of in-home support varied greatly depending on the zip code a student lived in. Students often rely on outside community partners and a need stemmed from not feeling as if they were receiving adequate support from their school or home. As COVID-19 impacted the world, students swiftly had to understand and perform in their new world of distant learning (Bartlett, 2022). Notwithstanding are the language and/or cultural barriers that exist in this new world. How can educators ensure that the new protocols and systems put in place are equitable for all students?

It is for these reasons that it is imperative we understand the needs of our students and engage their support systems as their families as a way to understand students deeply and holistically. Schools have a responsibility not only to battle racism on school grounds, but to ensure that all of their students are represented using an equitable lens (Pole, 2001). In both studies findings concur that the family system plays the most significant role in feeling included and supported. It was clear that students relied heavily on their family for motivation to continue progressing forward and saw them as a system of support and motivation. The connectedness of sharing that pride of their culture and valuing the uniqueness they bring into this system is important and viewed by some researchers as the apex point of any successful program for newcomer students (Olsen, 2021). Inclusivity is crucial for students to feel they belong. Inclusivity builds on valuing diversity and understanding what attributes and characteristics make people different (Altugan, 2015). Working with marginalized students' families and communities brings a powerful connectedness that school leaders can build on to ensure inclusivity.

One asset each child comes to our schools with and we have full access to embrace to help us guide our students is their family. Students' families and communities are very important. Creating ample opportunities to integrate knowledge about students' lives so they can see themselves in the curriculum and through their home. It affirms their identity. It makes school relevant. It encourages their sense of purpose. Building intentional system conditions will allow for effective outcomes. As leaders it is imperative that we align and articulate within and all systems that support our students.

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Discipline Disproportionality in Rural Schools in the South

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This study uses an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach to examine principals' responses to their schools' disproportionate discipline data in five schools located in the rural southeastern United States. Semi-structured interviews were analyzed for principals' insight into their school discipline data. Results indicated that Black students were being disciplined at higher rates than white students in all five schools with principals sharing varied responses in discussing perceptions of causality. Principals attributed disproportionate discipline to a cultural mismatch between teachers and students, followed by student trauma and mental health issues. Recommendations are made for principal action and preparation.

Keywords**:** discipline, disproportionality, rural, leadership, data use

This study examined the disproportionate rate of student discipline actions for Black students compared to White students in five schools located in the rural southeastern United States. Because disproportionate discipline has been a focus of study mostly in urban school contexts (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010), less is known about disproportionate discipline in rural schools relative to Black students in these contexts (Brushaber-Drockton, 2019; Lavalley, 2018).

The trend of Black students receiving discipline in schools at higher rates than White students has been noted for over four decades (Children's Defense Fund [CDF], 1975; Losen, 2011; Skiba et al., 2002). Nationally, Black students receive exclusionary discipline, including suspension and expulsion, at a rate of three times more than White students (Wald & Losen, 2003). On average, 50% of Black students report they have experienced suspension or expulsion at least one time in their school career, compared to 20% of white students (Wallace et al., 2008).

In the state where this study was enacted, Black students receive an average of 117.6 discipline infractions per 100 students, whereas white and other race students receive 37 - 40 infractions per 100 students. Black students in the state receive 25% of referrals for exclusionary discipline, compared to 13.5% for white students. Between 2006 and 2012, the use of in-school suspension (ISS) for Black students in the state increased while the rate for white students decreased (Anderson, 2018). During this same time period, the state was 15th in the nation for the use of out-of-school suspension (OSS) for all students and ranked 13th for the gap between Black and white students for OSS (Losen & Gillespie, 2012).

This study analyzed principals' responses to their own schools' data, exploring perceptions of disproportionate discipline causality. The research questions for this study were (1) How is discipline disproportionality perceived in rural schools from the principal's perspective? and (2) What factors are most influential in explaining discipline disproportionality in rural schools from the principal's perspective? In this study, disproportionality in discipline is defined as the over- or underrepresentation of students in discipline incidents when compared to the percentage of the student population the racial group comprises.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a lens to examine disproportionality in school discipline. CRT frames the intersections of race, racism, and power. The basic tenets of CRT are: (1) racism is pervasive and institutionalized in the United States; (2) because racism advances the interests of whites, many are not interested in abandoning it; (3) race is a social construction; and (4) minority groups are racialized differently throughout history (Delgado & Stefanic, 2011).

The tenets of CRT intersect with school discipline as educators make decisions about students shaped by their implicit biases, especially when the decision being made is subjective (Pearson et al., 2009). According to Gillborn (2014), CRT is a tool used to maintain white supremacy and oppress non-white identities. In schools, discipline policy is used as a justification for excluding students from the classroom, thus taking away their right to learn and contributing to their lack of belonging. In the context of this study, discipline policies function as a tool of oppression.

CRT is an appropriate framework for this study because of its focus on how racism becomes institutionalized in systems in the United States. Schools are microcosms of society, and the policies used to "manage" students perpetuate systemic racism (Simson, 2014). CRT has been used as the framework for examining how school discipline impacts students of color in a number

of studies, including in middle schools (Wiley, 2020), in examining statewide discipline systems (Gillborn, 2014), and in understanding how restorative justice and trauma-informed practices are in alignment with CRT (Simson, 2014; Dutil, 2020).

Literature Review

Discipline in schools typically consists of a teacher making a discipline referral for a student who is perceived as breaking the norms of the school and often results in punitive consequences, including student detention, parent conferences, corporal punishment, ISS, OSS, and expulsion. Consequences are applied by administrators according to the school discipline plan, which must align with federal and state policies. Often, groups of students are disproportionately affected by discipline decisions, notably Black students (CDF, 1975; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Office for Civil Rights [OCR], 2018; Skiba et al., 2002, 2011).

Racial bias plays a significant role in the disproportionate discipline rate for Black students across multiple studies. Bradshaw et al. (2010) found that Black students had a 24 - 80% higher chance of receiving a referral compared to white students. Black students were more likely to be referred to the office for offenses that were subjective in nature (e.g., disrespect, defiance) while white students were more likely to be referred for objective offenses (e.g., smoking, vandalism; McKintosh et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2002; Tajalli & Garba, 2014).

Recent studies on disproportionate outcomes for students deepen our understanding of this issue. Black students comprise 18% of school enrollment but represent 42% of all students suspended and 48% of the students who have had more than one OSS (OCR, 2014). This suggests that even though Black students make up one-fifth of the student population, they comprise almost half of the suspensions.

As students get older, data indicate Black students are pushed out of the classroom at even higher rates. Elementary-level Black students were twice as likely as white students to receive a discipline referral and four times as likely at the middle school level (Skiba et al., 2011). For Black female students, the outcomes are even worse. Black females were suspended more than females of any other ethnicity (OCR, 2014). In 2013, Black females made up 50.7% of all girls with multiple out-of-school suspensions while Black boys made up 39.9% of all boys with multiple OSS (OCR, 2014). Females with darker skin and more Afro-centric features were likely to be suspended twice as often as students who were white while lighter-skinned Black females did not show the same risk level (Blake et al., 2017). These studies have continued to confirm the high rate of disproportionate outcomes for Black students and provide finer detail on the ages and characteristics of Black students being pushed out.

Exclusionary discipline practices have a greater impact on Black students and include consequences that exclude a student from participating in their regular school schedule (e.g., ISS, OSS, expulsion). Studies have consistently verified disproportionately higher rates of exclusionary discipline for Black students across the United States (Gregory et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2011). Commonly adopted “zero-tolerance policies” have contributed to these data by causing an increased use of exclusionary discipline, with large numbers of students referred to juvenile court and disproportionate numbers of Black students represented at every level of the system exacerbating the school-to-prison pipeline (Mallet, 2016).

These discipline practices disrupt a student’s learning, causing them to miss instruction, classwork, and socialization with their peers (Skiba et al., 2011) without addressing the inciting event or re-socializing them with their peers. Exclusionary discipline is associated with negative

outcomes, including lower academic achievement (Anderson, 2018), higher rates of school dropouts, and increased contact with the juvenile justice system (Wald & Losen, 2003). In the state where this study occurred, students suspended in the ninth grade had lower rates of high school graduation and enrollment in post-secondary education (Anderson, 2018).

Based on the persistence of disproportionate discipline for Black students, researchers have examined numerous causal factors, including poverty, behavior differences among students, and culture. However, studies have failed to find concrete evidence that any of these factors are implicated in discipline disproportionality. When all other factors were controlled for, race still made a significant difference in discipline rates among students (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace et al., 2008).

Policies and School Discipline

Federal policy directly impacts discipline policy in public schools. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 includes two sections that affect student discipline in schools: Title IV and Title VI. Both mandates prohibit discrimination in public schools based on race, color, or national origin and require public schools to enact systems of equity and fairness in discipline policies and practices. More recently, a "Dear Colleague" letter dated January 8, 2014, by the Obama administration outlined two themes that the OCR looks for when investigating claims of discrimination in school discipline, including different treatment and disparate impact based on race.

Despite evidence that these policies resulted in schools changing their discipline policies with positive results, these recommendations were recently revoked (Federal Safety Commission, 2018, p. 67). This decision reduced the ability of OCR to investigate claims of disparate impact in schools and identify patterns of systemic racism, causing them to close 65 investigations without recommendations (CCR, 2019).

State laws influencing this study require schools to track student discipline in a centralized system to inform state policy changes in support of students (Anderson, 2018). These data are reported as the number of student incidents per 100 students for each demographic group and are publicly available ([state] MySchool Info, 2019-2020 data). Each school is also required to craft discipline policies aligned to state guidelines using input from stakeholders, which must be approved by the local school board and filed with the state department each year (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). However, the existence of a system translates widely in daily school practices as evidenced by disproportionate data.

The impact of discipline policies and practices in schools can have an effect on disproportionate rates when utilized consistently. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) guidelines encourage schools to look closely at equity with regard to student discipline, and state legislation is increasingly more concerned with that as well. While discipline policies are helpful in that they set the guidelines for what can and cannot be done in schools, it is really the everyday practices that have the most impact on reducing disproportionality when used consistently (Welch & Payne, 2010), which may be a space of uncertainty for principals (Wieczorek & Marand, 2018). Disproportionate treatment of students of color signals a failure to implement ESSA guidelines and address cultural differences among student populations leading to punitive outcomes for students of color due to implicit racial bias (Nance, 2017).

School Characteristics and School Discipline

School characteristics have an impact on disproportionate rates of discipline for Black students. Urban districts have the highest rates of disproportionate exclusionary discipline among students when compared to rural districts and report the highest rates of suspension even when controlling for other factors, such as wealth, district size, or racial composition (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Noltemeyer et al., 2010; Tajalli & Garba, 2014; Wallace et al., 2008). However, it is unclear if these findings are due to the depth of research in urban districts compared to rural or because there truly are more instances of disproportionate discipline in urban schools (Brushaber-Drockton, 2019).

Racial composition of the student body also impacts disproportionate rates of discipline. Researchers have consistently found that in districts where Black students are the majority, schools tend to use more harsh, punitive consequences; enact more zero-tolerance policies; use less interventions; and have higher rates of exclusionary discipline (Welch & Payne, 2010). Tajalli and Garba (2014) found that as the "whiteness" of a school district increased, so did the discipline rates for Black students. Additionally, one of the strongest predictors of OSS for any student, regardless of gender, school achievement, economic level of the school, or the severity of the student's behavior was attending a school with a higher percentage of Black students (Skiba et al., 2014).

Rural School Discipline

Around 9.3 million students in the U.S. attend rural schools (Showalter et al., 2019), with approximately half of all school districts classified as rural serving approximately 20% of students in this country (NCES, 2016). Additionally, one-fifth of the nation's rural population identify as people of color (Collins, 2022). Twenty-eight percent of students in the state where this study was enacted attend rural schools (Lavelley, 2018).

Rural schools often struggle with a lack of resources (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018; Yettick et al., 2014), including well-trained personnel, but less is known about how school discipline manifests in rural school spaces (Brushaber-Drockton, 2019) representing a gap in the literature. Existent studies indicate that rural schools tend to have harsh discipline codes (Harvard Law, 2014); School Resource Officers (SRO's) perceive administrators who are less tolerant of violence, drug use, and gang-related issues (Ruddell & May, 2011); and SRO's have greater authority and discretion in handling student discipline and see their role as putting students in contact with the justice system (Hunt et al., 2019).

Trauma and School Discipline

Lack of cultural competence among teachers contributes to discipline disproportionality, with the cultural mismatch between teacher and student creating a disconnect often leading to negative consequences for the student (Caldera et al., 2019; Weinstein et al., 2004). Classroom management styles of teachers have a significant impact on discipline outcomes for Black students, with teacher responses to student behavior possibly triggering or intensifying student trauma (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). Notably, the state where this study was enacted ranks highest in the percent of children who have suffered adverse childhood experiences (ACES) with disproportionate impact, given 61% of Black students experience at least one ACE compared to 40% of white students (Sacks & Murphey, 2018).

Method

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to gain a holistic view of discipline disproportionality in identified rural schools. Data collection occurred in two phases. Phase One focused on the quantitative data, consisting of reported student discipline numbers from each school for one school year. Qualitative data were collected from two rounds of interviews with each principal to further understand each school context in Phase Two.

This study was enacted in five rural schools in a southeastern state within a 100-mile radius of one another and were chosen based on the appearance of disproportionate discipline numbers through publicly available data. School leaders were invited to participate in the study based on their data, and leaders from all five schools accepted the invitation. All schools were within a single geographic region characterized by a declining population and minimal economic growth. The majority of schools in this region serve populations with at least 50% of students receiving free and reduced lunch, and academic performance is significantly lower than other areas of the state. The study participants included the building principal from each of the five schools and one elementary assistant principal, including five white females and one white male, which is representative of the area and the larger profession (Taie & Goldring, 2019).

Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected through a request from the State Department of Education. These data, entered by each school, included both discipline infractions and actions for the 2017-2018 school year. Discipline Infraction data were categorized by the code that best described the infraction. Discipline Action Taken detailed the action taken by the school authority in response to the infraction. School-level data were provided with disaggregation for each category for race and by grade level.

Qualitative data were collected through two interviews of approximately 60 minutes, held six weeks apart with each principal. The first interview focused on participants explaining their beliefs related to discipline in their school, general information on their current discipline system, and their perception of how rural contexts intersect with school discipline. The second interview focused on questions related to each school's discipline data.

Data Analysis

The total number of infractions and actions for each school was calculated by racial group and overall population based on data obtained from the state. Because of data security, any numbers for student groups where the value was less than ten were not provided in the data set and were noted as restricted values (RV). In these cases, a value of one was substituted for any action or infraction provided as RV. This method allowed the total numbers to be held constant, while providing value for categories with fewer than ten infractions to represent activity. Having close approximations provided valuable insight into which infraction and action codes were being utilized by each school and which categories contained the highest numbers. Following the substitutions in each category for RV, data were analyzed in the categories of infractions and actions and disaggregated by ethnicity.

Composition index scores were calculated for each school to determine the proportion of each racial group comprising the total number of infractions and actions (Nishioka et al., 2017).

Differences in composition index scores were also calculated to determine degree of disproportionality. The composition index was calculated using the following equation:

$$\text{Composition index} = \frac{\textit{Number of discipline incidents for a racial group}}{\textit{Total number of incidents for all students}} \times 100$$

Following calculation of the composition index for infractions and actions within each school by racial group, a relative difference in composition was calculated. This measured the relative difference between infractions in the different racial groups within the entire student population to show degrees of disproportionality. A positive value for a relative difference in composition means that a particular racial group is overrepresented in the number of discipline incidents, while a negative value means the group is underrepresented. The relative difference in composition was calculated using the following equation:

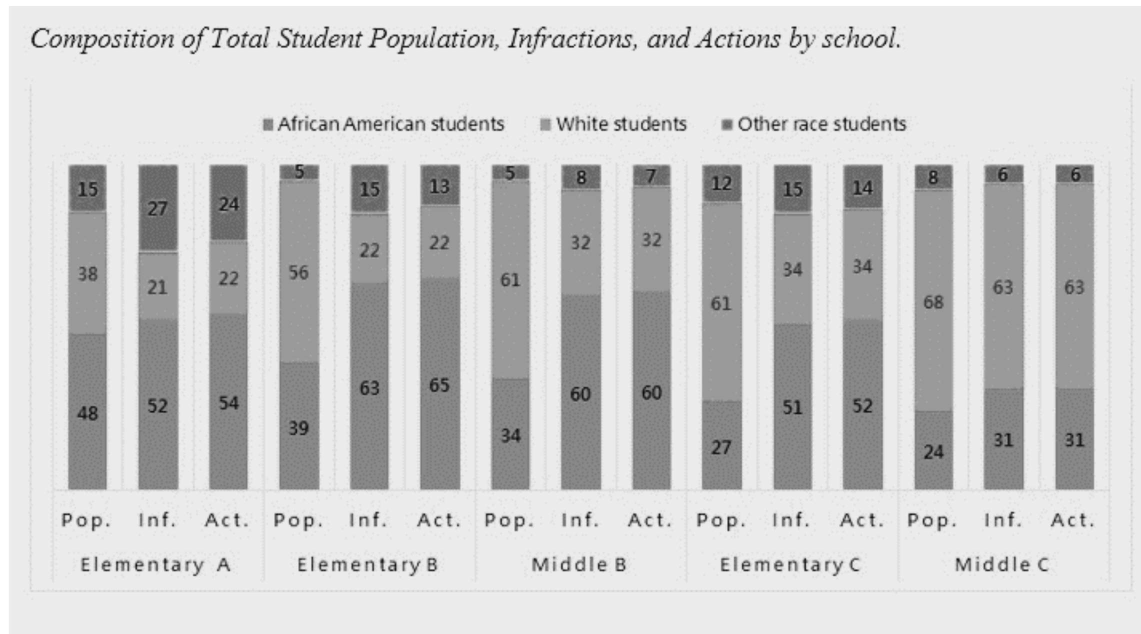
$$\text{Relative difference in composition} = \frac{\textit{Composition of discipline incidents for each racial group} - \textit{Composition of same racial group in the population}}{\textit{Composition of same racial group in the population}} \times 100$$

For the qualitative data, multiple cycles of coding were conducted using descriptive, emergent coding (Saldana, 2016). Researchers worked in tandem to code the data using joint-probability agreement. Through this process of coding, re-coding, and generating analytic memos, emergent patterns and themes were identified based on first- and second-round coding for each separate school and individual leader as well as overall trends.

Results

Analysis of each school's 2017-2018 data indicated statistically disproportionate discipline in all schools, with Black students overrepresented in discipline infractions and actions. Composition index scores were calculated for each school for the population, infractions, and actions. These percentages provide a basis to compare proportionality of discipline infractions and actions for each race within the student population (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



Composition of Total Student Population, Infractions, and Actions by school.

The relative differences in student composition by race based on the number of disciplinary infractions for each school provided a school-specific measure of the level of disproportionality by student racial group proportional to the student population (see Table 1).

Table 1

Relative Difference in Composition of Infractions and Enrollment Composition for Students in All Schools by Race

School	Black students	white students
Elementary A	8.3%	-44.7%
Elementary B	61.5%	-60.7%
Middle B	76.5%	-47.5%
Elementary C	89.7%	-44.3%
Middle C	29.1%	-7.3%

When examining relative differences in composition, the larger the number, the greater the level of observed disproportionality for that student racial group. While Black students were statistically overrepresented in the discipline data for all schools included in the study, some schools had higher disproportionality than others. white students were significantly underrepresented in the number of disciplinary infractions, with the exception of Middle C. This

may be partially explained due to the smaller student population of the school (299) or the fact that the majority of the students at that school are white (68%). Differences in relative composition can be sensitive to group sizes that represent a high or low percentage of the population, which may affect disproportionality rates in these schools (Nishioka et al., 2017).

Differences in composition were also calculated for five of the infraction categories for each school, including Insubordination, Disorderly Conduct, Bullying, Fighting, and Other. These categories were chosen of the twenty-five provided because all schools recorded most of their data in them, and they were likely to signal implicit bias due to their subjective nature (McKintosh et al., 2014). In the subjective categories of Insubordination and Disorderly Conduct, Black students were overrepresented at high rates in four of the five schools (range from 23% - 37% difference).

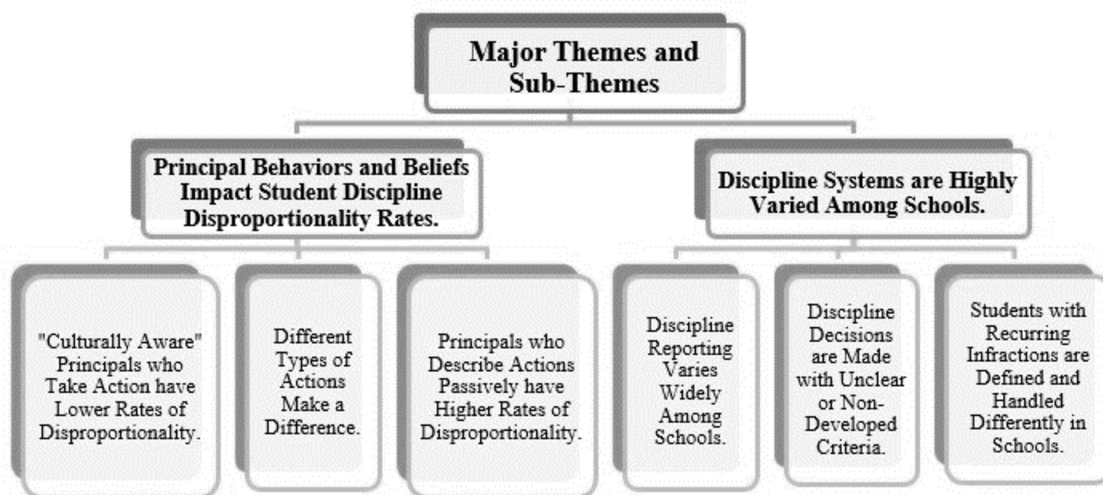
Composition differences were also calculated for actions, including ISS, OSS, Corporal Punishment, and Other. Most significant here were the differences for ISS, which again showed Black students overrepresented at high rates, ranging from 32% to 39% in four schools, and white students underrepresented at high rates. Middle C had a difference of 6%, which shows overrepresentation for Black students but at a much lower rate than the other schools. The differences for Corporal Punishment also show overrepresentation for Black students, but scores were lower and ranged from 6% to 21%.

Analysis of the composition scores and relative differences in composition data make clear that these schools engaged in discipline practices that contribute to disproportionate discipline and may indicate that implicit bias is a contributing factor in how discipline is managed in these schools.

Qualitative data were collected as the principals responded to their data and discussed their views on student discipline and disproportionality. In the two semi-structured interviews, principals also shared their experiences related to discipline, barriers they faced, and work they were currently engaged in to improve student outcomes. First- and second-round coding led the researchers to define two primary themes, supported by sub-themes, providing insight into two major impact points in disproportionate discipline: the principal and the system (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

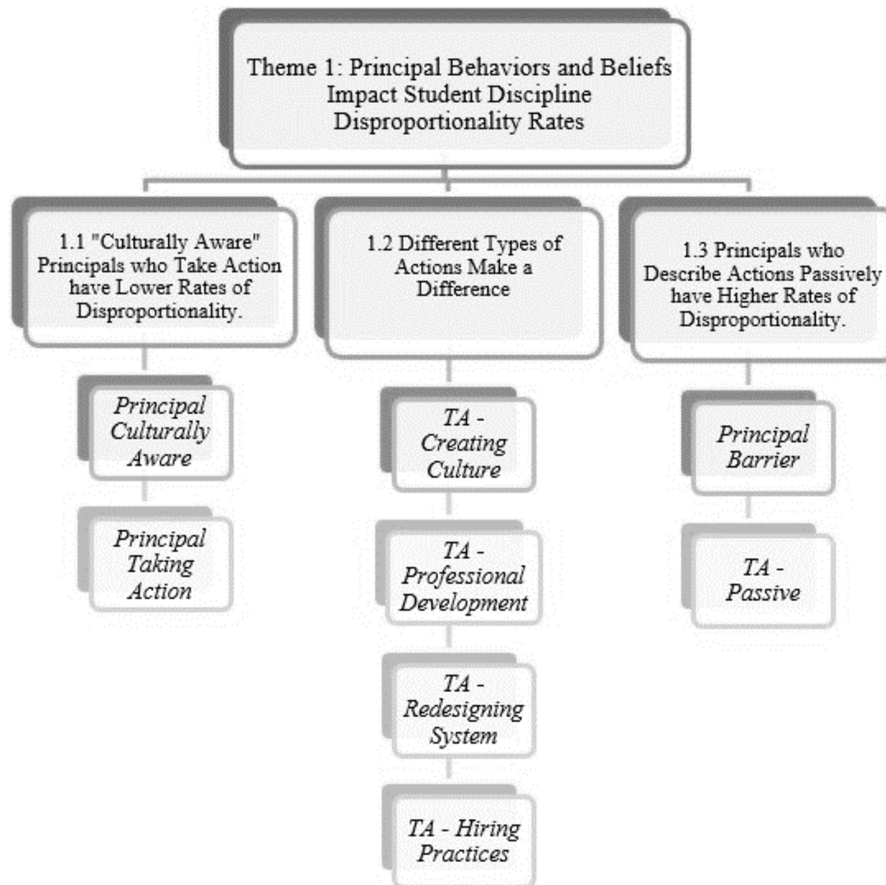
Major Themes and Sub-Themes Derived from Qualitative Data Analysis



The first major theme identified that principals' behaviors, actions, and beliefs in these rural schools impact their school's discipline disproportionality rates and provided insight into the issue of disproportionate discipline in rural schools. Participant responses were heavy in certain categories and absent in others in ways that mirrored the quantitative data (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

First Major Theme, Sub-Themes, and Codes



Note. TA=Taking Action

The data indicated that three of the principals in the study were taking measurable actions (Sub-theme 1.2) to meet the needs of their students using an equity frame, including taking some culturally responsive actions (Elementary A, Elementary C, Middle C). These principals were intentional in supporting students based on an exhibited awareness of students' cultures (Sub-theme 1.1). The language from these three leaders generated all responses within the theme *Taking Action - Culturally Aware*, and in these schools the rate of disproportionality was relatively lower when compared to the data of the others. These principals discussed many aspects of culture in their schools, especially related to behavior and respect. Several noted that respect and disrespect meant different things to their Black and white students. One principal, in explaining the difference, noted:

> A big thing with our African American males is respect, and if they feel any kind of slighted or disrespect from anybody, teacher or students, they lash out a lot. It's not all of them. It's just those few that have the most social problems, what I call…they don't have the social skills that a lot of kids have. Or they don't have the appropriate social skills that I guess we connect with our culture that's going to be successful.

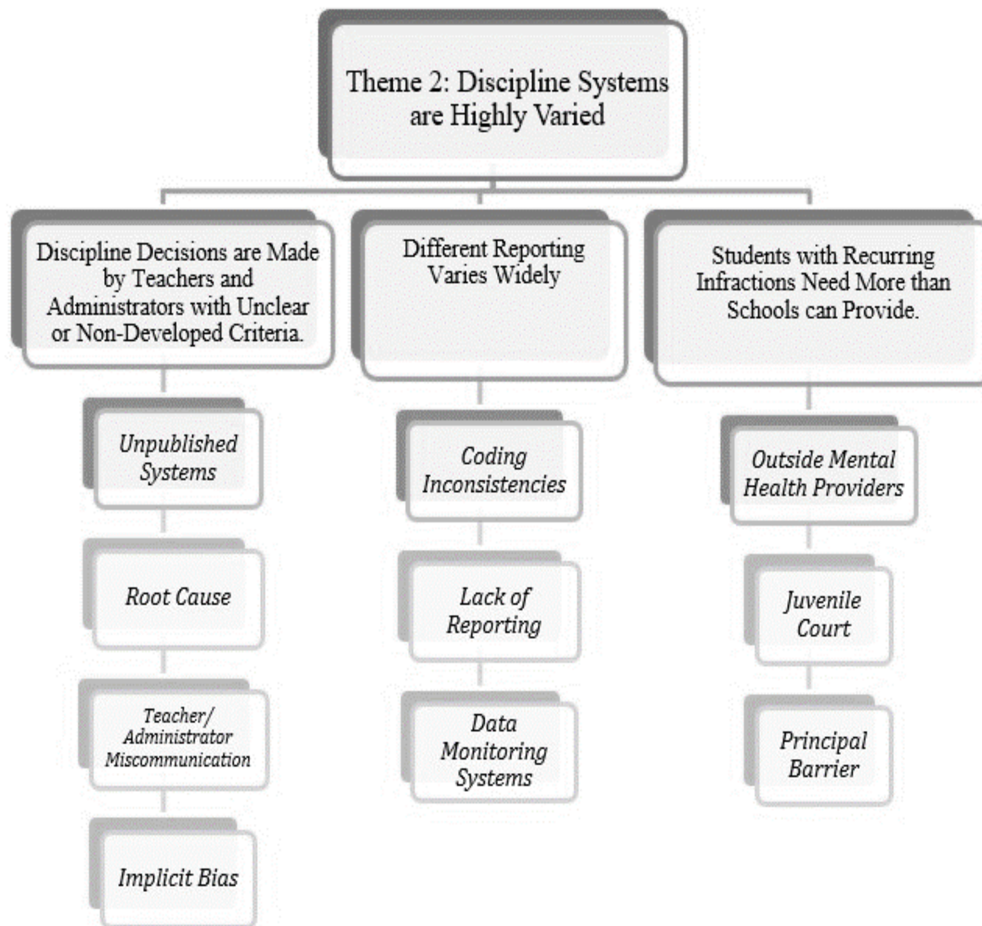
In contrast, the other three leaders (Elementary and Middle B) used passive language when addressing issues related to culture (Sub-themes 1.2 - 1.3). Their language deflected ownership of discipline disproportionality away from school-based loci of control and provided all the data for the code *Taking Action - Passive*. For example, when asked about the differences between staff and student demographics, these leaders described the issue passively with one leader noting, "Overall we don't spend a lot of time with culture and that kind of thing because we're so focused on teaching reading, writing, and math. We don't make a big deal out of any cultures, really." Notably, the rate of disproportionality in these schools was higher than the others.

In terms of actions taken, principals in schools with lower disproportionate data described specific steps they had taken in hiring practices and creating inclusive school cultures. As one principal noted, "We've actively recruited African-Americans so [the students] see some of the culture in some of our staff members, too. Because if I have ... what is it? 61% white, and 27% African-American, that should reflect in my staff." Another noted, "The big thing about PBIS is changing *our* behavior. The first thing we work on is changing *our* behavior before we start working on changing the behavior of the students." Conversely, principals in schools with higher disproportionality made more passive statements like, "I don't know why [teachers of color] don't apply here. That's something we should be finding out" and "I'm not happy about [discipline disproportionality], but I've never been given an opportunity to do anything about it."

The second major theme that emerged from the data concerned the discipline systems utilized in these schools. Discipline system components included the office referral process, coding, consequences, and data-monitoring. The variability of these systems led to defining the study's second theme with three sub-themes (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Second Major Theme, Sub-Themes, and Codes



Discipline systems are commonly based on "known" rules principals have used for years and may allow for bias at several leverage points (McKintosh et al., 2014). Although all principals reported that they had discipline policies in their handbooks, they also said they intentionally left them vague to not "tie their hands" (Sub-theme 2.1). Principals reported they did not follow a prescribed series of steps but rather tried to determine the cause of the referral (Sub-theme 2.1). This process at times led to miscommunication between teachers and administrators because the administrators would determine responses to being sent to the office on a case-by-case basis, and teachers wanted something more clear-cut. For example, one principal noted having a school-wide referral form with tiers of offenses on it but that they hadn't really used that part for several years because nobody really understood it.

As a result of the variability in responding to student behavior, the researchers identified that discipline reporting varied widely among schools and districts (Sub-theme 2.2). Principals shared information about how their discipline data codes are determined and assigned internal to the school culture; however, none of the principals were aware of official definitions related to the state discipline codes and instead relied on their own interpretation. Principals gave descriptions of codes for discipline infractions that were often in direct conflict with their recorded data. For

example, one principal stated that they never use the "other" code for infractions because it inhibited the analysis of their data but, upon viewing data, noted that the majority of their infractions had been coded as "other." There was also variability in who was coding the discipline data, which ranged from teachers to the school secretary to the principals themselves. None utilized clear criteria in coding. As for monitoring discipline referrals, the administrators varied from one principal who knew exactly how many referrals they had at the moment and that they were on track to reduce the overall number by 18% for the year, to a principal who relied on his teachers to look at the data. Accordingly, the principal who knew the number of referrals had the lowest rate of disproportionate discipline among students, while the one who relied on teachers to examine data had the highest.

The final sub-theme in this area focused on the students who have multiple discipline referrals within a short period of time (Sub-theme 2.3). Principals reported feeling ill-equipped to handle students with serious behavioral issues and noted about 90% of their office referrals came from 10% of the students. All principals noted they relied on outside mental health providers and the juvenile court system to support these students. Some of these students spent as much time as 54 days in ISS last year, and one principal said she had a student who had more than 30 referrals in a school year. Several principals talked about those with severe problems as being "more than they are trained to handle" in the school.

The confluence of the quantitative and qualitative data for each school allowed the researchers to view the relative differences in compositions and the top recorded codes for each principal (see Table 2).

Table 2

Relative Differences in Composition and Top Recorded Codes Across All Schools

School	AA	W	Top Recorded Codes from Interview Data
Elem A	8.3%	-44.7%	*Taking Action - Professional Development, Taking Action - Redesign System, Impact of Study, Principal Aware of Disproportionality, Taking Action - Creating Culture*
Elem B	61.5%	-60.7%	*Taking Action - Passive, Teacher Barrier, Principal Barrier, Principal Aware of Disproportionality*
Middle B	76.5%	-47.5%	*Principal Barrier, Discipline Reporting, Policy, Taking Action – Passive*
Elem C	89.7%	-44.3%	*Relationships with Families, Relationships with Students, PBIS, Principal Aware of Disproportionality, Taking Action - Creating Culture, Taking Action - Redesign System*
Middle C	29.1%	-7.3%	*Principal Culturally Aware, Taking Action - Creating Culture, Relationships with Students, PBIS, Taking Action - Redesign System*

Note. AA = Black, W = white.

Based on study results, Elementary A had the smallest relative difference for Black students, and top codes revealed a principal who believed in promoting equity and took actions toward that end. Middle B also had lower rates of relative difference for Black students, and top codes indicate a principal with deep knowledge of Black culture and a leadership style based on relationships. The remaining schools had significantly higher relative differences in composition for Black students and were led by principals who described actions passively and were more focused on academics than behavior.

Discussion

The perceptions of the principal can greatly impact a school, given their position of authority to make decisions affecting many students (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Skiba et al., 2012). Based on data collected in this study, principal perceptions were grouped into three categories to answer this research question with regard to disproportionality: (1) awareness, (2) perceptions of degree, and (3) reactions.

All six leaders were aware of disproportionality by race, specifically mentioning they see Black students more than any other race. However, their depth of reflection on this topic varied widely. At one end of the spectrum was a principal who had been recognized state-wide for reducing discipline disproportionality in her school, while at the opposite end was a leader who had not examined discipline data for the previous six years. The other leaders fell in between, with all but one admitting that they knew their discipline was disproportionate. The exception to this was the principal of Middle C, who stated, "I don't really think my discipline is disproportionate, to be honest." Her feelings were somewhat accurate, as her school data showed the smallest difference in composition scores for Black students of all five schools.

While principals were aware of disproportionate discipline in their schools, they were unaware of the degree to which it existed. The staged composition scores were effective in helping these leaders analyze their data. Several expressed surprise to see such large gaps in composition for each group. One remarked, "I mean, I knew it was disproportionate, but didn't know it was this much disproportionate." Several leaders had an emotional response, expressing dismay and concern. Others responded more analytically, delving into layers that could be impacting rates. These leaders raised many questions in the moment to problem-solve the disproportionality they saw in the data. However, they also acknowledged the complexity of this issue and recognized that solutions would not come easily. Notable in the qualitative data was some principals' lack of action taken to reduce those rates in some of the schools despite their tacit awareness. These findings are consistent with those of DeMatthews et al. (2017) who found that principals who are aware of injustices in their schools do not always work to correct them.

Principals' Discussions of Disproportionality

Principals primarily cited cultural mismatch between teachers and students, followed by student trauma and mental health issues, as the contributing factors most influential in explaining discipline disproportionality, particularly between teachers and students. These leaders noted that the teaching staff in each school did not represent the demographics of the student body; however, only two principals talked about their efforts to recruit a more diverse teaching staff. This finding is consistent with the research base noting the prevalence of a white, female teaching force and

their lack of understanding Black students as a cause of disproportionate rates of discipline in schools (Ferguson, 2001; Townsend, 2000).

Beyond issues of representation, these leaders also indicated teachers had a lack of understanding about the cultures of their students and about their own personal biases. These principals believed some teachers lacked the skills to appropriately handle students in discipline situations, noting teachers yelling at students, triggering outbursts, and intensifying conflict situations with their own behavior. They noted that the classroom management style for some teachers had a significant impact on discipline outcomes for Black students (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). However, only one principal of the six interviewed had provided professional development for teachers on cultural responsiveness in the past year.

Several of the principals also mentioned cultural mismatch with regard to the school system itself. From the teaching methods used in the classrooms to the ways educators address misbehavior, some principals identified that school expectations were too far removed from students' home experiences, reflecting the literature base indicating that when students of color encounter school structures based in middle-class norms, this conflict often leads to over-identification of Black students for disabilities, emotional disturbance, and discipline infractions and actions (Donovan & Cross, 2002; CCR, 2019).

Student trauma was another factor in disproportionate discipline rates mentioned by principals. The principals in this study specifically referenced the influence of drug use, addiction, and poverty as trauma triggers experienced by their students, which they felt led to a lack of coping skills, trust, and insecurity.

Several principals mentioned the struggle to find quality mental health help for students, which is likely due to the rural nature of these schools (Frankland, 2021). It was clear that most schools were not equipped to handle the types of serious behaviors they were seeing from students and that few resources were available in their communities. All leaders identified numerous local mental health providers with whom they had built relationships. Juvenile court was also utilized to coax parents into getting help for their child when they were not responding to school requests. Beyond the few mental health providers in the communities and juvenile court, there were no other resources available to assist administrators.

Critical Race Theory

Factors contributing to disproportionate rates of discipline in these schools become more evident in framing the findings using the study conceptual framework: critical race theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefanic, 2011). These factors include the influence of implicit bias, the discipline system, and teacher and administrator training. Principals recognized the school-based discipline systems as creating barriers for students of color. One principal noted that she thought the students were coming to school without the skillset to match "the way we define success in our society." However, as one of the tenets of CRT claims, when current systems advance the interests of whites, many are not interested in changing those systems. It is notable that although the principals were aware their current systems of discipline, including referrals and consequences, caused disproportionality for their Black students, only half of them were actively revising their systems to attempt proportionate outcomes for all students.

Socially constructed views of race could be the root cause of disproportionate discipline rates (Simson, 2014). The comparison of quantitative and qualitative data indicated a cultural mismatch as a root cause of disproportionate data. Because the demographics of the teachers were

so different from the Black students in these schools, misunderstandings due to limited cultural knowledge of the other race lead to conflict. Among the teaching staff in all five schools studied, only eight Black teachers were employed out of the over 200 certified teachers. Principals also noted in interviews that their teachers were mostly "white, middle-class women" and gave examples of cultural mismatch between teachers and students. All of the administrators in the study were white females, with the exception of one white male.

Implicit bias is implicated for its role in disparate rates of discipline for Black students (CCR, 2019). Study findings in the more subjective infraction codes indicate that implicit bias was present. In four of these schools, Black students were overrepresented at high rates for Insubordination and Disorderly Conduct, as evidenced by large composition difference scores. white students were underrepresented in both categories at equally high rates aligning to previous study findings (McIntosh et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2002).

Impact of Rurality

The findings in this study provide insight into the state of disproportionate discipline in rural schools in a southern state. The key factors cited by principals causing disproportionality included a cultural mismatch between teachers and staff, as well as students who have experienced trauma and a lack of mental health supports. Common solutions to the issue of disproportionate discipline are often based on findings in large urban and suburban districts, while the rural nature of these schools presents its own set of challenges (Frankland, 2021). Recruiting diverse teaching candidates to come and live in the rural South presents its own set of difficulties, but creating "grow your own" programs for future teachers beginning in high schools is an example of a place-based solution that can help diversify the teaching staff in these schools. Students are often introduced to the teaching profession through introductory courses, and some offer a series of courses that allow high school students to graduate with a Certified Teaching Assistant credential that allows them to become a paraprofessional following graduation and get college credit for their courses. Providing college credit for courses taken in high school and offering incentives to students, such as guaranteed positions in their home district, may be one answer to diversifying the teaching staff and creating a teaching force that is diverse and invested in their rural community.

Students living in rural communities experience ACEs at high rates, likely due to poverty, geographic isolation, and limited access to mental health care (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). As cited by the principals in the study, students often require more services than the school can provide, but specialized services are not often available in their communities due to the rurality of locations. Providing trauma-informed, social-emotional support in schools is a place where schools can begin to support their students at the youngest ages. Using trauma-informed practices as a lens for social-emotional learning can benefit all students, including those who have not experienced trauma (Frankland, 2021). Building on the strengths of rural schools, including the deep connections that residents have to one another and the central focus the school provides in the community, can also be part of the solution in supporting students. Empowering the school staff and community to work together in providing positive youth programs, creating awareness around trauma-informed practices, and involving community members in generating solutions have all been found to have positive benefits on students in rural communities (Frankland, 2021).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations in the study include the sensitive nature of the phenomenon studied. Because the focus of this study involved race and implicit bias, qualitative data collected may not reflect the administrators' true beliefs. The study is also limited by changes that occurred related to school discipline at the federal, state, and local levels during the course of the study. Guidance from the federal level requiring schools to examine their discipline data for disparate impact was revoked during the course of the study, causing some confusion for schools as to where they should focus their efforts. Delimitations include the small sample of principals that were interviewed and schools selected for the study. Finally, the inability to track data by student to identify the influence of students with recurring infractions is a delimitation. These constraints limit generalizability of the study.

Implications

The findings in this study provide guidance for professional practice, calling for schools to establish clearly defined systems for discipline referrals that minimize opportunities for subjective decision-making. Schools also need access to transparent and easily navigable systems for regularly monitoring student discipline data for disparate effects on groups of students (McIntosh et al., 2014). Training in implicit bias and culturally-responsive practices for staff is critical for decreasing disproportionate rates of discipline (Fenning & Jenkins, 2018). Principals need ongoing professional development in using and disaggregating data to support school improvement, starting in their principal preparation program. They also need specific training on disparate impact, training in implicit bias and culturally-responsive practices, and support in understanding how to advocate for social justice (DeMatthews, 2016). Training future school leaders in the implementation of restorative practices systems, which focus on teaching students to repair the harm they have caused, as well as a focus on teaching students expected behaviors rather than applying punitive consequences, is also necessary.

To more completely understand the phenomenon of disproportionate discipline for students in rural schools, this study should be replicated in other contexts. Replication should include other regions and school contexts to examine patterns of impact that principals can have on discipline disproportionality and to measure effects of systems put into place to address it. Additional methods to explore this issue should also be included to expand this study, such as adding qualitative data sources (e.g., focus groups of teachers, parents, and students) and staging a longitudinal study based on specific interventions.

Conclusion

This study examined the problem of practice found in the disproportionate rate of student discipline for Black students compared to white students in rural schools in a southeastern state. The study findings concluded that Black students were being disciplined at much higher rates than their white counterparts in rural schools, likely due to implicit bias. Principal responses to these data indicated that principals who were culturally aware of the student diversity in their respective schools and took specific, concrete actions to ensure equity for all students were most successful in reducing rates of disproportionate discipline. These actions included training their staff to be aware of implicit bias and utilizing culturally responsive and trauma-informed discipline practices, as well as actively cultivating a diverse teaching staff to represent the cultures of their students. This study points to a need for clear, objective discipline systems in schools that minimize the impact of implicit bias, as well as for targeted principal development.

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Book Review

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Title: Community-Owned Knowledge: The Promise of Collaborative Action Research
Author(s): Gilberto Arriaza and Lyn Scott
Publisher: Peter Lang
ISBN: 978-1-4331-8897-8 **Pages:** 200 **Year:** 2022

While there are many books on action research, Gilberto Arriaza and Lyn Scott's text on Collaborative Action Research (CAR) breaks some new ground and adds something distinct to the conversation. The central argument of the text surrounds the power of knowledge owned and produced through the process of collaborative research and focused on solving community problems. Arriaza and Scott's text, *Community-Owned Knowledge: The Promise of Collaborative Action Research,* strikes a distinct balance between grounding the practice of CAR in critical theories and addressing core concepts while also providing very practical guidance to demystify many of the stages of CAR. As such, this is a great tool for K-12 practitioners or any non-profit organization that wants to engage CAR while it would also stand up well in a graduate course on the topic, too.

The overall structure of the book is clearly organized, beginning with some core definitions and conceptual grounding, and then sequenced, by chapter, in terms of various aspects of the process. Each section concludes with key chapter learnings, an essential question to use for discussion, a potential activity related to the chapter, and resources. These features were succinct and would be quite useful as a part of a teacher-directed learning community or a graduate course. Activities like The Five Why's in chapter 2 can focus discussions for groups to identify the challenge to address through CAR. The authors recommend using your own data to do this activity but, if you don't have it, they provide a case with some sample data where a group could practice the process of using data with The Five Why's protocol to formulate a focal issue for CAR. Essential questions like these in chapter 1—"What preconditions do we need at our working place to enact a CAR tradition? How can we use CAR to engender social and cultural capital and get rid of deficit thinking?" (p. 31)—were compelling and could be used well to launch a discussion of the chapter's ideas with a professional learning community or in the graduate classroom. These examples are representative of those sprinkled throughout that make the text a true learning tool for CAR.

Throughout the text, the authors present complex concepts in readable terms and accessible for a range of audiences. For example, the authors discuss how social and cultural capital can be generated through CAR, enabling teachers to become agents of change in their organizations. Later discussions about faulty attributions and fallacies in reasoning as well as characteristics of data strength are straightforward, clear, and precise. They offer the CAR practitioner, who may not have pursued research training, accessible concepts without sacrificing conceptual integrity.

Sometimes a text with this kind of conceptual heft may be lacking in the practical methods offered, but that is not the case here. Arriaza and Scott are experts in CAR but always with an eye to practice given their extensive work in schools and communities. Their chapters, with careful

depictions of the process of CAR, makes the invisible more visible; in so doing, it de-mystifies parts that many struggle with such as Question Design, Data Reduction, and the Literature Review. For those who work with teachers or graduate students on these parts of the process, this book is the first I've seen that really breaks down the process of crafting a question from stating the challenge and then operationalizing that research question in the design by identifying variables, factors, and items. In this stage of the text, the authors offer examples from their work with teachers so that the research questions are sharpened and able to be developed into a data design.

Data analysis, especially in qualitative inquiry, is another area that is often not clearly conveyed to CAR practitioners who might be told to just re-read and categorize to identify themes. Instead, the authors here unmask the mysterious process of qualitative analysis offering ways to first reduce the data systematically through chunking, slicing, coding, grouping, and categorizing. Again, here this description is aided with the example of an observation transcript provided at the end of the previous chapter. The authors patiently take us through the data reduction of one part of these observation notes, showing us how to break down and then build up to compelling themes meticulously grounded in the data. Similar sections about the literature review and data collection methods offer welcome insights that could be quite useful for graduate students or novice CAR practitioners alike who often struggle with these parts of the process, too.

A deep discussion of ethics and culturally responsive practices with CAR are not singled out in a separate chapter but both topics are integrated throughout various chapters in relation to related topics like bias. Qualitative analysis is prioritized rather than quantitative analysis, given the nation of CAR data sources; likely, more basic information about quantitative analysis might be a good addition for future editions. The opening of the text may feel dense or hard for some practitioners to get through to get to the practical insights on the process. This made me wonder how it would feel if readers elected not to read it cover to cover but jumped to where they need some immediate practical guidance and then circle back to the concepts undergirding those processes. After a little investigation, I would conclude that the writing is so readable and accessible that it could, indeed, be read and used in that way. I found that, even though I read it straight through, going back to chapter 1 was a real treat and a deeper read for me—something I would highly recommend that readers try out.

The authors promise much with a text that spans the theory and practice of CAR, doing so well in achieving their goals because they wove in all kinds of examples, including sample data, that illuminate the processes they seek to describe. This versatile text will be well-used in my own work with novice graduate researchers and experienced teachers engaging in CAR. The knowledge produced through the process that Arriaza and Scott espouse is indeed of and for the community, as the title implies. It has the potential also to transform that community from which it emanates. Indeed, with a text like this, "we gon' be alright," as G.T. Reyes says in the opening dedication.

In Memoriam

Dr. Louis Wildman (1941-2022)

Wayne Padover
National University

The CAPEA Family is saddened given the recent passing of Dr. Louis Wildman, a friend, colleague and long-time leader in the organization. It is often stated, a measure of a person's life is the extent to which that individual touched others' lives and made the world better because they were here.

Many were aware of the well-deserved recognition Dr. Wilder received inclusive of the prestigious "Living Legend Award" by the National Council of Professors of Education Administrators and the "Professor of the Year Award" from the Association of California School Administrators as well as the more than one-hundred publications he provided. It was the thousands of educational leaders he was privileged to help prepare that were the source of his greatest pride and sense of purpose in his professional life.

Louis viewed CAPEA as a beacon of light, leading state and national education communities and professional organizations in developing research and empirical knowledge. He dedicated himself to prepare the current and next generation of educational leaders such that they serve all students for them to become all they are capable of being. We, at CAPEA, were blessed to have him as an active and vibrant leader long after his days of retirement. So it is, that this publication is dedicated to his memory and the exquisite model of who he was, and the legacy Louis left for us as we serve others.