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Testimonios of Latin@ Leaders in Large Urban School Systems:

Educación, Lenguaje, y Cultura

by

Hilda L. Maldonado

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Testimonios of Latin@ Leaders in Large Urban School Systems:

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Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
Los Angeles, CA 90045

This dissertation written by Hilda Maldonado, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.
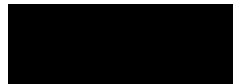
July 20, 2021
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Date

Dissertation Committee

_____
Magaly Lavadenz, Ph.D., Dissertation Chair

_____
William Perez, Ph.D., Committee Member

Maria Ott
Maria Ott (Apr 15, 2021 13:59 PDT)
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Maria Ott, Ph.D., Committee Member

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

Testimonios of Latin@ Leaders in Large Urban School Systems: Educación, Lenguaje, y Cultura

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Across the nation, Latina/o educational leaders who serve large urban school systems face the challenges of educating historically marginalized Latinx student populations, many of whom represent a diverse group of English Learners (ELs) in school systems designed for monolingual English speakers. This study is an exploratory*,* qualitative, multiple case study, using testimonio methodology to document the experiences of seven Latina/o leaders across the nation to arrive at new understandings of their practices. The review of the literature focused on the sociopolitical history of Latina/o education, linguistic hegemony in schooling, and theories of leaders of color. These concepts were used were used to develop cross-testimonio analyses of the seven testimonios, which revealed five cross-case themes: (a) personal moral compass, (b) relating to students and families, (c) systemic inequities are revealed, (d) bilingual/bicultural connections, and (e) proving the right to lead.

The leaders approached their leadership through their identity as bilingual members of the same communities they led, they used their lived experiences to hire bilingual teachers, implemented dual language programs, used bilingual text, renamed English Learners to Emergent bilingual and made public data to reveal areas for improvement. They led with sympathy, compassion and a sense of community to ensure they proved why they were the right leaders. Recommendations include the need for national, state and local policies to use an asset

based lens for educating Latina/o and English Learners, identification and support for more

Latina/o leaders and creation of a Latina/o Leadership Framework.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Pew Research Center Fact Tank reported that the Hispanic population represented 52% of the 2020 electorate report of U.S. population growth in 2019, and they reached a record 60.6 million, representing 18% of the overall U.S. population (Krogstad, 2020). This trend also represents a two-fold increase in the Hispanic student population in schools, colleges and universities as reported in the *2017 National Population Projections Tables: Main Series* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). This projected growth in Hispanic student population makes the case for the importance of understanding the educational needs of these students. Hispanic students also known as Latina/o students are not monolithic groups, while not all Latina/o students are English learners, many Spanish speaking English learners are Latina/os and represent the majority population of English learners (ELs) in the United States. According to the report, *The Condition of Education,* "Spanish was the home language of 3.7 million [English Language Learner] ELL students in 2017, representing 74.8% of all ELL students and 7.6% of all public K-12 students" (Hussar et al., 2020, p. 39). How are leaders in school systems addressing the complex instructional needs of an ever-growing and multifaceted student population of Latina/o students who are also English learners? "Educational leaders of color in the United States have traversed, negotiated, and often overcome myriad inequities in education themselves. What they contribute to leadership theory and practice is largely unknown or reflected in mainstream leadership paradigms" (Santamaría, 2014, p. 349). Educational leaders of color add value to the lives of diverse students; as role models for students, as connections between school life and the communities they serve and, in some instances, as social justice leaders who provide advocacy

and support to historically underserved students or marginalized students (Khalifa, 2013;

Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). There is limited literature on

Latina/o leaders as a subgroup of education leaders of color, which leads to the purpose of this

study: to identify the practices of school system leaders specifically Latina/o education leaders

leading school systems with large Latina/o English learner populations.

Background of the Problem

Early education and elementary programs lack a consistent program design to meet the

needs of a non-monolithic group of learners such as Latina/o English learners. However, given

the large number of Spanish speaking students this represents an opportunity to create programs

to meet their linguistic and academic needs and as a result prevent the large number of students

whose needs are underserved and unrecognized in U.S. school systems. According to Ruiz Soto

et al. (2015), in 45 states and the District of Columbia more than two-thirds of ELL students

spoke Spanish as their home language. The elementary program types available to elementary

students fall into four categories according to Valdés (2001): (a) English-only, (b) English only

with ESL, (c) bilingual education (transitional), and (d) bilingual education (maintenance).

Valdés also asserted that "the challenges of educating students who do not speak a societal

language are enormous" (p. 15). The context of learning environments for students in middle

school and high school systems in the United States are not designed to meet the needs of all

levels of students and especially the variety of English learners. There is a dual challenge posed

to English learners to attain fluency in English while mastering the academic courses leading to a

high school diploma (Hill et al., 2019). According to Owens and Valesky (2015), "In the typical

high school, for example, people's daily lives are deeply affected by the schedule, which governs

all and often defines the possible" (p. 118). By middle and high school, some English learners appear to fall into a typology known as long term English learner. Long-term English learners are defined as students who have been enrolled in a U.S. school for 6 or more years that have remained at the same English language proficiency level for two or more consecutive prior years or have regressed to a lower English language proficiency level as measured by English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC). In spite of this increasing and large student population, Latina/o English learners have incurred academic deficits and are unable to meet graduation requirements (Olsen, 2010). The state of California enrolls the largest number and counted 1.3 million students as English learners in 2018, plus an additional 1 million more students who were English learners at some point but have since become proficient otherwise known as "reclassified" (Santibañez & Umansky, 2018). The California Department of Education (n.d.), along with many researchers, refer to this combined population as "ever-ELs." In this population lies an even more vulnerable population of students. Olsen (2010) urged leaders to address the needs of a group labeled "long-term English learners" who despite many years in our schools and despite being close to the age at which they should be able to graduate, are still not English proficient and have incurred major academic deficits. The call to action by Olsen on leaders to address the needs of long-term English learners, along with the lack of clearly defined programs and the challenges of educating English learners beginning in the elementary grades posed above by Valdés (2001) are issues that impact the role of school leaders and school system leaders.

Gold and Maxwell-Jolly (2006) stated that the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is one of the few places that gathers dropout data for English learners and the

California district with the greatest share of these students, found that of the English learners who enrolled in the ninth grade in 2000, only 27% graduated 4 years later (p. 4). On November 2018, the headlines in LA School Report were California's graduation rate rises, but there is no improvement in students' eligibility for state universities and goes on to cite improvement in graduation rates of English language learners, a 0.8-point increase, from 67.1% to 67.9% (Swaak, 2018). Large urban districts such as LAUSD have not made strides in graduation rates of ELs/Long Term English Learners [LTELs]. To further explain the complexity of providing effective programs and instructional services for ELs/LTELs the next section will describe the systemic and structural problems faced by school system leaders.

Statement of the Problem

To frame the problems created by schooling systems that are rooted in westernized views of today's students this section is organized into three areas: designed instructional programs and school schedules, providing adequately prepared educators, and avoiding the victim blaming trap which compromise students. Organization in secondary schools in addition to being impacted by the traditional 6-hour, 5-day-a-week schedule must adhere to behavioral norms that are external and part of youth culture. Owens and Valesky (2015) wrote:

> Social-cultural influences that reach in from the outside and establish norms for behavior in the school . . . such as community standards, tradition, judicial decisions, statutory law, and—not least, by any means—the broad generalizations embodied in concepts such as Western culture. (p. 118)

Western culture for all intents and purposes means English only school settings. As further proof of the importance of creating schools to meet student needs, leaders of color must

be able to traverse these seemingly competing interests. In a research study on leaders of color and their unique contribution, Khalifa (2013) conducted an ethnography study from 2006-2008 of an alternative high school that outperformed other alternative high schools and closed gaps for students of color who were considered at risk. This example of an alternative high school closing achievement gaps as opposed to a traditional high school exemplifies the need for understanding the role of school system leaders in creating the schools that students' need. In this example, one can see that it takes an alternative high school setting to be able to meet the needs of LTELs and that a traditional high school schedule does not have a built-in flexibility for non-English speakers course taking opportunities.

School leaders must also be able to identify the staffing and teachers that are most appropriate for students needs while adhering to credentialing requirements and labor union agreements for teacher grade or course assignment. The role of the school leader as an instructional leader has been hailed as the most important function. Principals are responsible for hiring, recruiting, retaining, and developing teachers, as such school leaders, in turn, are responsible for ensuring that their teachers are culturally responsive, and that the vision of the school imbues cultural responsiveness (Khalifa, 2013).

Once staffing is in place to meet the needs of students, school leaders must be able to ensure the achievement gap for all learners is closed and to do this, they must navigate fiscal, legal, and assessment requirements. Recent funding, instructional, and accountability reforms, prove that policymakers have recognized the importance of improving outcomes for English learners (Hill et al., 2019). Estrada (2013) cited earlier authors to note the following:

As this population grows in public schools, so does the achievement gap between this growing population and native English speakers. The combination of continuous academic failure, language biases (i.e., assessments and school culture), and a low rate of language acquisition can be misinterpreted as a disability, contributing to ELLs being overly represented in special education and other high incident disabilities, such as SLD. (p. 8)

This creates a challenge for system leaders tasked with improving student outcomes.

Guinier and Torres (2002), in their work *The Miner's Canary*: *Enlisting race, resisting power, transforming democracy*, used the metaphor for the canary as a warning about the environmental conditions that impact the canary as opposed to labeling the canary's condition as the problem. The depressed socioeconomic, health and educational conditions of people of color as representation of their character rather than the structures of power that create the conditions of their lives pathologized people of color. The influence of identity on leadership practices, the relationship between leadership and advocacy, culturally responsive practices, and the notion that Latina/o leaders must be vigilant when practicing coalition building can have an impact on Latina/o students schooling (Alemán, 2009a; Khalifa et al., 2016; Murakami et al., 2018). In closing, a school leader must be able to organize a school schedule, hire and prepare school staff, create systems and structures to monitor student outcomes and ensure that students do not get blamed for not meeting expected achievement standards; rather these students get the supports needed to meet academic, cultural, and linguistic expectations. Leadership matters and the next section will explain the purpose of a study on the practices implemented by Latina/o leaders.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to capture the experiences of Latino leaders leading large urban school systems in the United States and to identify the leadership practices they use to address the schooling of Latina/o students and English learners. To conduct the study the applied critical leadership framework was used as a conceptual framework and an exploratory, qualitative multiple case study was conducted with the use of testimonio to identify their practices. According to Santamaría and Santamaría (2012), the applied critical leadership framework explains the ways in which the principles of transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory intersect. The examples of effective leadership practices can inform school leadership preparation programs and add to the body of knowledge in educational leadership. These may include creating optimal learning environments, challenging schooling systems and structures that prevent English learners from succeeding and having courageous conversations about education, race, language, and culture in schools.

Research Question

The ability to create a systemic change to address the "perceived" academic deficits that elementary age English learners [EL] and Long Term English Learners [LTELs] defined as English learners who after more than 6 to 10 years in school and have not become reclassified, was a challenge felt in California particularly and throughout the nation as the rise in English learner population continued. This call to action, coupled with the many changes that occurred in the United States in standards, curriculum, assessment, and school performance reporting have placed the role of education leaders in the forefront of student outcomes. The research literature indicated that elementary age English learners and long-term ELs often have limited access to

well-prepared or bilingual teachers, instructional programs that are not well designed to meet their language and learning needs, academic coursework required for high school graduation and admission to postsecondary education, that they may experience some negative socioemotional and academic effects of being labeled EL, some may end up in special education programs and that they tend to have elevated high school dropout rates (Hill et al., 2019, p. 7). Rodríguez et al. (2016) posited that Latino educational leadership across the P-20 pipeline in the United States must acknowledge the importance of serving Latino communities and families, as well as the ways in which Latina/os and leaders who serve Latina/o communities must negotiate and navigate a greater dominant socio-political system to improve educational opportunity and equity for diverse learners (e.g., racially, ethnically, linguistically, economically, etc.).

Practices that Latina/o leaders use in leading school systems were identified. The research question that was explored was: What are the leadership practices of Latino/a educators leading large urban school systems with significant enrollment of Latina/o students who are also English learners?

Significance of the Study

Demographic and generational shifts in student population along with changes to standards, assessment, and in California, funding changes that aim to improve the outcomes of Latina/o students and English learners have made it abundantly clear that a new set of leaders and leadership practices are needed at all levels of education systems. According to Santamaría (2014), "Educational leaders of color think differently about how students reach goals, frame tasks, create effective teams, and communicate ideas" (Santamaría, 2014, p. 350). The research study conducted by Santamaría analyzed and described the intentional leadership practices used

by educational leaders of color who have been and are making changes in education systems. The study used the work of prior researchers and aimed to add to this body of research by including the lens of linguistic pedagogies, practices and policies that impact the bilingual Latina/o leaders leadership experiences and practices. Rodríguez et al. (2016) asserted that:

> The unique experiences of Latina/o principals and principals who serve Latina/o communities, in particular, must be considered as part of the platform for Latino Educational Leadership. In this respect, the collective goal is to recognize Latino Leadership in its own right, as a framework that is central to the discourse and welfare of Latina/o students and leaders across the country. (p. 144)

This body of research aimed to identify the leadership practices used by Latina/o leaders to serve, provide linguistic access, and infuse an asset-based approach to serving Latino communities. The hope is that these practices will be further researched and replicated to prepare future leaders that serve Latina/o and English learners.

Conceptual/Theoretical Leadership Framework: Applied Critical Leadership

Research provides evidence that educational leaders who are also members of historically underserved groups in the United States may practice educational leadership through different filters of experience than their mainstream peers, rendering their leadership practice qualitatively different (Alemán, 2009a; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). To accomplish the call to action on meeting the needs of English learners school leaders must respond to teacher and principal preparation programs, Khalifa et al. (2016) said, "Effective leaders must be capable of promoting and sustaining an environment stable enough to attract, maintain, and support the further development of good teachers" (p. 1272). Educational leaders and specifically school site leaders

are often the ones held most accountable to the progress or lack thereof student progress, it is of paramount importance that leaders are mindful of the enormity of this responsibility. Khalifa et al. (2016) stated:

> Because minoritized students have been disadvantaged by historically oppressive structures, and because educators and schools have been—intentionally or unintentionally—complicit in reproducing this oppression, culturally responsive school leaders have a principled, moral responsibility to counter this oppression. (p. 1275)

To identify the characteristics and practices of social justice leaders, transformational framework underlying applied critical leadership (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012) was used.

Design and Methods

This research used an exploratory, testimonio, qualitative multiple case study design to deeply understand the practices of Latina/o leaders. Yin (2018) asserted that "the ability to conduct 6 or 10 individual case studies, arranged effectively within a multiple-case design, is analogous to the ability to conduct 6 to 10 experiments on related topics" (p. 55).

The results of the interviews and surveys were analyzed through the lens of Santamaría's (2014) theoretical framework underlying alternative leadership model. Yin (2018) stated, "Case study research comprises an all-encompassing mode of inquiry, with its own logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis" (p. 16). The exploratory design as an inductive process begins with collecting qualitative data from a purposive sample with a goal of increasing understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, followed by coding, concept mapping, to analyze the data (Mills & Gay, 2019).

To ensure deeper understanding of the participants' experience a "testimonio" methodology was also applied. As stated by Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) "Within the field of education, scholars are increasingly taking up testimonio as a pedagogical, methodological, and activist approach to social justice that transgresses traditional paradigms in academia" (p. 363).

Participants

This national study of seven Latino/a leaders in urban school systems selected its participants according to several criteria: (a) that they are currently serving a minimum 20% Latina/o students; (b) serve a minimum of 10% of English learner students; (c) serve in an urban school/educational system. The seven Latino/a leaders were purposefully selected according to the following criteria: (a) self-identify as Latino/a, (b) have a leadership role in a school system that serves a 20% or more Latino students and 10% English learners, and (c) represent a state in the United States with a large Latina/o student population. The study engaged seven Latino leaders who have led or currently lead in educational leadership positions.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are the leadership preparation programs that participants completed may not have addressed the use of a culturally and linguistically responsive lens. Another major limitation is the number of study participants while a larger scale study may be appropriate, the nuanced insight from the interviewees provided depth of understanding of the practices and experiences of system leaders. Self-reporting on the survey and interview were left up to the participants and their truth telling. Lastly, the participants and researcher's previous professional interactions or similar network of leaders of may have led participants to bias in answering questions favorably during the interviews.

Social Justice Leadership Connections

DeMatthews et al. (2019) affirmed much about what is agreed upon by most social justice leadership scholars that schools must have leaders who can recognize and empathize with the experiences and plight of marginalized and oppressed students. This is especially important in reducing the widening gaps of opportunity and achievement between low income and impoverished African American, Latino, and immigrant children as compared to their White middle class peer group (DeMatthews et al., 2019). Social justice leadership work is not without sacrifice and a need for additional support. Latino leaders using a culturally and linguistically responsive leadership lens to address schooling needs, analyze systemic barriers and advocate for students for whom language is an additional barrier to learning add to the richness of schooling systems that serve Latina/o and English learners ultimately benefitting all students. This study addressed the value of Latino leaders in the U.S. school system and aims to add to the body of knowledge in educational leadership. To connect the issues that Latino/a leaders face, a literature review was conducted which includes the history of Latino/a education rights in the United States, language and schooling policies, educational leadership, and Latina/o educational leadership research.

Positionality

At this point it is imperative that I share a little about me and the personal and professional lens that I bring to my dissertation by sharing my positionality and intersectionality. I am a child immigrant and constantly live in a bifurcated reality of not being from here nor there. I am a mother/stepmother, daughter, wife, sister and now a superintendent at a suburban school district. I held a senior level position in a large urban school district and was one of few

Bilingual/Bicultural Latina/os at that level of leadership. The immigrant experience has been a very difficult and traumatic experience for my parents and for us children who grew up in Mexico, my parents had six children, four were born in Mexico and the two youngest were born here in the United States. In 1996 and 2000 respectively, my brother Lazaro and sister Sandra passed away, they were both 28 years old at the times of their deaths. Two years later I became a divorced single mother of a 3-year-old son. The intersectionality of being an immigrant and a successful teacher, principal, director and senior cabinet member in a large school district in the United States led me to be selected as a Durfee Foundation Fellow in 2016, and the focus of my inquiry was the question: How might we leverage the multiple languages as assets rather than deficits? As I studied this question, I learned that my voice and advocacy for others comes from my own social justice temperament and perspective of life and humanity. I believe that public education is an institution that provides opportunity for the oppressed. As an immigrant I had to have the courage to change my language, beliefs, traditions, and ways of living. And I also had to have the courage to return to it and find the beauty of my first language, our traditions, beliefs, and ways of living. In this journey I learned to lead for others like myself, parents, students, and family members who make the trip to a new country to escape poverty, violence, illness, and have to face it all while learning a new language. As a leader I would like to use my position and intersectionality work with educators at all levels of schools and school system to ensure that they realize all children are born with inherent gifts and that the purpose of education is meant to inspire and explore children's natural curiosity and identity. Some might perceive my positionality as a limitation of this research, and I argue that it is precisely because of my story that I seek to learn from others' journeys and voices. Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) stated, "Most

of the methodological and epistemological discussions regarding testimonios focus on an approach in which an interlocutor, who is an outside activist and/or ally, records, transcribes, edits, and prepares a manuscript for publication" (p. 365).

Glossary of Terms

The following definitions are used to describe commonly used terms.

Latina/o: In this report, we use the U.S. Census definition of Latino/a: any person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin. Latino youth may be of any race, such as White, Black, or Asian, and may speak any language, such as Spanish, Portuguese, Mixteco, or English. The California Department of Education (n.d.) also uses this definition. We do not use the term *Hispanic*, which typically refers only to individuals whose common language is Spanish (Education Trust-West, 2017, p. 3).

English learners (EL): Students (formerly known as limited-English-proficient or LEP) English learner students are those students for whom there is a report of a primary language other than English on the state-approved Home Language Survey and who, on the basis of the state approved oral language (kindergarten through Grade 12) assessment procedures and literacy (Grades 3 through 12 only), have been determined to lack the clearly defined English language skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in the school's regular instructional programs (California Department of Education, n.d.).

Long-term English learners (LTELs): An EL student to which all of the following apply: (a) is enrolled on Census Day (the first Wednesday in October) in Grades 6 to 12, inclusive; (b) has been enrolled in a U.S. school for 6 or more years; and (c) has remained at the same English language proficiency level for two or more consecutive prior years, or has

regressed to a lower English language proficiency level as measured by the state test (California Department of Education, n.d.).

Late arriving English learners (LAEL): commonly referred to as newcomers who arrive in U.S. schools in Grade 6 or later and have been in the country for no more than 1 year upon first enrollment. Some LAELs may have had formal education in their home countries, while others may not be literate in their home language (Hill et al., 2019).

Further definitions of English learner typologies can be found in Appendix C. The definitions above are from the California Department of Education (n.d.). The latest guidance from the U.S. Department of Education's (2016) "English Learner Toolkit" states:

> While the Elementary Secondary Education Act, as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act, does not give a definition of a "long-term English learner," Section 3121(a)(6) mandates a report every 2 years of the number and percentage of "ELs who have not yet attained English language proficiency within 5 years." (Chapter 2, p. 2)

Summary and Organization of the Study

In summary, an exploratory, qualitative, multiple case study, testimonio design was used to deeply understand the lived experiences and practices of Latina/o leaders. The purposefully selected national sampling of seven Latina/o leaders was the focus of this research. The research consisted of cross case analysis to arrive at practices used by analyzing testimonios. The aim of this study was to identify the practices and contributions that Latina/o leaders bring to educational leadership in school systems that serve Latina/o students many of whom are also English learners. The ultimate goals were to contribute to the research on educational leaders who serve in large urban school districts with significant enrollment of Latina/o students and

English learners. In Chapter 1, I identified the problem and its importance to the educational field. Chapter 2 provides a review of three distinct bodies of literature related to this topic. The topics include history of Latino Education including English learners in the United States, language policies in schools including linguistic hegemony and educational leadership theories specially Latina/o leaders. In Chapter 3, I describe the research methodology and design and lists the steps taken to conduct interviews and gather demographic data, the instrumentation used, and phases of analysis followed by the cross cases analysis and synthesis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research using testimonios for each of the seven participants and identifies the common themes in their lived experiences as Latina/o leaders. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a restatement of the purpose of the study and shares the significance of the findings, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational changes across the nation in the area of standards, curriculum, assessment, and school performance reporting have placed the role of education leaders in the front line of leading school systems, while improving educational achievement for all students. In addition to leading changes in education, school leaders are also challenged to close achievement gaps for diverse student populations some of which have historically been underserved and underperforming. Costello and Dillard (2019) asserted "schools are not immune from the political and socioeconomic forces gripping our nation" (p. 4). The continual increase in enrollment of Latino/Hispanic students throughout United States schools presents an opportunity to explore the leadership practices of Latina/o leaders who are trusted with leading school systems that serve these students (Bauman, 2017). Guinier and Torres (2002), in describing the value of engaging leaders of color, stated, "It is not enough to identify leaders of color with the ability to articulate the concerns of their racial constituency. It is necessary to involve that constituency in the process of decision-making and strategic planning" (p. 102). Previous research found that "there is scant literature available identifying and celebrating the positive attributes of education leaders from historically oppressed groups and those who identify with them, and ways in which these individuals acquire mainstream institutional access to create real change" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, as cited in Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012, p. 7).

In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, researchers claimed, "It turns out that leadership not only matters: it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3). Recent studies like these shed new

light on the role and impact of education leaders and specifically the lack of research on education leaders of color, which previous studies had not addressed.

This chapter is organized to provide a literature review of the major issues impacting school leadership. The review of literature reveals the systemic discrimination, linguistic hegemony, and lack of research on effective strategies practiced by Latina/o school system leaders. It begins with a section on the research question followed by the conceptual framework used to frame the study. It is then followed by three major areas of literature research review, the first area is a review of the research literature on the history of Latino education rights in the United States, these include a review of landmark cases that had an impact on some of the rights earned over time for Latino students to integrated schooling and language rights and ends with the role of educators. The second section of the literature review addresses the role of language policies in education, which include linguistic hegemony, and program types for English learners. The third section of the literature review addresses the role of school leaders and includes a review of leadership theories and ends with the research on Latina/o leadership.

Research Question

There are a myriad of factors impacting the education of Latina/os and English learners, such as a history of school segregation which labeled and tracked students as inferior (Ochoa et al., 2016) schooling systems that lack adaptability and design to differentiate student needs at all levels of language proficiency and content instructional need (Olsen, 2010; Valdés, 2001), language policies and schooling model that exploits, excludes and devalues them (Macedo et al., 2016) adequate teacher and school leader preparation to support second language learners, (Giroux, 1995; Shields, 2010; Valdés, 2001). Lastly, the policies that impact classrooms which

are influenced by the overall sociopolitical environments at the state or federal level and the

implementation of these in schools place the role of educators and school system leaders in a

position to advocate or ignore the rights of students to a free and just public education.

The role of Latina/o leaders have gone unrecognized in the civil rights movement (Ochoa

et al., 2016). There were many small cases led by Latinos impacting civil rights in the 19th

century, but these have gone unnoticed in history and not taught in schools. Civil rights are

perceived as Black and White issues, and this results in marginalization of the Latino and

Mexican-American students' experience of history and bigotry in schools. Critical race theory

(CRT) would attribute this to lack of counter storytelling, permanence of racism and interest

convergence. To further understand the contributions and leadership practices of Latina/o

education leaders this research explored the following question: What are the leadership

practices of Latino/a educators leading large urban school systems with significant enrollment of

Latina/o students who are also English learners?

Conceptual/Theoretical Leadership Framework

To capture the experiences of Latina/o leaders, this work used the applied critical

leadership framework by Santamaría and Santamaría (2012). The applied critical leadership

framework is comprised of transformational leadership (principles), critical pedagogy (practice)

and CRT (perspective/lens) and is a:

> Strengths based model of leadership practice where educational leaders consider the
>
> social context of their educational communities and empower individual members of
>
> these communities based on the educational leaders' identities (i.e., subjectivity, biases,

assumptions, race, class, gender, and traditions) as perceived through a critical race

theory lens. (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012, p. 5)

Figure 1

Transformational Framework Underlying Applied Critical Leadership
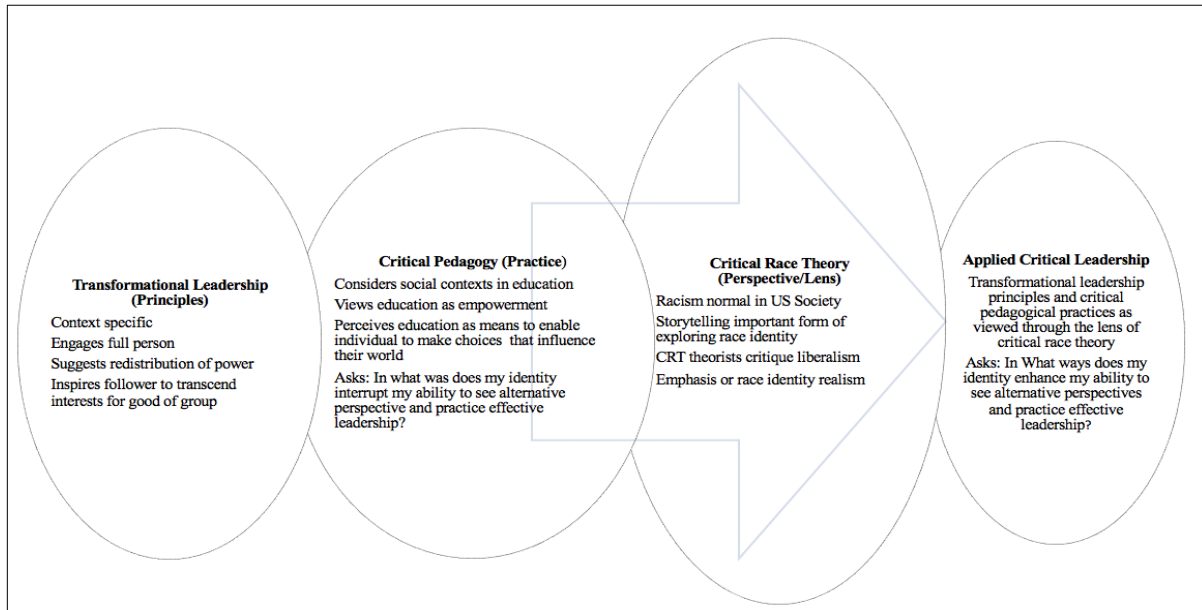
Note: Reprinted from *Applied Critical Leadership in Education: Choosing Change,* p. 8, by L. J. Santamaría and A. P. Santamaría, 2012. Copyright Routledge. Used with permission.

The transformational framework underlying applied critical leadership is a comprised of

principles of leadership, practices, and perspectives as described by Santamaría and Santamaría

(2012). Transformational leadership address the context specific, engages all people, suggests

distribution of power, and inspires followers to transcend interests for the good of the group.

These are viewed as principles of leadership. Next is the critical pedagogy or practices which

considers social contexts in education, views education as empowerment, perceives education as

a means to enable individuals to make choices that influence their world, and asks: in what ways

does my identity interrupt my ability to see alternative perspective and practice effective

leadership? The last is the use of a critical race theory perspective or lens and that speaks to

viewing racism as normal in U.S. society, using storytelling as an important form of exploring race identity, critiquing liberalism, and having an emphasis or race identity realism. These lead to applied critical leadership which is defined as transformational leadership principles and critical pedagogical practices as viewed through the lens of critical race theory. According to Santamaría and Santamaría, the framework asks, in what ways does my identity enhance my ability to see alternative perspectives and practice effective leadership?

Applied Critical Leadership

Santamaría (2014) conducted research using CRT coupled with a culturally responsive case study conceptual inquiry approach to capture the experiences of educational leaders of color. Her contention was that historically the stories and experiences of women and ethnically and linguistically diverse leaders were not of consequence in both theory and leadership. Santamaría claimed that research on leadership has been defined by various theorists as managerial, instructional, situational, transactional, transformational, or moral. Findings from the research suggest a need for creating leadership models that specifically address diversity in schools and universities. In addition, she identified nine leadership characteristics that were implemented by multicultural leaders who practiced social and equity-based leadership using a CRT lens. The nine leadership characteristics identified are as follows: critical conversations, critical race theory lens, group consensus, stereotype threat, academic discourse, honoring constituents, leading by example, trust with mainstream, servant leadership. Table 1 defines each of the practices, based on text from Santamaría (2014, pp. 367-379).

Table 1

Applied Critical Leadership Practices

Practice	Description
1. Critical conversations	Leaders' willingness to initiate and engage in critical conversations
2. Critical race theory	This lens involved the notion of considering race first, valuing storytelling as communication, being critical of liberalism, and understanding the reality of racism. Leaders chose to assume a CRT lens in order to consider multiple perspectives of critical issues
3. Group consensus	Leaders used consensus building as the preferred strategy for decision making in meetings, one-on-one talks, etc.
4. Stereotype threat	Leaders are conscious of stereotype threat or fulfilling negative stereotypes associated with their perceived racial, ethnic, or linguistic group
5. Academic discourse	Leaders make empirical contributions and to add authentic research-based information to academic discourse regarding underserved groups
6. Honoring constituents	Leaders honor all members of their constituencies (e.g., staff, parents, community members, stakeholders). The leaders sought out and wanted to include voices and perspectives of traditionally silenced groups and individuals (e.g., Spanish-speaking parents of ELLs, students, etc.).
7. Leading by example	Leaders lead by example to meet unresolved educational needs or challenges . . . purposely lead in order to "give back" to the marginalized communities with which they identified or served, supporting their own social justice journeys.
8. Trust with mainstream	Leaders communicate the need to build trust when working with mainstream constituents or partners, or others who did not share an affinity toward issues related to educational equity. They communicated the need to win the trust of individuals in the mainstream, as well as the need to prove themselves qualified and worthy of leadership positions and roles.
9. Servant leadership	Leaders "felt somehow-called" to lead, these individuals were reportedly led by what they called "spirit."

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As a result of the research, Santamaría (2014) made an argument for why transformative leadership is both needed and can be achieved in spite of the external societal ills, such as poverty, homelessness, etc. that impact students' daily lives. Additionally, Shields (2010) asserted that "there is a recognition in both theory and practice that educators must do what they can to challenge unjust practices, to overcome inequity, and to create conditions under which all

children can learn" (p. 582). The research findings from Santamaría (2014) identified nine common leadership characteristics that leaders of color who practice transformational leadership use to support diverse student outcomes and suggested the need for alternative models of educational leadership in response to diversity in schools. These findings shape the actions of the leaders and teachers at school sites; however, schooling is also impacted by the sociopolitical issues of the time, language and learning policies that impact school instructional program designs and surrounding community all of which impact student outcomes. The next section highlights how the history of educating Latina/o students has impacted their schooling, discriminated against them, removed rights to an education and essentially ignored their educational needs.

History of Latina/o Education Rights in the United States

According to Professor Emeritus for San Diego State University and a longtime advocate of Latino civil rights in education Ochoa, "There are four sociopolitical periods that contextualize the journey of Latino education since 1848 to the present" (Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 25). There are four significant impacts in the Southwest and the United States. The four periods are: pre- and post-Civil War and reconstruction, separate but equal segregation, the civil rights movement and equal access, and the movement to undo civil rights gains. Table 2 summarizes the four periods impacting the experiences of Latinos in the United States (Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 25).

Table 2

Sociopolitical Periods

Timeline	Period	Sociopolitical
1848 to 1910	Period I	Pre- and post-Civil War and reconstruction
1910 to 1954	Period II	Separate but equal segregation
1954 to 1980	Period III	The civil rights movement and equal access
1980 to present	Period IV	The movement to undo civil rights gains

Pre and Post Civil War and Reconstruction 1848 to 1910

During the pre- and post-Civil War and reconstruction period, the United States went through a shift in land ownership from Mexican territory in the Southwest with the Treaty of Guadalupe at the end of the Mexican American War. During this time, Mexican citizens and landowners lost their rights to access, voice, and political representation. According to Ochoa et al. (2016), this period was "driven by the belief of *manifest destiny* of the God-given right to expand the country's border from sea to sea" (p. 26). Thus, began the struggle for self-determination as Mexicans were being displaced from their lands, being politically disenfranchised and denied access to resources. At the end of the U.S. Civil War, the 14th amendment was passed granting "equal protection to all" and resistance to it began in the Southwest (Ochoa et al., 2016). Some states began to pass laws establishing separate public schools under the guise of a "separate but equal school" (Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 26) establishment. In other parts of the country, Supreme Court decisions such as, *Plessy v.*

Fergusson, in 1896 (Ochoa et al., 2016) also upheld separate but equal decisions. The end of this period was marked by segregation under a democratic government, and the debate in legal challenges for equal access began (Ochoa et al., 2016).

Separate but Equal Segregation 1910-1954

The second period, known as Separate but Equal Segregation, was marked by struggle for process, the rights to equal access, and segregation—both socially and in education. With the threat of the Mexican Revolution, Mexican immigrants migrated north following employment patterns in railroads, steel, automobile industries, cotton fields and food and vegetable fields in the northwest including California. As they settled in these new communities, Mexicans experienced direct racism and separate but equal facilities in schools and in addition to the important Mendez case, that is discussed later, four other cases challenged the direct racism faced by Mexicans. This second period marks the Mexican community's challenge for rights and use of a strong voice toward equality in education for all children in the United States (Ochoa et al., 2016).

The Civil Rights Movement and Equal Access 1954-1980

The third period is known as The Civil Rights Movement and Equal Access, it is described as "a new moral and legal national awakening for equality, equal opportunity, equal access, due process, and equal benefits. The 1950s marked the catalyst of the national civil rights movement" (Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 30). With the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision that ended separate but equal doctrine, the nation experienced a new morality on equal educational opportunity for all students (Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 30). In 1958, the *National Defense Education Act* (1958) supported foreign language, mathematics and science policies; however,

foreign language was designated for monolingual English-speaking students, and no educational programs or supports were identified for students with "limited English language" proficiency. Ochoa et al. confirmed the *1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act* resulted in an increase of Latin Americans and Asians into the country, in conjunction with the arrivals of exiled Cubans to Florida in 1959 after the Cuban revolution, the need for comprehensible bilingual instruction became paramount for school systems. A seminal case of this time is the 1974 Supreme Court decision on *Lau v. Nichols (1974)*, a class action lawsuit by Chinese students in San Francisco who argued that not understanding the instruction of their English-speaking teachers led to their low academic achievement and access to equal educational opportunity. The U.S. Supreme Court concluded equal treatment of English-speaking and non-English speaking students did not constitute equal educational opportunity and, therefore, violated non-English speaking students' civil rights. Ochoa et al. (2016) stated the *Lau v. Nichols'(1974) decision* resulted in a series of similar cases which "addressed the educational language rights of language minority students with respect to assessment, appropriate and well implemented programs, staffing, and evaluation program quality" (p. 33). Important to this socio political period was the 1970 decision in *Diana v. California Board of Education (1970)*, it enacted federal special education laws with respect to delivering educational services to culturally and linguistically diverse students, and established that when testing the students, the following must occur; testing to be conducted in both English and their primary language, eliminating culturally unfair items in the assessment process, and developing intelligence test to reflect Mexican American culture. This case amongst others, examined the issue of overrepresentation in assessment methods used to determine who was or

was not mentally disabled. Lastly, this time period also marks significant contributions in the areas of gender and discrimination of students with disabilities.

The Movement to Undo Civil Rights Gains 1980 to Present

The fourth sociopolitical period titled, "The Movement to Undo Civil Rights Gains," is marked by the policies of President Reagan and President George H. Bush. Ochoa et al. (2016) cited these policies as decentralization, decategorization, and deregulation, all of which threatened equal access and equal benefits. Under decentralization, policies work to shift federal responsibility to each of the 50 states thus creating 50 different social and educational policies. In deregulation the focus shifted from national guidelines to education policy that granted flexibility to each of the 50 states on various ways to meet compliance. Feldstein (1994) and Spring (2002) described decategorization, as a policy to reduce input from community advisory committees on federal programs that address social and educational problems (cited in Ochoa et al., 2016). As part of deregulation of federal policy, the decision on *Castañeda v. Pickard* case in (1981) impacted Latino and language minority students. Students in Raymondville, Texas sued the school district for failure to implement bilingual education. Instead of requiring bilingual education and granting language rights in the classroom the Fifth Court of Appeals set a three-prong test that school districts could use to determine whether or not they were in compliance with services to limited English proficient students. The three-pronged test is the following: (a) a program is based on an educational theory recognized as sound or, at least, as a legitimate experimental strategy; (b) the program is actually implemented with instructional practices, resources, and personnel necessary to transfer theory to reality; and (c) the program must not persist if it fails to produce results (Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 38). It is important to consider how

these social and political events and movements have resulted in the marginalization of Latino children in the United States and placed the responsibility on each school system to design their own program without clear commitments to achievement for students.

Latina/os and the Civil Rights Movement

The previously mentioned cases during the separate but equal segregation and the civil rights movement and equal access periods, were catalysts to the programs, pedagogy, and teacher development approaches to instructing diverse students (Ochoa et al., 2016). During this period language minority students, Latinos, Chinese and others began to experience school systems that met their needs and teachers recognized the importance of a students' language and culture. Of particular importance is the *Mendez et al. v. Westminster* (1946) school district case from the 1940s, which was filed by five Mexican-American families requiring school districts to end their White school and Mexican school policies, which separated students based on surname and skin color (Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016, p. 62). These authors state this case became the impetus for the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case which ended the separate but equal policies and began a period of desegregation and students' civil rights. In the National Archives for Educator Resources, the following description of the testimony of superintendents was recorded:

> At the state trial, Orange County superintendents used stereotypical imagery of Mexicans to explain the basis of school policy. One declared, "Mexicans are inferior in personal hygiene, ability, and in their economic outlook." He further stated that their lack of English prevented them from learning Mother Goose rhymes and that they had hygiene deficiencies, like lice, impetigo, tuberculosis, and generally dirty hands, neck, face, and ears. These he stated warranted separation. (Macías, 2014, para. 4)

28

This quote from a superintendent declaring Mexican children as inferior in their ability and lack of learning English is significant. The superintendent testimony raises important questions about the role of teachers and leaders during these time periods and how they could possibly testify against children and hold such high leadership positions? Where is the moral and ethical leadership of schooling during these times?

According to both Mike Madrid, Chapman University professor and Sandra Robbie, an Emmy award winning producer and graduate of Westminster School district, there is little known about the contributions of Latinos to the civil rights movement (Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016). They both cite the importance of recognizing that civil rights are not just a Black versus White issue that began in the American South, but they are also a Brown versus White issue that has origins in the Southwest and California, and many Latino families have gone unrecognized for their contributions to the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case (Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016). Robbie (2016) stated:

> the way my history books told it the civil rights struggle was something that took place in the American South. That was a lie. The civil rights struggle included all of us. It was about people of all colors all across the country. (as cited in Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016, p. 59)

According to Weiner (2003), "When acts of resistance are forgotten, discounted or untold, the work of activists is devalued and moments in history that do not immediately transform or are constricted by the institutions can become deterrents for opposition or rebellion" (p. 95). This period marks the continued marginalization of the Latina/o experience in schools. The school system leaders of the time protected the school system against claims of discrimination instead of

protecting the students' rights. The public testimonials by the Superintendent clearly show the complete disregard of Latina/o students as worthy human beings.

Education/Schooling Outcomes for Latina/o Students

Historically, the outcomes for Latino students in the United States has been low as reported in National assessments. In *The Condition of Education* report, closing achievement gap is a goal of both national and state education policies, and the authors stated that:

> From 1992 through 2015, the average reading scores for White 4th and 8th Graders were higher than those of their Black and Hispanic peers. Although the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps did not change measurably from 2013 to 2015 at either Grade 4 or 8, some of the racial/ethnic achievement gaps have narrowed since 1992. (McFarland et al., 2017)

At Grade 4, the White-Black gap narrowed from 32 points in 1992 to 26 points in 2015; at Grade 8, the White-Hispanic gap narrowed from 26 points in 1992 to 21 points in 2015 (p. 158). This data represents a five-to-six point narrowing of the gap that took 23 years to achieve, which is equivalent to two generations of student population. At this rate of achievement Hispanic and Black students will not be able to catch up to their White counterparts. The implications of these achievement gaps point to the systemic racism which leads to generational poverty, lack of access to jobs, and marginalized communities. This data further explains the lack of urgency or supports available to historically underrepresented students.

The National Center for Education Statistics Institute for Education Sciences (2020) stated:

The percentage of public school students in the United States who were English language learners (ELLs) was higher in fall 2017 (10.1%, or 5.0 million students) than in fall 2000 (8.1%, or 3.8 million students). In fall 2017, the percentage of public school students who were ELLs ranged from 0.8 percent in West Virginia to 19.2% in California. (Hussar et al., 2020, p. 36)

Cities are more likely than rural areas to have students who are English language learners. These students made up 14% of total public school enrollees in city school districts in Fall 2015, compared with only 4% in rural areas (Bialik et al., 2018). Latina/o youth do not represent a single identity or race, the majority are U.S.-born and speak English, while others speak both Spanish and English or speak indigenous languages. Some are second or third generation while others are recently immigrated and all share the same dream of success in the United States (Education Trust-West, 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). According to this report, Latino college rates continue to remain flat, the percentage of Latinos with college degrees remained at 10 to 11% between 2005-2015. Cilluffo and Fry (2019) from the Pew Social Trends website reported, "Hispanics voters are projected to be the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the 2020 electorate, this trend also represents a two-fold increase in the Hispanic student population in schools, colleges and universities" (para. 3).

California, the largest state in the country, has a majority of students who are Latina/o; this means that hundreds and thousands of Latino students continue to be denied a college education. A college education can lead to improved economics and health, which result in an improved life. Given these conditions what has been the history of education for Latinos in the

United States. Schooling systems in the United States are challenged to create better results for Latina/o children many of which are U.S. born and English learners.

Olsen (2010) identified the needs of the group labeled *long-term English learners* who despite many years in our schools and despite being close to the age at which they should be able to graduate, are still not English proficient and have incurred major academic deficits. Many of these students were part of the elementary programs which were designed as English-only and implemented in school districts throughout California as a result of Proposition 227 in 1998 and incurred both English and subject matter academic deficits.

In response to a letter from Director Arthur Ziedman from the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights to the Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District following a compliance review and citing lack of services to English learners and LTELs, the District revamped their English Learner Master Plan and designed special courses for LTELs in middle and high school (Zeidman, 2011). Olsen's (2010) research became a model for the design of courses. Several years later in a study by the Public Policy Institute, school principals reported they found themselves challenged with creating master schedules that included the required courses while students found their school schedules largely impacted by courses which prevented them from accessing electives. Principals found themselves grappling with the decision to ensure students meet graduation requirements while at the same time students meet criteria to be reclassified, meaning having sufficient English proficiency. A principal lamented:

> At the end of the day, if I have an 11th grader who has still to finish the a–g [high school graduation] requirements, I've got to take them out of that LTEL class. And I've got to give him . . . his graduation requirements. I will make the annotation to the district. . . I'm

sorry, but the a–g weighs more than the LTEL class, and that I got from the district and

from training. (Hill et al., 2019, p. 17)

The sheer number of EL students who lingered unnoticed and underserved is proof that

the historical and sociopolitical issues impact the fundamental institution of public education and

puts the future of progress at risk. Most at risk are the lives of thousands of students known as

LTELs who participated in a schooling system that allowed academic deficits to be incurred.

Education leaders are asked to respond to a call to action when they notice students being left

behind because of education policies that exclude them from participating fully, yet while laws

exist to guide the needed supports there are prescribed models of practice that are available to

help leaders. In the next section the literature review further explores how language policies

affect program and course designs and further exacerbate opportunities for English learners.

Language Policies in Education

This section will further explore how language policies in education impact Latina/o and

English learners. To understand how these non-monolithic groups are impacted it is imperative

to frame issues around the language use policies that impact educators' role, their consideration

of their students' home language and its place and relationship to both teaching and learning.

Darder (2012) cited the work of Cole and Scribner (1974) when discussing the *Question of*

Language:

It is impossible to consider any form of education-or even human existence-without first

considering the impact of language on our lives. Language must be recognized as one of

the most significant human resources; it functions in a multitude of ways to affirm,

contradict, negotiate, challenge, transform, and empower particular cultural and

ideological beliefs and practices. Language constitutes one of the most powerful media

for transmitting our personal histories and social realities as well as for thinking and

shaping the world. (p. 333).

As a resource in the classroom and the medium by which the teacher and student interact,

language use represents one of the most important tools for education, Darder (2012) contended

that it is essential for dialogue, developing meaning and production of knowledge. As part of a

students' schooling experience and a primary purpose of education is to prepare students to use

their voice and find their passion, Darder (2012) also stated:

From the context of its emancipatory potential, language must be understood as a

dialectical phenomenon that links its very existence and meaning to the lived experiences

of the language community and constitutes a major cornerstone for the development of

voice.

There is a further need to explore how linguistic hegemony occurred as a result of the laws that

govern language use in schools and classrooms as discussed, in the previous section on the

history of Latino education rights, and its implications are further explored in the next section.

Linguistic Hegemony

To understand the issues of Latinos and English learners it must be emphasized that

Latinos are neither culturally nor linguistically a monolithic group; they face challenges and

opportunities from the moment they step into a classroom and into graduation. It is also

important to learn about the teachers and administrators' role in presenting opportunities and

removing barriers of language in the classroom, how language use in the classroom impacts

teaching and learning and explore the ways in which programs of instruction are shaped by landmark legal decisions.

In all classrooms the teacher uses language to convey meaning and the students use their language to convey understanding. Macedo et al. (2016) argued these language issues are true not only for language minority students but also for monolingual English (Caucasian, Chinese, Black, or Latino) students who do not speak "standard English" because they also become victims of a schooling model that exploits, excludes, and devalues them (p. 42). Fillmore and Fillmore (2012), in addressing the question of common core, text complexity, and English learners (ELs), as part of a set of commissioned papers by Stanford University stated:

> One of the most serious policy questions that comes from the work that I am talking about is the need to give teachers, not just teachers but also school administrators, the kind of understanding of how language works in learning . . . she adds. . . I want them to see that something they take for granted—language—we know the language we can read that paper, if you're in a position to be reading it at all. You are completely literate, and you are comfortable enough with the language of academic discourse that you don't see a problem with it. But I want them to take away from that, the fact that language is pretty invisible, if you know it well. It is not invisible if you don't know it well—then it's a big wall, and the students especially are going to need help getting through that giant barrier. (03:55).

When it comes to the topic of learning a second language, most agree that the English language is necessary in school, work, and life in the United States. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of how learning is measured when it's conducted only

in English. Whereas some are convinced that English only displays of learning are the only ways of "knowing" others maintain that knowledge is the same regardless of the language in which students express it. Ultimately what is at stake here is the opportunities and barriers students will face as they work toward acquiring a high school diploma and a college education especially if the measures of achievement are only conducted in one language-English.

In California, students who apply for the University of California are required to have 2 years or more of a foreign language in high school to qualify for college entrance (Regents of University of California, n.d.). Macedo et al. (2016) asserted that learners from diverse language and cultural backgrounds have been viewed as having deficits and therefore are many times treated at school sites as if legitimate knowledge is only normed by linguistic correctness. Language is not neutral. It is the means by which learner's make sense of the world and use it to make meaning. Macedo et al. (2016) asserted the importance of understanding the connection between multiculturalism and bilingual education, to be viewed as a way in which people produce, transform, and reproduce meaning and ultimately affirms the lived experience which can produce either a subordinate or a lived culture. Important to these issues is the understanding how to teach language to second language learners. According to Valdés (2001), many believe that language study is very much like the study of other subjects and that language can be taught and learned in a short period of time. In addition to learning English children go through a process of acculturation and when children have difficulties learning some argue that it is due to their lack of commitment to schooling or the lack of commitment by their communities to becoming an American. Valdés asserted:

The field of second language acquisition is a relatively new field of inquiry that takes

theories and methodologies from a number of disciplines (psycholinguistics, social

linguistics, social psychology, and neurolinguistics) and uses them to understand the

process of second and foreign language acquisition in instructional and non-instructional

studies. (p. 19)

Valdés (2001) also stated that in the field of second language acquisition, there have been

many studies on the linguistic environment necessary for second language learning, the

characteristics of language production of second language learners, individual differences for

second language learning, and the process for acquiring a second language whether naturalistic

or instructional. Valdés agreed that there is a lack of knowledge about the process for acquiring a

second language. Given this lack of knowledge in the field of second language acquisition, how

then do school leaders and teachers make decisions on the types of instructional programs for

students who are not monolithic language learners and thus require instructional programs to

address both their first language and second language in school? The implications of this lack of

clear guidance and research on second language acquisition demonstrates the need for more

research to support students, teachers, and leaders.

Language Policy in Schools

According to Ochoa et al. (2016), the *Bilingual Education Act of 1968* and the *Civil*

Rights Act of 1964, gave rise to many bilingual and ESL programs throughout the United States.

The exile of Cubans in Miami began the wave of bilingual education programs that parents

wanted for their children. Herman Sillas, attorney for plaintiff Sal Castro, recollected the 1968

walkouts in Los Angeles, led by their teacher Sal Castro, who demanded rigorous education and

bilingual education that valued and affirmed their home language (Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016). This event epitomized the conscientization of students.

After the walkouts, the Los Angeles Unified School District began to make changes such as hiring bilingual teachers, establishing bilingual programs, and ensuring administrators learned about the community, cultural and language of their Mexican American students (Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016). These changes did not last very long, and the next period of anti-Latino movements began to take shape. Maria Quezada, former bilingual teacher and President of the California Association of Bilingual Education in 1996, posited that Proposition 227, an initiative led by businessman Ron Unz, quickly eradicated the rights of Latino and other speakers of languages other than English (Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016). The Proposition 227 initiative "English Language Education for Immigrant Children" had key provisions such as replacing all language programs using an immersion model, which according to Quezada (Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016) was an untested methodology. She went on to state that another key provision was that "children should be taught English by being taught in English at school" (Colón-Muñiz & Lavadenz, 2016, p. 161).

When California voters passed Proposition 227 in 1998, every parent and teacher who had fought to improve the learning conditions for these students felt the same blow of anti-immigrant and racist attitudes that were heard in the courtroom when the superintendents testified in the *Mendez v. Westminster* (1945) case. How did California become a state where a landmark case like *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974, which granted language rights to non-English speakers, pass an English only law policy 24 years later? The Latino civil rights gained were quickly overturned and school system leaders had to make changes in curriculum and programs

to comply with both federal civil rights laws and anti-immigrant children state laws such as California's Proposition 227. To understand how to implement these new policies education leaders began to design school programs from elementary to secondary to meet the needs of a variety of English learners. These school program designs were meant to teach students English in English and as stated in the research by Olsen (2010) resulted in the academic deficits incurred by long term English learners. In the next section, the literature review reveals how instructional programs are designed to support learning.

Program Types for English Learners

While not all Latino students are English learners, many Spanish speaking English learners are Latinos. By middle and high school, English learners appear to fall into two typologies (Hill et al., 2019). Table 3 summarizes the options that exist for school systems when educating English learners.

Table 3

Language Learning and Academic Subject Instruction Options in Elementary Schools

Program Type	Definition	Classroom Population	Comments
English-only	All subject matter taught in English	Anglophone and ELL children	No support provided for ELL students
English-only with ESL	English with English-as-a second language-(ESL) instruction with special teacher	ELL children	ELL children taken from classroom for special instruction
Bilingual education (transitional)	Minority language used to teach concepts; English used increasingly	ELL children	Primarily implemented in Grades K-3; children transferred to all-English programs after Grade 3
Bilingual education (maintenance)	Minority language and English used to teach concepts after English is acquired	ELL children	Focus on continued development of both English and the minority language; very few such programs beyond Grade 3

Note. Reprinted from *Learning and Not Learning English*, p. 15, by G. Valdés, 2001, Teachers College Press. Copyright 2001 by Teachers Press. Used with permission.

New education policies revealed the lack of understanding the needs of Latinos and English learners. The challenges increase as students enter middle and high school. Valdés (2001) added that middle and high schools are not always prepared to educate English learners who arrive with a variety of needs based on prior schooling experience. Teachers' lack of knowledge in second language learner teaching methodology many times result in them not wanting to deal with students who speak and write "imperfect" English. Table 4 captures the options for English learner students in secondary schools by Valdés (2001).

Table 4

Language Learning and Academic-Subject Instruction Options in Secondary Schools

Program Type	Definition	Classroom Population	Comments
Newcomer programs	Self-contained intensive ESL	ELL students who are newly arrived	Students focus exclusively on English for a specific period of time.
ESL instruction	Instruction in English as a second language; focus primarily on grammar and lexis	ELL Students	Students may spend up to three periods a day in ESL classes
Sheltered Instruction	Specially designed instruction in English in regular subjects; math, social studies, science, etc., intended for ELL students and delivered using simplified/planned language	ELL Students	Students spend several periods a day in ESL instruction and also enroll in special subject matter courses designed for ELL students. There is limited coverage of the curriculum.
English-only	Regular classes	Anglophone and ELL students	No special support provided for ELL students.

Note. Reprinted from *Learning and Not Learning English*, p. 15, by G. Valdés, 2001, Teachers College Press. Copyright 2001 by Teachers Press. Used with permission

Typical high school master schedules are designed to meet the needs of average students who are on a continuous improvement path to mastery courses known as A-G. These high school designs are typically limited to a 180-day calendar and 8:00 to 3:00 p.m. weekly schedule. According to Valdés (2001), "The challenges of educating students who do not speak a societal language are enormous" (p. 14). Valdés asserted that, it is not just about teaching English, it is also about how to provide large numbers of students access to a curriculum in English while they are learning English. Students who fall behind or are not on this improvement path to mastery find high school difficult to navigate and many times end up dropping out. They are expected to

keep up or catch up, and especially important is that they do not incur irreparable deficits in subject-matter learning (Valdés, 2001). Latino English learners in particular face a tremendous disadvantage to meeting the required courses to qualify for college admission. According to Maxwell-Jolly et al. (2007), a lack of support services to meet complex student needs, a shortage of teachers trained to work with English learners; inadequate assessment of students' native language and content area skills; lack of cohesive, comprehensive programs; insufficient content courses that are accessible to English learners; a lack of materials coupled with few investments in counselors and teacher preparation result in high schools that are not designed to meet the needs of all students and realize the college-for-all promise. The issues of educating English learners are similar to the issues of educating Latino and Black students who have historically been underserved in schools.

As stated earlier Latino students who are unable to meet Algebra I requirements in middle school automatically enter high school with the challenge of meeting college preparation in the 4 years of high school; however, if teachers are not well prepared, assessment of mastery is not flexible, and schedules are not adjusted, students will continue to fail. The role of educators and the programs designed to meet the needs of Latina/o English learners matters because Latina/o leaders are in a unique position to identify the needs of these students and have the decision-making power to address institutionalized practices of schooling that create barriers instead of opportunities. The language assets of English learners can become their most important strength and viewing their ability to blossom into bilingual and bicultural citizens adds value to society.

Role of Educators

Educators play an important role in the lives of students; their support of historically underserved students is key. The role of educators is impacted by policies made at the federal and state level, at the district level and at the school site level. The historical and sociopolitical impacts have placed many educators at the intersection of advocacy (as in the aforementioned case of Sal Castro) and implementation of policies (as in the previously mentioned Proposition 227). How do educators contend with linguistic hegemony, instructional program designs, and leadership decisions that ultimately impact their teaching? According to Giroux (1995), educators must provide students with a sense of identity, place and meaning by affirming their voices, histories, and stories. These critical educators need to organize curriculum to empower students to make clear judgments about issues of equality, justice, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression and understand how society has historically and socially constructed these, Giroux made a case for redefining the role of teachers as public intellectuals and critics. According to Gándara et al. (2003), instruction should use the students' primary languages and recognize their bi-cultural identity as a reality and an asset. Conversely, the needs of recently arrived students or "newcomers" known as foreign born students also require a schooling program that provides for language and academic support that is beyond the normal master schedule course development. Gold and Maxwell-Jolly (2006) asserted that many schools that enroll hundreds of English learners have only one or two teachers with any training or background to address English learner needs and rarely is a school principal knowledgeable enough to provide guidance to staff or to bring new resources to their attention. In essence the role of the educator is placed at the hands of leaders, many of which are tasked with overall

student outcomes. Well-intentioned administrators and teachers grapple with the challenge of preparing students for both college and career, additionally, the need for remediation courses, lack of teacher preparation, time-bound expectations of schooling result in poorly planned school programs that are not designed to meet the learning and language needs of Latina/o students and English learners (Gold & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006; Olsen, 2010; Owens & Valesky, 2015; Valdés, 2001). Their role in society elevates the issues of knowledge and power and politics that seek to impact what is and is not taught in schools (Giroux, 1995). The role of educators is largely governed by the decisions made by principals and district leaders in conjunction with federal and state policies. In the following section a review of leadership theories and research, school leadership and Latina/o leadership aim to understand how they are prepared to support educators.

School Leadership

To understand the role of school leadership and system leadership in the implementation of the policies, support of educators in schools and the practices used to create the learning environments and optimal conditions necessary for learning it is important to understand the research on school leadership. Leithwood et al. (2004) stated, "It turns out that leadership not only matters: it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning" (p. 3). The following sections explore the leadership theories beginning with the traditional approaches to leadership. This is followed by theories about leadership using the critical race theory, culturally responsive leadership, and ending with research on Latina/o leadership as it relates to the connection with English learners.

Leadership

Rost stated that "managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing" (as cited in Northouse, 2019, p. 221). Leadership history and definitions are wide and varied. One thing that most leadership researchers can agree on is the lack of a universal definition of leadership, rather leadership is viewed as a process that involves the interaction between leader and follower. The process of leadership involves understanding the complexity of the organization, the people, and the goals to be reached (Northouse, 2019). Given the complexity of leading school systems with ever changing student populations that are impacted by policies, programs and people, a look at how leadership theories inform the development of leaders is reviewed next. Culture is defined as the commonly shared beliefs, values, norms of a group of people. Two factors that impact leadership and culture are ethnocentrism and prejudice. An ethnocentric world view assumes that one's own group is at the center and prevents leaders from fully understanding the world view of others, similarly prejudice consists of judging others negatively, prejudice inhibits leaders from seeing the many facets and qualities of others. To expand on this, next is an analysis of the work of Khalifa et al. (2016) on leadership theories and frameworks that speak to diverse leaders who are leading with a culturally responsive lens. Research by Khalifa et al. (2016) and Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) used qualitative approaches that lead to deeper understanding of the intersectionality of leadership process and culture effects. These theories challenge the Eurocentric and westernized views largely used to define leadership.

Critical Race Theory and Leadership

Santamaría and Santamaría's (2012) ACL framework cites critical race theory as the perspective or lens used by leaders of color (Figure 1). Similarly, Khalifa et al. (2013), in their analysis of scholar Derrick Bell's critical legal studies (CLS) and its relationship to CRT as a conceptual framework for analyzing American education and reform, argued that data-driven leadership behaviors and social justice leadership conversations are trends in educational leadership that should be analyzed using Bell's interest convergence and conversations on race. Interest convergence stipulates that Black people achieve civil rights victories *only* when White and Black interests converge. Khalifa et al. (2013) cited several of Bell's legal critiques and interest convergence which basically states that:

> The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision as ending segregation of schools was done as a result of preserving the image of the United States as human rights advocates and not a deliberate act of ending segregation in U.S. schools. (p. 492)

They also asserted that evidence of this is in the lack of resources and poor implementation of solutions following the decision on *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*. CRT asserts that racism is normal in U.S. society, storytelling is an important form of exploring race identity, and CRT theorists also critique liberalism and provide an emphasis on race identity.

In the modern age, it is believed that the success of educational leaders is mostly measured by assessing student test-score data (Khalifa et al., 2013, p. 496). The premise that the only measure of worth is a single test score has perpetuated beliefs about intelligence and ability of students in achievement. This is particularly damaging to students who are not yet proficient in English since all testing is done in the English language.

Giroux and Giroux (2008) noted, "In addition to draining schools financially, both high-stakes testing, and zero tolerance policies have served to push out or kick out Black and Latino youth in disproportionate numbers" (as cited in Khalifa et al., 2013, p. 498). These policies are largely informed by educational leadership perspectives that are western culture specific. The principal is largely viewed from a hierarchical leadership perspective that is indicative of a White, westernized approach to school leadership which seeks to view the principal as a decision maker, who does not represent the culture or language of the community. The main aspect of CRT is to highlight the educational leadership behaviors informed by a very specific worldview (Khalifa et al., 2013). When educational leaders deflect issues of race, focus exclusively on neoliberal, data-driven reforms, and then reproduce racialized disparities in school, they are in fact perpetuating racism (Khalifa et al., 2013). These scholars found, until the 2000s, there was a lack of research on race in educational leadership. The work of Santamaría (2014) build upon the empirical work of Bell to inform the need for leaders of color to disrupt systemic structures like the use of a single test to inform student outcomes or success or ignore the linguistic needs of English learners when implementing instructional programs or comparing their outcomes on accountability tests with their English only peers.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Khalifa et al.'s (2016) work on the teaching and leadership required for the schooling needs of minority students resulted in identifying the use of a culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework to address the diverse needs of students in schools today. A culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework consists of four strands: critical self-awareness, CRSL and teacher preparation, CRSL and school environments, and CRSL and

community advocacy. Previous research found that critical self-awareness is the aspect of the leader having "an awareness of self and his or her values, beliefs, and/or dispositions when it came to serving poor children of color" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1280). CRSL and teacher preparation is the aspect of "the crucial role of the school leader in ensuring that teachers are and remain culturally responsive" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1280). Singleton and other researchers including Terrell and Lindsey stated that CRSL and school environments refers to "recruiting, retaining, and developing teachers . . . promote culturally responsive school context with an emphasis on inclusivity and having courageous conversations about inequities as crucial to changing the culture of the school" (as cited in Khalifa, 2016, p. 1281). Lastly, CRSL engaging students and parents in community contexts is the fourth aspect and "highlights the ability of the school leader to engage student, families, and communities in culturally appropriate ways" (Khalifa, 2016, p. 1282). This includes advocating and understanding the communities and student's academic, social emotional and culture and language needs. To mitigate the education of diverse students, school leadership reforms must do more than just address transactional, transformational leadership approaches, to close achievement gaps, leaders must clearly understand their role in addressing students' culture and how it is situated within their school culture. However, Khalifa et al.'s (2016) discussion on the findings included the need to acknowledge that CRSL is under researched and undertheorized. The nascent research in this area of school leadership provides a framework for additional studies to support the premise and promise of practices used by leaders of color. To understand the evolution from a western view or Eurocentric view of a single leader the next discussion focuses on the practices of transformational leadership.

The Relationship Between Transformative and Transformational Leadership

The idea that leadership emanates from a single leader "has receded as a dominant concept" (Lambert et al., 2016, p. 9). Shields's (2010), in a study on transformative leadership, cited the seminal work of Burns as follows:

> In sum, transactional leadership involves a reciprocal transaction; transformational leadership focuses on improving organizational qualities, dimensions, and effectiveness; and transformative educational leadership begins by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequity and injustice. (p. 564)

Lambert et al. (2016) stated, the collaboration among staff, parents, community and leaders are interdependent and do not rely on the behaviors of a single charismatic individual but the practices of all and result in transformational leadership.

Burns (1978) formulated leadership as traits and behaviors that are guided by a set of values, goals, foundation, power, process, etcetera (as cited in Shields, 2010). Shields argued that this approach, while valuable to the study of leadership, did not go far enough to explain the true nature of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010). Shields continued by explicitly defining the difference between transformational and transformative leadership as having an expected challenge to the status quo. Under transformative leadership, the leader in collaboration with followers is operating on the values of equity, social justice, is processing knowledge frameworks that create inequity, requires moral courage and is emphasizing deep and equitable change (Shields, 2010, p. 563). The inequities and social justice issues that students of color and Latino students experience in school are a product of the larger social and political context and as

such a transformational leader must not only embody the behaviors and traits of leadership but must be willing to reflect on his/her moral courage to encourage followers in actively and purposefully create better schooling conditions for underserved students. Shields (2010) cited the work of Giroux (1985) who calls for "need for the school administrator to be a transformative intellectual," "to encourage social justice," and to practice "transformative leadership which can transcend the intellectual bias in democratic schooling to the benefit of all students and staff" (p. 567). Transformational leadership then provides students and communities with a much needed advocacy that challenges the status quo and coordinates resources to meet the needs of all students while focusing on those who have been marginalized. Santamaría and Santamaría's (2012) ACL framework transformational leadership principles include "context specific, engaging the full person, suggests redistribution of power, inspires followers to transcend interests for the good of the group" (p. 8; Figure 1). These principles are further explained when coupled with critical race theory to result in leadership practices. The next section explores the current research on Latina/o leadership which is also an evolving area of scholarship.

Latina/o Leadership

There is a need to inform the educational community on the ways in which theory and practice come together to give voice to Latina/o leaders' experience in supporting the outcomes of Latina/o English learner students in the United States inclusive of the sociopolitical context that impacts their leadership. Alemán (2009b) used a CRT framework to study the "niceness" of Utah Latina/o educational and political leaders found that "Ten years after Ladson-Billings's (1998) initial query, I have outlined how niceness may be used as a method of maintaining the status quo, covering up institutionalized racism, and silencing the experiences of Latina/o

leaders" (p. 308). Alemán concluded by providing a critique of the use of traditional notions of coalition building that promoted an understanding that only served to further marginalize communities of color.

Murakami et al. (2018) posited that studying the leadership of Latina/os is not only of cultural relevance to the field of school administration but also provides a deeper understanding of their trajectory as former students of some of the same systems they lead. López (2016) cited the research by Haney and later Valenzuela, who found that "policies socially construct schools, educators, and students—particularly low-income, emergent bilingual, students of color—as mere failures based on reductive indicators" (p. 135). The focus on Latina/o leadership is significant due to the demographic changes, and the lack of research on the value of Latina/o educational leadership, which is in many cases generalized without a focus on identity, language, or culture. The cultural and linguistic relevance that Latina/os bring to the field of administration is needed to understand the importance of role models for students (Murakami et al., 2018). Researching the ways in which Latina/o leaders practice school leadership will inform school boards and others to avoid the duplication of school leaders who perpetuate school systems not designed to empower and value cultural and linguistic diversity. According to Méndez-Morse et al. (2015), despite the limited research on Latina educational leaders, during the past decade an increasing number of investigations have focused on or included this population specifically; most of these studies have been dissertations. Rodríguez et al. (2016) concluded that Latino leadership is in need of definition in its own right they asserted:

> The charge and gaps in educational leadership literature propose the need for additional
>
> studies that show how all school leaders have the skill set to mitigate the achievement or

opportunity gap, and ensure that tomorrow's workforce will be prepared to be part of the

country's economic future. This is a real leadership task placed upon school leaders

across the country. Yet, the unique experiences of Latina/o principals and principals who

serve Latina/o communities, in particular, must be considered as part of the platform for

Latino Educational Leadership. In this respect, the collective goal is to recognize Latino

Leadership in its own right, as a framework that is central to the discourse and welfare of

Latina/o students and leaders across the country. (p. 144)

The reasons for this research on Latina/o leaders of large urban schooling systems are due

to: limited research on Latina/o educational leaders, the increase in enrollment of Latina/o

students some of which who are also English learners, the lack of recognition of the practices by

Latina/o leaders who represent historically marginalized students coupled against the traditional

notions of leadership which lacks understanding or validation of the practices used by Latina/o

leaders.

Conclusion

Historically, U.S. policy has been designed to marginalize students of color, students in

poverty and immigrant students, Latina/o students and English learners while not a monolithic

group have incurred serious academic deficits. These academic deficits are a result of systemic

racism, linguistic hegemony, erosion of civil rights, and policies such as California's proposition

227 which worsened the outcomes of Latina/o English learners, according to Khalifa et al.

(2013), deeply racialized disparities in almost every aspect of schooling still exist:

He goes on to reflect…on the one hand African Americans (and other racial minorities)

were *always* expected to perform poorly (and these expectations have a direct

52

relationship with their achievement; see Ream, 2003) and on the other hand, educational

leadership practice has served primarily to reproduce these conditions rather than

challenge them. (p. 500)

The issues outlined in this chapter highlight the historical marginalization and oppression of

Latino/a students (Ochoa et al., 2016) inclusive of academic deficits incurred by those who are

also English learners (Olsen, 2010). It highlighted the ways in which language policies

perpetuate further marginalization of students through linguistic hegemony (Macedo et al.,

2016), and a lack of instructional programs to adequately prepare students (Valdés, 2001). It

addressed the issues of the impact of leadership on student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004) to

transformational leadership (Shields, 2010), the relationship of responsive leadership and culture

(Khalifa et al., 2013) and finally the importance of studying Latina/o leaders (Murakami et al.,

2018). Testimonios provide the narrative experiences of a national sample of seven Latina/o

leaders as the top leaders in large urban school systems. By using testimonios the study captures

the voice and experiences in a storytelling form that further explores race identity and the

intersectionality of being a bilingual Latina/o leader. There are many assets that Latina/o

students, teachers and school leaders offer U.S. society and identifying the role of Latina/o

leaders is a step toward recognizing their importance. According to Rodríguez et al. (2016):

Latino Educational Leadership across the P-20 pipeline in the United States must

acknowledge the importance of serving Latino communities and families, as well as the

ways in which Latina/os and leaders who serve Latina/o communities must negotiate and

navigate a greater dominant socio-political system to improve educational opportunity

and equity for diverse learners (i.e., racially, ethnically, linguistically, economically,

etc.). (p. 141)

The following chapter describes the national research study conducted to examine the practices

of these seven bilingual Latina/o school system leaders through an exploratory, *testimonio,*

qualitative, multiple case study design.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Latina/o youth do not represent a single identity or race; the majority are U.S.-born and speak English, while others speak both Spanish and English or speak an indigenous language. Latina/o students are not a monolithic group (National Center for Education Statistics Institute for Education Sciences, 2020). This growing populations of both Latina/o and English language learners presents a need to identify effective school leadership practices to address their academic, culture and language education needs. This chapter is organized as follows; it begins with establishing the connection between Latino leaders and English learners, reiterates the research question followed by a description of the methodology used including context, participation recruitment, the qualitative data procedures including data collection, instrumentation, and interview process. This is followed by the qualitative data analysis phases, a discussion on validity, trustworthiness and reliability and ends with a cross case analysis description.

Latino Leaders and English Learners

The increase in enrollment of Latina/o students and Latina/o English learners and their non-monolithic status, coupled with the persistent achievement gap, creates an urgency for system leaders to impact student outcomes for complex and diverse Latina/o and English learner student populations. Leithwood et al. (2004) stated:

> It turns out that leadership not only matters, it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning, according to the evidence compiled and analyzed by the authors, they continue to state that the impact of leadership tends to be greatest in schools where the learning needs of students are most acute. (p. 3)

The role of the school leader as an instructional leader has been hailed as the most important function. Méndez-Morse et al. (2015) posited that studying the leadership of Latina/o leaders is not only of cultural relevance to the field of school administration but provides a deeper understanding of their trajectory as former students of some of the same systems they lead. Educational leaders of color add value to the lives of diverse students as role models for students, connections between school life and the communities they serve, and, in some instances, as social justice leaders who provide advocacy and support to historically underserved students or marginalized students (Khalifa, 2013; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). The focus on Latina/o leadership is significant for the following reasons: (a) the rapid increase in demographic changes, (b) the lack of research on the value of Latina/o educational leadership, (c) the lack of focus on identity and the cultural and linguistic relevance that Latina/os bring to the field of administration and (d) it adds to the importance of positive role models for students and (e) leaders who are also bilingual provide important access to and connection to families and communities of English learners. In this chapter, the aim is to explain the use of a research methodology that captured the lived experiences of Latina/o leaders. The analysis of the research was a combination of both cross-case synthesis and testimonio defined as "critical race testimonio that can be used in critical race research to more accurately portray the experiences of the Latina/o community" (Huber, 2008, p. 173).

Research Question

At first glance, education leaders and researchers might say Latina/o leadership practices are all the same. The review of the theoretical and empirical leadership on the contributions of leaders of color is in fact addressing the larger matter of leading U.S. schooling systems and

structures in large urban schools with significant enrollment of Latina/o students inclusive of those who are also English learners. Cities are more likely than rural areas to have students who are English language learners (Bialik et al., 2018).

Therefore, the study of education leadership practices by leaders of color and how they might contribute to the success of student achievement, school culture and focus on the linguistic and cultural capital that students offer are significant to the overall success of our nation's educational system. Critical race theory scholars argue that if school leaders find systemic racial bigotry, then they must challenge it, or they will—intentionally or not—reproduce it (Khalifa et al., 2013). To further understand the contributions and leadership practices of Latino/a leaders in large urban U.S. school systems, this study explored the following question: What are the leadership practices of Latino/a educators leading large urban school systems with significant enrollment of Latina/o students who are also English learners?

Methodology

This section frames the method used to conduct the study; it begins with the context of the study, the research design, the recruitment and participant selection, the instrumentation, and the process for data collection and analysis. Included is a discussion of limitations, validity, and trustworthiness.

Context

The context for this research was a national study of Latino/a leaders in urban school systems serving a minimum 20% Latina/o students. For each school these leaders serve, at least 10% are English learner students.

Qualitative Procedures

I used exploratory*,* qualitative, multiple case study, testimonio design to deeply

understand the lived experiences and practices of Latina/o leaders. The researcher began by

working inductively when conducting an exploratory design (Yin, 2018). It began with collecting

qualitative data from a purposive sample with a goal of increasing understanding of the

phenomenon under investigation (Mills & Gay, 2019). It is important to note, much of the

literature that analyzes social justice educational leadership and the practices of leaders of color

is conducted using qualitative methods (Khalifa, 2013; Santamaría, 2014; Shields; 2010;

Theoharis, 2007). In a multiple case study approach, Yin (2018) asserted that the researchers

predict contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a theoretical replication). Case study

research comprises an all-encompassing mode of inquiry, with its own logic of design, data

collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis (Yin, 2018). To further explain

and give voice to the experiences of Latina/o leaders, this study also used testimonios as part of

the qualitative analysis. The term *Testimonios* is used by Chicana/o Latina/o scholars to describe

both a methodology and a narrative in educational research. According to Blackmer Reyes and

Curry Rodriguez (2012), testimonio "provides an outlet for affirmative epistemological

exploration" (p. 532). The conceptual framework used for this study is Santamaría and

Santamaría's (2012) applied critical leadership framework. This well-established framework

served as a conceptual lens for this study and further strengthened its design. Santamaría and

Santamaría (2012) explained how the applied critical leadership frameworks can be used:

> Strengths based model of leadership practice where educational leaders consider the
>
> social context of their educational communities and empower individual members of

these communities based on the educational leaders' identities (i.e., subjectivity, biases, assumptions, race, class, gender, and traditions) as perceived through a CRT lens. (pp. 5-8)

This framework has influenced the design of the study due to its strengths-based approach, the connection between leadership practice, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory to arrive at a set of practices used by leaders of color to create an intersectionality that is lacking in traditional frames of leadership.

Qualitative Data Collection Procedures

The qualitative data collection procedures include an explanation of the recruitment and selection of participants.

Recruitment

The participants of this study were purposefully selected. I recruited eight participants via personal correspondence to invite them to participate, only seven agreed to participate. Participants received an email explaining the purpose of the research study along with an explanation for their selection. Once the participants agreed they received a link to a demographic survey via Qualtrics, an online survey resource (http://www.qualtrics.com), with a login code. They were also scheduled for a video conference interview via Zoom (http://www.zoom.us). Included in the interviews were the informed consent form and the university's IRB form.

Participant Selection Criteria

Latino/a leaders in urban school systems serving a minimum 20% Latina/o students and of whom at least 10% are English learner students were recruited. These Latino/a leaders were

purposefully selected according to the following criteria: (a) they self-identify as Latino/a, (b) they have held or are currently in a leadership role in a school system that serves a 20% or more Latino students and 10% English learners, and (c) they each represent a state in the United States with a large Latina/o student population. According to Bialik et al. (2018), English learners are more likely to enroll in cities rather than rural areas. School systems are defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; n.d.) into four major local categories: city, suburban, town, and rural, and each of these is subdivided by size and distance into three additional categories based on size or proximity; Large, Midsize or small and/or Distant, Remote, Fringe . This urban-centric classification system was used to identify participants for this study as those leading school systems in large cities which are defined as "Territory inside an urbanized area inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more" (NCES, n.d., para. 2). The study engaged the seven Latino leaders across the nation who have led or currently hold educational leadership positions. Participants had 10 to 30 or more years of experience as educators, and all have advanced degrees in education with five out of seven having an Ed.D. They all self-reported bilingual skills of varying degrees of proficiency. All of the participants had either a collegial or professional relationship with me or were part of the same professional network (e.g., working in the same school district, having served as a previous supervisor, or being members of similar professional networks), leading school systems with significant Latina/o including English learner communities was the main criteria for selection. Participants were given an opportunity to remain anonymous for the purposes of this research. To provide anonymity, demographic information or professional experience was deidentified and in some cases modified.

Instrumentation

In order to answer the research question, two instruments were developed to gather participants' information: (a) Latino Leaders Demographic Survey, and (b) Latino Leaders Interview Protocol, and (c) a set of follow-up questions developed after the interviews were completed. Table 5 provides a summary of the constructs and literature review connected to each of the demographic survey questions.

Table 5

Latino Leaders Demographic Survey Item Development

Question	Constructs	Citation/Research
1. Position?	Leader title	Demographic (position)
2. Years working as an educational leader?	Experience	Demographic (expertise)
3. List of educational leadership positions and places that prepared you to become a systems leader (first to current)?	Experience	The process of leadership involves understanding the complexity of the organization, the people, and the goals to be reached (Northouse, 2019).
4. Graduating university and highest degree attained/major?	Preparation	Demographic (schooling)
5. Languages spoken and level of proficiency (i.e., speak, read, write)?	Identity	Macedo et al. (2016) asserted that understanding the connection between multiculturalism and bilingual education, as a way in which people produce, transform, and reproduce meaning ultimately affirms the lived experience which can produce either a subordinate or a lived culture.
6. Gender identity?	Identity	Demographic (self-identifier)
7. Ethnic identity?	Identity	Demographic (origin)
8. Highest parental level of education?	Identity; background information	Demographic (family history)
9. Family Income-Socioeconomic status: growing up (i.e., low, middle, upper middle, upper)?	Identity; background information	Demographic (family income)

Table 5 (continued)

Latino Leaders Demographic Survey Item Development

Question	Constructs	Citation/Research
10. What additional skills or training do you need to become an educational leader? How/where do you acquire these?	Experience; preparation	Research on the value of Latina/o educational leadership, without a focus on identity and the cultural and linguistic relevance that Latina/os bring to the field of administration is needed to understand the importance of role models for students (Murakami et al., 2018).
11. As a person from a historically marginalized background in educational leadership, how does your identity as a Latina/o impact your leadership practice?	Critical race theory	"To mitigate the real needs of minority students, school leadership reforms must do more than address transactional, transformational leadership approaches. To close achievement gaps, leaders must clearly understand their role in addressing students' cultures and school culture. Khalifa et al. (2013) identified the need to acknowledge CRSL is under researched and undertheorized" (p. 1297). Alemán (2009b) stated, "Ten years after Ladson-Billings's (1998) initial query, I have outlined how niceness may be utilized as a method of maintaining the status quo, covering up institutionalized racism, and silencing the experiences of Latina/o leaders" (p. 308).
12. What type of leadership "style" defines your practice?	Transformational leadership	Santamaría (2014) conducted research using critical race theory coupled with a culturally responsive case study conceptual inquiry approach to capture the experiences of educational leaders of color. Her contention was, historically, the stories and experiences of women and ethnically and linguistically diverse leaders were not of consequence in both theory or leadership. She claims research leadership has been defined by various theorists as managerial, instructional, situational, transactional, transformational, or moral.
13. What are some of your tried and true strategies for leadership success?	Transformational leadership	The nine leadership characteristics identified by Santamaría (2014) are: "Critical Conversations, Critical Race Theory Lens, Group Consensus, Stereotype Threat, Academic Discourse, Honoring Constituents, Leading by Example, Trust with Mainstream, Servant Leadership" (p. 375).
14. What are the most common barriers you have faced for leadership success?	Critical, pedagogy	Shields (2010) asserted, "There is a recognition in both theory and practice that educators must do what they can to challenge unjust practices, to overcome inequity, and to create conditions under which all children can learn" (p. 582).

Note: Adapted Appendix D and Appendix E to create new demographic form along with identified constructs and citations to show correlation, from *Applied Critical Leadership in Education: Choosing Change*, (pp.163-164) by L. J. Santamaría and A. P. Santamaría, Routledge, 2012, copyright 2012 by Routledge; from E. Murakami, F. Hernandez, F. Valle, and I. Almager, 2018, *"Latina/O School Administrators and the Intersectionality of Professional Identity and Race,"* in *SAGE Open, 8*(2), pp. 1–16, (https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018776045), copyright 2018 by SAGE Journals; from M. Khalifa, C. Dunbar, and T. Douglas, 2013, *"Derrick Bell, CRT, and Educational Leadership 1995–Present,* in *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 16*(4), pp. 489–513, (https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.817770), copyright 2013 by Taylor & Francis; from E. Alemán, 2009b, "Through the Prism of Critical Race Theory: Niceness and Latina/O Leadership in the Politics of Education", in *Journal of Latinos & Education, 8*(4), pp. 290–311, (https://doi.org/10.1080/15348430902973351)*,* copyright 2009 by Taylor & Francis; from L. J. Santamaría, 2014, "Critical Change for the Greater Good: Multicultural Perceptions in Educational Leadership Toward Social Justice and Equity*", Educational Administration Quarterly, 50*(3), pp. 347–39, (https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X13505287)*,* copyright 2014 by SAGE Journals; and from C. M. Shields, 2010, "Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts", *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46(*4), pp. 558–589, (https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X10375609), copyright 2010 by SAGE Journals.

To develop the instrument, I used many of the same questions used by Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) with some edits to create a demographic survey and develop interview questions. Table 6 is a summary of the interview questions used to frame the in-person interview questions with a connection to the construct and literature citation used to connect to the question relevance. Table 6 provides an analysis of the constructs and research related for each question. The questions address topics of identity, achievement as leaders, and strategies used to lead (Appendix B). I added additional questions to capture language policy issues and English learner students' schooling and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which occurred during the development of this dissertation.

Table 6

Latino Leaders Interview Protocol Item Development

Question	Construct	Citation from Chapter 2
1. What kinds of measurable results have you experienced in your position as a result of your educational leadership?	Critical pedagogy	In the modern age, it is believed that the success of educational leaders is mostly measured by assessing student test-score data (Leithwood et al., 2004). The premise that the only measure of worth is a single test score has perpetuated beliefs about intelligence and the ability of students in achievement. For example, Giroux and Giroux (2008) as cited in Khalifa (2013) noted, "In addition to draining schools financially, both high-stakes testing, and zero tolerance policies have served to push out or kick out Black and Latino youth in disproportionate numbers" (p. 498).
2. How do you think your peers or constituents would describe your educational leadership practice?	Leadership practice	Merriam asserts that measuring educational leadership is done in a very Westernized United States way that is culturally specific to a White, Western European, male, upper-class perspective (as cited in Khalifa et al., 2013). Researching the ways in which Latina/o leaders practice school leadership will inform school boards and others to avoid the duplication of school leaders who perpetuate school systems not designed to empower and value cultural and linguistic diversity (Murakami et al., 2018).
3. Do you feel you have to do anything different to convince your peers of your ability to lead effectively? If so, what do you need to do differently?	Critical race theory; critical pedagogy	Santamaría (2014) Stereotype threat- or fulfilling negative stereotypes associated with their perceived racial, ethnic, or linguistic group (p. 370) According to Giroux (1995), educators must provide students with a sense of identity, place, and meaning by affirming their voices, histories, and stories.
4. How might speaking the language of the families/students you serve impact your leadership style?	Critical race theory	According to Valdés (2001), many believe that language study is very much like the study of other subjects and that language can be "taught" and "learned" in a short period of time (p. 18). According to Gándara et al. (2003), instruction would use the students' primary languages and recognize their bi-cultural identity as a reality and as an asset.
5. As a person from a historically marginalized background in educational leadership how does your identity impact your leadership practice?	Critical race theory	"To mitigate the real needs of minority students, school leadership reforms must do more than address transactional, transformational leadership approaches. To close achievement gaps, leaders must clearly understand their role in addressing students' cultures and school culture. Khalifa et al. (2013) identified the need to acknowledge CRSL is under researched and undertheorized" (p. 1297). Alemán (2009b) stated, "Ten years after Ladson-Billings's (1998) initial query, I have outlined how niceness may be utilized as a method of maintaining the status quo, covering up institutionalized racism, and silencing the experiences of Latina/o leaders" (p. 308).

Table 6 (continued)

Latino Leaders Interview Protocol Item Development

Question	Construct	Citation from Chapter 2
5. As a person from a historically marginalized background in educational leadership how does your identity impact your leadership practice?	Critical race theory	"To mitigate the real needs of minority students, school leadership reforms must do more than address transactional, transformational leadership approaches. To close achievement gaps, leaders must clearly understand their role in addressing students' cultures and school culture. Khalifa et al. (2013) identified the need to acknowledge CRSL is under researched and undertheorized" (p. 1297). Alemán (2009b) stated, "Ten years after Ladson-Billings's (1998) initial query, I have outlined how niceness may be utilized as a method of maintaining the status quo, covering up institutionalized racism, and silencing the experiences of Latina/o leaders" (p. 308).
6. What cultural, linguistic and leadership strategies do you use to improve school systems for diverse English learners (i.e., newcomers, long-term English learners, gifted English learners)?	Leadership strategies	The focus on Latina/o leadership is significant due to the demographic changes and the lack of research on the value of Latina/o educational leadership. In many cases it is generalized without a focus on identity and the cultural and linguistic relevance that Latina/os bring to the field of administration. Further, there is a need to understand the importance of role models for students (Murakami et al. 2018).
7. How did leadership preparation/development programs prepare you to understand the needs of Latina/o English learners?	Critical race theory; critical pedagogy	Murakami et al. (2018) posited that studying the leadership of Latina/os is not only of cultural relevance to the field of school administration but also provides a deeper understanding of their trajectory as former students of some of the same systems they lead. Giroux and Giroux (2008) called for the "need for the school administrator to be a transformative intellectual to encourage social justice' and to practice 'transformative leadership which can transcend the intellectual bias in democratic schooling to the benefit of all students and staff'" (cited in Khalifa, 2013, p. 567).
8. My role as a researcher is to build a case study from your experiences to inform applied educational leadership. In that light, is there a story or experience you would like to share that you think typifies your unique application of educational leadership practice?	Story-telling narrative critical race theory	Mills and Gay (2019)

Table 6 (continued)

Latino Leaders Interview Protocol Item Development

Question	Construct	Citation from Chapter 2
9. How did COVID-19 influence your leadership experiences?	Leadership strategies	

Note: Adapted Appendix D and Appendix E to create new interview protocol along with identified constructs and citations to show correlation, from *Applied Critical Leadership in Education: Choosing Change*, (pp.163-164) by L. J. Santamaría and A. P. Santamaría, 2012, Routledge, copyright 2012 by Routledge; from K. Leithwood, K. S. Louis, S. Anderson, and K. Wahlstrom, 2004, *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*, The Wallace Foundation, copyright 2004 by the Wallace Fondation; from M. Khalifa, C. Dunbar, and T. Douglas, 2013, *"*Derrick Bell, CRT, and Educational Leadership 1995–Present, in *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 16*(4), pp. 489–513, (https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.817770), copyright 2013 by Taylor & Francis; from E. Murakami, F. Hernandez, F. Valle, and I. Almager, 2018, *"*Latina/O School Administrators and the Intersectionality of Professional Identity and Race," in *SAGE Open, 8*(2), pp. 1–16*,* (https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018776045), copyright 2018 by SAGE Journals; from L. J. Santamaría, 2014, "Critical Change for the Greater Good: Multicultural Perceptions in Educational Leadership Toward Social Justice and Equity*", Educational Administration Quarterly, 50*(3), pp. 347–39, (https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X13505287)*,* copyright 2014 by SAGE Journals; from H.A. Giroux, 1995, "Educational Visions: What Are Schools for and What Should We be Doing in the Name of Education?", in J. L. Kincheloe and S. R. Steinberg (Eds.), *Thirteen Questions* (pp. 295–302), Peter Lang*,* copyright 2014 by Peter Lang; from G. Valdés, 2001, *Learning and not Learning English*, Teachers College Press*,* copyright 2001 by Columbia University; from P. Gándara, R. Rumberger, J. Maxwell-Jolly, and R. Callahan, 2003, *"*English Learners in California Schools: Unequal Resources, Unequal Outcomes", *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11*(36), pp. 1–54*,* (https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v11n36.2003), copyright 2014 by Arizona State University; from E. Alemán, 2009b, "Through the Prism of Critical Race Theory: Niceness and Latina/O Leadership in the Politics of Education", in *Journal of Latinos & Education, 8*(4), pp. 290–311, (https://doi.org/10.1080/15348430902973351)*,* copyright 2009 by Taylor & Francis; and from G. E. Mills and L. Gay, 2019, *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Implications (12th ed.),* Pearson, copyright 2014 by Pearson*.*

According to Yin (2018), "Unstructured interview, in-depth interview, or intensive interview" are ways for the researcher to both follow a line of inquiry as per the case study protocol and present the questions in an unbiased manner that serves the needs of the line of inquiry (p. 118). The interview protocol I used was modeled after Santamaría and Santamaría (2012), who used critical pedagogy, transformational leadership, and a critical race theory lens to arrive at applied critical leadership framework in educational leadership. The results of the survey were triangulated to arrive at an understanding of the themes and patterns that emerge from the responses. Patton (2015) stated that collecting information from multiple sources can corroborate the same finding (as cited in Yin, 2018 p. 128).

To validate the interview protocol, a pilot test for the survey and interview protocol was conducted. The purposefully selected participants were ranked, and the least known participant was asked to take the demographic survey and participate in the interview. At the end of these

two events a debrief was conducted between the participant and me with an opportunity to provide feedback on the questions with recommendations for improvement. The recommendations were used to validate the instruments developed. The participant noted that asking the question about barriers was welcome since "so many questionnaires focus on achievements without a place to recognize the difficult situations people have had to overcome" (personal communication, July 24, 2020). In a follow-up email she stated, "I found the interview questions to be very well crafted. They really caused me to reflect on important events and aspects of my life" (email correspondence, August 5, 2020). This feedback signaled the appropriateness and validity of the instruments to be used.

<div align="center">

Demographic Survey Procedures

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Participants received a letter of invitation (Appendix D). Once the participants agreed to participate, they received an email with the demographic survey via Qualtrics (Appendix A), which included questions about their experience, leadership preparation, and education. A table of the results was created to summarize their answers.

Interview Procedures

I invited participants to a 60-minute Zoom interview. The interview consisted of eight questions and a final optional question as time allowed and offered the participant to tell a personal story or experience. Due to the global pandemic during the writing of this dissertation, an additional question was added to the interview as follows: How did COVID-19 influence your leadership experiences?

Participants were asked for permission to record the interview conversation and told that responses would be used for analysis only and kept confidential. All participants agreed to record

the interviews using Zoom. I recorded via Zoom to capture the interviews and later received both a recorded video and a transcript of the interview via the Zoom platform. I replayed each recorded interview while reading the transcript and made edits as necessary, as an example a couple of the participants spoke in Spanish during the interview and the Zoom transcription wrote these in English.

I used a software system to aid in the data analysis of the interviews, called Dedoose, a secure platform used to analyze qualitative and mixed method research (Dedoose software tool version 9.0.17, 2021). The results from the Latino Leaders Demographic Survey (Appendix A) and the Latino Leaders Interview Protocol (Appendix B) were compiled to capture the various themes and subthemes from the participant responses. The testimonios were written after analyzing the findings by reviewing the Dedoose coding, reviewing the Zoom recordings, and re-reading the transcripts using different lenses of the Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) ACL framework.

<p align="center">**Follow-up Interview and Debrief**</p>

After analysis of the survey and interview were completed, the participants were invited to debrief the draft of the recorded transcripts for accuracy and content. They all agreed to the transcript accuracy; one participant asked for a chance to further explain her response. Following the transcript review, the testimonios were written and the participants were sent a draft with follow up clarification questions and four out of the seven provided additional feedback. I asked additional questions that naturally evolved from the participants' answers, and these interviews were unstructured and provided for a guided conversation rather than a rigid interview (Yin, 2018). One participant responded with a concern over her overuse of short phrases in responding

and provided comments back to me. A second participant asked to meet over Zoom and elaborate on her story because she found a connection back to an experience with her daughter which she failed to mention in the earlier interview. The results of that interview were later incorporated into her testimonio. Next a cross case analysis was conducted following the testimonio completion, memo notes were used from Dedoose to further understand the overall leadership practices. At the end of each testimonio a brief summary of how they each add to the research question was added.

Validity and Trustworthiness

As cited in Mills and Gay (2019), Dey (1993) identified six questions intended to help researchers check the quality of their data:

- Are the data based on one's own observation or on hearsay?

- Are observations corroborated by others?

- In what circumstances was an observation made or reported?

- How reliable are those providing the data?

- What motivations may have influenced a participant's report?

- What biases may have influenced how an observation was made or reported? (Mills & Gay, 2019, p. 579)

Qualitative researchers who attend to these guidelines for conducting credible data analysis and data interpretation are rewarded with trustworthy research reports that withstand scrutiny of the research community (Mills & Gay, 2019, p. 579). For the purpose of this study, I focused on questions three through six as part of the final analysis to ensure validity and trustworthiness given the fact that observations were not part of the study but rather there was a

purposefully selected sample of participants. I found validity and trustworthiness achieved in conducting the research study.

Reliability

Participation in the interviews were deemed reliable given the nature of the question formats. The interview questions inquired about their perceptions of their leadership experiences and not on data that required fact checks. The motivation for participants was the recognition that they represent a group of leaders who are historically underrepresented. Their responses to questions about Latino/a students' schooling experiences were coupled with their own schooling experiences as children/young adults, the needs of the communities they serve and their experiences as educators similar to the school systems they lead. The biases that may have influenced how an observation was made or reported would be the specificity of the English learner typologies in the interview question which challenged all participants to think about these learners as non-monolithic for example asking about gifted EL, those with formal v. informal prior education. Some participants seemed challenged when asked about how their school system meets the variety of needs that these students present beyond just having academic deficits or achievement gaps.

Qualitative Data Analysis

To conduct analysis of the data, I used both a cross-case synthesis approach coupled with a testimonio methodology. Interviews were conducted over a 3-month period and the data was transcribed and coded using the applied critical leadership framework principles (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). I used Dedoose, which is a data management and excerpting code analysis tool that analyzes the participants responses to interview questions. The demographic survey was

analyzed using a table graph at part of first pass of data analysis. The interviews were loaded into Dedoose and coded using two different sets of codes, the first coding of qualitative data used the following: critical race theory, leadership strategies, critical pedagogy, and storytelling narrative. The second coding of qualitative data analysis in Dedoose used the nine applied critical leadership (ACL) practices from Santamaría and Santamaría (2014) framework.

Phases of Data Analysis

Phase 1

I found that the first coding was inconsistent with the applied critical framework and did not yield as robust data as needed. In this phase I uploaded the interviews and used three constructs: critical race theory, leadership strategies, critical pedagogy, and storytelling narrative. However, I did not find any particular value or insight with this approach.

Phase 2

To ensure that analysis was more consistent with the applied critical leadership framework, the second pass of data analysis used the applied critical leadership practices from Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) as follows: critical conversations, critical race theory lens, group consensus, stereotype threat, academic discourse, honoring constituents, leading by example, trust with mainstream, servant leadership. The apriori codes were tallied and an important finding was that the top three strategies identified were critical race theory lens, honoring constituents, leading by example, and followed by critical conversations. The ACL practices were enacted differently by each leader though the critical race theory lens was a strong practice identified by all participants.

During this coding, I wrote memo notes in Dedoose to capture additional themes that were beginning to emerge the value of mentors, female leadership, or the importance of being a visionary leader. The memo notes were reviewed several times and used to analyze each leader's story.

Phase 3

In phase 3 the analysis of the data involved reviewing the Dedoose codes for each of the interview transcripts while using the applied critical leadership practices. The Dedoose platform summarizes the qualitative coding through a summary of code application. In this round I was looking for participant findings that confirm use of some of the ACL practices in a uniform way, and I found that while they were all used not all were equally implemented and some were rarely mentioned. As an example, even though five out of the seven participants have an Ed.D. only one participant mentioned a need to use academic discourse as a way to establish her leadership and a second participant mentioned it as way to establish belief in herself as a leader and not necessarily done for others. This began the process for developing the testimonios. The third phase also provided an opportunity to revisit the memo notes and look for the cross testimonio themes. As cautioned by Yin (2018), I engaged in a rigorous and deep analysis of the data to ensure the case study does not simply become an "interview study" (p. 130). Following the coding of ACL to each participant's interview, I analyzed the individual responses and related the answers back to the overall themes in the Codebook (Tables 5 and Table 6). The themes for leadership were in many cases grounded in the personal lived experiences of each participant whether as a student, a professional or in the context of their leadership practice. The

development of the cross testimonio analysis resulted in themes and were the final step in the overall analysis.

Developing the Testimonios

According to Huber (2008), "The focus on narrative in testimonio allows researchers to document the stories of their participants while validating their experiential knowledge, a central tenet of LatCrit" (p. 169). To begin to develop the testimonio, in the next round of data analysis a table was created to capture quotes from each participant and match it to the construct of each ACL practice and to quantify the number of times this was coded in Dedoose (see Appendix E: Applied Critical Leadership Codebook). The use of *testimonio* for both data analysis and the methodology aims to ensure the lived experiences of the participants are given both voice and space. To develop the *testimonio* of each participant I paid attention to what Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodriguez (2012) described: "In Chicana and Chicano education research, *testimonio* is situated in the liberationist pedagogy exemplified by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire" (p. 527). Darder et al. (2012) said, "As Freire so eloquently wrote, 'Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects that must be saved from a burning building'" (p. 52). They advocated writing as a means of liberation—dialogically informing a narrative that is first spoken and then used to make literacy meaningful as a dynamic entry to conscientization and liberation from oppression. To achieve this, I used the ACL as a backdrop to the story of each participant. The writing of the testimonio began with reading and watching the Zoom recordings and looking for particular words or phrases that captured each leader's journey. These words or phrases became the headers for describing each of the leadership practices that inform their leadership identity, language use, cultural awareness,

and overall connection to the Latina/o community of learners. Additionally, Huber (2008) summarized four central tenets of a critical race testimonio that emerge from her review of scholars' work:

> Critical race testimonios can: (a) validate and honor the knowledge and lived experiences of oppressed groups by becoming a part of the research process; (b) challenge dominant research paradigms that guide traditional forms of academic research, including epistemological and methodological perspectives; (c) function within a collective memory that transcends a single experience to that of multiple communities; and (d) be motivated by social and racial justice by offering a space within the academy for the urgent stories of people of color to be heard. (p. 172)

In making meaning of each participant's experience, my aim was to enact one of the key goals of collective *testimonio*, "Voicing the experience provides a kind of active journey from torture, oppression, or marginalization that ultimately leads the speaker or writer to become the empowered survivor" (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012, p. 527).

The next phase of writing the testimonios was to conduct a cross case analysis to identify the themes in common between each leader's practice. While analyzing the overall interviews, themes about each participant's leadership style emerged. In the last phase I conducted a cross case analysis to identify the overall themes or practices shared by the participants using their overall testimonios.

Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) stated, "Most of the methodological and epistemological discussions regarding *testimonios* focus on an approach in which an interlocutor, who is an outside activist and/or ally, records, transcribes, edits, and prepares a manuscript for publication"

(p. 365). This last step of preparing the testimonio gave me a much more intimate look at each leader so that their individual journeys could be codified from a single occurrence to their collective human experiences.

Cross Case Analysis

I embedded the results of the cross-case synthesis with counter storytelling narrative as described by Huber (2008): "Through telling critical race counterstories, we humanize the struggles and injustices faced by people of color within academic research, calling attention to racist structures, policies, and practices in education" (p. 167). The process involved taking the single experiences of the seven participants and developing a cross case analysis of their collective experiences. This in-depth, in-context understanding of their leadership practices involved examining and developing various artifacts along with writing each of their testimonios to arrive at a set of themes in leadership practice. In the first phase I reflected on the tables which include information and summary analysis, and the creation of a codebook that were compiled through the qualitative data collection process, this included a review of the memo notes captured while coding in Dedoose. The following tables were used to begin to develop deeper understanding of the factors impacting a leaders' practice:

- Table 1. Applied Critical Leadership Practices

- Table 2. Sociopolitical Periods

- Table 3. Language Learning and Academic Subject Instruction Options in Elementary Schools

- Table 4. Language Learning and Academic Subject Instruction Options in Secondary Schools

- Table 5. Latino Leaders Demographic Survey Item Development

- Table 6. Latino Leaders Interview Protocol Item Development

- Table 7. Participant Demographic Survey Results

- Table 8. Themes for Leadership Practices

The first four tables were summaries from the literature review, the last four tables were created to synthesize and cross reference the literature review, demographic survey results, participant responses, and the ACL practices. In the second phase the ACL practices were further cross analyzed in Appendix E. This process of analysis was conducted to arrive at both a deeper understanding of the participants practices in using ACL: critical conversation, critical race theory lens, group consensus, stereotype threat, academic discourse, honoring constituents, leading by example, trust with mainstream, and servant leadership. The codebook includes examples and quotes from the participants along with the count of instances in their transcripts using Dedoose. During the coding of their transcripts in Dedoose using ACL, I made memo notes of themes and ideas that captured every individual. In the last phase I examined the participant testimonios to arrive at meaning of their leadership journeys by applying the research question and summarizing each participant's testimonio in relation to the question, then revisiting the summary of ACL practices used, followed by a review of memo notes and finally through a deductive approach developing a set of themes that all participants shared in their practices. As stated in Delgado Bernal et al. (2012):

> Unlike the more common training of researchers to produce unbiased knowledge, testimonio challenges objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance. These

approaches have resulted in new understandings about how marginalized communities

build solidarity and respond to and resist dominant culture, laws, and policies that

perpetuate inequity. (p. 1).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to give voice to Latina/o leaders and identify their

practices leading large school systems with significant Latina/o and English learner populations.

By capturing their lived experiences using an exploratory, *testimonio,* qualitative, multiple case

study design, this research expands the body of knowledge in the field of school leadership and

social justice leadership. The national sampling of participants provided much needed insight

into practices used by Latina/o leaders across the United States. The next chapter discusses how

the participants' voice and story resulted in a set of testimonios of their lived experiences, their

identity as Latina/o leaders, leadership journeys and personal connections to the communities

they serve.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to use the applied critical leadership framework to conduct an exploratory, qualitative multiple case study and testimonio methodology. The findings were used to narrate the practices of Latino leaders' leading large urban school systems in the United States. It was my intent to identify leadership practices and give voice to Latino leaders' experiences and combine these with culturally responsive leadership practices, critical race theory (CRT) and multilingual approaches to schooling of English learners. According to Santamaría and Santamaría (2012), the applied critical leadership framework explains the ways in which the principles of transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory intersect. The nine leadership characteristics identified are as follows: critical conversations, critical race theory lens, group consensus, stereotype threat, academic discourse, honoring constituents, leading by example, trust with mainstream, and servant leadership. The following research question was the focus of the study: What are the leadership practices of Latino/a educators leading large urban school systems with significant enrollment of Latina/o students who are also English learners?

For this inquiry seven participants were recruited to participate in the research study which consisted of a demographic survey followed by interviews. The participants were purposefully selected to represent school systems with large numbers of Latino students who are also English learners. Table 7 shows their higher education degree attainment, years of experience in education and self-identified leadership style. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect their identity. Surprisingly and unintentionally, all except one reported growing up in

homes with low income and parent education levels from elementary to secondary but not

beyond. One of the participants grew up in a middle-class home with educated parents.

Table 7

Participant Demographic Survey Results

Participant	Degree	Years of experience	Self-identified leadership style	Family income	Parent education level father/mother
Laura	Ed.D.	21-30	Transformational	Low	Primary/secondary
Teresa	Ed.D.	21-30	Culturally responsive	Low	Secondary/elementary
Sofia	Ed.D.	21-30	Transformational	Low	Elementary/secondary
Jose	Master's	11-20	Transformational	Low	Career tech/secondary
Luis	Ed.D.	30 +	Transformational	Low	Elementary/elementary
Maria	Ed.D.	11-20	Transformational	Middle	Secondary/secondary
Josue	Master's	30 +	Managerial	Low	Elementary/elementary

All participants self-identified as Latino/a and have prior school systems experiences that

range from paraeducators, teachers, administrators. One participant rose to the superintendency

from the health and human services branch of education and worked as a social worker.

Methodology

Testimonio was used as a methodology because there is a lack of research to capture the

experiences of Latina/o education leaders and the research methodology challenges the

traditional notions of conducting research: "In Chicana and Chicano education research,

testimonio is situated in the liberationist pedagogy exemplified by Brazilian educator Paulo

Freire. Indeed testimonio, liberationist pedagogy, and its corollary epistemological project evolved at approximately the same time," according to Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodriguez (2012, p. 527). Prior to writing the testimonios I summarized the demographic survey, coded the interview responses in Dedoose, and engaged in three phases of analysis, ending with a cross case analysis. In the first phase I had no findings to report or draw any conclusions; in the second phase of analysis I found that there were four practices invoked by the participants—critical race theory lens, honoring constituents, lead by example, and critical conversations. In the third phase of the analysis I used the Dedoose coding to look for themes in application of the practices and found that while there was use of the practices there was no uniformity. The last part of this phase involved developing themes in the practices used by the participants.

Participant Testimonios

The following are the testimonios of seven Latina/o leaders leading large urban school systems located in the largest school districts located in some of the larger states in the United States, with some of the largest enrollment of Latina/o student populations which includes significant English learner populations. These testimonios are about what it means to thrive, inspire, advocate, challenge, change, connect, and provide hope and courage to the thousands of Latina/o students and English learners in America. These testimonios get to the heart of the communities and families who entrust their children daily to teachers, counselors, principals, and superintendents. The incredible amount of humility and humanity shared by each of the participants in sharing their journey as leaders of schooling systems in which they may have been students themselves reminds one that the work of educating children is a privilege and an honor to be nurtured and cared for with great empathy and compassion.

Two of the participants reported non-traditional high school completion experiences. Two others reported using non-traditional career trajectories to success having had experiences of discrimination and racism as teachers or administrators. One of the participants reported a recognition that her skin color and father's European last name gave her entry into a different schooling experience than her mother, cousins, and friends. The testimonios that follow are listed in order of interview schedules.

Teresa

Teresa had recently retired as superintendent with more than 30 years of experience in education. She has had many positions starting with being a teacher, principal, coordinator of research and evaluation, chief academic officer in several districts, and assistant superintendent of education services before becoming a superintendent. She had experiences across many school districts and in a variety of roles. She identified herself as a Latina with fluency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in both English and Spanish. Her father completed secondary education and her mother completed an elementary education. She identified the following as her leadership strategies for success:

Inspire others to share high expectations for student success; provide training and support to staff so they can implement effective strategies and programs to support students meeting these higher expectations; listen to address parent's needs for themselves and their children; engage parents as full participants/partners/leaders in education; work with the Board of Education to keep focus on meeting the students' needs first and foremost.

When asked about barriers to leadership success she mentions; resistance to culturally responsive leadership, pressure from board members for competing areas of interest, inadequate funding,

and declining enrollment and most notably high achieving student recruitment outside of the

district. She received an Ed.D. from Harvard in Administration, Policy and Social Planning,

which she received as a member of the Urban Superintendents Program.

Give Kids the Keys

Teresa believed that her role as superintendent is to ensure that students are well prepared

for either going to college or a career and she tells a story about it through a poster she has had

for many years as part of her office decor.

One of the first things I did when I arrived in this district was to find out how many of

our students are 12th graders who just graduated, where do they go to college? How

many colleges are they admitted to? . . . and I found out it was 26 colleges.

She had an epiphany:

A picture of doors of Harvard and it was years ago there was a big thing that you know

the doors of Washington, DC. The doors of San Francisco, etc, etc. And so it's just a

poster that I had bought when I was back there years ago. I've carried it with me

wherever I go. And years ago, I looked up one day and I looked all these gorgeous doors

and said, they're all closed. That's my job is to give kids the keys so that when they walk

across the stage, they can go through any door they choose.

This metaphor of schools being places that prepare kids to have doors open for them became a

mantra of sorts that she began to use in her leadership to express the value of making sure that

students are prepared for the future. She was clear that while not all will go to college, the ones

who choose careers are looking at careers of the future which are very different from some in

high schools today. As she gathered the data on college acceptance, she noted the increase from

26 to about 100 schools accepting their graduates by the time she retired. However, sadly she

admitted that the reality is not as promising:

> For me to think these kids now have so many more options so many more people are
>
> looking at them and saying, "We want you on our campus. You know you studied hard,
>
> you're ready, we want you on our campus." And the sad part is that they probably won't
>
> all get to go because of financial difficulties and now with COVID-19. You know, it's
>
> much more challenging.

Teresa was proud of her achievement as a superintendent, and she cited the achievements

reached by her high schools that went from being in the lowest five percentile at the state level to

becoming recognized as top high schools in *U.S. News and World Report*. This is clearly a point

of both pride and reflection for Teresa and she wonders out loud, "Did we prepare them well

enough to stand on their own two feet and to be successful after they leave us?" This care and

compassion are informed by her early experiences as a student.

My Mom Is So Hurt

Teresa's father is Anglo, and her mother is Mexican. She spoke about her awareness at

being treated differently because of both her German last name and skin color. In speaking about

this she recalled two instances that marked her view of what school systems are for and how they

impact students. As a young girl Teresa spent most of her time with her mother while her father

worked long hours. She recalled:

> My dad's Anglo, my mom's Mexican, and she went to elementary school here in the
>
> United States and had horrible, horrible, horrible experiences, which I didn't know about
>
> until I was a little bit older. Mm hmm . . . I actually remember when I first learned a little

83

bit about it . . . it was the first day of sixth grade when I came home and started to do

some math homework and got stuck and I asked my Mom for help and she just came

walking to the table where I was sitting with this most distraught look on her face and

then she said, "I can't help you . . . I never went to sixth grade" and I just, I was so

shocked you know because she looks upset.

Teresa clearly remembered this event, and it informed both her personal and professional identity

though it takes time before this becomes evident in her practice later in her career when she is

asked to speak about it more publicly. This event leads her to question the purpose of education

and the moral implications of allowing students to drop out and the systemic inequities that have

gone unchecked. She continued to tell the story and its impact:

I became very upset, but it also made me think I remember thinking, how can that be?

How can the education system . . . how can it be that the people in schools let that

happen? How can kids drop out after fifth grade?, and that was the start of the

understanding of what happens to people who aren't in places that support them

linguistically or educationally you know that it's okay for this little girl who doesn't

speak English to drop out. And then I'm just, you know, growing up knowing family

stories and seeing other relatives and things that were happening to people in the family

and just, you know, knowing some of those stories. I do remember . . . looking at another

girl in my classes, a Latina, who was struggling and just understanding why was she was

struggling . . . it wasn't her . . . it was because I could see that she wasn't getting the

support that I was and I actually was very aware of the fact that I don't look Latina, you

know, teachers, liked me, and people, you know, said nice things about me, et cetera et

cetera, that they didn't always say about other kids, including my relatives. So, I think

that's just what's motivated me to undo those kinds of inequities to do what I can to

change them.

In the second part of this story, the impact it had on Teresa years later when she was in the urban

superintendents' doctoral program at Harvard School of Education was explained. She recalled

this interchange with the professor:

I said that story about my mother that I just shared with you and she said, "Why don't

you talk about that?" I said, Well, I never tell anybody that because my mom is so hurt . .

. in my mind, she would be hurt again and I just don't want to do it, and she said, no, she

said, it's just the opposite people need to hear that story. I rewrote my speech, and I use

that story and ever since then, I have . . . in talking with parents, in particular, found that

when I share with them my family history it brings such a sense of hope to people that

they know they also didn't get to go to school. Maybe they got 2 years or 6 years or 5

years or 8 years or whatever. But many, many people didn't get to finish their education.

And they worry that their children will not be able to achieve their dreams because they

weren't able to, and when they see that another person's mother is just like them, but her

daughter was able to achieve success . . . It's humbling to me. Yeah, see how much my

mom's experience has helped other people and I'm grateful that I can share and then I

can share it in Spanish because it communicates just a world of possibilities to people and

it gives them hope and then I also add, my mother also made me study every day in

summer and she took me to the library every Tuesday, you know, so those things helped

me too.

In a follow up interview with Teresa, she wanted to be sure that the story of her mom didn't end without sharing the story of her daughter going to Harvard years later:

> I really wanted her to go to Stanford because she actually was born at the hospital there at Stanford. . . . Her principal and her dad really thought she should go to Harvard and you know, I was not in favor of that at all, and so the principal called me up one day.

Teresa paused and recounted how her own reaction was surprising to her when it came to thinking about the difference between what she wants for her daughter as a parent, her decision to send her daughter to college and what she hoped for her students:

> To me it's amazing how people see your values and your culture just come out, sometimes in unexpected ways I listened to the principal over an old phone on the wall . . . I held it an arm's length out from my ear, I did not want to hear what this lady had to say I was totally opposed to it . . . and as soon as she finished I hung up the phone and the words out of my mouth shock even me! the words were "these Americans don't care where they send their kids to school."

She continued with how much it meant to not only herself as a worried mother sending her child across the country to college, but her surprise at her mother's words when she told her that her daughter would be going to Harvard:

> I called up my mother to tell my mother about it, and she said to me just think only three generations … and that really you know I took those words to heart and such a deep way that when I heard about the Urban Superintendents program at Harvard and my daughter was encouraging me to go, I remember thinking, maybe we can just make it two generations.

A couple of years later Teresa related the story of when she attended the Harvard Urban Superintendents Doctoral Program while her daughter was a college student there, and to close the loop on educational equity she brought her mother to the graduation ceremony. She reported:

> When you graduate, they sell diplomas for parents, you know, they're just pieces of paper. They're not real school diplomas; they look like them and it's a Harvard diploma for the parents.

Upping the Ante

It became clear that Teresa's leadership approach to school systems was geared towards an asset-based mindset. In her teaching experience she told of a time she questioned the coordinator of gifted students about the lack of English learners in the program. This became a sore point between them in the lunchroom. A couple of years later she found herself in charge of the gifted program, and she was able to find English learners who also qualified as gifted students. This experience as a teacher provided a frame of reference for her leadership as a principal in later years. She told of a story while working with teachers on a complaint about the student's ability to learn the content in social science.

> We had a fifth grade teacher that was complaining that the social science textbook was too hard for the kids and so somehow or other, I suggested that the way we should deal with it was to split it between fourth and fifth grade because it was old text . . . it really wasn't quite challenging text and then take the fourth grade curriculum and move it down to third grade because the fourth grade California fit with third grade community focus and we did that, and the kids blossomed they . . . blossomed, they could actually do it. And then because we had a lot of Spanish speaking kids, we also bought the books in

Spanish too and this was before we had to implement language programs, they were taught 3 weeks in English and then 3 weeks, the next chapter or unit in Spanish. They actually were learning in both languages and by the end of the year the kids are so incredibly fluent in both languages and doing very, very well and excelling. Then we did something similar in math. We took the math curriculum, which the sixth-grade teacher thought was too much for 1 year, so we moved it down to fifth grade, some of that went to fourth grade, etc. So, in a sense, what we were doing is we were upping the ante. We're upping the expectations of what kids could do and then when the teachers could see that, in fact, yes, they could do that. It really opened the fact that our expectations previously hadn't been rigorous enough. If we put in these more rigorous expectations and supported the kids along the way they could do it and we actually went from the lowest of 22 elementary schools and in 3 years we were second only to a magnet school.

She closes the story by sharing that because of these incredible gains she was accused of cheating. "I actually got accused of cheating because we haven't seen it (student achievement at a fast rate), we just really focused on the expectations of [students] and a lot of professional development." She reflected on this experience:

What is the rigor of the work that we're doing? how do I help people increase that rigor? and what other support do we need for our teachers to do that? and for the principals to understand what we're doing? so they can also help the teachers too and that really has been successful in raising student achievement just partly their expectations, but then also bringing in concrete programs.

This final point reminded her of the last curriculum selection in her district which resulted in her expectation that a program is selected that represents the most rigorous expectations. At the end of the selection process her assistant superintendent mentions that the publisher was surprised because they asked:

> How come you guys are taking this other book? In most of the districts like your kind of districts [they] are taking this other book? but it was quite an eye opener to see him saying that, you know, districts like "ours," which means the poor districts, you know, the districts with kids of color.

> At the end of our interview Teresa and I discussed her approach to COVID-19 and its impact on her leadership. She explained the need for leaders to constantly read and be aware beyond the halls of academia. Right before the March 2020 shutdowns she was preparing for her son's graduation from the Air Force:

> One always has to look out broadly and what's happening in the world and have interest beyond . . . what they're doing. So even though I was an educator, I love reading science, all different kinds of science. I love reading things about anthropology or reading about paleontology, or, you know, just all different kinds of things and I think it's very good for us in leadership positions to have that spark of enthusiasm and interesting energy to be surveying what's going on in the world, I do that normally. So, I was very aware of COVID-19, I think before a lot of people were. The other part of it was, I had a son who was in the Air Force and was going to graduate. I was wondering, to see once I found out that they had taken some people from one of the ships and sent them to the base where he was. I was worried and wondering. I wonder if we'll be able to go to this graduation. I

was watching it like a hawk. In cabinet meeting one morning I was talking to my cabinet. and I said, we need to start planning for the eventuality, that we may have to close schools.

Teresa uses transformational leadership practices, she honors constituents, holds critical conversations, and uses a critical race theory lens. Teresa values the language and culture that English learners bring to school and reframes it. Teresa felt compelled to help heal her mother's wounds from having been denied an education, so she made sure to get a diploma to give to her mother at the graduation. Teresa recounted the difficulties that are faced by many immigrants in both her family and acquaintances whose lives are deeply impacted by a lack of educational opportunities that lead to better job opportunities. For Teresa, this work is both personal and professional.

Luis

Luis is a successful superintendent in one of the largest school districts in his state. He is the eighth child in a family of 10 and grew up in a largely Latino neighborhood. He identifies as Latino, bilingual in Spanish and English, his parents completed elementary education only. The over 30 years of experience in education include being a teacher, coach, assistant principal, director of personnel, and assistant superintendent of human resources. He self identifies his leadership style as transformational and credits his success to leadership strategies that create high performing teams. The barriers he describes to leadership success are low expectations, biases, and governance. He describes the impact of his Latino identity on his leadership experience as being both a liability and an asset.

Part of My DNA

In addition to being a teacher in the school district that he now leads Luis was a student and when asked about the measurable outcomes of his leadership he tells a painful story of his experience before becoming the superintendent.

> I was a student in this district. I was a teacher in this district. I couldn't even get an
> interview for an assistant principals' job in this district. I love the city. I love this District,
> but I've had to leave several times because people wouldn't give me a chance. I was too
> young; I was too brown. I was too good. I was too much of an immigrant…….and I've
> had to overcome all of those barriers to get an opportunity to lead this district and, you
> know, so you do what have to do to convince people that you have the skill sets that are
> required to lead in this context.

Luis explains that he was blackballed by his school district for speaking up against authority figures (principals) who were abusive toward female teachers. He decided to apply to suburban districts, and this resulted in his ability to gain experience as an assistant principal, principal and superintendent. These experiences earned him respect and credibility, he returned to the district and learned that the principal he previously complained about was fired after repeated complaints from teachers. Luis's time away from his beloved district helped him grow as a leader and return as the top leader (superintendent) resulting in becoming their longest serving leader with proven results. He describes those experiences as:

> Sometimes you just gotta speak up, even if it costs you personally, but that was
> probably the best thing that ever happened to me because I would have never… I may

have never become the superintendent. I had to go out and learn how to be a leader…

learn how to be an administrator… learn how to be a superintendent and then I've had a

chance to be the superintendent twice (same district). So sometimes you don't know

where destiny is going to take you . . . and you just have to have the courage to speak up

for what's right and speak against what's wrong.

Even with these experiences, Luis maintains a positive attitude towards his role. He describes the

assets of his identity as:

I say you got to be proud of who you are. I know I'm proud to be an immigrant. I'm

proud to be from (the East side of the city) for your context (referring to my origins) it's

like East LA. and I'm proud. I . . . [had] … this mustache … I shaved it one day in high

school . . . and that identifies who I am. Um, but also, I don't want to be identified, just as

a Latino superintendent. I want to be identified as an effective superintendent . . . but I

can't change who I am. I don't want to change who I am and it's my set of experiences

that have helped me be successful, to some degree, because I'm proud of my

background…. I think I had that [referring to his identity] as part of my DNA because I

was an urban kid, and I was an urban teacher. So those two things helped me more.

He goes on to state the many experiences he has had as a superintendent in three different

suburban, largely White districts where he was initially the only Latino. He acknowledges that

there is discrimination but maintains a positive outlook to how effective leadership strategies

have helped him succeed.

You Gotta Know Your People

Luis's use of a critical race theory lens informs his leadership practices and as he reflects on the question on how his educational experiences and leadership preparation programs have helped, he acknowledges how his lived experience informs his leadership more than schooling. He also cites a lack of leadership programs that help him to develop the skills needed to successfully support Latino/a English learner students. A proud data point for him are the outcomes of English learners in his district.

> We've had tremendous growth in our English learners, and we have a tremendous dual
> language program that is district wide…. When I got hired in 2005, we had 1,800
> classrooms that did not have a certified bilingual teacher in them. In fact, we're violating
> the law 1,800 times for providing services. So, we had to come up with the bilingual
> staffing plan which we then compressed . . . and we made sure that we had . . . we instead
> . . . of just spreading the few teachers out. We put them all in Pre-K and K and then we
> grew them all the way up to fifth and sixth if necessary. We've gone from that to today,
> our English learners way outperform any of our other student groups, including our
> second and third generation Latinos, our African Americans and we have a very
> successful dual language program, but it took us a decade to build.

He later cited the fact that all 150 of the elementary schools offered a dual language program and that there are six middle schools with dual language programs and three high schools which offer math classes in Spanish so that many students are able to earn a biliteracy certificate. Luis was very clear about his role and expectations of what the school system is meant to achieve and when speaking about his leadership preparation he cites that:

I don't know that there were any programs that helped me to determine the need of

Latino students. I went to a very traditional undergrad at Tech (college). I learned nothing

about Latinos there except how to survive because I was one of them. . . . When I got my

master's degree at the University. I didn't learn anything about Latinos there.

His answers changed when asked about practices used to educate English learners. He seemed to

have a more hands-off approach on teaching strategies but a focus on people and systems was

evident:

I know nothing about that, nothing about that. I taught government, I taught history. I

taught, I was a coach. I know about people I know about systems. You gotta know your

people. Now, I knew that we had a problem when I came to the city and we had all those

vacancies. We didn't have teachers who could deliver all those things, the teachers are

the experts and then we have content experts and then we have people who understand

programs. That's not me. That's not my job. However, I understood research. I used to

walk around, about 5 years with this little thing. I pull out of my clip here (points to his

pocket) and it was the Collier and Thomas research about the long-term effects of the

different programs and least effective was ESL pull out . . . the most effective program

was two-way dual language. I used to quote that research on every speech that I gave, I

walked around town at the chamber, at principals' meetings and everything, talking

about it. I didn't know anything about it, thank goodness. Nobody asked me to explain it

(meaning the teaching practices).

He continues with "It's my job to advocate for students, it's my job to know what works and

then make it happen."

Luis was clear that his goal was to know not only about leadership but mostly about people. This critical race theory lens was evident when he talked about families and students:

> I learned to appreciate qualitative research, before that I was just a numbers person . . . but what I was missing were the stories that are attached to those numbers…qualitative research helps people understand people's personal and cultural and social beliefs . . . I learned about being Latino by being a Latino… and helping Latino families and I learned about who I am. I've been to all of this training. Very few of them were there to help me to understand the plight of Latino or underserved students.

In a follow up interview with Luis, he was asked via email; is there anything else about leading large school systems with significant Latino families and English learners that leaders should know about? and he responded:

> A Latino leader of a large school system that has significant Latino and English learners should always indicate that he is proud of his heritage. He should always advocate for all learners but never apologize for advocacy for Latinos and English learners especially if the leader is an immigrant. A Latino leader should never be a militant because militants do not stay at the decision-making table, but they should be loud advocates. Research such as the Collier and Thomas study should be used for proper advocacy.

He also responded as follows when asked about the need for more Latino leaders and the future of preparation for them:

> We can and will have enough Latino leaders in the future because there are now many more Latino teachers in the ranks. But outstanding leadership growth programs happen by design not by accident. So Latino leaders must reach back and properly design

programs and encourage teachers to become leaders beyond their classrooms. Antonio

(personal friend/colleague) encouraged me to get my master's degree when I was a young

teacher despite my protests.

Luis's leadership practices are about advocacy for Latina/o and English learner students. Luis is

a leader who is practicing both a transformational leadership principle and using a critical race

theory lens to lead. He honors his constituents by speaking proudly and being a role model for

Latina/o families and students through his being and speaking the culture and language.

Jose

Jose tells a painful story of being ostracized by his colleagues for developing program

that represented the students' cultural roots and traditions. Jose has been an educator for more

than 30 years and has risen to top level leadership positions in five different large school systems

in states across the country. His career began as a teacher and he has served as a principal, region

superintendent, deputy superintendent, and superintendent of schools. He has earned a master's

degree in education leadership and is fluent in English and Spanish. His parents had career/trade

school and secondary school experience and he identifies his life as growing up in a low

socioeconomic environment. Jose believes that his leadership style is transformational and

described his strategies for success as being authentic, unapologetic, clear in the work that needs

to be done and lastly recommended that leaders embrace themselves and their history. The

barriers he described for Latino/a leaders are the lack of leadership opportunities and access to

networking opportunities that propel them to the next level. His departure from the teaching

profession and his first school district led him to national recognition as a superintendent in five

states and validated how his authentic voice and self was his strongest asset. He shares how

painful it is to know that because of his skin color and features he is still followed by security when frequenting luxury stores, or places known to be friendlier to a more "White-looking" clientele even though he is a very public figure in this large city. He likened this experience to those of Black and Brown students on a daily basis who are treated as "potential criminals" instead of as customers when they frequent stores or public places. He was very clear that national politics play a role in the schooling experiences of students and even perceived "politically friendly allies" who are threatened when a Latino leader makes school inequities public and challenges the systemic racism that leads to poor outcomes for Black and Brown students.

Incredible Disproportionality

The interview with Jose begins with a question about his measurable outcomes as the leader of a large school system in the United States. Jose quickly becomes animated and relays data for students for the last 3 years. He starts with academics:

I think the cornerstone. It has always been the data . . . so what is the data telling me and I've always led with that. I can tell you that in my large city. I've been here almost 3 years. Our academic indicators have been trending upwards, pre COVID-19 . . . we had the greatest growth in not only English language arts and mathematics, but also social studies and science. Which for me was really, really important.

What sets Jose apart from other leaders who speak to data as is stated above is that he followed up with disaggregating it by significant student groups. He didn't just stop at celebrating upward trending data. He dug deeper:

But then going deeper, our students with disabilities and our . . . we don't call them

English language learners. I changed that I call them multilingual learners. Our

multilingual learners also showed significant growth not only on English language

attainment, but also in their native language. For me, that's really important because we

want to maintain bilingualism, the whole reason to call them multilingual learners. So for

me, those indicators are good barometers but they're not for me conclusive determinants

upon how well we're doing.

Once he disaggregated for students with disabilities and language proficiency, he turned the

attention to the students' social emotional indicators of wellness:

The whole other set of indicators were social, emotional indicators and some of them are

lagging indicators, as you know, attendance, suspension rates, referrals to special

education and what we found is, and I kept pushing the team here . . . what we found is

that when you really start going into that level of detail there is incredible

disproportionality . . . every one of those indicators. You know Black kids were being

suspended at eight times the percentage of the representation of the system than females

16 times their representation. . . . If you're a Black student, you are four times more likely

you were four times more likely to be suspended or referred to special education, then to

graduate.

His unapologetic sharing of data publicly was evident as a cornerstone of his leadership style. He

shares some of the actions taken in AP classes where students of color were not represented and

the expansion of opportunities to them resulted in improvement by 32%. He shares his belief:

To lead not only in academics, but also to understand that the humanistic side of

educating children is just as important, in my humble opinion, as the academic side. So

that was really what I've looked at in terms of the leadership.

Jose describes the support received from peers as a new superintendent as being "lukewarm" at

best depending on the political nature of the city leaders and also the racial makeup of the area.

He cited an example of going to meetings where he was the youngest person of color in a

meeting,

I was the only Latino and only one of one of three people of color in the superintendent.

so, I was definitely the raisin in the cup of milk. Every single . . . meeting we had and it

was always, it's always been one of these things as well, where I'm typically in a

superintendent's meeting I'm typically I can't say that anymore. But I was typically the

youngest one you know that had the biggest job. So there was always a great deal of

skepticism about who this guy is and why he is in the job and why you know what

qualifies him to be the judge.

Jose asserted that his lived experience as a teacher and principal gave him the education

vernacular and legitimized his leadership.

Entrenched Privilege

Jose's multiple experiences as a school system leader in five different states provided a

viewpoint that informs how he leads in a way that both surprised and challenged him to think

about how privilege, politics and power impact school systems and education. When it comes to

connecting with Latino communities, he described his ability to speak Spanish as one of his

strongest assets; "I've always had a very good relationship with all communities." He was surprised at the variety of political perceptions from the many cities where he has led:

> [In one city] . . . which is kind of, you know, left of left. So I consider myself a pretty liberal guy, you know, I have lived the experience of being a Latino in the world, you know, you have a certain worldview, but I was considered very conservative in this city for some reason.

He compares the next two city leadership jobs in a central U.S. state and an eastern U.S. state as a dichotomy, where he expected to have more challenges, yet was surprised that it was in the east and not central United States:

> I think what's been unfortunate in eastern U.S. city is that, and it's pretty ironic because the central city is in a red state . . . and I have found more pushback in terms of an equity agenda in the blue state . . . or maybe in the red state they were they're planning to you know, dig a hole somewhere, and I was going to disappear. Who knows? But in the east . . . wow, you can really tell the generations entrenched in equity in the school system and it's just widely accepted as that's just the way it is. Right.

Jose's acute awareness of the impacts of the socio-political tenor of the school systems location is a leadership skill that is not always discussed in any leadership research or programs. Having a lens on the political nature or bent is a skill that leaders of races and ethnicities must be aware of. However, this knowledge did not prevent him from speaking up about what was really happening when the team drilled down on student outcomes.

> So, when you start taking on those inequitable practices and then speaking freely about those inequitable practices and say, well, yeah. And then when people realize that, you

know, this guy is talking about these things, but he actually has some authority to change these things. Yes, scares the pants off of people, especially people that have entrenched privilege and unfortunately, that's really been White people and interestingly enough, Asians. So, they've really come out against a lot of the equity agenda, which would help their children as well. But I have found that the Black community and the Latino community have really coalesced around the work that we were trying to do and continue to do, obviously that's gotten a little more difficult now with COVID-19.

Jose described this experience as eye opening and related a short story about what changed when the nation turned its attention to the violent murder of George Floyd in 2020. He noticed the quick turn of events as:

Now, prior to The George Floyd murder. You know, I was being criticized and people would call me a racist and that I'm talking . . . all I care about is Black and brown kids, well then you saw the reaction of the nation to the George Floyd murder and then the world and how people were now all of a sudden, okay, saying, Black Lives Matter and okay talking about systemic racism and okay all of those chattering class that were like consistently just hounding me about this stuff, all of a sudden, have been silent. Because they realize that there is this quiet majority that had woken up to the fact that this is a reality in our system and their protests no longer are falling on deaf ears so it's been really interesting to see how that's quiet and a lot of that work is down (lessened).

A significant characteristic of Jose's leadership is his constant presence in Latino communities. He made sure that he is out in the community, meeting people, in connecting with his identity as a Latino leader he shares that:

It's like all of our story if we're Latinos. It's all of our story. You have to be the, you

have to be better than then you have to try harder. You can be better than anyone else in

the room because there's a bigger spotlight on you . . . There's already a spotlight on you,

but when you're a person of color of your Latino or Latina, and "yo no soy güerito" I

look Latino . . . I speak Spanish. I lean into who I am because for me that's my comfort.

That's my moral zone.

Because Jose has worked in school systems with significant Latino populations, he credits his

bilingualism as an added benefit that is often overlooked when people think about the value of

Latino/a leaders:

Every single one of the five districts has had a significant population of Spanish speaking

constituents, students, and parents. So, what's been fascinating for me is when there are

press conferences and we all have to do these press conferences or press availability. And

you get asked a question in English and you answer the question, and then then it never

fails the reporter from Univision from Telemundo will shout out "y ahora en español"

And then the ability to just pivot and say what you just said in English, without any notes

into Spanish really creates an interesting dynamic for my monolingual English-speaking

colleagues, where they realize they can't do that.

Jose turned his attention to the reasons for his overt communication about student outcomes and

also his unapologetic drive to address the implicit bias and systemic racism in schools by

sharing:

In every single one of those superintendencies when I am not in the urban superintendent

uniform, you know, the suit and tie with, you know, staff around me, but when I'm Jose

on the weekend walking in jeans and tennis shoes or boots and a baseball hat and a T-shirt walking into Bloomingdale's or walking into Dillard's or walking into Sears I have been followed. . . . I've been because I don't look like the superintendent, so I'm just another Mexican in a department store and I can tell that there's people lingering watching where I go. Right. That is an experience that is not unique to me, that is an experience that I know many of my African American Colleagues said many of my Latino Latina colleagues . . . have happened to them whether they realize it or not.

Jose became serious as he described this painful reality of his lived experiences and emphasized that as a driver for the use of his voice, his positionality and development of educators helped everyone understand the impact it has on the psyche and identity of adults and ultimately on the students they serve.

So, my identity as a Latino again leaning into the fact that I'm a lucky, when I talk about implicit bias and I talk about restorative practices and I talked about why it is that I'm so focused on equity for all of our students, it's because I share those experiences. I share the experience of being the superintendent being followed in Bloomingdales by undercover security for no other reason than I'm Mexican in Bloomingdales. Not dressed. Like I belong in Bloomingdales, and I think what that does is it opens at least some people's eyes to the fact that this isn't just for me something that I do because I'm the school district leader or something that I'm going to do, I'm not doing it because I want notoriety. I know this is very personal to me because if they follow the superintendent. Imagine what they do to the little kid from the other side of town . . . that walks into those

stores, so again, it's, it's just being very, very plain spoken about what my experience has

been living in this skin for 53 years in this country . . . that I think is important to share.

As for the preparation he received in leadership programs Jose, cited skills like being reflective

and a critical thinker but mostly he believed that the soft skills of public speaking and thinking

on your feet are what have helped him be successful in many school systems and he credits his

family traditions for giving him that strong identity.

Parent Empowerment Not Engagement

One of the most important strategic moves of Jose's leadership is tapping into Latino

parents through both culture and language. He recognized that students who are English learners

needed to be labeled differently and changed it to "multilingual learners," to signal that they

were able to navigate more than one language. Jose also asserted that parents needed to become

empowered in order to know how to support their children. He changed the department's name

from family engagement to family empowerment. His claim is that you can engage a parent by

simply suspending their student and they will definitely show up at school. Instead, he asked his

leaders to create a parent university so that parents could learn about the school system, what

students should know by grade level, by quarters. This work needed to be done in multiple

languages to address the over 169 languages spoken in his school district. Jose recognized that

parent privilege was not just about wealth but about being able to navigate the school system and

being a resourceful advocate for their children. He was intent on changing the way many parents

approach schools and the content of the parent university addressed topics like the following:

What should you do to prepare for a parent teacher conference because, you know, I

know. My parents were "lo que diga el maestro y pobrecito" [whatever the teacher says,

poor thing]. . . . I get a bad report . . . right, that was the extent of their parent teacher

conference. But if a parent knows to ask one or two questions. How can I help you at

home with my child or what do you think my child's strongest capability is? . . . whatever

subject area. Now, it starts a whole different kind of conversation, as you know, between

the parents and the teacher.

In our last question related to how COVID-19-impacted his leadership Jose quickly enumerated

all the ways in which we have suddenly been able to pivot to teach and learn in ways that we

previously thought were impossible to achieve. He stated:

I know that you know in my 31 years as an educator, we've always talked about the

technological divide and how are we going to bridge the technological divide, and we

have said- it's too expensive. We've talked about smaller class sizes- It's too expensive.

We've talked about connectivity. Oh, that's too expensive. We've talked about virtual

professional development and people aren't traveling all day to go to different meetings.

That's just impractical adults don't learn that way … Well . . . guess what, since March,

we've done every single one of those. We've bridged the technological divide and we

bridged the connectivity divide. We've built a capacity to teach in a remote setting.

He recognized that there are benefits however, to the ways technology can make our ways of

working more efficient as follows:

We've now been able to and I miss people. I'm a people person. But instead of people

traveling from all five boroughs taking half-a-day to get to a meeting, that's going to be

for 2 hours. Now you can do multiple meetings in an hour or two. Right. So, I think the

way we work and how we work has been, I would say irreversibly changed by COVID-

19 . . . yeah, but when I talked to my colleagues in the department about what, what we'll do, when we get back to the new to the normal I say the pre COVID-19 normal cannot be the new post COVID-19 normal now… and then think about some of the things that we stopped doing . . . so people say, like, what have you stopped doing? well we pivoted very quickly to a remote learning setting. Not everybody had devices right away so you couldn't do grades, the way we used to do grades and the punitive nature of grading. We couldn't do that. Right. You didn't show me enough effort. So I'm going to lower your score . . . no, not because now it's about "Did you login? Did you finish? and is it a quality?" . . . concerned with the rubric that we've developed is it or isn't it right so we're not, we weren't punitively grading kids anymore.

In addition, to the national conversation about equity in grading practices Jose noted the ways in which student behavior and teacher evaluation drastically changed;

The world didn't end. And then we stopped suspending kids from school and the world didn't end, we stopped using punitive teacher evaluation systems that gave no help to teachers to get better, but just rated them, the world hasn't ended right. So, a lot of these things that we just thought, oh, you can never touch… we stopped doing because we had to and things that we thought we could never do we started doing because we have to. That's the new normal post COVID-19 and for me, I just want to make sure that we don't lose that capacity to use technology in a very different way. Think about this. Think about the power. Once we have a vaccine, where if we maintain small class sizes as we can get but then to have the ability based on all the technology based on all the curricula, whether it's in house develop best practices or third-party curriculum. To really be

adaptive to the needs of the children in a classroom so that the student that is behind the teacher now has an additional set of tools. Adaptive curriculum that can help supplement that student needs and likewise for the students at the other end of the spectrum that have already mastered. They're ready to go. You can also challenge them as well. You can personalize instruction in a much greater way. So, I think those are all lessons -Silver Linings- with COVID-19 that I just, I think it will be a true, it will truly be a tragedy if we just revert back the elasticity. I call it the elasticity of the status quo. We've been pushing this new way of doing work that could be really powerful for kids. And then once we get a vaccine, if we just go right back to where we were, shame on us.

His leadership practices are to hold critical conversations, honor the more vulnerable of constituents and a deep awareness of stereotype threat. His brave and relentless approach to deliver implicit bias training to all staff before the national conversation on systemic racism is testament to how far he is willing to hold the critical conversations to confront the marginalization and bifurcated educational systems that exist in the United States.

Laura

Laura has over 21 years of education experience in urban school districts. She considers her trajectory into education and educational leadership to be unconventional. Laura graduated from high school via continuing education pathway and culminated her education by earning an Ed.D. in Social Justice Leadership. She has been a paraeducator, teacher, specialist, administrator, deputy superintendent, director of education and deputy executive director in large urban school districts. She is proficient in English and Spanish and was raised by a mother with a secondary education and a stepfather with an elementary education in a low socioeconomic

status home. She identified the barriers to success to being a woman of color and a need to have to work twice as hard as her White male counterparts. She also credited her success to relationships, communication, mentors, and a strong sense of bringing her authentic self to her work.

We Care About Kids

Laura spoke about rethinking our traditional ways of measuring results through student assessment but rather as looking into systems and structures that perpetuate an outcome that lacks a view of how students may be mislabeled or served.

I definitely have gotten clearer and clearer over time; how do you measure that impact? When we all get into this work because we care about kids and we want to make sure that student outcomes are the ultimate measure.

Her passion for ensuring that the purpose of the work is because we all must care about kids and to achieve their success, we must be able to look at systems. This has informed her experience on how systems impact student outcomes, and she stated:

I realized that I had some students who were inappropriately identified and these were English learners. I mean, you know, this is where that passion for me comes around, looking at Students who are English learners and who were identified for disabilities and I realized that there were some students who were inappropriately identified and being able to have them exit out of certain kinds of special education services because they were able to independently do the work. Once explicit teaching happened, they were growing and flourishing both academically as well as socially-emotionally.

Her approach to improving a system has to do more with helping school system leaders view the conditions for teaching and learning and ensuring they can ascertain for themselves the work and how to measure impact. Laura described these approaches as:

> Really look at what are those systems and structures that perpetuate some of those kinds of inequity, or lack of progress for certain kids or for certain educators not feeling like they can be their best successful self and so I started to really look at what were some of the types of professional learning or coaching and how that actually helped change practice, not just the quality of the PD [professional development]and surveys and things like that, but actually, going back and seeing teachers…[seeing] their efficacy change and the rate at which they were able to say they felt comfortable with what I've taught them to do . . . to be able to do on their own, and I thought that was a nice growth and then over time to really look at more of a performance management approach…

As part of Laura's approach to closing the achievement gap she made the following observation:

> How assessment data was being used for English language development . . . and so I started to see . . . for example . . . special education . . . decreasing the numbers of overdue IEPs [Individualized Education Program] or disproportionality rates that decrease in the schools I was serving and working closely . . . to being able to see . . . academic scores go up.

Laura recognized that in addition to systems and structures, working with people that were looking at their work constantly, was another key element of focusing on the care needed for kids.

> Being a part of a team that was so focused and targeted on those outcomes and then

being a part of …coming up with the solutions to those processes and structures

that help contribute to that academic success.

She recognized there needs to be a way to look at both autonomy and systemic approaches

depending on the culture of the system and knowledge of the staff. She described her experience

by comparing the approaches between two school districts.

How do I create the conditions for successful teaching and learning to happen?

I don't think that's necessarily always something we measure as an impact factor.

But it's critical because it ties to the student outcomes. It ties to closing the achievement

gaps. It ties to closing opportunity gaps. One of the things that I was very focused . . .

because the district was one in which instructional autonomy was huge. How do I now

say, everybody's going to use this curriculum and we're going to use this assessment and

this I know that was not going to happen…very different from where Open Court

[structured reading program] was in place and people really, you know, some people

have feelings about that, but there was growth. This was not going to happen in the

autonomous district. I was not going to use the same approach and so we looked at it

from competency, we changed the way we thought about how we're going to hit these

outcomes because I knew it was about setting up the conditions for success to happen and

being clear about what those outcomes were . . . the conditions help people find an

opportunity . . . to focus on the outcomes and goals and so we did see academic

improvement for all students.

Laura was willing to constantly reflect on her practice by asking herself questions and thinking differently about how to approach the challenges of ensuring all students achieve. In reflecting on these experiences, she asserted the following:

> I think one thing that still saddens me is that over the years I have not necessarily seen the achievement gap close . . . I have not seen the achievement gap, close it really is, I think, is one of the things that still is heartbreaking to me that I have not seen that happen yet.

Waiting for a Different Leader

Laura described the impact of her identity on her leadership journey as one that starts with acknowledging the need to connect the personal lived experience with the professional lived experience and she credited her mentors and network of leaders that have helped her to reconcile these 'selves'. She described the beginning of this journey as follows, speaking of identity:

> It is a source of strength and I think as I've gotten older, I have also become more confident. I think it's also become a non-negotiable of who I am, it's I think it's something that . . . because of other women Latinas who showed me or women of color, just in general have shown me that your identity is a source of strength . . . it's something that I always knew. I knew I came from a rich history of culture and language. I always know that power and history. I know that I have those things. But I don't think you understand how to use it wisely. I didn't know how to use it as a source of strength in any situation. I felt it was something that I sometimes had to leave outside the door.

She lamented the time it may have taken her to achieve this knowledge as:

> Being a Latina being comfortable and really letting that shine and not be something I just hold close to my heart, and to myself, but something that I share with as many

people. But I will say it's taken time to get to that place . . . telling my story, my leadership

story or whatever it may be, is one in which it is very much grounded in my Latina

identity.

Laura also recognized in this reflection that there is a need to help young women of color; "I

don't think we tap into young women of color early enough because…we're still . . . we haven't

had those same experiences as other communities do, other leaders do, especially White males."

She went on to say:

I wish we would tap on tap into young women leaders of color, Latinas earlier on . . .

when you're still messy and trying to figure out your space, your place and to have

people who can, you know, be a support for you, to be you, keep introducing new

different contexts and situations because for many of us…I grew up in a community in a

household that I didn't have… [those experiences].

Because Laura followed a non-traditional path out of high school, she believed that

people perceived her differently when first meeting her, she acknowledged that her pride comes

with being described as someone who follows through with her commitments and brings her

"authentic" self. Even though hearing herself described as "authentic" at first bothered her, she

now understands the power behind showing up as a genuine person. "I didn't know how to live

in that hybridity . . . code switch to all those same things in the same way." She described her

identity as:

I think sometimes people are surprised at the interest I have . . . the expertise that I have

and some of the relationships or people that are part of my network that helped me be a

better leader. I think sometimes they are a little surprised by that. I think I sometimes

surprise people too. Because I think being a Latina, being a woman. I think sometimes

they're probably waiting for a very different leader and what they would arrive is

someone who's…. I'm humble, but I'm also quite confident about the work that I do and

that is I think sometimes surprising to people "No me dejo" (I'm not a pushover).

In addition to her affinity group of people understanding what it means to be her authentic self,

Laura credits the ability to straddle two cultures as a way for her to engage support for her work:

I like the fact that people think I'm authentic. I think because whether it's me trying to

learn and understand permission . . . this is what realities are and if we're going to disrupt

it, we've got to work together to disrupt. If not, I also need you to be a support and show

up for me. I think as a leader that also helps me. I've had many situations, even as a

deputy superintendent where I would say to funders. This is a reality. . . . I need you to

show up for me on this day, and I need you to speak to truth on what the situation and

what this cause is for you whether support or not . . . in the end, helped with communities

to see

that you know I'm coming at this humble and I'm not trying to come at this from a place

of knowing all things, but--this is work. We've got work to do.

Laura is very aware of the paradox in presenting herself as both humble and confident and

described some skills of communication that help her with her leadership. The following quote

typifies her reflection and awareness of how to hold critical conversations when leading:

I think there are some people . . . some leaders who could just enter into a conversation

from a discourse perspective. I think as a leader. I find that I cannot just hit something

head on that way. I have to learn how to really be observant to the situation. To then figure out what's the right strategy to enter into a conversation, especially if it's a complex conversation. Sometimes it is best to just be direct about the conversation, but in many situations. I think I found that as women you sometimes have to be a lot more strategic you can't just use one tool for every conversation, even though the situation might call for discourse. I don't know if we have that luxury to always be able to do that.

Empathy and Learning

In thinking and talking about her professional development both before becoming a teacher, during her teaching career and later as a system leader, Laura is focused on finding opportunities to connect with the community and connecting with the lived experiences of people. She credits her professors at CSUN who created a graduation experience for Latino students that allowed them to include their family members in a way that allowed them to wear their own clothing and to acknowledge their accomplishments (many were first generation college graduates), in a way that felt familiar and was a source of pride and inspiration. She also described her experience as a paraprofessional for a teacher:

Being a teacher's assistant for the first time and seeing how the teacher, not knowing what to do, you know, it was a Caucasian English only speaking teacher, and then you have all these English learners… recent arrivals. I still remember them, Edgar, and he was from El Salvador and you know so smart, so bright [emphasized]. Was trying to learn English and just remembering those experiences is something. And when we talk about being humbled. Like, I still love those experiences.

In a follow up email exchange Laura clarified that the above story was one of "being able to see the impact of identity and the supports students needed and how the teacher could not support more and how she was reminded about the students' resiliency and how he taught the teacher and and ultimately how quickly he could learn-it was humbling and brought so much joy."

Using her knowledge of both the language and culture and honoring these constituents is another way that Laura gets to be her "authentic" self, she relates it as:

> I can really relate to many of the communities that I've served, I'm able to understand their perceived experience as well as the need. . . . I see our work as customer service, right, I mean that's sort of my role. And if you're feeling, whatever your perception is or reality is I think by speaking the language feeling comfortable whether, when I was a teacher. You know, go to the, you know, the parties, the kid's parties and . . . I easily could join and it felt comfortable and good to, you know, leading community events where there are large numbers of community of Latinos and being able to deal with that or be responsive to that as well as English learner communities because of the fact that I really try to come at it from a place of empathy and learning.

Laura is a successful Latina leader recognized both at a state and national level. She reflected on how she leads and recognized the privileged place from where she experienced the pandemic, it became both a source of frustration and a recognition of her position of privilege now that she finds herself being able to impact policy at a larger level she stated, "My humble beginning is not necessarily reflected in what's happening right now in my life." Laura's deep sense of her identity and lived experience is what drives her work, and she credited mentors, professors and others who have given her a network of support that allows her to go back to her authentic self.

She recommended that all leaders should identify for themselves who they are, why they do the work they do and what drives them.

> There are internal assets that I know I have and because of the fact that I had educators or experiences that helped me identify what those self-actualization skills were from my culture my language my identity to just natural things about my spirit and being I think it was doing what was critical… and I don't think educational leaders get to do that very often until again, much later in life and I think that's unfortunate.

We close with her final comment: "Self-actualization, knowing your assets, but also that network was critical for me and my educational leadership." In a follow up review, she asked to express that "as a leader I learned what my internal assets were with the support and help of mentors, but we need to foster this earlier with students and emerging leaders." Laura's leadership practices are to build trust with mainstream, honor constituents and to lead by example. She recognized that how she shows up to the work and how she enters conversations are marked by others' perceptions of who she is and that informed her critical race theory lens, yet she sees this as a strength of embracing her identity, culture, and language.

Sofia

Sofia has over 21 years of experience in education and worked in the health and human services branch of education systems. She has held a variety of positions in health and human services and is now a Superintendent for a County Office of Education. She considerd herself bilingual and described her childhood as growing up in poverty by a mother with a secondary education and a father with an elementary school education. Her self-described strategies for leadership are having compassion, empathy, distributive leadership and being vulnerable, and

having a belief that people can reach high expectations. Conversely, she described the barriers to leadership success as "systemic racism and sexism, getting people to believe in the community they are required to support, and negative thinkers."

Unique Experiences Are Strengths

The non-traditional pathway for Sofia to complete high school traversed her journey to becoming a superintendent of a large county office of education. She spoke candidly about the fact that she realized her colleagues have questions about how someone who was not an educator became a superintendent. "I'm Latina, it's because I'm a woman and it's because I come from a very different background, not only in terms of my employment experience and the fact that I didn't come through the traditional instructional route." She was also keenly aware of the internal voice that many times makes her doubt her own abilities:

My own experience as non-traditional student, you know, as a young mom. So I think

that part of it is my own head that sometimes that negative talk…wait a minute, I'm in

the room with all these really smart instructional people and I'm just a non-traditional

student and believe it or not, you know, even though I have three degrees from a top

ranked university and every once in a while that ugly voice will stand out and those fears

will come back and you know I've learned to really to just own that and get through

it….I've learned over time, just as I shared previously that my unique experiences are

actually a strength.

Compassion and Empathy

In describing her leadership style, Sofia relied on her vulnerability to guide how she interacted with students, parents, and employees. The following excerpt is representative of how Sofia has used her skills of compassion and empathy to lead:

> You know, as a first-generation immigrant you know what it's like to face poverty and you know the hardships, the discrimination, the basic needs that many of our families aren't getting met . . . that understanding of how all parents really care about their kids and that just because you know from my own experience Latinos, like my parents did not come to my school. . . . My family didn't really, my parents didn't really understand the educational system or, you know, they were so busy…. Their priority with five children was to work and make money and put a roof over our head, and they were probably intimidated. I think having that true understanding of parents who care so deeply about their children and finding ways to engage with them where they don't feel threatened . . . to also understand when they can't and find other ways to make sure that we're able to explain and help them to understand what their children need and how they might be able to help without judgment. So, I think just having those personal experiences . . . are different from someone who has it, and it may be hard for them to really empathize and understand what our students and our families are experiencing.

It is evident that Sofia believed in the power of being able to have leaders who are willing to challenge the system to meet the needs of the families and students. In response to speaking the language of families, Sofia expressed concern at her level of proficiency in Spanish when

118

speaking to parents and was appreciative of the grace extended to her when she stumbled upon words she could not translate:

> Families will help you and they're so grateful that you're willing to put yourself out there to be vulnerable to show. Hey, I know how hard it is, when you're speaking another language because- look I don't speak Spanish perfectly, but I want to communicate with you in whatever way is most effective and when the way you feel comfortable and if I have to feel a little uncomfortable…you have to experience it every day . . . you know when you're trying to speak English, So I think it's a wonderful way to connect and model for all of our students, and adults.

This experience informed her passion for what is possible for herself and her students:

> Doesn't matter where you started in life. Doesn't matter if you didn't speak the language you know the potential of doing whatever you want is always there. If you're willing to work hard and get help and fight you know the barriers that are presented.

Beliefs

Sofia also described best practices such as analyzing data, , reviewing policies, and exploring the expectations of teachers and employees. She identified the issue of believing that it's possible for all students to learn and achieve at high rates as one of the biggest challenges. She additionally, identified the same issue for both students and families and asserted that the role of the leader is to inspire and support parents to create a strong belief system in the possibilities:

> When you have deeper conversations, which you find is people don't believe and people

place barriers and excuses for why children aren't able to learn and I think that we have to go much deeper into that, you know, it's, of course, you know, it starts with . . . I don't think you can. It's not easy to change people's hearts and deep-rooted racial biases or you know that they have . . . that just doesn't happen. You know, it takes a lot of work. So I think, first you start with looking at your policies to identify anything that may be leading to more of these biases or that may be leading to kids not having full access to the support that they need and changing the policy first because then it's a policy and you can say you didn't follow the policy. Second to that or even I don't even know if it's second it's maybe even more important than that is getting the children and the families themselves to believe in themselves because they've been told so often that you can't get here, or you're not doing well or your child isn't succeeding or you're not meeting our expectations of an involved parent. So, I think all of those things are critically important.

Sofia believes in the value of helping families and students in feeling pride in their culture and language and what an incredible asset it is to have these. Sofia's first-born child was born with a severe medical disability and as a young mom she recognized the need to pursue an education to better understand her son's disability. She pushed through her feelings of insecurities about school and believed that led to overachieve in attaining three degrees from a top ranked university, the fear of failure. She described these experiences as the catalyst for her compassionate and empathetic nature and her determination to ensure students are treated as a "whole child." She stated that you can't separate school from housing and mental health because they are all equally important. Lastly, for Sofia strong partnerships with outside agencies also provide the safety net and are part of a greater system that is needed in order for all to work

together to provide for the needs of children and families. Sofia took a non-traditional pathway to high school completion, after dropping out to give birth as a young mom, and yet achieved the highest education degree (Ed.D.). She became nationally recognized and a sought-after leader, she believes in being compassionate and recognizes the biases she and others like her face. Her sensibility towards marginalized students helped inform her leadership to shape programs and practices that systems weren't willing to address. Sofia's leadership practices are to honor constituents, use critical race theory lens which informs her empathy and compassion and to lead by example through her own academic contributions.

Maria

Maria is a bilingual educator with close to 20 years of experience in education. She is an immigrant from South America, she grew up in a middle-class family with secondary level educated parents. She has held positions in education such as teacher leader, principal, executive director, and assistant superintendent. She holds an Ed.D. and identifies as a high academic native level of Spanish in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Some of the barriers she has faced in leadership have been racist and biased entrenched practices and she has used a transformational leadership style and names community engagement, coherence between departments and a focus on instruction as strategies for leadership success. Understanding power dynamics and work on antiracist and linguistically sustaining transformation is her identified impact on her leadership practice.

Asset Based Views

Maria's leadership in the area of Latino English language learners defined her focused journey. She responded to questions about measurable outcomes by citing the need to

differentiate quantitative and qualitative data meaningfully and wholly for English Language Learners. She cited its impact on views and decision making as follows:

> In what ways do we use them for the purpose of deficit views that contribute to a narrative that then reinforce the deficit view of students and therefore I need to counter that with more qualitative data that comes from the experiences of the students themselves and families themselves and of course, teachers, principals, leaders that also influence those environments in my leadership both of those have had to come into play and influence the way we use that data to move forward with decision making.

In some ways Maria herself felt a need to prove her own worth and academic knowledge as a way to belong. She referred to her own academic attainment when describing how she believed others perceived her education leadership practice:

> I have pushed myself to try to reach you know, like the doctoral level of a scholarship attainment because of wanting to demonstrate that I'm capable and that I'm committed to you know stretching myself to the highest level, and probably no way trying to capture credibility professionalism in case there's any doubt, because you know, being a woman of color, who is a second language speaker of English, bilingual, immigrant. There are a lot of ways that those conditions can be interpreted by others to be less than, and so I tried to counter the narrative by pushing myself to demonstrate, you know, these high levels, whether it's been . . . ultimately I've done it for myself. . . . It's been a great journey and it's been helpful particularly around the notion of understanding data.

She continued on by asserting that for her career choices she has stayed in the field of English language learners and compared herself to other leaders who have risen through the ranks of K-

12 leadership by holding various positions. There is a sense for Maria that the need is so great in this area, and she explained it as:

> I have always stayed very close to the field of English language learners within programs that serve English language learners because I have felt that it's at such an underserved subgroup and you know best it's sometimes marginally attended to and it really deserves consistent ongoing leadership and advocacy to move it forward. . . . People believe that I'm committed to the field.

Connection and Community

Maria has a deep commitment to being a leader that is connected to the community and shared collective experiences as a way of knowing how to lead and what is needed by students, teachers, principals, and parents. She bemoaned the need for glossy reports, written summaries and any administrative tasks that take time away from the relationship work that is needed from leaders. She described these as ways to understand and impact the educational journey of students:

> So a leader that spends time with stakeholders, a leader that spends a lot of time connecting with students, with teachers, with parents . . . that isn't necessarily people might think you know that's all that's great that you're doing that, but that's not what furthers your credibility the things that the institution wants are reports and memos and a lot of you know, the written word and the presentation that's glossy those are the things that further careers and those are not my strength, like, I have to work hard at those and if I could. . . . I would avoid them but in the institution, you have to prioritize the written form, the objective data but because of the field, I mean my position...typically people, I

think that are successful in my position have to straddle the notion of being a community

leader with being an administrator within an institution and you can't further the changes

and improvements, you want to do by simply imposing them at the central office

institutional level without having done a lot of trust building with principals and teachers

and parents.

She noted using storytelling as a tool to help both the institution and individuals understand why

change needs to happen and she challenged herself at the same time to learn to do it in a way that

the institution can understand it:

Where I have to bring all of these different stakeholders and help them move from where

they're at if they're comfortable with what they're doing, because there are

improvements that need to occur. But then I also have to have the time to describe that

process in a glossy way in a presentation and I have time for both I need to do the work

I'm not necessarily good at telling the story for the institution, but I have to push myself

in that area. . . . That's the area where I have to where I have to do better. To better tell

the story of what's happening with students with parents with teachers at the school level

and if I don't do that well…then the notion of making the change of being believed as a

leader is harder.

As part of making the connections needed for non-English speaking families, she recognized that

bilingual leaders shift the power dynamics in schools and provide support to families who need

access to the educational system in ways that others may take for granted:

The majority of the families and student body spoke my same home language and, at

times, it was more like 50/50. . . . I felt that it leveled the playing field for the families,

because they didn't need to use an interpreter to get to the decision maker in institutions,

so they had direct connection, so I felt that I was providing a level of equity from that

perspective.

To move the work forward she recognized that there is an imbalance of cultural understanding

between being individualistic and collectivist. This imbalance has been a part of her development

as a leader:

> The ways I work the way they communicate my craving for more of collective cultural
>
> practices in a highly individualistic majority culture and often highly individualistic
>
> institutional cultures. I am aware that when I was younger and less mature, I sort of
>
> suffered from it, you know, like suffering from the fact that I didn't have collectivist
>
> spaces, but now I tried to create it myself. I am aware that I'm going against the current
>
> and counterculture. So, at least with maturity an age has come more awareness of my
>
> ways of being and what I need to know, do well and thrive. I'm more mature. . . . I don't
>
> apologize for that anymore in the past, I thought that it was something I needed to grow
>
> out of and (pauses) like toughen my skin.

Being Human

Maria acknowledged that the current leadership preparation programs do not address

issues of educating Latino/a English Language learners despite the fact that they are the largest

growing population. She also pointed out that many are being moved into special education

programs because of this lack of understanding their different language needs:

> They are one of the largest subgroups along with the notion of English learners who are
>
> now starting to be overrepresented in special education most of those topics I've had to

learn on my own, because that situation requires it, but not through the administrator

preparation program.

She mentioned that most programs address diversity and multiculturalism but not multilingual

education. She does believe that the current movement towards anti-racist pedagogy and

culturally and linguistically sustaining practices are recognizing that the "building blocks of the

American education system are based on the cultural expectations of the majority culture which

have been predominantly White." She further stated that "... the notion of the curriculum and

institution, has also been focused on the majority White culture and the right hand of White

culture is English only. English only perspectives and English only majority cultural

expectations." Maria called out the need to develop the capacity of staff to address the linguistic

needs of students while ensuring that they are a part of the general education program and

curriculum. She posited that many well-intentioned people will want to separate them or

segregate them in order to address their needs, but she believed that dual language programs are

better at serving them and enrich the school community overall. Maria is passionate about this:

> It's not only for racial differences but linguistic differences and ability differences
>
> separate but not equal is "no go" in my mind, and so it has to be within the general
>
> education environment, and we have to do the hard thing of building everybody's
>
> capacity to attend to all of those needs in that environment.

The collective experiences of English language learners in school systems that seem to be

designed for either general education or special education students is not one that Maria takes

lightly. She recognized that while the COVID-pandemic created new challenges for the way

adults relate to one another it also created a challenge for schooling children in ways no one predicted:

> It's been really hard we have collectively learned some things that we probably want to carry on like the notion of flexibility, the notion that not all learning is the same… that some learning is better done in person, but some learning can also be done remotely that there are some kids that have engaged to (distance learning) really well and what of that can continue in the future….It has also revealed, of course, all of the disparities.

She continued to grapple with how both adults and students will be interacting differently while going through this shift:

> I want to say that I feel like we're still very privileged because I think we don't necessarily understand the level of the impact that it has had on families that are housing insecure and food insecure and all of that, and so it's been this hard for us that don't have to necessarily deal with those challenges, you know, imagine how hard it's been for the families and we still help them connect online for synchronous or asynchronous learning . . . so yeah … I think as we move forward and we start having a semblance of how, and in what ways we take the lessons of this time has given us and to apply them to future settings and contexts we are going to process what we've learned about being human, about community and about learning.

Change

We end Maria's interview with a question about a story she would like to be told and she chose to talk about her accomplishments in her previous school district where she was able to get the district to move from offering transitional bilingual programs to dual language programs for

127

English learners and English only speakers. Her reclaiming of the general education space for English learners is:

> Probably the story around change, you know the change process that occurred in my former school district around change in transitional bilingual education to dual language programs and going from you know, a handful three to four transitional programs into a transformation that led to almost 50% of the schools, having dual language programs . . . so I think it was a story of claiming the general education environment because the transitional programs were very small programs where people would literally tell me 'oh you, you know the bilingual classroom is in the basement at the end of the corridor,' you know, like they were programs that were unattended to, not led properly … The kids were separated. The families weren't central to the mission of the school.

She reached a goal in this district that led to a very student-centered change:

> A lot of the schools that went through the transformation. They went from one little section to half of the sections for each grade level and they were a significant presence in the school and that could not be ignored . . . it could not be put at the end of the hall or the corridor. It could not be forgotten, because it was like right there front and center it required that the school completely change their ways of communicating with parents so finally Spanish speaking parents had to have secretaries, who are bilingual, translation of communications and newsletters. Interpretation of messages that you know were done over the phone. . . . I feel like it became more like their experience . . . became more similar to what English speaking families have always experienced a greater sense that it was also their community and that they knew what was going on with their children's

learning so Dual language or not dual language that's the vision that I have for families of English language learners where they feel they know what's going on, where they're being made a priority where they can't be ignored anymore.

Maria practiced transformational leadership, she believed strongly in working with the community to impact change. She also practiced honoring constituents and further practices through academic discourse. She attributed this to both a need to prove herself as a leader but also because she believed this area is under recognized and underserved.

Josue

Josue is an experienced superintendent in a large urban school district. His story of being a homeless immigrant young man who is now dedicated to student success serves as an inspiration for many leaders. With over 30 years of experience as an educator he has amassed recognition for leading his school district toward closing achievement gaps. He speaks five languages, English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian. He is one of six children born to parents with elementary education and grew up in poverty in his native country. He is the only member of the family to emigrate to the United States. He names unfair competition as a barrier to his leadership success and uses visioning, planning, effective communication, focus and perspective as his tried-and-true strategies for success. He looks for team members with Type A personalities to achieve outcomes.

Narrowing Achievement Gap

Josue's leadership style came through with confidence and pride at the start of the interview, he named the measurable outcomes for his large urban school district with concise and precise mission-oriented goal attainment:

A number of results, [which have gained national recognition] because it focused on

narrowing achievement gap, dramatically improved graduation rates and really

highlighting. In fact, the minority student achievement in addition to that, when I

became superintendent graduation rates in our city on average were around 58%, and

had some high schools with graduation rates as low as 36% in the schools that we

manage excluding charter schools now [the rate is] 93.1%. The biggest jumps and the

biggest narrowing of the gap has been graduation rates for English language learners or

students with disabilities and for African American students and for students, regardless

of ethnicity or race.

He described his journey toward achieving success not just in race demographics but also by

socio economic status and language proficiency status. His understanding of the measures for

schools using both internal data but also external ratings such as the NAPE scores is a source of

pride:

When I think back to the early years of my superintendency when I inherited dozens of

schools rated (as the lowest) today for the fourth year in a row, we have zero schools

rated (in the lowest categories). So we do not have failing schools and 99% of our

schools are rated in the top three tiers we have a higher percentage of schools rated in the

top two tiers schools in our state, even though we are poor, more diverse with a greater

percentage of English language learners, then the state as a whole. In addition to that, we

are top rated district, which for an urban school system is very, very rare. Fourth, and

eighth grade particularly and in our district fourth graders are number one in the country

in reading and number one in the country in mathematics our eighth graders don't fall too far behind.

He continued to support his district achievement in being recognized for achievement in increased AP scores for Hispanic students and African American students, being recognized as a top district of the year for school choice offerings. He finished with sharing about his financial success as a district. He has led two successful referenda and described:

Invest in excess of a quarter of a billion dollars in technology and about a billion dollars in school construction renovation, which is going phenomenally well, we've completed about $900 million dollars' worth in technology…

Josue understood the value of investing in people not only through professional development but also through fiscal responsibility:

The second referendum we passed was critically important and that one was to significantly improve teacher compensation and we increased teacher compensation, with a voter approved referenda, this propelled our teachers from below the national average salary to significantly above national average salary for 4 years, also an excess of a billion dollars by anywhere between 13 . . . 14 and 23% for teachers.

Gravitational Pull of Status Quo

Josue's managerial approach to leadership is framed on the premise that Abraham Lincoln has used to work with a team of rivals. He believes strongly that hiring type *A* personality types who deliver *A*-level work will lead to the best decisions that can be made and implemented quickly. He considered this rivalry to be a positive and constructive approach that becomes results oriented. The following describes the urgency and precision of his approach:

A very active listening literally leadership marked by a definite approach that forces

critical thinking through the planning process debate with my team over best approaches,

with pros and cons on the table but then when we make . . . when we reach an agreement

regarding implementation . . . swift implementation . . . quick implementation across the

board, because we recognize that the gravitational pull of the status quo, usually can kill

the best of ideas and well for a long period of time, make decisions and then implement

swiftly. . . . You never want to take off in an airplane that's taking off slow. . . . You take

off fast, if you want to get somewhere.

Bend Not Break

Convincing people of the ability to lead was posed as a question when describing his

leadership style and Josue explained the need for leaders to be adaptable and adept at

understanding the situations and political pressures and to tackle them without sacrificing one's

convictions:

Political pressures that I've lived through as superintendent. . . . I think good leaders

adapt, but without bending on their ethics, their moral fiber and their conviction, so I

have adapted much like a palm tree, you know I have swayed with different winds but

I've never broken or bent to a point where I am sacrificing my belief system my

convictions my own sense of ethic about the work and about public education so over

time, I would think that I have done things from a different perspective but that's the

approach . . . and its strategy it's not shifting my conviction or my belief system, and I

think any good leader reads the conditions and adapts the approach without sacrificing

the conviction, and I think that's important.

He perceived his identity in a very positive way and used it to inform his leadership:

> I think it's number one. I do think it influences me in a very positive way, I don't carry it
> as a chip on my shoulder . . . I don't wear it on my shirt sleeves nor do I expect to accrue
> special consideration on the basis of it. I think what it does, for me, is it provides me
> greater sensitivity and awareness towards those both students and adults alike, who
> currently carry the same burden or face the same challenge. So, it is a heightening of
> sensitivity and awareness that leads to, in my opinion, more effective leadership work
> and policy development that eliminates the gaps that come with the historic challenges
> that minority and the immigrant communities have faced.

He went on to describe how his experience gave him a greater understanding and sensitivity to
create greater awareness and also how this allowed him to tell his story in a very free, and
unfettered, unfiltered way. This translated to impact of outcome in his opinion and people knew
he not only can talk the talk, but he can walk the walk. He was not so naive however about this
inspiration to overlook the need to address the inequities that exist for students:

> There's no reason as to why America's kids who follow the same journey
> shouldn't be able to succeed, and if they don't then let's have that very difficult
> conversation as to why not, I don't believe that those kids are broken and if they're not
> succeeding, then something around them is broken, and we are to pay close attention to
> that . . . why is it not happening for other kids who traveled the same journey, this allows
> us then to strategically and honestly look at the social conditions around kids and their
> families, particularly immigrant kids minority kids and ask the tough questions about the
> adequacy of schooling, the adequacy of home security, food security, the fear of

immigration and all those elements that have a direct or indirect impact on student

achievement.

In addition to having a deep understanding of the social and cultural conditions of families, he

recognized the importance of his multilingualism as an incredible asset to working with the

community members and family members:

If you are able to speak the language automatically you are able to lift certain barriers and

challenges of communication that makes this and you know that some of those

challenges, often lead to distrust or misunderstanding so the two very, very quickly on the

basis of where I am, who I am around go from what I believe is pretty decent English to

fluent Spanish to fluent Portuguese to fluent French or Haitian Creole to Italian breaks

down many, many barriers particularly in communities, like my city where first and

second generation residents still struggle with English. I have the ability to speak directly

to the child, but also to the parents and the native language not allowing any doubt about

what my messaging is. It's an added plus in my leadership style, because I do not need a

translator I can get on Spanish radio Spanish TV and deliver broadcast messages to the

entire community, as I would do in English.

Not only is it important to him that his message is delivered in a language that they understand

on a much higher level it is the sense of being a part of a larger community effort that results

from being seen and understood:

Let's face it communication is an indispensable tool of leadership. If you are versatile in

your communication to build by being able to connect not only with a mind, but also the

heart of the individual you're addressing. Then I think you're better able to lead better

able to explain issues better able to deal with challenges in our communities there's no greater sense of belonging . . . that's in somebody's feeling that this person so cares about me my family my children that he meets me where we where I am and in the way that is most comfortable, for me, and I think that's important.

Representative Workforce

In identifying how his own language and cultural understandings of the families and communities he serves are key to leadership, he also described the development of teams of leaders in his cabinet who also are representative of the student body. Having a representative workforce helps to breakdown a lot of barriers and he ensured that principals, directors, and other senior leaders have walked the same journey and are emphatically dedicated, "to utilizing strategies that improve and increase the opportunities for these students through equity and access." This is also his way of "demonstrating to our diverse student population that we are them and they are us and secondly, this relentless pursuit of our own maturity towards a better version of who we are, as professionals and recognition of the challenges that our students face." He believed strongly that developing their leadership style is part of this work and he conducts leadership retreats and hosts equity conversations:

The need for us to really look at ourselves in the mirror but then turn the mirror into a window because the mirror reflects upon how we see ourselves in the world, but hopefully that mirror is also able to open as a window that lets us see and do for others beyond our current existence, and certainly we deploy massive professional development on these topics like social emotional well-being of English language learners.

A similar approach used is the development of a parent academy, to ensure that the system is developing the skills and knowledge of the students but also that of the parent and essentially getting a two for one approach. The academy aims to address a range of topics and issues both to develop workforce skills and also to help parents learn about the tax code, their immigration rights, and ultimately Josue mentions the effects of these on children "…helping those parents is helping the students, because we know that a lot of these kids come to us marked bruised and traumatized sometimes by the trauma and bruising that they observe their own parents going through." Josue also recognized the financial supports needed by many students and families and he ensured that they receive adequate fiscal investments that result in added instructional supports:

> You know we from a funding perspective, we do not fund every kid exactly the same, we have a multi-tiered system of support and with tiered system of support, depending on the tier that the student is in and one of those is English language learners then there is differentiated funding and resource allocation for that child there's also additional time on task Saturday programs for the child and the parent, there's the opportunity for winter school there's a winter break school there's the opportunity for spring break school there's the opportunity for year round school so we use time, effort, money, intellect, compassion culture, tradition all as strategic investments to best be able to connect which students and their families that makes sense.

We Became the Caretakers

In describing the impact of the COVID pandemic in his school system Josue acknowledged that while it was the most disruptive event he's ever known there were a few

elements in place that helped with the implementation of a new way of working; a versatile diversified choice driven approach to work, a referendum passed that provided the technology needed to provide 20,000 devices to students overnight, development of digital content and established hotlines for parents to get "mental well-being social emotional support, technical assistance, all that was very seamless." While the summer became a bit more complicated, they were able to provide three different summer experiences for students on the basis of need, fragility, poverty, special education, and language support. His school district was open and remained open since early fall. He credits this to having the right protocols, having the right investments, and providing choice. Parents have chosen 50/50 between distance and in-person learning and students are going to school 5 days a week. He described the work as:

> We've also learned that changed the way we work, is the fact that, and I think this is very apparent to everybody it's that, more than ever we became the caretakers not just of the academic success of students but the food security they need, the home security they need, the social emotional support they need, the mental support they need develop new systems of identifying abuse, because many of those kids were not with us, relying on different signs. . . . I'll say is that we have become much better at recognizing identifying those kids who, even before the COVID[-19]-crisis were already in crisis.

He asserted that the lessons learned are meant to stay with us and recognized the impact on families and the way they interact with them:

> So we became a 24/7 anytime anywhere system that meets students and families where they are rather than this expectation, you have schools, they come because that was over . . . you know parents for the better, part of a year have had a front row seat to their kids'

education, they are making decisions now they're more empowered that's not going to go away so we've learned how to leverage that parental energy of engagement in a positive way to help us become better at what we do sometimes it's not easy, but I think it's good.

Compassion for Voices Ignored

Josue has been very public with his life story it is both a source of inspiration and strength to so many people, we closed with him sharing how this resulted in who he is as a leader on a daily basis:

I couch surfed in friend's homes, when I was a teenager in this country, but for about a month I literally slept under the bridge, so I know the struggle and I have incredible sympathy compassion and drive to help the thousands of homeless kids in our community and across the country I'm also you know, the only one in this country for my family, the only one I'm one of six, the only one, for many years to graduate high school and in college until my youngest brother who was like a son to me and he became my prodigy. Never in a million years would I have thought that, considering my humble beginnings growing up in a one room apartment with no running water, electricity, born to a third grade educated custodian father and third grade educated seamstress for a mother in very, very difficult conditions were food was scarce and everything was never in a million years would I have thought that at one point I would be at the White House advising Presidents on education- that I would be national superintendent of the year four different years or that I would be on the board nationally recognized organizations, that I would be the author of you know, well respected and nationally recognized publication writing on the issues of educational equity and never did, I think that what I would say

138

would ever matter, because I was so accustomed to people in my realm when I was a child, their voices being ignored, class, status, poverty, lack of influence or position and I say that because that inspires me and I hope by me repeating these truthful stories about my own journey inspire young people in this country that some of us may have had a difficult time getting here or staying here, but by the grace of God, now that we're here we're here for good. We do not need to change ourselves in this country to be the best version of us, and that's the story I tried to tell every single day.

Josue's transformational leadership practices are to lead by example, honor constituents, and servant leadership. He practiced a managerial leadership approach that creates urgency and works to hire people who represent the students they serve.

Cross Case Analysis

The *testimonios* provided here have given light to a variety of experiences by Latino/a leaders in large school systems in the United States and with significant Latino/a English language learner populations. Some of the major themes dealt with issues of identity, painful and hurtful inequitable schooling experiences, and a lack of attention to a subgroup of students' schooling experiences; they all shared a deep compassion and empathy for the students and families they serve. The participants shared personal or familial stories about educational inequitable schooling systems that left indelible marks on them sometimes in a positive way and sometimes in a negative way. Despite these experiences the participants felt compelled to lead and become beacons of hope to others like themselves. Table 8 depicts the major themes that emerged from the participants' testimonios about their schooling.

Table 6

Themes for Leadership Practices

Themes	Personal moral compass	Relating to students and families	Systemic inequities are revealed	Bilingual-Bicultural identity	Proving the right to lead
Definition	This practice relates to the experience and expectation that the leaders have a strong "why" or purpose for taking on the role of leader.	This practice relates to the experience that leaders can easily see their former self in the students and families they serve. Relational trust and sense of belonging is a key feature.	This practice relates to ways in which leaders develop a clear set of policies and practices to be used in the school system to address needs of the historically underserved student population.	This practice relates to ways in which the leaders used their identity and mastery of a second language to communicate and build trust with families and communities.	This practice relates to the ways in which leaders describe the impact that a lack of opportunity for Latina/o represents and some of the practices they have to undertake if they do get to lead.
Sample quotes	"If you could see things from their eyes, you know, his story. History is his story. What about her story. It's the perspective…" Luis	"We are them and they are us. . . . . I have incredible sympathy compassion and drive to help the thousands of homeless kids in our community and across the country I'm also you know, the only one in this country for my family" Josue	"The ability to be empathetic and the ability to lead and be very clear…and have targets and measures and a very clear plan of how we're going to get there." Sofia	"Because of my cultural, linguistic background as well as you know, being "authentic"…and in the end, helped with communities to see that you know I'm coming at this humble and I'm not trying to come at this from a place of knowing all things, but this is work we've got to do.." Laura	". . . if we're Latinos . . . it's all of our story you have to be better than them you have to try harder . . . you have to be better than anyone else in the room because there's a bigger spotlight on you.." Jose

Bilingual/Bicultural Connections

The purposefully selected participants all identified their language proficiency skills in English and Spanish as fluent. This allowed them the ability to live in and code switch in and out of communities inside and outside academia. Most of them have doctorate degrees and have achieved the highest levels of leadership within some of largest school systems in the United

States. Their ability to traverse these worlds gives them a unique perspective and responsibility to create schooling systems that bring all students' academic and social emotional needs to the forefront. It is a unique set of skills to be able to translate a message to constituents on the spot as was expressed by Jose when he spoke to his inherent bilingualism, Josue also spoke to his ability to connect directly with families in a way that his message was understood easily and breaking barriers to understanding. Laura related her ability to attend a Latina/o child's birthday party or to speak to a large community gathering in their language and feeling comfortable in that space. Maria spoke to this as a space and program that needs to be reclaimed if public education is to deliver on the promise:

> I felt that it leveled the playing field for the families, because they didn't need to use an interpreter to get to the decision maker in institutions, so they had direct connection, so I felt that I was providing a level of equity from that perspective.

Sofia felt that her level of Spanish was not as high as she would like it to be but felt that as a leader her attempt modeled both an authentic learning experience and a desire to connect to families while understanding that their daily lives required them to also constantly try to speak English to make themselves understood.

Personal Moral Compass and Humanity

All of the participants shared a passion for the humanity that exists and is many times lacking in the education system. This humanity was evident in the way they described how important their own lived experience as Latina/o leaders informed the impact they had both internally and externally for those they lead and thus revealed a strong personal moral compass for their leadership journey. Their way of speaking about this topic reflected a drive and a

purpose that was beyond their status or title. To begin with Jose expressed this in his interview when he finished talking about the measurable outcomes or statistics that are often used, test scores, attendance, achievement etc. and then paused to say that as important was the measurement of mental health and wellness: "To lead not only in academics, but also to understand that the humanistic side of educating children is just as important, in my humble opinion, as the academic side." Maria expressed the same personal moral compass when she described the process of change that her schools went through as they added more dual language classes: "to process what we've learned about being human, about community and about learning." For Teresa this was expressed as:

> The whole reason why I'm in education is to improve outcomes and support and open doors for students of all colors…it is not to just have a good high school that is, you know, got a great football team and a great basketball team and only some kids getting into great places.

Luis' experience of being ousted and marginalized as a Latino leader stung but also helped him to understand a source of strength in being reflective of perspective, we all bring as leaders; "if you could see things from the eyes, you know, his story. History is his story. What about her story. It's the perspective…" Laura had a more internal path to understanding:

> Latinas who shown me or women of color, just in general have shown me that your identity is a source of strength . . . I didn't know how to use it as a source of strength in any situation. I felt it was something that I sometimes had to leave outside the door.

Sofia's journey was similarly starting with the "self" as she expressed; "I've learned over time, just as I shared previously that my unique experiences are actually a strength." She spoke of how

142

much she struggles with the internal voice that tells her she's not good enough also known as the "imposter syndrome." For Josue there was a level of understanding of himself which he described as having a maturity that leaders must bring to the work. He stated the following:

> I think what it does, for me, is it provides me greater sensitivity and awareness towards those both students and adults alike, who currently carry the same burden or face the same challenge. So, it is a heightening of sensitivity and awareness that leads to, in my opinion, more effective leadership work and policy development that eliminates the gaps that come with the historic challenges that minority and the immigrant communities have faced.

These leaders bring a moral compass that is driven by a deep desire to right some of the wrongs and become more than just Latina/o leaders but agents of change who see a group of families and students who have been marginalized and pushed out of schools. Their personal moral compass is based on the reality of the human condition.

Relating to Students and Families

Most of the participants expressed the importance of what it meant to be like many of the students in their school systems and that the relevance and relation to their experiences truly helped to make students and families view educational systems as possibilities and opportunities instead of as places of oppression. Josue most aptly expressed it when he said:

> We are them and they are us, I have incredible sympathy compassion and drive to help the thousands of homeless kids in our community and across the country I'm also you know, the only one in this country for my family.

Sofia expressed it as:

I think that when you inspire people and get people to follow you, people really

appreciate the fact that you speak from experience, the experience of growing up first

generation immigrant that you know what it's like to face poverty and you know the

hardships the discrimination.

Teresa's ability to see her mother's story and the stories of so many in her life who were clearly

treated differently than herself were key impacts to how she ensured that the leadership strategies

lifted the assets and not the deficit views that many educators hold.

Systemic Inequities Are Revealed

Latina/o leaders in this study were also in many cases students in the same or similar

systems they led. This insight from either a student or teacher/leader gave them a perspective that

allowed them to view the systems inequities. They used their platform to reveal the policies,

practices, and views about Latina/o English learners to make public the transformational changes

needed to close the achievement gaps. Laura identified her approach to this work by shifting the

focus away from student outcomes and towards teaching practices. Her approach resulted in

using professional development and feedback loops to help teachers refine their craft and learn

how to reach students differently. She approached this work first by noticing the large number of

English learners being identified in special education and began to help teachers notice what the

students can do and began to have students' exit special education. She noticed "Once explicit

teaching happened, they were growing and flourishing both academically as well as social

emotionally." Luis also used an approach to ensure teachers who were bilingual were being

assigned to the primary grades and publicly cited research on what was best practice for English

learners. Similarly, Maria, Teresa and Josue expressed a fervor for calling out the strengths that

students bring when they are bilingual. They turned the conversations into possibilities. Josue stated the following:

> I don't believe that those kids are broken and if they're not succeeding, then something around them is broken, and we are to pay close attention to that . . . why is it not happening for other kids who traveled the same journey, this allows us then to strategically and honestly look at the social conditions around kids and their families, particularly immigrant kids minority kids and ask the tough questions about the adequacy of schooling, the adequacy of home security, food security, the fear of immigration and all those elements that have a direct or indirect impact on student achievement.

Maria described it more as a system rooted in bias: "the notion of the curriculum and institution, has also been focused on the majority White culture and the right hand of White culture is English only. English only perspectives and English only majority cultural expectations."

Proving the Right to Lead

Latina/o leaders are confronted with educational challenges like all leaders when it comes to improving outcomes for students. For the participants, an additional barrier was their ability to prove that they earned the right to lead beyond meeting some diversity quota. Luis stated, "You do what you do have to do to convince people that you have the skill sets that are required to lead in this context." He went on to say:

> I don't want to be identified, just as a Latino superintendent. I want to be identified as an effective superintendent . . . but I can't change who I am. I don't want to change who I am and it's my set of experiences that have helped me be successful, to some degree, because I'm proud of my background.

Jose expressed it as, "there was always a great deal of skepticism about who this guy is and why he is in the job and what qualifies him to be the judge." Laura came to realize that to prove herself as a leader she had to come to the realization that she needs to bring her whole self to the work and not just her experience:

> I knew I came from a rich history of culture and language. I know that I have those things. But I don't think you understand how to use it wisely. I didn't know how to use it as a source of strength. In any situation. I felt it was something that I sometimes had to leave outside the door.

Maria felt it in her attainment of higher levels education via a doctorate degree:

> I have pushed myself to try to reach you know, like the doctoral level of a scholarship attainment because of wanting to demonstrate that I'm capable and that I'm committed to you know stretching myself to the highest level, and probably in a way trying to capture credibility, professionalism in case there's any doubt, because you know, being a woman of color, who is a second language speaker of English, bilingual, immigrant.

Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the practices of Latina/o leaders of school systems that enrolled Latina/o and English learners. I found that the participants approached their leadership through a number of applied critical leadership practices. While not all of them used the same practices, there were four practices that were commonly enacted, using a critical race theory lens, honoring constituents, and leading by example and critical conversations. Two of the participants used academic discourse as a way to establish their contributions to educational leadership and to establish credibility as leaders both externally and internally. Through the testimonios and a

146

cross synthesis of them, I identified additional themes of leadership practices that the participants shared. These themes are: (a) personal moral compass, (b) relating to students and families, (c) systemic inequities revealed, (d) bilingual/bicultural connections, and (e) proving the right to lead. While it may appear that relating to students and families might be similar to honoring constituents, the difference is that the ways in which the participants personally related to the students and families increased their own sense of belonging and this resulted in increased relational trust.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to research the practices of Latino leaders' leading large urban school systems in the United States with a significant enrollment of Latina/o and English Learners. It used the applied critical leadership framework to conduct an exploratory, qualitative multiple case study and testimonio methodology. To capture language policy issues, English learner students' schooling and due to the timing of the impact a COVID-19 pandemic questions were added to the original interview protocol developed by Santamaría and Santamaría (2012). The applied leadership framework combined transformational leadership (principles), critical pedagogy (practice) through a critical race theory (perspective/lens) to arrive at a set of applied critical leadership practices which ask: In what ways does my identity enhance my ability to see alternative perspectives and practice effective leadership? The nine leadership characteristics identified are as: critical conversations, critical race theory lens, group consensus, stereotype threat, academic discourse, honoring constituents, leading by example, trust with mainstream, servant leadership. Table 1 defines each of the practices based on text from Santamaria (2014, pp. 367-379).

Table 1

Applied Critical Leadership Practices

Practice	Description
1. Critical conversations	Leaders' willingness to initiate and engage in critical conversations
2. Critical race theory	This lens involved the notion of considering race first, valuing storytelling as communication, being critical of liberalism, and understanding the reality of racism. Leaders chose to assume a CRT lens in order to consider multiple perspectives of critical issues
3. Group consensus	Leaders used consensus building as the preferred strategy for decision making in meetings, one-on-one talks, etc.
4. Stereotype threat	Leaders are conscious of stereotype threat or fulfilling negative stereotypes associated with their perceived racial, ethnic, or linguistic group
5. Academic discourse	Leaders make empirical contributions and to add authentic research-based information to academic discourse regarding underserved groups
6. Honoring constituents	Leaders honor all members of their constituencies (e.g., staff, parents, community members, stakeholders). The leaders sought out and wanted to include voices and perspectives of traditionally silenced groups and individuals (e.g., Spanish-speaking parents of ELLs, students, etc.).
7. Leading by example	Leaders lead by example to meet unresolved educational needs or challenges…purposely lead in order to "give back" to the marginalized communities with which they identified or served, supporting their own social justice journeys
8. Trust with mainstream	Leaders communicate the need to build trust when working with mainstream constituents or partners, or others who did not share an affinity toward issues related to educational equity. They communicated the need to win the trust of individuals in the mainstream, as well as the need to prove themselves qualified and worthy of leadership positions and roles
9. Servant leadership	Leaders "felt somehow-called" to lead, these individuals were reportedly led by what they called "spirit."

Note: Reprinted from *Applied Critical Leadership in Education: Choosing Change*. (p. 8) by L. J. Santamaría and A. P. Santamaría, 2012. Copyright Routledge. Used with permission.

The use of testimonio as part of the qualitative methodology furthers the new

understanding of their practices as stated by Delgado Bernal et al. (2012):

Unlike the more common training of researchers to produce unbiased knowledge, testimonio challenges objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance. These approaches have resulted in new understandings about how marginalized communities build solidarity and respond to and resist dominant culture, laws, and policies that perpetuate inequity. (p. 1).
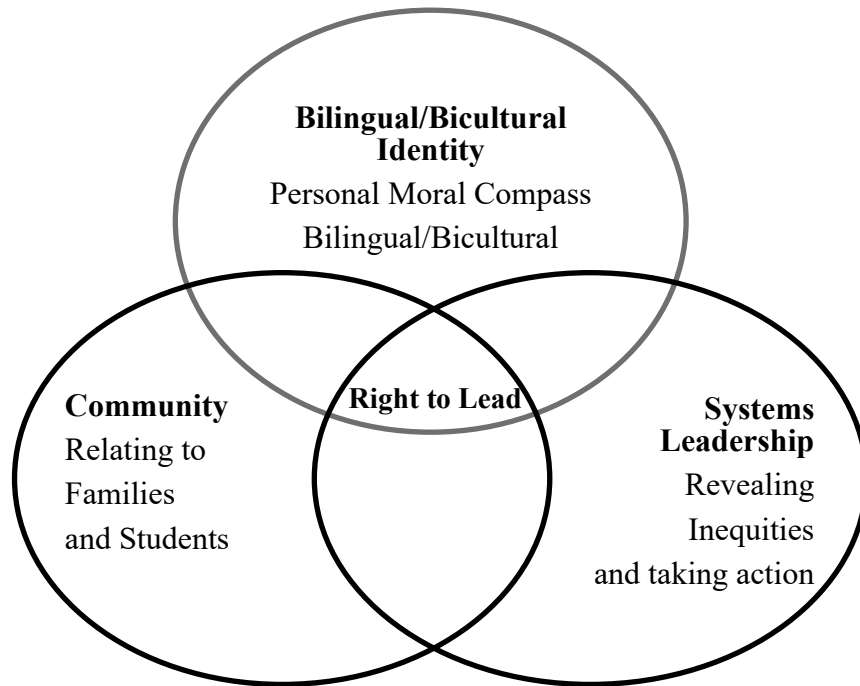
This study found that the participants used applied critical leadership practices, to schooling of Latina/o students and English learners, however they did not practice them to the same degree and in the same manner. The following research question was the focus of the study: What are the leadership practices of Latino/a educators leading large urban school systems with significant enrollment of Latina/o students who are also English learners? There were five themes identified to support the value of Latina/o leaders in leading in large urban school systems: (a) bilingual/bicultural identity, (b) personal moral compass, (c) relating to students and families, (d) systemic inequities revealed, and (e) resulted in the nexus of Latina/o leaders proving the right to lead. The themes are the result of the cross-case analysis and revealed a need for additional research in the areas of preparing Latina/o leaders to lead and create change that challenges the status quo and address inequalities, values student and family language and culture and practice transformational leadership. It also pointed to the need for improved implementation of language use policies and research at the national, state, and local levels. Lastly, it must be noted that my previous professional interactions with both known participants' and newly met participants may have resulted in delimitations to the research.

Discussion of Findings

In this section I will expand on the five themes from Chapter 4 to describe the personal experiences and professional practices of Latino leaders of large urban school systems. At the end of the analysis, I arrived at five cross-cutting themes, and these were summarized in the areas of identity, community, and systems leadership. Identity is comprised of these components: (a) bilingual/bicultural and a personal moral compass, (b) community is the ability to relate to the students and families they lead, and (c) systems leadership is the practice of revealing inequities in the system and taking action. The nexus of these three resulted in the leaders' expressions of their right to lead. To frame this discussion Figure 2 was used to make meaning and explain the five themes which resulted in looking at the themes through the leaders' identity, their community connection, and their systems leadership approaches which resulted in the nexus of the right to lead. The study participants shared their testimonios of their identity, in both personal and professional lived experiences.

Figure 2

Latino/a Leader Overarching Leadership Themes

Bilingual/Bicultural Identity
Personal Moral Compass
Bilingual/Bicultural

Right to Lead

Community
Relating to
Families
and Students

**Systems
Leadership**
Revealing
Inequities
and taking action

Bilingual/Bicultural Identity

The testimonios revealed that participants reported lived experiences or moments that defined their identity and how they presented themselves along with how they used their bicultural/bilingual skills when leading which resulted in clearer communication, respect and connection to their families and communities. Darder (2012) cited the work of Cole and Scribner (1974) when discussing the *Question of Language*:

It is impossible to consider any form of education-or even human existence-without first considering the impact of language on our lives. Language must be recognized as one of the most significant human resources; it functions in a multitude of ways to affirm, contradict, negotiate, challenge, transform, and empower particular cultural and

ideological beliefs and practices. Language constitutes one of the most powerful media

for transmitting our personal histories and social realities as well as for thinking and

shaping the world. (p. 333)

This leadership practice relates to ways in which the participants used their identity and

functional or mastery of a second language to communicate and build trust with families and

communities. As stated in the methodology section in chapter 3, I added additional questions to

the interview protocol used by Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) to capture language policy

issues, English learner students' schooling and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which

occurred during the development of this dissertation. Jose shared that he felt like a "raisin in a

cup of milk" as a leader. Luis mentioned that "I've [had] this mustache that identifies who I

am….I want to be identified as an effective superintendent." Teresa was clear that because she

had a German father and Mexican mother, she was largely identified by her last name and skin

color and therefore allotted certain benefits in school, and she observed how her cousins and

friends were not given that same level of attention and support. Participants practiced

transformational leadership principles and used a critical pedagogy along with race theory lens

when communicating with students, families, community, and the media in Spanish. Jose and

Josue shared that their ability to switch languages provided an added benefit to their community

when speaking to the media or directly to parents in front of their children and resulted in clear

understanding of the information. Along the same lines, Sofia's and Maria's ability to speak to

parents in their home language resulted in a connection that showed respect and inclusion of

families in schools. The participants identity as a bicultural/bilingual leader shaped their

practices and resulted in greater connections to families, use of language as a way to provide

access to leaders and ensure clear communication. This access represents a more humane approach to education and places the language needs of both students and families at the center.

Personal Moral Compass

This theme relates to the experience and expectation that the leaders have a strong "why" or purpose for taking on the role of leader. The participants shared a critical race theory lens and transformational leadership principles when identifying their personal moral compass. The leaders' ability to tap into their moral compass was evident when they shared experiences as students, educators, leaders in many of the same or similar school systems they led. Sofia shared, "As a first-generation immigrant you know what it's like to face poverty and you know the hardships, the discrimination, the basic needs that many of our families aren't getting met." Jose offered, "To lead not only in academics, but also to understand that the humanistic side of educating children is just as important, in my humble opinion, as the academic side."

Santamaría (2014) related this need to understand the moral compass and drive that Latina/o leaders as "Educational leaders of color in the United States have traversed, negotiated, and often overcome myriad inequities in education themselves. What they contribute to leadership theory and practice is largely unknown or reflected in mainstream leadership paradigms." The above quotes reflect some of the inequities negotiated and begins to make explicit the way they express their identity through their leadership. This theme adds to the body of research by capturing the lived experiences and an awareness of their personal moral compass as serving as an important leadership practice. Darder (2012) summarized this as a complex issue:

Our efforts to transform traditional educational structures that historically have failed

bicultural students. In doing so, it is essential that we do not fall into totalizing theoretical

traps ignoring that human beings are in fact able to appropriate a multitude of linguistic

forms and utilize them in critical and emancipatory ways. It is simplistic and to our

detriment as educators of bicultural students to accept the notion that any one particular

form of language (e.g., "standard" English), in and of itself, constitutes a totalizing

dominant or subordinate force, as it is unrealistic to believe that simply utilizing a

student's primary language (e.g., Spanish, Ebonics, etc.) guarantees that a student's

emancipatory interests are being addressed. Consequently, the question of language in the

classroom constitutes one of the most complex and multifaceted issues that educators of

bicultural students must be prepared to address in the course of their practice. (p. 133)

The participants understood this complexity and voiced it as part of their everyday lived

experiences and inherently understood its value when humanizing and connecting to the families

and students they are responsible for and the way in which they lead. Their personal moral

compass came from an inherent view as members of the community and former students of the

systems they lead. They shared examples of students and families being relegated to the

basement for classes, receiving information in a language they don't understand, treated as if

they have no aspirations to complete their studies, or observing teachers not knowing how to

teach a non-English speaker. Using their personal moral and compass and transformational

leadership strategies they conversely, hired bilingual teachers, implemented dual language

programs, invested in technology and internet access, purchased bilingual curriculum and set

high expectations for learning, offered teacher professional learning opportunities and lead with sympathy and compassion without comprising students' needs.

Community

This theme is relating to community as a practice of working alongside the students and families based on a lived experience of growing up in similar communities. This practice involves critical self-reflection by the leaders about their biases and is iterative, according to Khalifa (2016, p. 1285) quoting Dantley (2005b), a psychology of self-reflection means the leader is grappling with their own identity and contrasting that against the identity of the learning community.

Relating to Students and Families

This theme relates to the experience that leaders can easily see their former self in the students and families they serve. Relational trust and sense of belonging is a key feature. Latina/o leaders expressed a deep understanding of the families and students through their own perspective or lens, and this was expressed with a level of reflecting on who they were as students or children themselves and conversely as leaders to many like them. This is captured by Josue when he shares that "We are them and they are us….I have incredible sympathy compassion and drive to help the thousands of homeless kids in our community and across the country…" Sofia expressed it in terms of "the experience of growing up first generation immigrant that you know what it's like to face poverty and you know the hardships the discrimination." Maria shared the most poignant example when a school transformed from a transitional bilingual program to a dual language program and when speaking about relation to students and families:

156

It could not be forgotten, because it was like right there front and center it required that the school completely change their ways of communicating with parents so finally Spanish speaking parents had to have secretaries, who are bilingual, translation of communications and newsletters. Interpretation of messages that you know were done over the phone . . . I feel like it became more like their experience . . . became more similar to what English speaking families have always experienced a greater sense that it was also their community and that they knew what was going on with their children's learning so Dual language or not dual language that's the vision that I have for families of English language learners where they feel they know what's going on, where they're being made a priority where they can't be ignored anymore.

According to culturally relevant school leadership theory (Khalifa, 2016), engaging students and parents in community contexts:

Highlights the ability of the school leader to engage student, families, and communities in culturally appropriate ways… as well as the role school leaders may play in promoting overlapping school–community contexts, speaking (or at least, honoring) native students' languages/lexicons, creating structures that accommodate the lives of parents, or even creating school spaces for marginalized student identities and behaviors all speak of this community aspect. (Khalifa, 2016, p. 1282).

Darder et al. (2012) wrote the following:

For Freire, an emancipatory praxis is central to an education that prepares students to become beings for themselves. But more importantly, such a praxis can only be forged within the context of courageous dialogue; for it is only as we come to see the world as

157

subjects who can act upon it—rather than as passive victims of circumstance—that we come to experience for ourselves what it truly means to be human. This is precisely what Freire meant when he wrote and spoke of empowerment as a pedagogical imperative. (p. 3).

Participants in this study acknowledged their personal lived experiences as key to informing their own leadership practices and support of families and students like themselves. Their intentional moves to include them in the overall education system front and center ensures they are not in the margins or treated as a passing group of people but rather as legitimate members of the community who are staying. This leads to the next practice that many of them used when leading at a systems level.

Systems Leadership

This theme emerged from the deep understanding by leaders that their practices involved a larger view of social justice leadership from the lens of how the system is designed and the results for student achievement. Shields' (2010) described the work of transformational leaders as, "transformational leadership focuses on improving organizational qualities, dimensions, and effectiveness; and transformative educational leadership begins by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequity and injustice". Transformational leadership takes into account the impact of the inequities of the outside world and what occurs internally in educational organizations, Shields (2010 p. 584). The systems leadership approach is in this instance intertwined with the transformational leadership definition and used to capture the practices of Latina/o leaders.

Systemic Inequities Revealed

This practice relates to ways in which leaders develop a clear set of policies and practices to be used in the school system to address needs of the historically underserved student population. Participants reported using their platform to reveal (make public) the student outcomes, programs, teaching practices, policies, and views about Latina/o English learners to make public the transformational changes needed to close the achievement gaps**.** Shields (2010) cited the seminal work of Burns on transformational leadership:

> In sum, transactional leadership involves a reciprocal transaction; transformational leadership focuses on improving organizational qualities, dimensions, and effectiveness; and transformative educational leadership begins by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequity and injustice. (p. 564)

Participant Laura identified her approach to this work by shifting the focus from student outcomes and towards teaching practices. Her approach resulted in using professional development and feedback loops to help teachers refine their craft and learn how to reach students differently. She approached this work first by noticing the large number of English learners being identified in special education and began to help teachers notice what the students can do and began to have students' exit special education. She noticed "Once explicit teaching happened, they were growing and flourishing both academically as well as social emotionally." By revealing the data and focusing the efforts on improving teaching practices she was able to challenge both the power and privilege of teachers while at the same time address the inequitable outcomes. Josue named it as being clear to his community and staff:

I don't believe that those kids are broken and if they're not succeeding, then something

around them is broken, and we are to pay close attention to that . . . why is it not

happening for other kids who traveled the same journey, this allows us then to

strategically and honestly look at the social conditions around kids and their families,

particularly immigrant kids minority kids and ask the tough questions about the adequacy

of schooling, the adequacy of home security, food security, the fear of immigration and

all those elements that have a direct or indirect impact on student achievement.

Maria's practices centered on increasing dual language programs. Sofia used deep conversations

about belief systems to get at the root of any bias and explained "It's not easy to change people's

hearts and deep-rooted racial biases or you know that they have . . . that just just doesn't

happen." Teresa focused on increasing students prepared for college and close examination of

curriculum and the use of bilingual text. Luis increased the hiring of bilingual teachers and the

number of dual language programs. Jose renamed students as emergent bilinguals to signal an

assets-oriented approach and renamed the family empowerment department. Looking at different

data sets through a critical race theory lens, using critical pedagogy and enacting

transformational leadership practices were practices used by the participants when leading school

systems.

Proving the Right to Lead

This practice relates to the ways in which leaders described the impact that a lack of

opportunity for Latina/o represented and some of the practices they have to undertake if they do

get to lead. In several of the testimonios the participants shared that they could not get ahead in

their original school systems. They acknowledged a bias against them which they attributed to

stereotypes and discrimination. Four out of six leaders had to seek opportunities outside of their

home communities either out of state or city due to being overlooked when promotional

opportunities arose. As cited in the introduction to this research, "There is scant literature

available identifying and celebrating the positive attributes of education leaders from historically

oppressed groups and those who identify with them, and ways in which these individuals acquire

mainstream institutional access to create real change" (Guinier & Torres, 2002) as cited in

Santamaría & Santamaria, 2012, p. 7). To mitigate this one participant mentioned actively

recruiting for leaders who are like the students and explained "we are them and they are us."

Jose explained, "If we're Latinos . . . it's all of our story you have to be better than them you

have to try harder. . . . You have to be better than anyone else in the room because there's a

bigger spotlight on you."

These accounts represented the issues that many aspiring leaders of color have to go

above and beyond to prove themselves worthy of leading. It also unveils the issues of systemic

oppression/racism of leaders of color, according to Rodriguez et al. (2016), the few Latina/os

attaining graduate degrees consequently affects the number of Latina/os who are in the

leadership pipeline in higher education, as administrators and faculty. For Maria and Sofia this

was especially poignant as they worked toward attaining their doctoral degrees and felt it

necessary to prove their ability and scholarship, they represented both internal and external

reasons for seeking higher education. The need to prove the right to lead is a convergence of the

lack of opportunities, pressure to continuously perform at higher levels, seeking higher degrees,

and being overlooked for promotional opportunities that Latina/o leaders must confront.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Expand the Research Base

It appears important to expand the research base on the identification, development, and practices used by Latina/O/Bilingual-bicultural leaders. The themes that emerged on bilingual/bicultural connections, language use in the classroom, and leading school systems that address Latina/o and English learners point to a needed area of further research. There are several recommendations for research on Latina/o bicultural and bilingual assets. Following the literature review, case studies and findings, it is important to note that there is an urgent need for expanding research on the identification of Latina/o leaders, value of being a bilingual Latina/o leader and the transformational practices used by Latina/o leaders. Specifically, bilingual-bicultural Latina/o leaders provide an additional benefit to families and students and there is limited research on identifying their practices. Concurrent research on multilingualism as an asset for both students, educators and leaders will add to the existing body of literature.

School leaders for the most part are former teachers and educators and research on the preparation programs is also needed specifically on addressing educating Latina/o and English learners. Research may further analyze the educators' prior lived experiences, bilingualism, socio economic status and their lens on transformational leadership.

Recommendation 2: Develop an Asset-based Approach to English Learners

It is important to develop national, state, and local policies to include an asset-based approach to the education of Latina/o and English learners. There is a need to develop policies that require an increase in school system leaders that represent the students and families served, particularly for growing populations of students with language and culture needs. These policies

must move away from deficit and subtractive models of schooling that deny students of their language, culture, and connection to family. One observation made was the historical subtractive schooling approach that some of the participants experienced when they were in school, understanding the effects of language loss and lack of seeing leaders that look like them is worth studying. The California Department of Education (2020) provides a model for policies that address the assets many students bring however there are no national policies that address additive schooling for Latina/o students or English Learners. Policies to address the impact of teacher language use on student achievement would remedy the language loss and subtractive experiences many Latina/o students have faced as they try to navigate learning both academics and a second language. It is important to note that while federal laws exist, they have been largely unfunded, and as stated in the literature review in Chapter 2, the fourth sociopolitical period titled, "The Movement to Undo Civil Rights Gains," is marked by the policies of President Reagan and President George H. Bush. Ochoa et al. (2016) cited these policies as decentralization, decategorization, and deregulation, all of which threatened equal access and equal benefits.

Recommendation 3: Encourage and Nurture Latina/o Leaders

There are two recommendations in the area of growing and nurturing Latina/o leaders. The first recommendation is to design preparation programs for future school system leaders that must address the specific culture and language needs of Latino and English learner students and families. This includes recruitment, investing and retaining Latina/o leaders. The second recommendation is in the area of professional learning for current Latino/a leaders on practices that transform outcomes for Latina/o students and English learners. The recruitment, hiring,

promotion and professional development of educators is one of the largest investments made in school systems. It is recommended that leadership development programs and human resources executives in school districts tap into current leaders of color, provide mentors, explicitly teach ways to address the sociopolitical context, use of critical race theory lens and transformational leadership but most importantly how to use their authentic voice to lead from a place of strength. In addition to knowing about the current political events surrounding and impacting schools, Latina/o leaders need to understand and confront the history of Latino and English learner education systems in the United States and the impact it has had on generations of students. Without having this background knowledge at the forefront of their practices they are bound to perpetuate past wrongdoings that have resulted in a lack of accountability to the language and cultural support for Latino English language learner student needs in school including those in the students' family and community and or not be able to name the impact of subtractive schooling on student achievement. It is recommended that a Latina/o Leadership Framework be developed to capture the development of identity, community, systems leadership and encourage the use of their voice and agency as they practice the right to lead.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The ACL framework was useful in analyzing leadership practices, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory lens; however, it lacked a mention of critical language theory. In this study it turned out that all participants reported a level of proficiency in Spanish that connected them to their communities, all except one was fluent. There is a need to develop a theoretical framework on the use multilingualism in leadership practices and schooling. In today's global economy and

164

with the advancement of technology that allows collaboration around the world a multilingual society of students would be advantageous.

Implications for Practice

Leadership practices enacted by Latina/os reveal a different way of leading which is focused on leading with community instead of a top-down approach. The participants practiced a more humanistic approach to their work because they deeply identified with many of the families and students. Their clear understanding that change is needed was evident in how they reacted to the new challenges posed during the global pandemic. As stated earlier when referring to post COVID-19 schooling, one of the participants begins to call out all the ways in which COVID-19 has positively impacted issues of grading for competency instead of compliance, teacher evaluation programs that provide timely and relevant feedback, the redefinition of behaviors given the use of online learning platforms. The use of professional development time was positively impacted because there was no longer a need to drive across a large urban school district. He summed up the experience by acknowledging that prior to the pandemic everyone thought that changing our grading system, our schedules and our use of technology signaled the end of the world as we know it and in the middle of the pandemic as all those changes were made, we realized that the world didn't end, and we were able to change swiftly.

Policy Implications

As stated in the historical and sociopolitical narrative in chapter two, the policies are only as good as the resources that are directed at the time of implementation. While there exist policies at the federal and state level, there is a need for policies that address leadership preparation programs that include practices used to ensure school systems are adaptable and

agile in responding to students' cultural and linguistic needs, however, without adequate human and fiscal resources progress in this area will not occur. Rodriguez et al. (2016) asserted that "Policy research can also acknowledge the highly segregated and underserved realities of Latino communities" (p. 148).

Conclusion

Latina/o and English learner students have incurred serious academic deficits for generations while enrolled in U.S. school systems which are largely designed for a monolithic English speaker who is part of the mainstream culture. The literature review revealed that the academic deficits are a result of linguistic hegemony, systemic racism, erosion of civil rights and resources and deeply racialized disparities; (Darder, 2012, Guinier & Torres, 2002, Macedo et al., 2016, Ochoa et al., 2016, Khalifa, 2013, Santamaría and Santamaría, 2012). The study addressed the impact of leadership on student outcomes and proposes to identify, develop and nurture leadership pathways for Latina/o leaders to address these disparities (DeMatthews et al., 2019, Leithwood et al., 2004, Murakami et al., 2018, Lambert et al., 2016, Khalifa, 2013, Shields, 2010). The use of testimonio was intentionally selected to give voice and not over rely on "objective methods" which tend to ignore measures such as language policies, lack of opportunities for Latina/o students to name a few, testimonio captures the voices and further explores the race and intersectionality of being a bilingual Latina/o leader, (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012; Delgado Bernal, 2012; Yin, 2018). There are many assets that bilingual Latina/o leaders offer U.S. society such as relying on their identity, community and using systems leadership approaches to begin to remedy academic deficits for students. They addressed two pandemics while the writing of this dissertation a global health pandemic and a national

systemic racism pandemic. They did so with a great deal of sympathy, compassion and human connection to all served because as bilingual/bicultural leaders they are able to navigate fluidly and efficiently between the two worlds.

Epilogue

This study took place in the midst of a global pandemic and involved interviews of leaders across the nation who were dealing with planning and preparing their school communities to return to some version of in-person school. I took on the role of superintendent 3 months into the pandemic in a new city, with a mission to improve outcomes for families like mine while finishing this dissertation. I am grateful that the study participants took time to speak with me and share their leadership journeys while managing their own school systems. In the United States, the global pandemic became politicized, and leaders were caught in some instances in the middle of these political maneuverings. The participants were able to center the needs of the historically and most vulnerable students. This ability to pivot their leadership practices and to move both human and fiscal resources exemplify the positive attributes of Latino/a leaders. Additionally, the systemic racism that was unveiled called for reforms across all forms of government such as policing in schools. These leaders like myself had to navigate ever changing policies that came from both federal and state health agencies, guidance from state departments of education which were sometimes not aligned to federal guidance from agencies like the Centers for Disease Control or from the state's health department, county health department to name a few, and local elected officials who were in some instances on opposing sides when it came to when it would be safe to open schools. We all quickly learned that the most negatively impacted communities were those with large numbers of people of color living

167

in poverty, in dense housing, working as essential employees in low wage jobs, had lack of access to health care or immediate information in their home languages. The second pandemic faced by school leaders was systemic racism. A national movement to elevate the institutionalized racism that is part of this country happened via the live videotaped murder of George Floyd, a Black man, by a White police officer; this placed many leaders at the center of addressing implicit bias and racism. Latina/os could no longer ignore what many have always known, lived, and experienced as members of the Latina/o community and the Black community: institutionalized racism is present in our school systems, our government policies and laws and it impacts our everyday lives. I believe we can do better, the health pandemic taught us that we are adaptable, flexible and can implement quick changes. It is my hope that we can create a new reality for so many of our students, when we lift up those who are most impacted, we all benefit.

APPENDIX A

Latino Leaders Demographic Survey

1. What is your name and title? *

2. How many years have you worked as an educational leader? *

        o   1-10 years

        o   11-20 years

        o   21-20 years

        o   30 years or more

3. List of educational leadership positions and places that prepared you to become a systems leader (first to current): *

4. Graduating university and highest degree attained: Major: *

5. Languages spoken and level of proficiency (i.e., speak, read, write) * Check all that apply.

        o   speak only

        o   read only

        o   write

        o   speak and read

- o   speak and write

- o   speak, read and write

6. Gender identity: *Mark only one oval.

- o   Female

- o   Male

- o   Prefer not to state

- o   Other

7. Ethnic identity: * Mark only one oval.

- o   White

- o   Latina/o (Hispanic)

- o   African American

- o   Native American

- o   Other

8. Highest parental level of education: * Mark only one oval per row.

Father	Elementary	Secondary	College/University	Career/Trade
Mother	Elementary	Secondary	College/University	Career/Trade

9. Family Income-Socioeconomic status: growing up? * Mark an oval.

Low Middle Upper Middle Upper

10. What additional skills or training do you need to become an educational leader? How/where do you acquire these? *

11. As a person from a historically marginalized background in educational leadership how does your identity impact your leadership practice? *

12. What type of leadership "style" defines your practice? * Mark only one oval.

       managerial

       instructional

       situational

       transactional

       transformational

       culturally relevant

       other

13. What are some of your tried and true strategies for leadership success? *

14. What are the most common barriers you have faced for leadership success? *

Latino Leaders Interview Protocol

1. What kinds of measurable results have you experienced in your position as a result of your educational leadership?

2. How do you think your peers or constituents perceive you in terms of your educational leadership practice?

3. Do you feel you have to do anything different to convince your peers of your ability to lead effectively? If so, what do you need to do differently? If not, why not?

4. As a person from a historically marginalized background in educational leadership how does your identity impact your leadership practice?

5. How might speaking the language of the families/students you serve impact your leadership style?

6. How did leadership preparation/development programs prepare you to understand the needs of Latina/o English learners?

7. What cultural, linguistic and leadership strategies do you use to improve school systems for diverse English learners, (i.e., newcomers, Long term English learners, gifted English learners)?

8. How did COVID-19 influence your leadership experiences?

My role as a researcher is to build a case study from your experiences in order to inform applied educational leadership. In that light, is there a story or experience you would like to share that you think typifies your unique application of educational leadership practice?

If time allows: Additional information you would like to share?

APPENDIX C

Glossary of Terms

The following glossary of Terms for English learner typologies was retrieved from California Department of Education (n.d.).

- English learner (EL): A student in Kindergarten through Grade 12 for whom there is a report of a language other than English on the Home Language Survey (HLS) and who, upon initial assessment in California using an appropriate state assessment (currently the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California [ELPAC]; prior to the 2017–2018 school year, the California English Language Development Test [CELDT]) and from additional information when appropriate, is determined to lack the clearly defined English language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and/or writing necessary to succeed in the school's regular instructional programs.

- English learner "at-risk" of becoming a long-term English learner ("at-risk"): An EL student to which all of the following apply: (a) is enrolled on Census Day (the first Wednesday in October) in Grades 3 to 12, inclusive; and (b) has been enrolled in a U.S. school for 4 or 5 years; and (c) has scored at the intermediate level or below on the prior year administration of the CELDT;[1] and (d) for students in Grades 3 to 9, inclusive, has scored in the fourth or fifth year at the "standard not met" level on the prior year

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[1] The 2018–201919 determinations at-riskAt-Risk of becoming LTEL [AR-LTEL] reflect a significant 1-one year increase from previous years. These changes stem from having only 1one year of ELPAC data available in the 2017–18 academic year required for making AR-LTEL determinations. Specifically, Education Code Sections 313.1(a)(1)(2) and 313(b)(1)(2) state that students for which the required testing data are not available shall not be excluded from AR-LTEL determinations. Due to the one-year transition from the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), 2 years of ELPAC data were not available to make these determinations as in prior years.

administration of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA). In addition, please note the following: (a) students for whom one or more of the required testing criteria are not available are categorically determined to be "at-risk;" and (b) the assessment component of "at-risk" determination for students in Grades 10 to 12, inclusive, is based solely on the CELDT criteria outlined above; and (c) the CAASPP-ELA component of "at-risk" determination is not applied to students in Grade 3, as outlined in Education Code Section 313.1(b)(1)(D), because the CAASPP-ELA is administered in Grades 3 to 8, inclusive, and 11, so students enrolled in Grade 3 on Census Day will not have prior year CAASPP-ELA test scores available. For more information see California Education Code (EC) 313.1.

- English only (EO): A student in kindergarten through Grade 12 for whom the only language reported on the HLS is English or American Sign Language (ASL).

- Ever-EL: A student who is currently an EL or who was formerly designated as an EL, but who has now been reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP).

- Initial fluent English proficient (IFEP): A student in kindergarten through Grade 12 for whom a language other than English is reported on the HLS and who, upon initial assessment in California using an appropriate state assessment (currently the ELPAC; prior to the 2017–18 school year, the CELDT) and from additional information when appropriate, is determined to be proficient in English.

- Long-term English learner (LTEL): An EL student to which all of the following apply: (a) is enrolled on Census Day (the first Wednesday in October) in Grades 6 to 12,

inclusive; and (b) has been enrolled in a U.S. school for 6 or more years; and (c) has

remained at the same English language proficiency level for two or more consecutive

prior years, or has regressed to a lower English language proficiency level, as determined

by the CELDT;[2] and (d) for students in Grades 6 to 9, inclusive, has scored at the

"Standard Not Met" level on the prior year administration of the CAASPP-ELA. In

addition, please note the following: (a) students for whom one or more of the required

testing criteria are not available are categorically determined to be an LTEL; and (b) the

assessment component of LTEL determination for students in Grades 10 to 12, inclusive,

is based solely on the CELDT criteria outlined above. For more information see EC

313.1.

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[2] The 2018–19 determinations of Long-term English learners (LTEL) reflect a significant 1one year increase from previous years. These changes stem from having only 1one year of ELPAC data available in the 2017–18 academic year required for making LTEL determinations. Specifically, Education Code Sections 313.1(a)(1)(2) and 313(b)(1)(2) state that students for which the required testing data are not available shall not be excluded from LTEL determinations. Due to the 1-year transition from the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), 2 years of ELPAC data were not available to make these determinations as in prior years.

Letter of Invitation

Hilda Maldonado

May 22, 2020

[Name and address of addressee]

Dear_____:

This letter serves as an invitation to participate in a study on educational leadership.

I am completing a doctoral dissertation in the Educational Leadership for Social Justice program at Loyola Marymount University. The title of the study is "Latin@ Leaders in Large Urban School Systems: Testimonios of Language, Culture and Education Policies."

There is a need to learn more about the practices of Latina/o leaders and the benefit it represents to Latina/o students who are also English learners. There is scant literature in this topic and your contributions will add to the body of knowledge in this area.

The time commitment from you will consist of completing a 14 item demographic survey which should only take about 30 minutes followed by participation in two interviews. The first interview consists of seven questions and should take approximately 45 minutes. Once the research is completed you will have an opportunity to participate in one more interview for follow up questions and clarifications.

Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of these data. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept anonymous and confidential. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Hilda Maldonado

Applied Critical Leadership Codebook

Construct	Definition	Example/quote	*F*
1. Critical conversations (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	Critical leaders' willingness to initiate and engage in critical conversations	"I got very upset one day with a fellow teacher who was in charge of the gate program and at the lunch table just kind of got after her, and you know about, what, how come there's no English learners in a gifted program. And, you know, so we just kind of butted heads on that. And then within a year or two, I became in charge of the gifted program. And sure enough, we found English learners who were in the gifted program." Teresa	37
2. Critical race theory lens (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	Chose to assume a CRT lens in order to consider multiple perspectives of critical issues. This lens involved the notion of considering race first, valuing story as communication, being critical of liberalism, and understanding the reality of racism.	"When I talk about implicit bias and I talk about restorative practices and I talked about why it is that I'm so focused on equity for all of our students?, it's because I share those experiences. I share the experience of being the top school system leader being followed in Bloomingdale's by security- undercover security- for no other reason then I'm Mexican in Bloomingdale's. Not dressed like I belong in Bloomingdale's." Jose	104

3. Group consensus (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	Used consensus building as the preferred strategy for decision making in meetings, one-on-one talks, and so on	"We had a fifth grade teacher that was complaining that the social science textbook was too hard for the kids and so somehow or other, I suggested that the way we should deal with it was to split it between fourth and fifth grade because it was old texts...it really wasn't quite challenging text and then take the fourth grade curriculum and move it down to third grade because the fourth grade California fit with third grade community focus and we did that, and the kids blossomed they...blossomed, they could actually do it. And then because we had a lot of Spanish speaking kids we also bought the books in Spanish too and before we had to implement language programs they were taught three weeks in English and then weeks, the next chapter or unit in Spanish." Teresa	4
4. Stereotype threat (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	Conscious of stereotype threat or fulfilling negative stereotypes associated with their perceived racial, ethnic, or linguistic group Santamaría (2014) Stereotype threat- or fulfilling negative stereotypes associated with their perceived racial, ethnic, or linguistic group	"I love the city. I love this District, but I've had to leave several times because people wouldn't give me a chance. I was too young, I was too brown. I was too good. I was too much of an immigrant. And I've had to overcome all of those barriers to get an opportunity to lead this district and, you know, so you do what you do have to do to convince people that you have the skill sets that are required to lead in this context." Luis	31
5. Academic discourse (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	The need to make empirical contribu-tions and to add authentic research-based information to academic discourse	I have pushed myself to try to reach… the doctoral level of a scholarship attainment, because of wanting to demonstrate that I'm capable and that I'm committed ... trying to capture… credibility professionalism. In case there's any doubt, because you know, being a woman of color, who is a second language,	8

179

	regarding underserved groups	Speaker of English bilingual immigrant…there are a lot of ways that those conditions can be interpreted by others to be less than, and so I tried to counter the narrative by pushing myself … high levels." Maria	
6. Honoring constituents (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	The need to honor all members of their constituencies (e.g., staff, parents, community members, stakeholders). The leaders sought out and wanted to include voices and perspectives of traditionally silenced groups and individuals (e.g., Spanish-speaking parents of ELLs, students, etc.).	"In general, and Immigrants and who we are and what we're about. So I think having relevant instructional programs where children can see themselves in a positive light and that we have the ability to empower children to feel pride and who they are. And the advantage of speaking two languages and all of the positive things that they need to know about being an English language learner and what a benefit that is especially in Los Angeles where speaking Spanish or speaking another language is such an asset. So for me I think what's really important is that we're looking at that whole child approach and that we have partnerships in place to make sure that our students who have the highest need and students who have not traditionally have had their needs met...not always have (we) had parents who are listened to, you know, really genuinely listen to and told how important they are. And how much we care about them. I think those things are things that I would look to a success." Sofia	51

7. Leading by example (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	Led by example to meet unresolved educational needs or challenges…. purposely lead in order to "give back" to the marginalized communities with which they identified or served, supporting their own social justice journeys	Well, I think part of it is where you grew up. I think part of it is being a teacher's assistant for the first time and seeing how the teacher, not knowing what to do, it was a Caucasian English only speaking teacher, and then you know you have all these English learners recent arrivals and I still remember them Edgar, and he was from El Salvador and and you know so smart. SO bright was trying to learn English and and just just remembering those experiences is something and when we talk about being humbled. Like, I still love those experiences. That's amazing. And so I do think it's remembering that I think...the other thing was continuing, and the reason why I say this because I continue to still to this day find opportunities to connect with the community and connect with lived experiences that were similar or different so that helps." Laura	43
8. Trust with mainstream (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	Communicated the need to build trust when working with mainstream constituents or partners, or others who did not share an affinity toward issues related to educational equity. They communicated the need to win the trust of individuals in the mainstream, as well as the need to prove themselves qualified and worthy of leadership positions and roles.	"Believe it or not, you know, even though I have three degrees from UCLA every once in a while that ugly voice will stand out and those fears will come back and and you know I've learned to really To just own that and and get through it and and tell myself, you know, and I've learned over time, just as I shared previously that my unique experiences are actually a strength. And that there is not any person, any leader that has every skill set. But I think the most important skill sets that are needed, are those that I talked about in terms of good communication and compassion and the ability to be empathetic and the ability to lead and be very clear." Sofia	19

9. Servant leadership (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 367-379)	"felt somehow "called" to lead these individuals were reportedly led by what they called "spirit."	"I can really relate to many of the communities that I've served. I'm able to understand their perceived experience as well as the need to see our work as customer service, right, I mean that's sort of my role." Laura	25

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