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## Hispanic school leaders and their impact on education

Linda Guzmán

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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

HISPANIC SCHOOL LEADERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy

by

Linda Guzmán

September, 2022

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This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

I want to dedicate my dissertation to my parents, sister, and son Kona. Thank you, mom and dad, for your support and for teaching me the value of work ethic, education, respect for others, and love of God. To my big sister, I could not have gone through this journey without you. I am so proud to say we started and finished this process together. To always being your copilot. Thank you, Kona for being the best puppy sitting next to me during long nights of writing, and encouraging me to write. You are not just a puppy you are an *encanto* to our family.

I also dedicate this dissertation to all those strong Hispanic leaders in the world especially those who supported me through this process. I appreciate the amazing Hispanic school leaders who participated in this study. Thank you for sharing your stories with me and having the desire to help your communities. Thank you for being a positive example and taking up space.

I want to acknowledge my professors from Pepperdine University. Thank you for sharing your talents and gifts with all your students. Thank you to Dr. Miramontes and Dr. Reyna Garcia for being a powerful representation of strong Latina women. Thank you for supporting me and guiding me through the dissertation process. Your mentorship has been such a gift. Thank you, Dr. Hendricks, for being an inspiration. You are genuinely the epitome of an educator. Thank you, Dr. Brahme, for your kindness and support. Lastly, thank you, Dr. Farzin, for teaching me that having a heart is just as important as having brains.

## VITA

**RESEARCH INTERESTS**

Higher Education; Organizational Leadership, Educational Leadership

**EDUCATION**

Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education & Psychology (GSEP), Malibu, CA

***Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Organizational Leadership***, October, 2022

Published Dissertation: Hispanic School Leaders and Their Impact on Education.

Mount Saint Mary's University, Los Angeles, CA

***Master's of Arts (M.A.) in Political Science and History***, April 2007

Published Thesis: Mexican-American Women and the Pursuit of a Higher Education: Reality or Dream

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to investigate the impact Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. The Hispanic community is one of the fastest-growing in the United States. Hispanics are the largest student group represented in elementary and high schools yet are disproportionately underrepresented in school leadership. Hispanic school leaders experience challenges in gaining the education, opportunities, and work experience to achieve leadership roles in schools. Once Hispanic leaders gain leadership roles and grow in experience, they face challenges implementing policies that positively impact their school community. A review of the literature identified challenges Hispanic leaders face in the workplace to achieve leadership roles in schools. It also looked at the challenges Hispanic students face and the need for mentorship. The literature notes that Hispanic students benefit from same-race leaders who can share background, life experiences, shared values, and provide mentorship. The goal is to identify Hispanic school leaders' impact on students of the same race. The literature reviewed provided support on how mentorship and social capital impacted Hispanic students. Through semi-structured interviews with 15 Hispanic school principals, the researcher was able to collect data. The principals shared their perspectives during the interviews on their experience with the phenomenon. The data was analyzed, disaggregated, and coded to reveal key themes.

*Keywords:* leadership, Hispanic school leaders, Hispanic students

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Background and Historical Context**

In the United States, lawmakers have passed legislation allowing all students to receive an equal education regardless of their income level or racial background. Hispanics were civil rights activists challenging school segregation similar to African Americans (Verdugo, 2006). According to Verdugo (2006), the *Mendez v. Westminster* was a legal case brought by Hispanic parents in 1946, who sought to register their child into an all-white school and were denied. Some might say this 1946 case paved the way for *Brown v. The Board of Education* in 1954. Both cases advocated for civil rights and equal education for students of color. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited federally funded institutions from discriminating based on race, color, or national origin, and it has paved the way for laws that protected Hispanics in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Department of Education, 2016). Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) of 1974 prohibited the discrimination of faculty, staff, and students and required school districts to promote equal opportunity to all students (Thompson, 2013). The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 assured the relationship between government and colleges to support Hispanic students attending higher education institutions. Due to policy changes, colleges and universities are attempting to increase programs to better support Hispanic students (Vigil-Laden, 2001). The act has been revised several times and is currently under review again. The HEA outlines a plan to support the needs of Hispanic students and Hispanic leaders serving institutions of higher education by providing grants (Dervarics, 2003).

U.S. Presidents have continued to advocate for education reform that supports the Hispanic community. From President George W. Bush to President Barack Obama, both

administrations had high expectations to make a change in education that would benefit the new majority (De Brey et al., 2019). Part of President Bush's legacy was the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002. The purpose of the act was to close student achievement gaps by providing fair and equal opportunities to marginalized communities by holding schools and institutions accountable (Bullough, 2020). Requiring schools to make yearly progress in grades K-12 by mandating schools to be transparent about student standardized test scores. NCLB Act focused on district leaders hiring highly qualified instructors to close the academic gap of students living in poverty with limited English or disabilities (Borden-King et al., 2020). The opportunity for Hispanic students to have a quality education, opportunity, and qualified teachers leads to a better future full of opportunities.

The White House Initiative of Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics outlines the promotion of educational equity in schools and economic opportunities for Hispanics (The White House, 2021). The initiative's purpose was to increase awareness of systematic causes that lead to educational challenges for Hispanic students in urban and suburban areas. The initiative also analyzed Hispanics' access to childcare, early childhood education, addressing inequalities in the treatment of Hispanic children in disciplinary actions, improving data collection, and ensuring access to qualified instructors in all grade levels. Lastly, the initiative supported the recruitment, preparation, promotion, and retention of Hispanic educators who relate with students through lived experiences and meet their social, emotional, and academic needs. Similar to the NCLB Act, the initiative focuses on qualified teachers and leaders in schools.

## **Policy Change and Reform**

With a change in the makeup of students' backgrounds in the U.S., policy changes and educational reform must be made. Diversity is valuable in education. Some laws have been created to improve Hispanic students' educational success through different supports. Policies or acts that establish a budget for research development, and implementation of policies in educational systems are essential. Although there has been a focus on providing equality to students through policies, there is still a lack of opportunity for Hispanic students to reach academic strides. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Education aimed to provide studies with programs that support student diversity. Government programs aimed to focus on students' cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional, and physical development (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Department of Education, 2016). Hence, organizational change in higher education provided a clear mission that stated an institution's commitment to diversity (Chang, 2002).

### ***The Term Hispanic***

For this study, the term Hispanic, Latino, and Latinx was used interchangeably and referred to a person's origin and ancestry, not their race (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). The term Hispanic was coined in the 1970s by Congress to refer to a diverse population in history, nationality, social class, legal status, and generation (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). The term included Spanish ancestry and those born in the United States from Spanish-speaking countries. The 2019 Census refers to Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central Americans, South Americans, and Spaniards as Hispanic (Ennis et al., 2011). Hispanics are a very diverse group and not homogenous (Verdugo, 2006). Verdugo (2006) notes that many Hispanics prefer the

term Latino because it provides a more expansive definition. In this study, Hispanics, Latinos, and Latinas will refer to those with Mexican and Central American heritage.

### ***Population Majority***

Researchers define *racial minorities* as an identifiable race or a group with limited access to resources and opportunities (Lee, 2004). Projections show that by 2060 the Hispanic population will reach 111 million making up 29% of the working population in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Hispanics are a growing community and have a massive impact in the U.S. (Montemayor & Mendoza, 2004). The Hispanic population is young with high birth rates and shorter life expectancy (Serafin, 1998). Mexicans are the fastest group of Hispanics growing 107.7% faster than other Hispanics (Verdugo, 2006). Verdugo (2006) notes that between 1990 and 2004 Mexicans grew from 13,430,000 to 26,630,000. Mexican-Americans are one of the largest subgroups of Hispanics.

### ***Population Challenges***

The Hispanic populations' growth impacts U.S. societies' culture, laws, especially in education (Verdugo, 2006). Although Hispanics make up a large majority of the population in the U.S. (Tienda, 2001) and are no longer considered a racial minority, there is a lack of academic opportunities to further their education and hold leadership roles in schools. There is a lack of representation of Hispanic educational leaders in comparison to the Hispanic population. It is projected that by 2050 Hispanics will grow from 9% to 25%, solidifying them as the largest minority group in the U.S. (Ylimaki et al., 2007). Hispanics are a young population in age and make up a large majority of the student body in elementary and high schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Although they make up a significant number of the student body, only half are high school graduates who do not hold professional

jobs compared to their white counterparts (Vigil-Laden, 2001). Hispanics differ from white students because of their lack of educational opportunities leading them to hold unskilled jobs (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). Hispanic students who are English Language Learners (ELL) continue to fall behind white students in reading comprehension and mathematics, which creates a more significant gap that is difficult to surpass (Carnoy & Garcia, 2017).

**Poverty.** A factor that has affected the poverty rates is the de-industrialization of the U.S. and the globalization of jobs. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a loss of industrial jobs, and therefore, a new type of job was needed (Harrison & Bluestone, 1990). The new jobs required higher education because they focused on technology and globalization. Education became key to having employment because a high school diploma has minimal value in the U.S. labor market (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). Carnoy and Garcia (2017) note that the number of low-income students increases in the U.S., and ethnicity and social class play a role. Even when not considered economically low-income, Hispanic students are still in high poverty schools. Hispanic children living in poverty must focus on survival rather than future success (Flora et al, 2016). Researchers have studied the persistent gaps in student achievement between Hispanics and whites for decades, and income level plays a role in the inequalities (Reardon et al., 2015). Hispanics' poverty rates are three times as high as whites' (Lemus & Verdugo, 2006). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), the average yearly salary is \$56,000, and Hispanics earn \$45,000. 21.4% of Hispanics live in poverty. High school dropouts can earn \$200,000 less over a lifetime than those with college degrees (Verdugo, 2006). Walker (2006) stated that children under 18 make up the most significant number who live in poverty. Unemployment rates are the highest in the Hispanic community (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) and this is due to lack of educational opportunities (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002).



### ***Lack of Educational Attainment or Achievement***

Hispanics who cannot receive the resources and education needed are more likely to drop out of school. Historically Hispanic students attend schools that have significantly fewer resources and are underfunded (Garcia, 1981). Hispanic students represent the largest dropout rates in high schools (Marshall & Olivia, 2006; Verdugo, 2001). In 2004 only 58.5% of Hispanics graduated from high school compared to 85.5 % of white students (Verdugo, 2006). In 2008 18.3% of Hispanics dropped out of high school while 4.8% of white students dropped out (U.S. Department of Education, National Center of Statistics, 2010). Verdugo (2001) remarks that Hispanics dropout three times more than whites. Data shows a deficit in Hispanic student performance due to a lack of educator development in cultural proficiency (Gándara, 2005). The lack of performance leads to dropping out and having fewer workforce opportunities. Hispanic students lag behind white students in graduation rates (Fry, 2002; Verdugo, 2006). Research shows that a higher degree increases opportunities in the workforce, and without a high school diploma, college is not an option (Verdugo, 2001). Hispanic are stuck in an academic pipeline not conducive to their growth.

**Educational Attainment and Achievement.** Between 1970 to 2004, Hispanic high school graduation rates have increased among Hispanics (Verdugo, 2006). Hispanics are increasingly registering to community colleges, state colleges, and research universities (Arciniega, 2012). The Hispanic population is diverse, and when compared to each other, the graduation rates are increasing. Schools are increasingly providing support for low-income students and are motivated to increase graduation rates.

### ***Recruitment of Hispanic Students***

The number of Hispanic students registering at higher education levels has increased due to recruitment from Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs; Vela & Gutierrez, 2017). HSIs focus on student recruitment and retention because that is an indicator of whether the student will complete their desired degree. Vela and Gutierrez (2017) note that HSIs are motivated to enroll and retain Hispanic students because they must apply every five years for funding. Funding is established if their undergrad student body is made up of a diverse population. The National Center for Education Statistics (2017b) shows an upward trend in enrollment in two-year colleges, but despite the gains, there still remain external obstacles that prevent Hispanic students from completing degrees.

In 2013-2014 Hispanics in the U.S. made up a fraction of higher education degrees. Hispanics made up 18% of Associate degrees, 12% Bachelor's degrees, 9% Master's degrees, and 7% of Doctoral degrees (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2017a). These trends have been consistent for the past 25 years of U.S. Census data. Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities (HACU; 2017) shows data that from 1990 to 2014, the number of HSIs has grown from 137 to 435. In 2019-2020 the number of HSIs schools grew to 569 in 28 states (Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities, 2019).

An institution's commitment to supporting a diverse student body is impactful because it acknowledges the disparities in the U.S. graduate education system (Campbell et al., 2004). There is a sense of urgency when institutions decide to be part of HSI because participation comes with instability. There are no guarantees that an institution will be designated as an HSI and receive funding. Instructors in these institutions receive training to better support a diverse population of students. School norms, values, and expectations that are not inclusive can have a

negative impact on Hispanic students (Verdugo, 2006). Professors and staff support students by creating an open and empowering environment that is inclusive. HSIs are not like Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) because HBCUs were founded with the purpose of graduating African American students. HSIs were not founded to solely graduate Hispanic students but instead adopted mission statements that aimed to support a group of students (Ekpe et al., 2015). Some policymakers urge colleges and universities not to lower their academic rigor and accept unprepared students simply because they want to increase diversity (Dougherty et al., 2016).

**Recruitment of Hispanic Leaders.** Why are white males leading institutions that are serving a majority of Hispanic students? (Freeman, 2015). Role models are key to student achievement and institutions are actively recruiting faculty and administrators that are Hispanic (Arciniega, 2012). There is an apparent mismatch between the number of Hispanic leaders and the number of Hispanic students (Freeman, 2015). Arciniega (2012) stated that Hispanic administrators are solid role models for Hispanic students. Hispanic leadership can bring an institution a unique perspective on social justice issues and a clear vision for development. Betts et al. (2009) noted that institutions must actively recruit Hispanic leaders. Increasing diversity in the leadership pipeline by providing more professional development and opportunity for growth. In order to increase the number of Hispanic leaders, institutions must significantly increase Hispanic students at the graduate level (Freeman, 2015). Leadership can only be attained by having higher education and experience. Representation matters, but it must be the correct representation. Highly qualified Hispanic leaders are what institutions must recruit.

**Retention of Hispanic Leaders.** Researchers note that little has been studied on retention and why Hispanic leaders who become leaders in schools tend not to stay in Hispanic

communities in need (DeAngelis & Kawakyu-O'Connor, 2012). There is a leadership crisis since once Hispanic leaders reach a level of experience, they move on to more affluent school communities (Nieto, 2006). Nieto (2006) evaluated Hispanics' career paths to get insight into their career choices. The HEA also focuses on providing incentives to Hispanic leaders to stay in unrepresented communities to increase growth. Institutional leadership is critical to an institution's advancement (Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005) and schools will not move forward if they lack qualified leaders. One of the most significant problems in education is the failure to hire and retain qualified teachers and administrators (Padron et al., 2002). In HSI institutions find it difficult to hire, develop, and retain qualified senior positions (Freeman, 2015). Freeman (2015) notes that there is a leadership gap that must be addressed. Snyder and Dillow (2015) noted that Hispanic leaders only made up 4% of the leadership in higher education institutions.

### **Same-Race Role Models**

Research shows a link between same-race role models in a students' academic achievement (Doyle et al., 2019). Harris (2006) noted that there is a connection between effective principals, schools, and leadership who establish positive school culture. Leadership skills are universal and not necessarily dependent on having the same race or experiences, but being of the same race does have a unique impact on students (Doyle et al., 2019). Doyle et al. (2019) note that students benefit from having teachers and principals who look like them because they gain more academically and have fewer disciplinary referrals. Hispanics that choose to become educators seldomly are promoted to leadership roles because they are judged as less prepared solely because of their ethnicity (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Once in the workforce, Hispanics hold teaching positions and are rarely promoted to principals, vice-principals, deans, or superintendents because gatekeepers showed preferential treatment to white candidates

(Tallerico, 2000). Tallerico (2000) argued that gatekeepers assume that white candidates have substantial advantages over Hispanic candidates. Non-Hispanic leaders in urban schools are found to lack respect and knowledge of the community they serve (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). This is why non-Hispanic leaders struggle to make an impact because they do not understand what they do not know.

### **Equity**

The lack of equity is evident when looking at Hispanics' Census data and their high school and college graduation numbers. According to the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, Hispanics make up 18.5% of the population in the United States, making them the largest ethnic majority. Hispanics are the largest population group after whites (Flores, A., 2017). Census data shows that California alone has over a million Hispanics and are one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the United States (Vigil-Laden, 2001). As Hispanics grow in the U.S., so should their impact, yet this is not evident in the research. The goal is to close the achievement gap, increase student retention, and increase graduation rates in Hispanic students. By closing the achievement gap, Hispanics can grow in their leadership. These policies and acts mentioned provide the mechanism that connects school leaders, communities, school organizations, and policymakers. Systematic inequalities have existed and created barriers for Hispanic students that need to be addressed.

Further investigation has to take place in analyzing equity factors that play a part in why Hispanics do not pursue higher positions or are not promoted to higher positions (Oto et al., 2011). The lack of opportunity in achieving a higher degree and promotions plays a part in the lack of representation. Lewin's (1951) force field analysis theory helped the researcher connect the drivers and barriers for Hispanic principals in reaching higher-level positions, and analyzing

the external drivers that influence the career decisions made by Hispanic educators. White school leaders hold positions that influence recruitment, hold school board membership, and are superintendents of school districts (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Hispanic leaders who hold leadership roles, such as being a Superintendent, are more likely to be viewed as lacking the skills to manage budgets and finances (Glass et al., 2000).

This paper was a qualitative, phenomenological study investigating the impact Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. The researcher sought to understand whether Hispanics holding leadership roles in education, influenced their students and the community. The research also sought to find whether there was a genuine need for more Hispanic leaders. Researchers noted that school principals have a crucial role in school and could better create, develop, and implement school policies to benefit the student body (Carter, 2008).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Hispanics are underrepresented in leadership roles in school settings (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). The California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators noted a gap between the number of Hispanic students and Hispanic principals in California (Magdaleno, 2006). The same has proven true in Texas, where there is a gap between and underrepresentation of Hispanic leaders compared to the population (LeCroy & Krysik, 2008; Tresslar, 2010). Minorities make up 30.7% of the workforce population in the U.S. (Nivet et al., 2016). As the Hispanic population has increased rapidly, educational achievements leadership roles in schools have not. More needs to be studied if there is a correlation between culture, lack of opportunity, lack of education, and drive. Fernandez et al. (2015) noted that applying motivation and self-efficacy to Hispanic principals in secondary schools can potentially provide greater insight into their careers and experiences.

Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy theory could serve as a framework to study principals' career choices. There is a connection between an individual's self-efficacy and internal drive that motivates them to seek out higher positions. Students need to see leaders that can identify with them ethnically and racially because it allows them to visualize the possibilities (Tresslar, 2010). Scholars contend that a diverse leadership that mirrors the school student body positively impacts students' motivation and engagement because it provides role models (Carillo, 2009). Through representation in role models, students will be able to experience more significant opportunities (Padilla, 2003). Unfortunately, Hispanic leaders make a small number of educational leaders (Evans, 2007), even in states that educate a Hispanic majority (National Education Association, 2010). Hispanics have to work harder than any other minority because they are seen as immigrants and not true Americans (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). Scholars need to study more the perceptions and biases that Hispanics have to overcome in career choices and potential advancement (Myung et al., 2011). Romero (2005) suggested that creating demographic changes in school districts is difficult because having a staff that mirrors a community can be challenging.

Hispanics do face several obstacles, including being underprepared for leadership roles. Magdaleno (2006) advocated for mentoring because there is a lack of mentorship that leads Hispanics to move forward in education and in the workforce. Leadership is not an innate quality for some and needs to be nurtured through mentorship. Mentorship has proven to have an impact on people of color (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Hispanics are hardworking, which could be why they tend to be those who work the hardest yet do not seek accolades (Hallett, 2012). Work ethic has not translated into wealth (Vela & Gutierrez, 2017). Hispanic leaders need to receive training and mentorship that will lead them to seek out leadership roles. Students need to have

educational leaders that look like them. Hispanic leaders need to pay it forward through mentoring young students and supporting them in their academic goals (Magdaleno, 2006). Research shows that Mexican Americans tend to average the lowest academic level compared to Cuban Americans and other Hispanics (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). The more students are academically prepared for college, the more likely they will not hold low-wage jobs. As such, high school dropout rates have more than doubled in 2000 compared to non-Hispanic whites and blacks, and according to Tienda and Mitchell (2006), the rates are even higher for foreign-born Hispanics. Education is key to becoming prepared in school and later holding a leadership role, and one cannot happen without the other.

### **Purpose Statement**

This qualitative study sought to investigate the impact Hispanic school leaders have in primarily Hispanic schools. The study's objective was to identify strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who created successful schools. Additionally, the goal was to identify the challenges Hispanics faced when implementing those strategies and what they did to overcome those challenges. Finally, it was crucial to identify how Hispanic leaders defined, measured, and tracked their success at the schools they led once they implemented the strategies, and later, empowered the school community by passing down their knowledge to their students to increase their school success. Hispanic leaders are committed to educating their student population to provide them with the life skills they need to succeed. Therefore, a need exists to study Hispanic school leaders and their impact on schools that are primarily Hispanic.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions (RQ) were addressed in this study.



- RQ1: What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools?
- RQ2: What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies?
- RQ3: How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools?
- RQ4: What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders?

### **Significance of the Study**

There are several reasons why this study was significant. First, although much has been written about Hispanic leaders and the lack of representation, little is written about their impact on Hispanic communities. Thus, this study became critical because it investigated the type of impact Hispanic leaders had in primarily Hispanic communities by analyzing the importance of same-race role models in schools. Prior studies indicated that having leaders of the same race as the student body impacted students' achievement (Fernandez et al., 2015). Hispanic leaders can relate to their Hispanic and non-white students on a deeper level. Research shows that representation is essential, and reform needs to occur (Aleman, 2009) because it allows students to connect better with their school leaders who share the same culture.

The study also looked at the impact same race school communities had on the student body and why Hispanics were such an isolated group (Orfield & Lee, 2005). The U.S. has racially segregated schools due to income and ethnicity (Carnoy & Garcia, 2017; Laosa, 2001). In 2013, 73.9% of white eighth-grade students more likely attended a school with less than 25% of Hispanic students (Carnoy & Garcia, 2017). The segregation of public schools continued to increase (Clotfelter, 2004; Frankenberg et al., 2003). This is not to say the segregation was purposely done, but it was occurring due to income and housing factors. School segregation is an

issue that educational leaders must continue to address. The future success of the U.S. is tied to

the Hispanic communities' success across all industries. President Barack Obama and President

Joseph Biden assert that the Hispanic community has a profound impact on schools,

communities, the economy, and intern the whole nation and nation (The White House, 2021).

The growing Hispanic students in schools bring a wealth of diversity and enhance a rich learning

environment. Therefore, the success of the Hispanic community should remain a national priority

if the U.S. wants to remain a competitor in the global economy (Vela & Gutierrez, 2017). Global

competitiveness would only occur through equity and access to higher education for all members

of the community (Smith, 2009).

Having students connect with their leaders allows them to grow academically and seek out leadership roles in the future. This study identified career challenges Hispanic leaders face in

education and why it is essential to create a pathway for Hispanic leadership in schools,

understanding the importance of representation in school communities to promote higher-level

career choices. Hispanic school leaders face unique challenges, and because of that, they can

better prepare their Hispanic and non-white student bodies. This study sought to benefit students,

leaders, and teachers who seek to impact their primarily Hispanic communities. Also, the

research conducted provided data to school principals that serve same-race school communities;

for example, an African-American principal leading a primarily African American student body.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

This study had several assumptions that included the belief that Hispanic leaders

influenced Hispanic and non-white students more than white leaders. The assumption was that a

Hispanic leader who shared the same experiences and backgrounds of their student body had a

greater impact. Another assumption included the notion that representation mattered for students

when they sought mentorships. There was an assumption that mentors had a more significant impact if they shared the same cultural beliefs because they were able to engage more with students of similar backgrounds. It was also assumed that Hispanic leaders wanted to mentor students of the same cultural background and uniquely influence them. The researcher assumed that having a leader of the same ethnicity impacts a students' growth more. There is also an assumption that mentorship impacts students' future leadership roles. It was also assumed that there is a lack of representation because there is a lack of opportunity. There is a possibility that Hispanic teachers opt out of applying for higher-level positions, not because there is a lack of opportunities but lack of motivation or desire. There is a national leadership shortage in the U.S. due to a lack of interest in teachers wanting to become administrators (Gajda & Militello, 2008). In this study, there is an assumption that the researcher will find Hispanic participants who believe they have impacted the communities they serve because they share similar life experiences and backgrounds. It is assumed that the participants respond to questions honestly and express their own interpretation of the phenomenon being studied.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Possible limitations of the study included the inability to find a pool of Hispanic leaders in elementary and high schools in California. The participants in the study do not represent all "Hispanic" people or their views. It was challenging to find Superintendents, principals, vice-principals, and deans who were willing to be interviewed; therefore the researcher expanded the location from California to include participants from other states. The researcher conducted interviews with Hispanic leaders who have shown success in school communities with most Hispanic students and can share if they could engage with students on a more profound level because of similar cultural backgrounds. Scheduling interviews with busy leaders can be a

significant limitation. The researcher will focus on Hispanic school leaders on the West Coast in order to avoid location limitations. The researcher will interview 15 participants and must be aware of possible biases when analyzing the interview data. The sample size is small and does not represent a larger population.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are important to better understand the study.

- *Access*: Access is the power, opportunity, and permission to benefit from a system (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). Historically Hispanics have not been provided resources and opportunities to support their academic success.
- *Administrator*: An administrator is an individual that manages a school. Katz (2009) defines an administrator as someone who “(a) directs the activities of other persons and (b) undertakes the responsibility for achieving certain objectives through these efforts” (p. 6). An administrator can refer to a principal, school president, assistant superintendent, or superintendent in this paper.
- *Aspirational capital*: The term refers to marginalized people keeping hope and dreams alive despite their situations (Yosso, 2005).
- *Brown v. The Board of Education (1954)*: The court abolished legal racial segregation in schools (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002).
- *Educational achievement*: The term refers to performance in the educational system (Verdugo, 2006). For example, standardized test scores.
- *Educational attainment*: The term means to progress through educational systems (Verdugo, 2006). For example, graduation rates.

- *Educational Leader*: The term educational leader will refer to a leader engaging in culturally responsive practices and bridging the community needs with academics in a school setting (Auerbach, 2009).
- *Equal Educational Opportunities Act (1974)*: The Act's purpose is to provide all students a quality education without discrimination based on age, gender, race, color, nationality, disability, or sexual orientation (McDowell, 2016) to students whose first language is not English. In addition, the Act protects students who are discriminated against because they do not speak English (Marshall & Oliva, 2006).
- *Civil Right Act (1964)*: The Act prohibits federal-funded programs from discriminating against a person because of their race, color, or national origin. The doctrine that the act is based on has largely impacted public and private schools because they receive federal funding (Cole, 2019).
- *Community*: Community is defined by the neighborhood around schools and local residents that have their children attend schools or are invested in the schools' success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
- *Culture*: Culture is defined as an ethnic groups traits, customs, beliefs, food, religion, and language that connects them. It is also defined as “learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people” (Northouse, 2018, p. 438).
- *Cultural capital*: The understanding is that socially marginalized communities have cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities that go unrecognized (Yosso, 2005).

- *Cultural wealth*: Yosso (2005) defines cultural wealth as having six key assets that include having aspirational capital, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital.
- *Discrimination*: The intentional treatment, different treatment, or expressly singling a person out based on race (Cole, 2019).
- *Diversity*: Looks at the social class, ethnicity, and language background of a school's demographics (Min & Goff, 2016).
- *Familial capital*: The value that having similar backgrounds makes on people (Yosso, 2005).
- *Higher Education Act (1965)*: Legislation that passed and focused on supporting minorities who wish to attend college and earn a higher education degree by providing financial aid. HEA provides access to government grants, financial aid, and scholarship funds (Improving Access to Higher Education Act, 2019).
- *Hispanic*: The term Hispanic is a label created in the U.S. to describe descendants of Spanish-speaking countries, including Mexico and Central America (Tienda, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).
- *Hispanic leader*: In this study, a Hispanic leader describes an administrative school leader of Spanish/Latin descent that has a leadership role in education. It includes those born in the U.S. or who immigrated before the age of 10.
- *Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)*: HSIs are two and four-year colleges and universities that focus on serving Hispanic students. The institutions are designated by the Department of Education (DOE) and funded by Title V (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

- *Latin/Latino/Latina/Latinx*: Latino is a gender-neutral term that refers to a person that lives in the U.S. and has descendants from a Latin American country (Siskind & Helms, 2019). The term Latino refers to both male and Latina females. Latinx is a nonbinary term since the Spanish language nouns and pronouns are female or male. In the 1990s, the term Latino reflected political, geographical, and links to Latin America (Marin & Marin, 1991). Therefore, the term Latin and Hispanic will be used interchangeably in this study (Aponte, 1999; Gonzalez & Gándara, 2005).
- *Leadership*: The ability for an individual to effectively influence and motivate others in an organization (Bass & Bass, 2008; Chhokar et al., 2007).
- *Linguistic capital*: The term refers to the value bilingualism has on individuals (Yasso, 2005).
- *Marginalized community*. Refers to a group that historically has been denied access and opportunity (Calabrese-Barton & Tan, 2018). For example, not provided with a high-quality education due to social and economic status.
- *Mendez v. Westminster (1947)*: A federal court case that challenged found segregation of schools as unconstitutional. The Mendez family fought to have their Mexican children attend a white school (Aguirre, 2005). Case preceded Brown v. Board of Education.
- *Navigational capital*: The term refers to code-switching minority groups have when facing racially tense environments (Yasso, 2005).
- *No Child Left Behind (2002)*: The Act reformed the education system for grades K-12 by holding academic institutions accountable for the growth of students in marginalized communities (Bullough, 2020).

- *Prejudice*: Is a fixed attitude toward a group based on faulty data (Northouse, 2018).
- *People of Color (POC)*: Refer to a population of people that are not white (Cabral, 2021).
- *Racial/Ethnic Minority*: In this study, racial minorities refer to groups that historically have been identified by race and as a result, have limited access. (Lee, 2004).
- *Social Capital*: The ability of family members to invest time, attention, support, values, and advice to their children to decrease the dropout rate is social capital (Tarasawa, 2009).
- *School Culture*: This word school culture will refer to certain groups of beliefs and practices that encourage academic achievement more than others (Tarasawa, 2009).
- *Urban*: The term *urban* has racially coded language for people of color (Salisbury et al., 2019). An urban area has been shaped by societal forces developed by economic, political, and structural resources (Lipman, 2013).

## Chapter Summary

This dissertation was comprised of five chapters that investigated the impact Hispanic school leaders have in primarily Hispanic schools. Data was collected and analyzed through 15 semi-structured interviews with Hispanic school leaders. Chapter 1 focused on introducing the background of the study, statement problem, the purpose statement, research questions, the significance of the study, assumptions of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms. The researcher analyzed the assumptions and limitations of the study in-depth in order to validate the study. Furthermore, key terms that were frequently used in the study were defined to create more clarity. Chapter 2 included current literature pertinent to the study and expanded on



the researcher's studies on Hispanics in leadership. The literature focused on the Hispanic population, Hispanic teachers in education, evolution of the role of principals, historical educational policies, relationship to poverty and students, leadership characteristics, leadership styles, cultural implications, Hispanic students and education, mentorship, language, social capital, the Hispanic communities values and views on education, and challenges faced by Hispanic students. The researcher compiled literature that supports the study. Chapter 3 will outline the study's purpose, nature of the study, methodology, research design, interview protocol, state the limitations, and data analysis. It will also share the theoretical framework that guided the study. This study is a qualitative phenomenological study that is guided by participants' perspectives. The researcher interviewed Hispanic school principals. The researcher will share the 15 interviews and the process taken to desegregate, code the data collected from the interviews. Chapter 4 consisted of an in-depth data analysis. Lastly, Chapter 5 shared findings, pose conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future studies.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant literature related to Hispanic leaders and their impact in communities with a majority of Hispanic students. The chapter was organized with an overview of historical views of school principals, leadership, Hispanic leaders in academia, the lack of representation in school leadership, and the role community and values play in education. Hispanic principals often serve in urban communities without the proper resources, tools, and experience. Therefore, the literature was reviewed to see why a growing minority population is still not equally represented in school leadership.

### **Historical Roles of the Principal**

The term leadership, is defined differently by scholars because it is an ever-evolving role. For instance, leadership is defined as having the ability to mobilize, influence, and motivate a group of people to follow a joint mission (Atasoy, 2020). Within the education spectrum, it is believed that leadership has a moral responsibility to support students and families in high-need areas (Medina et al., 2014; Sergiovanni, 1992). The role of a school principal is fundamentally essential and full of ever-evolving responsibilities (Reid, 2021). Principals' roles have recently become increasingly complex and multifaceted (Fullan, 2014).

In the past, a school principal's duties focused on being an effective building manager. Currently, principals must address student issues, deal with personnel, balance budgets, focus on school safety, and focus on student growth (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). School principals have been responsible for influencing the school community and leading positive change. Research confirms that for change to occur in a school, the principal must guide the path toward innovation (Silva-Garcia et al., 2018). Innovation is related to change, and it comes from a willingness to accept change from occurring (Tomás et al., 2009). School organizations and

leaders must have the ability to be innovative (Ramírez et al., 2017). Principals are expected to make changes in the school curriculum and improve academic opportunities for students in marginalized communities (Marx & Larson, 2012). Principals can influence the school community, parental involvement, teacher retention, and professional development. High-needs schools require a multifaceted approach where leaders state the vision clearly and improve the school climate based on data and knowledge (Duke, 2014). Fullan (2016) stated that school leaders are essential to affecting meaningful and sustainable change in school communities.

### ***Gender***

Hispanic females are largely more educated than male Hispanics yet do not hold leadership roles equal to their population in school. Hispanic females must overcome more hurdles due to social and economic biases that prevent them from being selected for higher-level positions. In the Hispanic community, there is machismo. *Machismo* is the term used to describe males' role in a Hispanic household as the patriarchal and dominant figures. White males have generally held the role of the principal but as the population majority has changed, so has the need for diversity in leadership. As the population increasingly changes in the United States, there is a call for more diversity. Crawford and Smith (2005) remarked that female and male administrators of color face barriers that include isolation and racially motivating victimization. Females in education struggle to hold leadership positions and it is even more difficult for women of color.

### ***Expectations***

Unreasonable expectations for principals create a sense that principals have to do it all. Not only do principals have to deal with curriculum development, staffing, budgets, and community building, but they also have to create a safe space for all students. Principals need to

be prepared to have important conversations about diversity and social justice to create inclusive school environments (Payne & Smith, 2018). Reflecting on personal beliefs, social justice, and equity opens up the ability to connect with students of the same background. According to Jones and Ringler (2021), principals should have the skills to identify equity issues and support marginalized communities.

### ***Diversity***

Fernandez et al. (2015) contend that diverse school leaders who mirror the communities they serve can have the ability to increase motivation, engagement and serve as positive role models to students of color. Principals are held responsible for engaging parents and guardians of diverse backgrounds (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). Hispanic faculty experience challenges, including discrimination and disproportionate responsibilities (Stanley, 2006).

### ***Traditions***

Before the principal role was established, there was a "principal teacher," a person usually a male in charge of carrying out administrative duties, taking attendance, and dealing with student discipline (Kafka, 2009). The turn of the century brought the "principal teacher" role to change, and it evolved to a manager, administrator, and supervisor (Brown, 2005). In the 1800s and 1900s, the principal's status developed into a supervisory position (Rousmaniere, 2007).

### ***Student Discipline***

Researchers indicate that minority students are exposed to severe disciplinary outcomes and are most likely to be suspended (Skiba et al., 2011). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2003), student behavior and school policies impact Hispanic students because they are most likely to be retained and receive behavioral referrals than white students. School principals create

policies and provide teacher training that does not lead Hispanic students in a pipeline of failure. Most Hispanic students are perceived as defiant and punished more harshly than white students.

### **Evolution of the Role of Principal**

Principal roles are centered on being inspirational leaders, coaches, visionaries, team builders, disciplinarians, communicators, and instructional leaders. (Alvoid & Black Jr., 2014; Spillane et al., 2004; Zepeda, 2013). Since principal leaders have several roles, they must form strong teams through building supportive learning communities (Riveras-León & Tomàs-Folch, 2020). Principals must promote organizational culture in schools to enhance student achievement (Avci, 2016). Leaders must have a clear vision for teachers, parents, and students they serve (Dearman & Alber, 2005). Every leader is different, and every school community is different, but one factor remains true: leaders must have meaningful interactions with their school community better to understand their needs (Marasco, 2016). Only through understanding, students' ethnic backgrounds will principals fully understand students' needs. Hispanic principals spend time completing tasks that are centered on teaching and learning.

### ***Principal as Manager***

Principals are often described as holding a managerial role in schools. Mackler (1996) stated that principals encompass being managers and facilitators of change. Managers focus on establishing stability, manageability, and accomplishments. Niño et al.'s (2017) study showed that principals spent 33% of their time in the classrooms doing observations, 25% with students, 23% paperwork, 18% planning, 16% in meetings, 15 % training teachers, and 14% leading professional development for staff. Principals carry the title of instructional leaders, but unfortunately, they are burdened with so many tasks that they fail to focus on academic achievement. New principals have appointed over 192 tasks (Burcar, 2014) to improve student

learning. Backnor and Gordon (2015), noted that principals' focus should always be on learning despite all the tasks and responsibilities. The Wallace Foundation has developed a task management tool that allows principals to see what they spend their time doing (Turnbull et al., 2009). According to Turnbull et al. (2009), The Wallace Foundation found that 70% of principals spend their time completing non-instructional duties that include dealing with student behaviors, teachers, and parents. It is more beneficial when principals focus on organizational improvements instead of day-to-day teaching because they can create more significant change through the implementation of schoolwide policies.

### ***Principal as Steward***

Principals have been seen as stewards of schools. Their role had been as gatekeepers and keepers of the hall. The principal is responsible for moving the school forward through policy change, care, and honesty and prioritizing students in all decisions made. Having a clear vision and expectations leads to student achievement. Schools reflect principals and their efforts as stewards. The principal must establish core values that teachers, parents, and students support. As the stewards of schools, principals drive change and develop a strong learning community. In simple terms, a leader must follow only two things: deciding what to do and following through, always keeping in mind they are stewards of the institutions.

### ***Principal as Caretaker***

Students need caring adults who engage and support them in attaining their goals (Harris & Kiyama, 2015). Caring Hispanic principals' outreach programs are successful when they value school communities and make all goals focused on student achievement transparent. Showing that they authentically care for the students allows all stakeholders to have buy-in.

### ***Principal as Parent Advocate***

The principal's role becomes community builders, instructional leaders, and managers whose actions impact all shareholders. Principals hold the most power because they decide what is done with resources and information (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). School-family partnerships focus on collaboration and authentic partnerships need to go beyond symbolic activities (Auerbach, 2010). Additionally, schools need to empower parents to participate actively and feel that the partnership between school and home is authentic. Sometimes principals do activities, such as events where parents are invited to have coffee with the principal to connect with one another, but more meaningful activities are essential. Parent participation is connected to student achievement, but it should not be viewed as a means to an end (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Programs are measured by the standard of parent involvement in a school community.

Epstein et al. (2002) stated that solid partnerships between parents and students allow for higher academic achievements and parent involvement. U.S schools find it challenging to create this level of partnership (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Auerbach (2010) noted that parent involvement is shaped by a family's race, class, gender, culture, and language. An institution's response to a family is determined by the family's diversity and power differentials and therefore impacts if parents openly participate. Parents of higher economic status participate in school parent organizations, attend events, and feel welcomed compared to parents of color (López & Stoelting, 2010). According to Freeman (2015), in 1964, sociologist by the name of James Coleman argued that family environment, not poverty, was a determining factor in a student's academic success. If parents do not hold capital in a school, they will not feel comfortable participating, impacting their child's growth. Historically schools create a culture of power that is

fundamentally exclusive to marginalized people (Delpit, 1988), and therefore leaders must be advocates.

### ***Principal as Liaison***

Principals play a vital role in the parents' connection in the school environment (Auerbach, 2009; Cooper et al., 2010). Some researchers argue that principals should take up the role of community leaders in schools located in urban areas (Green, 2018). Building community between school and parents can be challenging. The challenges do not deter future principals' from taking up the leadership role. Principals who accept leadership roles take the role of a broker. Burt (1992) stated that brokers build bridges between networks that share a common goal. Brokering between community organizations develops support and collaboration in neighborhoods that serve marginalized communities (Chaskin et al., 2001; Putnam, 2000). Brokering these connections builds a stronger community and neighborhood for students of color. Students need to be around caring adults who support their educational goals and help build networks.

### ***Principal as Leader***

Principals are the second most crucial leader next to teachers in impacting student outcomes (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). Strong leadership is essential because the school principal impacts the school and leads to improvement (Northouse, 2018). The role of the principal shifts between instructional leader, organizational leader, and relational leader. Reid (2021) notes that quality leadership is an element that is fundamentally tied to student success. Principals are influential in positive student outcomes, including student achievement, graduation rates, and attendance (Grissom et al., 2015). Literature suggests a clear connection between principals' actions and student achievement (Kafka, 2009). Principals also influence students'



discipline and whether they are suspended or not (Grissom et al., 2021a). As instructional leaders, principals must construct a shared school vision on discipline so that students can improve (Spillane et al., 2004).

### ***Principal as Hero***

Principals are expected to be "heroic" leaders who single-handedly save schools through reform (Murphy, 2002). The idea of a hero is a strong metaphor that dominates the role of principalship (Ishimaru, 2013). According to researchers, leaders inherit traits that lead them to want to "save" organizations (Elmore 2000; Senge, 2006). Superhero principals are made to overcome challenges and systematic inequalities through resilience and skills (Sutton & Gong, 2021). This expectation can be overly stressful to Hispanic leaders because the success or failure of their student body lies in their expertise.

### ***Principal as Instructional Leader***

Ärlestig and Törnsen (2014) describe the role of the principal has moved from managerial to an instructional leader who focuses on outcomes of teaching and supporting all the school's stakeholders. Niño et al. (2017) stated that instructional leaders are required to foster a school culture that includes collegiality and trust that develops a bond with teachers. The bond developed with teachers leads to a climate of motivation toward innovation and critical thinking. Schools and principals are being held accountable for students' success because they must be aware of students' ethnic backgrounds and prior experiences and create a space for engaging conversations. Nelson and Waite (2005) note that awareness of social and cultural components is essential in a school. It is crucial to understand Hispanic principal roles because they need to focus on student-focused tasks when selecting what needs to be done. The goal is to maximize the role of principalship (Weller & Weller, 2002). When looking at principals' activities, it is

essential to address the types of capital principals have with their students (Yosso, 2005). School leaders need to align tasks with students' learning being the priority. A principal's primary responsibilities are to establish a schools environment that is conducive to providing students with effective practices through instructional leadership (Hoy & Hoy, 2006).

It is important to note that literature on educational leaders and instructional leadership does not include leaders of color, specifically Hispanic leaders (Niño et al., 2017). Research on Hispanic school leaders is still minimal due to the fewer Hispanic leaders. Instructional leaders must understand how learning occurs, teach, lead professional development, believe everyone can learn, and make data-driven decisions (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). Instructional leaders need to implement policies in schools that are data-driven. Researchers argue that instructional leaders align curriculum with instruction in assessment (Lunenburg, 2013).

### **Historical Educational Policies**

Hispanics continue to be one of the youngest and most influential groups in the United States, with consistently low educational advancement (The White House, 2011). Due to the U.S. education level of students globally being less than ideal, America must out-educate the world. Hispanic students are an integral part of America's global success or failure. Latinos' success in education will improve the labor market and intern improve the U.S. economy. Since a lot is weighing on Hispanic students' success, they need support to improve their educational outcomes. Currently, Hispanic students face persistent obstacles that prevent their success. Hispanic students are attaining the lowest educational levels, which has become a national crisis and created an urgency for educational policies. Hispanic students must receive the proper support at school to be better prepared for college and intern careers. The responsibility falls on policymakers, school principals, and leaders who need to strengthen and increase graduation

rates. Effective school principals decrease dropout rates and support students in fulfilling their full potential. School connectives can be a factor that prevents dropout rates (McWhirter et al., 2013). Hispanic students experience high dropout rates, and this is due to students being underprepared and attending academically low schools. President Obama focused on supporting Head Start programs, preschools, and daycare through the American Recovery and Reimbursement Act of 2009, which directly impacted Hispanic students. The U.S. has created policies to better support Hispanic students who need to increase their academic achievement. The Institute of Child Health and Human Development found that Hispanic children who received a quality early childhood showed small successes that can be tracked up to high school.

### ***No Child Left Behind Act***

The NCLB's focus was to increase student achievement in high-need schools because Americans were lagging academically compared to other countries (Medina et al., 2014). NCLB defines high-need schools by specific characteristics (Picus et al., 2005). Those characteristics can consist of students living below the poverty level and second language learners. The U.S. economy is dependent on having skilled employees who can compete with the global market in innovation. School reform will lead to the development of skilled students who can think critically. The adoption of rigorous student standards can impact schools and improve student achievement. Providing support for student success through policies and reform has to be prioritized to create positive outcomes. NCLB's act is essential because Hispanic students are failing. If they continue to fail, the country will fail because Hispanics make up a large portion of America's labor force.

### ***Promise Neighborhood Initiative***

According to Horsford and Sampson (2014), in 2010, the U.S. DOE allocated \$10 million to establish Promise Neighborhood Initiative, which focused on eradicating poverty by providing all students the opportunity to attend strong schools with community support. Reform will only work if it is focused on social and community-based experiences (Green, 2016). Leaders want to reform organizational structures by learning the school culture, creating opportunities for teachers to show leadership, facilitate collaboration, build common visions and beliefs (Murphy, 2002).

### ***Brown vs. The Board of Education (1954)***

The case of Brown vs. The Board of Education ruled that separating black and white students was unconstitutional; therefore, schools should be desegregated (Jones & Ringler, 2021). The ruling was meant to support students but inevitably left black educators and principals unemployed. Because of this shift, Black educators were left jobless (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). In 2003-2004, ethnic minorities or persons of color, both men and women combined, represented only 24% of principals at all levels with 5% being at the secondary level (Strizek et al., 2006). Brown vs. The Board of Education ruling did good but unfortunately also set instructors and leaders of color behind. Policies established to support marginalized communities have both positive and negative elements. Brown vs. The Board of Education is a ruling that attempted to desegregate schools, yet many schools continue to be purposely segregated by income level and ethnic background.

### ***Equal Educational Opportunity Act***

Another positive and negative policy example includes the 1997 EEOA. The EEOA's purpose was to distribute tax money more fairly through communities (State of Vermont

Legislature, 2006) by supporting marginalized communities through funding. Leadership in urban areas focused on social justice and diversity. The belief is that diversity better prepares students and decreases the achievement gap between students of color and white students (Jones & Ringler, 2021). Rural schools are less diverse and educate many impoverished children, so they need more support from the government (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Currently, schools are in danger of becoming resegregated because of social policy failure. Classrooms have become racially homogenous. The increase in enrollment and funding should develop professional development that guarantees curriculum reform and proper resources that support students of color (Foskett & Lumby, 2003). Closing the academic gap and creating diversity in classrooms has become increasingly difficult in urban areas.

**School Reform.** School reform cannot solely lie on the school principals' shoulders, although they are fundamentally crucial to school improvement (Reid, 2021). Reform has been a persistent issue in urban schools because it is difficult to attain (Green, 2018).

## **Principals-Present Day**

### ***Role***

The role of the principal in the 1990's changed to the age of accountability (Ranson, 2003). Principals' job descriptions shifted from managerial to reformer and change manager (Fullan, 2016). As a manager, principals focus on managing schools. However, now the role is more as a reformer—a reformer who creates change that will better support all students socially, academically, and emotionally. Acton (2021) noted the dangers of leading change without knowledge or experience. A lack of understanding of how change happens can be critical for leaders'. Simply having good ideas or intent is not enough because often, they do not make it to the classroom. Fullan (2016) stated what professional development will cause the most

significant impact on change. Although professional development is vital, it is still scarce (Huber, 2011). Hess and Kelly (2007) stated that school principals are asked to lead schools in a new world market with unprecedented responsibilities and challenges. Principals and teachers are critical to student outcomes even when the role of school leader continues to evolve (Johnston & Young, 2019). When principals improve instructional equality among teachers, they impact learning and achievement (Chetty et al., 2014).

### ***Expectations***

Principalship can be considered one of the most challenging careers in the U.S. because of the high demands and expectations. Although the role of principals is challenging, principals with experience are not being placed in schools where they are needed. The Change Makers project's function was to support school principals combat leader isolation and prevent burnout (Bauer & Silver, 2018). They are creating a support system for leaders who share the same passion for change and social justice. The Change Makers focused on mentoring and providing guidelines for principals to focus on their physical and emotional wellbeing through mindfulness. Bauer and Silver (2018) stated that leaders who show a commitment to change must engage in critical analysis of their institutions and identify injustices. Leaders must sharpen their equity lens in order to sustain themselves as social justice leaders. Social justice is essential to guarantee a prosperous future for students (Medina et al., 2014). Research emphasizes the importance of decreasing a principals' workload to lead change in schools successfully (Oplatka, 2017). Principals need adequate training to better support change.

### ***Experience***

There is evidence that districts place principals with less experience and qualifications in the most marginalized communities (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Less effective principals are

placed in schools that need the most support. Districts are not placing experienced principals in communities that need them, actively affecting students of color. The quality of a school's principal directly impacts student achievement (Grissom et al., 2021a). Novice principals are placed in Hispanic majority schools. In 2008 minorities represented 16% of experienced administrators in higher education (Bridges, 2008). In California, Hispanic novice principals are placed in low-achieving schools with high poverty levels (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018).

### ***Retention***

Schools with high needs tend to have significant turnover rates with staffing (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Teachers in high-need schools tend to burn out, and therefore the turnover rate increases, and principals are held responsible for teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011). Principals are held responsible for teachers succeeding or burning out. The School Leaders Network (2014) stated that novice principals are faced with “churn” due to higher levels of social, emotional, and intellectual challenges that lead to higher turnover rates. Principals are placed in schools and given the task to support students, parents, and teachers. Wearing many hats is part of the principalship, and because of this, many principals face unknown challenges. Principals assigned to high-poverty schools have a 21% turnover rate (Sutton & Gong, 2021).

Hussar et al. (2020) noted that 14% of the U.S. population is below the poverty rate and 21% of students are living in poverty. Serving communities in need can have additional challenges because there are needs with little financial resources and pressure to create positive change. In California, there is evidence that less qualified novice principals are placed in marginalized communities than more affluent schools (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Leadership practices and styles play a crucial role in student and teacher performance (Özgenel & Karsantik, 2020).

In 2016-2017 the average tenure for principals was four years, and 35% have stayed in their school communities for two years. (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Principals who rotate in and out of communities impact students' growth. Building relationships is key to increasing academic growth, but students cannot create long-lasting relationships when principals come in and out of communities. The ideal is that principals can stay in school communities for several years to build relationships. Researchers note that poverty is directly connected to principal retention (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Principals placed in low-income communities do not stay in the communities in need too long. Once principals gain experience, they leave communities needing more financial stake for schools that offer higher compensation. Districts compensate Hispanic leaders in high-poverty schools with lower salaries (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Additionally, the National Center for Education Statistics (2015) data showed that the medium earning with a bachelor's degree was less for Hispanics and Blacks than their White counterparts. The medium earning for a White employee with a bachelor's degree was around \$57,700 compared to \$45,100 for a Hispanic or Black employee. A student's poverty level is directly connected to the available educational opportunities. Principals are responsible for improving students' opportunities in schools.

In California, principals serving in low-income areas are paid approximately \$12,000, 10% less than principals working in affluent areas (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Direct discrimination in pay exists because people of color are paid different rates for the same work than white employees (Pettigrew & Taylor, 2001). Because Hispanics have a higher dropout rate, they have limited access to higher-paying jobs and are at risk of being involved in the welfare and criminal system (Gándara, 2010). High principal burnout is significant because it shows that although principals have the best intentions to educate and support students without balance,



burnout is inevitable. In elementary schools, both teachers and principals have high turnover rates due to the high demands. Principals in a set of schools with low-income demographics stay an average of 3.4 years, while those in high-level schools stay for five years or more (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). In schools where the student population is not below the poverty level, the turnover rate is lower. Grissom and Bartanen (2018) stated that 21% of principals in high-poverty schools resign their positions each year. Those instructors who resign work in schools that have 80% of students who are living below the poverty rate. This is compared to 17% of principals in schools in which fewer than 20% of students are low-income that remain in their position. A qualified and effective principal is the best investment a school district can invest in (Grissom et al., 2021a). Districts have not yet focused on offering novice principals support when leading schools in need through training or support. Principals of the same background can build tight unity with their students and possibly stay in a school community. The large number of principals leaving schools creates a sense of abandonment to students.

### ***Relationship to Parents and Students***

Parents' and students' relationships are important because parents are the first educators. Parents can motivate students to do well in school and pursue higher education. A loving home has more of an impact on a child's development than economic status (Jeynes, 2014). Students are affected by a lack of parent support and involvement in their schools. When students see their parents on campus and participating in activities, they become motivated, and their relationships become stronger. Parent involvement plays a significant role in student achievement (Mo & Singh, 2008).

### ***Leadership Characteristics***

Leadership characteristics are shaped by a school because leadership drives the shareholders of schools' behavior and how they think (Atasoy, 2020). Schools are multifaceted institutions that require leaders with a wide range of leadership capabilities (Daresh et al., 2000). Daresh et al. (2000) note that the pathway to principalship can be sometimes fragmented. Leaders should be adept and exhibit both the facilitator role but also the encouraging role. As enactors, principals can influence their team and strengthen the school culture and vision. Principals must champion teachers' growth and support leadership. A principal must be able to meet the demands of the principalship and increase the responsibility outside the managerial role.

### **Cultural Implications**

#### ***School Culture***

School organizations each have unique cultures comprised of deep values, beliefs, and traditions formed throughout time (Schein, 2010). A school's culture reflects a school's history. Stolp and Smith (1994) define school culture as a historically rooted set of norms, values, beliefs, and rituals created by the school community. These ceremonies and rituals are shared and protected by all stakeholders in the community. School culture is connected to a school's mission. Karadağ and Özdemir (2015) were expected to develop strong school cultures that promoted student motivation and growth through honest, open relationships. Epstein (2001) noted a six-part framework for developing achievement: parenting, communication, volunteering, homelife, decision-making, and community collaboration. School outreach is a great way to connect communities. School communities can collaborate through partnerships with local universities, colleges, or non-profits (Sanders, 2003). Students benefit from having colleges become accessible through partnerships.

### ***Community Involvement***

Principals face many challenges, and improving and sustaining educational outcomes is the most challenging (Almy & Tooley, 2012). In order for a principal to create an impact, the school community must have a supportive culture. Building relationships with school parents is meaningful because it develops a level of trust. Ladky and Peterson (2008) found that even informal contact between parents and educators improves relationships and connects school and home. A school's culture must be open to positive change in order to affect academic student performance. Building learning cultures that examine school policies with transparency and teamwork. Educational leaders deal with mistrust issues with marginalized communities that are not made to feel comfortable (Parker & Villalpando, 2007). Because there is a lack of Hispanic principals and teachers, white students are deprived of more diverse education, perpetuating isolation between white and non-white students (Frankenberg, 2008). Both white and non-white students suffer from segregated schools because it adds to misunderstandings between both races (Marx, 2009). Hispanic students in public schools are racially isolated purely because of their income level and background (Gándara, 2010; Sable et al., 2010).

Culture suggests that certain groups have beliefs and practices that motivate progress (Tarasawa, 2009). Research shows that learning begins at birth and is further developed by a student's family, community, and school environment. Hispanic communities are supportive of students' education where the parent is the first educator (The White House, 2011). Educational leaders need to reach out to parents to make them feel welcomed and part of the school community (Banks & Banks, 2019). The misconception for Hispanic parents is that they do not care and are not supportive of education (Marx, 2006, 2009). This misconception is sometimes believed by Hispanic teachers and leaders as well (Tatum, 2003).

### ***Parent and Administrator Relationship***

In the U.S., parental involvement is essential and expected as part of school culture, but parental involvement does differ depending on a group's background, experience, and culture. (Pérez-Carreón et al., 2005). Creating communities that support parental engagement where families are positioned to connect with school communities has shown to be beneficial to minority students (Torre & Murphy, 2016). Developing strong relationships with parents and educators is essential when reforming education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Shared leadership practices exist between parents and leaders who develop relationships where leadership bounces between leader and followers (Leithwood & Mascal, 2008). Shared leadership practices depart principals from the traditional hierarchical leadership role that dominates most school communities (Sergiovanni, 2006).

### ***Collaborative Leadership***

Collaborative leadership approach is not the norm because it takes an openness to share power (Cooper, 2010; Gold et al., 2002). Most principals say they want parent engagement but resist expanding leadership to parents because they refuse to give up power (Olivos, 2006). This is why some principals settle for token gestures like donuts with the principal, establishing a Parent Teachers Association, known as PTA, and open houses instead of providing meaningful opportunities (Auerbach, 2007). Meaningful opportunities are events that provide parents and school leaders the opportunity to have an open dialogue where trust is present. Parents whose goal is to be involved in school decision-making to solve academic issues happen through shared leadership (Zarate, 2007). Shared leadership implies that leadership is shared with others because all parties have the same vision for the organization. It is beneficial for principals to share leadership with parents and other instructors. For example, they develop a Professional Learning

Community (PLC) with teachers. In a PLC, teachers' leaders meet periodically with the principals to develop, implement, or reform school policies. Developing PLCs forms bonds between principals and teachers because it allows time for open discussions and the creation of school goals that align with schools' mission statements. The PLCs have meeting norms that support school goals. Teachers in schools can facilitate collaboration and improve schools (Copland & Knapp, 2006). Principals open to sharing power with parents and teachers cultivate relationships that foster solidarity, shared knowledge, and empowerment and transform schools (Auerbach, 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Principals can create parent organizations that provide parents with responsibilities that support positive school culture. Parents can also be part of discussions regarding school policies that impact students. Principals understand that parents are diverse groups with different needs.

### ***Principals and Students Relationship***

Principals must establish solid academic relationships in order to support students' needs. Principals can have intentional conversations with students and parents to develop stronger connections. Connections allow principals to have buy-in with schools and stay for a more extended period. Hispanic leaders share a common upbringing, language, and roles when leading schools with a large number of Hispanic students (Magdaleno, 2006; Murakami et al., 2018). Caring educators and leaders create a support system that impacts student engagement positively (Woolley, 2009). Principals who develop caring connections can positively impact engagement (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Woolley, 2009). Woolley (2009) argued that Latino students who are nurtured by their principals could become a model of academic success.

## ***Communities of Color***

Leaders draw from their cultural knowledge. Hispanic leaders attribute their success to clearly understanding their cultural background (Ozuna-Allen & Delgado, 2019). Schools are successful when the community knows the schools' mission and philosophy (Schutz, 2006). Strong communities with clear and well-aligned missions and values are better equipped to make well-informed decisions. Community-based programs that focus on students of color embracing cultural backgrounds can create positive effects. It is challenging for school principals to make connections with immigrant families, and therefore reaching out to community organizations can better support them. Hispanic students face many challenges. About half of Hispanics earn high school diplomas and hold unskilled occupations (Vigil-Landen, 2002). Education is key to progress, and therefore the more Hispanic students are provided with opportunities, the more likely they will hold future leadership roles. Hispanics have become the largest minority group on college campuses yet still have lower graduation rates than white college students (Thompson, 2013). Because principalship has many responsibilities, an important leadership trait is resilience (Sutton & Gong, 2021). Communities of color need leaders who understand their needs and have resiliency.

## **Hispanics in Education**

### ***Hispanic Culture Beliefs and Values***

Hispanics can be classified by collective similarities in culture and values (Murakami et al., 2018). The Hispanic community has profound similarities and differences since it comprises a diverse combination of Latin countries. Language similarities can unify the Latino community, but even within them, there are differences. A strong sense of values creates a connection between Hispanic leaders and students in primarily Hispanic populated schools (Montas-Hunter,

2012). In his 2011 State of the Union speech, President Barack Obama stated that the Hispanic communities' values and beliefs are essential to the country's success. Obama stated in his speech that Hispanics make up the country's largest and fastest-growing minority group (The White House, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Hispanics make a profound impact in the country and are committed to family, faith, hard work, and service (The White House, 2011). Obama stated that America is a country founded by diversity and that the future of the U.S. will be impacted by the growing Hispanic community. In order to target the educational disparities, the Obama administration created the My Brother's Keeper initiative that focused on supporting young men of color and increasing their educational opportunities (The White House, 2014). The initiative also looked at school disciplinary practices, most notably how schools deal with behavioral problems (Ferguson, 2000).

Connectedness can lower the rates of behavioral problems (McNeely et al., 2002; Sass et al., 2011). In Baltimore, a Big Brother and Big Sister program was developed to mentor students in local schools (Henry, 2009). National Big Brother and Big Sister programs can provide students positive support through social events, incentives, and community outreach time. When analyzing the importance of programs that allows Hispanic students to connect with adults who care for them (Harris & Kiyama, 2015). Students need caring adults who support their educational goals and engage with them.

The largest community college system is in California, and Hispanic students compose about 46% of its student body (The Education Trust-West, 2017). California also holds 46% of the Hispanic students in college and universities, and 86% are HSIs (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2019). According to the California Community College Chancellor's Office (2019), Hispanics make up the lowest staff. A lack of diversity stems from

the pipeline issue (Johnson, 2017). Hispanics Serving Institutions (HSIs) provide institutions a critical path to opportunity and their advancement increases success and opportunity for all students (The White House, 2021). Other researchers note that a critical examination of the lack of diversity should be done through analyzing school norms and leadership. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC; 2014) states that research warns educators on the community college leadership crisis. Part of the crisis is the high turnover rates for presidents and the lack of leadership diversity (Eddy, 2012). Leaders are being called to work in communities in need and lead transformational change. The National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC) works with the AACC to produce future Hispanic leaders.

Representation of leaders of the same background provides knowledge and skills required to effectively engage students of diverse backgrounds (Vargas et al., 2020). Diversity extends nationality and socioeconomic status (Ramirez & Suarez, 2002). A strong school community also promotes communication between stakeholders and affirms the communities culture, language, and traditions (Grissom et al., 2021a). Hispanic families and communities have to negotiate between socio-political systems to increase educational opportunities for Hispanic students (Rodríguez et al., 2016). Family and student ascribed like parental guidance and poverty level are variables used to explain student academic outcomes (Wiggan, 2007). Hispanic parents support their children's education, but sometimes that is not evident due to communication barriers. Principals must honor the experiences of the communities they serve and recognize that lived experiences provide knowledge to better critically analyze leadership practices (Lac & Cumings-Mansfield, 2018). Historically, political influences impact how and why decisions are made because these influences shape values that lead to educational policies (Scribner et al., 2003). According to López (2003), education politics do not consider race, class, gender, and



other oppressive factors when moving policies forward. Due to this lack of perspective from policymakers, underrepresented groups are not part of the decision-making (Dyrness, 2011).

Oliva and Alemán (2019) note that not allowing a group to be part of the conversation is problematic because these groups are the ones being directly affected and excluded by the various policies. Students and families are in a vulnerable position because of this lack of sociopolitical capital. Madrigal-Garcia and Acevedo-Gil (2016) coined the term New Juan Crow in Education, which refers to policies that do not support Hispanic students and instead create a school-to-prison pipeline. Undocumented Hispanic youth are also vulnerable to legislation like the Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA) that keeps students in limbo. Hispanic students experience discrimination and are treated as inferior or second-class citizens by teachers and peers (Córdova & Cervantes, 2010). The Pew Hispanic Center (2007) did a study in 2007 that found 41% of Hispanic students believed they or someone close to them had experienced discrimination because of their race within the past five years. In the study, 64% believe that discrimination against Hispanics is an ongoing issue in the U.S.

Traditionally, parents of color are viewed as having deficits because they are described as not caring about education which is not true (Valencia, 1997). School administrators sometimes ignore Hispanic parents, especially if they challenge oppressive policies (Auerbach, 2007). Studies show that when marginalized communities feel sincerely welcomed, they are more likely to participate and are attuned to a school's cultural climate (Henderson et al., 2007; Tillman, 2004). Leadership is messy, and principals need to shift their roles and allow students, parents, and teachers to support their responsibilities to achieve academic success (Cooper, 2010). Parents can be seen as equal partners who have the same goals. Principals are responsible for

initiating a positive school climate, addressing barriers, planning, using resources, and organizing staff professional development on family partnerships (Constantino, 2003).

**Confianza.** Researchers agree that students who participate in safe community programs in urban low achieving schools develop *confianza*, a form of trust (Harris & Kiyama, 2015). Stanton-Salazar (2011) states that when *confianza* exists then vulnerability can be present. *Confianza* allows people to interact without fear of judgment. Deep relationships of trust develop meaningful relationships (Rólon-Dow, 2005). Teachers that share the same background and experiences as the students they serve can build a trusting relationship (Bejinez et al., 2004). The higher level of trust between school leaders, teachers, and students, the more successful students will be and have less contentious moments when decisions are made (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). *Pláticas* are conversations that provide an opportunity to self-discover and share lived experiences unique to the Hispanic culture (De la Torre, 2008). These conversations are part of Hispanic culture because they are intertwined with *confianza* (trust) and *respetto* (respect) (Fierros & Delgado-Bernal, 2016).

**Respetto.** The term “respect” (*respetto*) in the Hispanic community is essential because it provides communication between community leaders and participants. Parents have a level of respect for their children’s teachers and principals. Additionally, the parents trust that their children are being provided with the best.

**Bridging.** Bridging helps because it ties the interests of shareholders in schools and districts that can freely discuss concerns and goals because of a high level of trust and a common interest (Warren, 2001). Research suggests that bonding and bridging are instrumental to principals and parents because they align their students' vision and strengthen social capital for all shareholders (Dika & Singh, 2002; Leana & Pil, 2006). The purpose of bonding and bridging

is to empower shareholders to improve student learning (Warren, 2001). Community-based programs can have initiatives that function outside school environments in supporting students in schools. For example, community programs that assist students with different issues can include academic support with English acquisition or advocating for students in their school sites (Wong, 2010). Programs can be in school sites as well because parents need to be provided support to navigate school settings better. Bridging occurs when individuals from different backgrounds, like educators and parents, access resources, share opportunities, and have experiences to improve their school communities (Monkman et al., 2005). Community connections allow organizations that likely would not have connected to improve their local neighborhoods (Warren et al., 2009).

**Language.** Hispanic youth are less likely to be enrolled in early education programs, which affects a student's vocabulary level (The White House, 2011). Hispanic children not enrolled in pre-school programs exhibit less language and mathematics skills compared to their non-Hispanic peers. ELLs are among the fastest-growing students and comprise 10% of the U.S. K-12 student body according to The White House (2011). Moreover, Snyder et al. (2018) state that 4.5 million Hispanic public school students identify as ELL. Research shows that 82% of Hispanic students' first language is Spanish (The White House, 2011). In the U.S., the most significant number of students receiving ELL supports are Hispanic and speak Spanish (Kindler, 2002). Further, California, Texas, New York, and Illinois hold the largest number of ELL students (Snyder et al., 2018). California comprises 1,390,316 public school students who identify as ELL. Hispanic students are often segregated from Whites students because they are placed in ELL classes (Marx & Larson, 2012). Therefore, their interaction with white students is

limited to little to no contact. Nationally, 97% of white teachers only speak English and cannot support ELL students (National Education Association, 2010).

Marginalized communities have been in need of language assistance in schools. Historically, districts have not provided support to Mexican American citizens and Hispanic immigrants who need support when learning English (Moll & Ruiz, 2009). In 2007 68.9% of Hispanic students spoke another language other than English at home, and 17.5% struggled to speak in English (Aud et al., 2013). In 2005 Hispanic students born outside the U.S. dropped out of school 38% because they were less likely to be fluent in English (Kewal-Ramani et al., 2007).

***Bilingualism.*** Researchers note that bilingual education supports students and allows them to connect with their background, yet some Americans view bilingual education as “un-American” (Ovando et al., 2018). Language has always been a topic of interest because some argue that immigrants and Hispanic Americans must assimilate and deculturize (Getz, 2005). Educators need the tools to educate 2.1 million non-citizen students who lack language skills (Nieto, 2006). Teachers influence students with low expectations, lack qualifications to teach bilingual students and provide limited academic support (Valenzuela, 1999). Having teachers that do not have the tools to support students properly leads to inconsistent relationships.

The growing Hispanic population requires more bilingual educators and administrators who can better support the language gaps and address linguistic diversity in schools (Elizondo, 2005). Elizondo (2005) suggests that bilingual educators can move up as administrators to serve the growing Hispanic community. Language is an important factor because bilingualism and being a Spanish speaker can be viewed in a positive light (Gil, 2019). Linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005) is present in families that speak both Spanish and English and leverage language as a resource when building relationships and establishing goals. Districts that have large numbers of

Spanish-speaking students should provide sufficient support for students like translators.

Investing in Spanish-speaking administrators and translators would provide those needed support. Principals who require teachers to focus on daily vocabulary building increase student knowledge and close the literacy gap due to language barriers (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

### ***Latino Family Characteristics***

Factors that play a part in Hispanic students lagging academically are personal, cultural, and school-related. Hispanic families in the U.S. represent diverse origins (Siskind & Helms, 2019). Mexican families are the largest group of Hispanics in the U.S. (Migration Policy Institute, 2016). In 2020 the Condition of Education report shared that students living in poverty have only 9% of parents who completed high school (Murakami & Kearney, 2020). Although many Hispanic parents do not attend high school, most emphasize the importance of family and community (Elenes, 2020). Bordas (2001, 2013) used two terms to discuss families and their support of education one is *destino* (purpose) and *tejando* (weaving). A part of success is following self-purpose and weaving together connections. Hispanic families are an integral part of the U.S. (Siskind & Helms, 2019).

In the Hispanic community, family, language, and culture play a part in students' support at home. Cultural factors contribute because a student's community knowledge is uniquely affected by their culture. Schools play a significant role in whether a student will dropout or excel. Reducing dropout rates benefits not only individuals but also families and communities. Fry and Taylor (2013) note that high school dropout rates declined in 2000 from 28% to 14% in 2011 for Hispanic students aged 16-24. Teachers, peers, and school administrators contribute to a student's success. When looking at all these factors, community-based programs, community school programs, and school programs are crucial. These programs promote *confianza* and safe

spaces that bring about positive outcomes. Connections between principals and students is reported to significantly lower dropout rates because students felt motivated to continue their educational goals (Orpinas & Raczynski, 2015).

Quality leaders exhibit essential qualities and qualifications. Grissom et al. (2021b) note that strong principals exhibit mastery in instruction, people, and organization skills. Principals are responsible for differentiating effective teachers and building solid relationships. Strong relationships can be established by building trust within the school community. The role of a principal is to run a school and all the complexities it contains.

Building a productive school climate is beneficial because it promotes a professional climate with academic focus (Grissom et al., 2021a). Having an effective principal matters. Principals need to be strategic when optimizing resources or allocating funding to support teaching and learning. As leaders, principals have power, and they need to be able to make decisions that benefit students. King (2002) states that principals must develop the skills to collect data to make more informed school decisions and, therefore, create more of an impact on student growth. Successful principals bring an equity lens to the schools they serve (Grissom et al., 2021b). When principals bring an equity lens to their team of teachers and staff, it allows them to create clear school missions. The Hispanic leadership model is a set of recommendations for institutions (Bordas, 2001, 2013).

Principals feel ill-equipped to be effective due to little professional development and a lack of district support (Acton, 2021). Professional principal preparation programs have been unable to keep up with the increasing demand for school reform (Hess & Kelly, 2007). Matthews and Crow (2010) state that principalship requires continuous skills and knowledge, and research does emphasize how important it is to provide principals with ongoing training and support. The

principal preparation program (PPP) was an inclusive internship program designed to include diversity and social justice in schools (Jones & Ringler, 2021). Programs created for novice principals provide instructional support.

### **Role of Hispanic Leader**

Hispanics have quickly become one of the largest minority groups in the United States (Fry & Lopez, 2012; Maxwell, 2014; Vigil-Laden, 2001). While Hispanic students grow, Hispanic leaders have not grown to the same speed. Leadership has traditionally been studied on White male leaders, and little is known about underrepresented groups (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The lack of Hispanic leaders in the U.S. is a crisis because Hispanic leaders are not allowed the opportunity to support their own culture (Murakami et al., 2018; Nieto, 2006). Hispanic leaders possess the tools to combat the crisis of representation, but they need to be provided with the space (Bordas, 2015).

Researchers argued that Hispanic children benefit significantly where Hispanic representation is present in district administration, for example, school board members (Arias 2005). Representation provides students with a visual of the possibilities. In the U.S., out of the 89,000 school administrators, only 7% are Hispanic (Bitterman et al., 2013; Crawford & Fuller, 2017). The number of non-White educators has increased in a span of 14 years by 5%, which shows a slight increase in the diversity of leaders but not to the equivalent of the population (Macias & Stephens, 2019). Bitterman et al. (2013) stated that nationwide the number of Hispanic principals was 6.8% out of 89,819 in the United States between 2011-2012. It is challenging to know the exact number of Hispanic principals nationwide because the term Hispanic is defined differently (Martinez et al., 2020). Ryu (2010) noted that minorities accounted for only 17% of full-time faculty employees compared to 77% of White colleagues. In

higher education, the lack of representation continues. Faculty of color make up 18% of full-time administrators in higher education, and 13% serve as college and university presidents, Hispanics being 5% of those percentages (Tran, 2014).

Fernandez et al. (2015) argued that educational scholars contend that diverse school leaders who mirror their communities can be positive role models and increase student motivation and engagement with students of color. There is a possibility that leaders that look like their students make a higher impact. School leaders who share cultural backgrounds and can relate to lived experiences motivate and improve student outcomes (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Hopson et al., 2010). Students build connections with principals that they can see as role models because of ethnic or racial similarities (Tresslar, 2010). White principals have reported feeling underprepared when supporting Hispanic and low-income students compared to non-white principals (Johnson & Young, 2019). Researchers believe that the mismatched leadership and student body negatively impact students and their academic and social development.

Even though Latino students have increased, teachers and leaders are still not equivalent. According to Flores and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014), there had been an increase in second-generation Hispanics in education, possibly because it is a less competitive profession. Hispanic educators also seek out education because it allows them the opportunity to give back to their communities. Yosso (2006) explains that Hispanic principals have cultural capital because they can connect with Hispanic families because of similar language and community.

Yosso's (2005) six-step cultural wealth model focused on aspirational wealth, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance. Aspirational wealth is focused on strengthening leaders' dreams and lived experiences by having community leaders share how they have overcome barriers and injustices and still succeed. By leaders displaying examples of resilience,



Hispanic leaders can have higher aspirations not to allow injustices to shape their outcomes. It is aspirational wealth where others provide *consejos* (advice) to keep dreaming and working towards a brighter future (Niño et al., 2017). Linguistic wealth consisted of understanding the value of being bilingual in both Spanish and English. Being able to communicate in two languages is an advantage. The third part was cultural wealth, which focused on community and extended families' value in leaders' lives. Social capital wealth allows individuals to build relationships and utilize peers and friends to develop their social capital. The more extensive the network a leader has, the more possibilities to grow. The fifth step, navigational wealth, refers to a leader's ability to exist in an organization with a positive or hostile environment. Resistant wealth is the ability for a leader to leverage social justice and push through the challenges they have experienced. Tarasawa (2009) defines social capital as the ability of parents to invest time and support in their children and therefore reduce dropout rates. Putman (2000) defined social capital as the network of social relations that share goals to improve conditions. Principals can help build social capital through building community and relationships with outside organizations. When Hispanic students move from schools, they struggle because of cultural incongruence and lack of resources (Reyes et al., 2000). Parents with social capital could participate in parent programs and better understand school communities (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011).

Districts are placing Hispanic leaders in high poverty, high need, and highly diverse schools, limiting advancement opportunities (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). They are given all the responsibility to create change for diverse students. Community-wide inequities like poverty can only be resolved through collaboration between neighborhoods and institutions that build community (Miller, 2012). Martinez et al. (2020) noted that policymakers must provide funding,

so they are less overworked. Leaders in urban areas face challenges comprised of external and internal factors that include inadequate teaching practices, students' income level, and home life (Milner, 2012). School principals can create change through building relationships with community leaders and organizations. Research suggests that improving neighborhoods is aligned with change to endure and prosperity to take action (Warren, 2005). Noguera and Wells (2011) remarked that urban schools are complex and, therefore, the solution to inequity cannot be easily solved by one person's policies. Urban schools have challenges unique to their environment, including poverty, racism, weak structures, and lack of recourses (Noguera, 2003). Urban schools lack the financial, human, and academic resources needed for a student to be successful (Warren, 2005).

Successful principals in high-need areas struggle with low-performing students and recognize the failures perpetuated by districts (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013). The school principals' performance as a leader is key to a school's success, favorable climate, and parental participation (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Schools with high-quality principals have higher achievement in standardized testing (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Unfortunately, less effective principals are assigned to communities in need (Clotfelter et al., 2007). Researchers suggest that a potential cause of Hispanic students underperforming is aligned to the underrepresentation of Hispanic leaders (Crawford & Fuller, 2017).

Principals play a vital role in students' academic lives, and there is also significance in having a Hispanic teacher (Flores, G., 2017). The HSIs were designed to guarantee Hispanic leaders' representation in two-year and four-year colleges and universities. HSI guarantees that Hispanic students receive the opportunity to serve schools that have been underrepresented (Vargas et al., 2020). HSI institutions have many Hispanic students in the United States. More

than 370 HSI institutions support students (Excelencia in Education, 2015). The HSI enrolls over 36,000 students and serves a diverse population, with 29% Hispanic, 21% Asian, and 3% African-American (Tran, 2014). Although the Latino population has increased, the number of educators continues to be predominately white. Nationally there are 87% white teachers serving students. (National Education Association, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). White teachers continue to dominate the teaching profession yet are less likely to be placed in urban schools. Only 23% of white teachers are placed in urban schools, in contrast to 58% of Hispanic teachers placed in those settings. Similar to white teachers white principals dominate the profession. In public schools, 84% of principals are white (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

In principalship, diversity is nonexistent (Evans, 2007). Research shows that hiring more faculty of color can improve employee conditions and deter challenges faced by colleagues (Vargas et al., 2020). Recruiting, hiring, and promoting Hispanic leaders has to be done deliberately (Gates et al., 2003). School districts in suburban districts resist change and do not recruit Hispanic leaders (Fernandez et al., 2015). The lack of applicants for principalship is due to a lack of mentorship and historical bias (Morgenthal & Winter, 2002). Mentor relationships that support diverse demographics, personalities, and skillsets influence the quality of mentorship (Holmes et al., 2007). Packer-Williams and Evans (2011) stated that positive mentorship can bring positive outcomes and help leaders deal with micro-aggressions, increase positive self-identity, and contest stereotypes. Hispanic leaders must actively overcome traditional perceptions that create personal and social pressures. Tillman (2001) also warned that mentorship can be challenging, and sometimes, the relationships between mentor and protégé are not easily developed. The challenges arise because people have different personalities, backgrounds, and experiences, and intern experience situations differently.

Snyder and Dillow (2015) reported in the 2013 Digest of Education Statistics that 2010-2011 out of 89,790 full-time and part-time principals, only 6,120 were Hispanic. In order to advance in leadership roles, Hispanic principals must appease superiors. According to Aleman and Aleman (2010), Hispanic leaders must appease white superiors and place their interests aside for higher positions. In order to fit into others' expectations Hispanic leaders, have to surpass expectations and prove they are qualified for the leadership positions. Scholars argue that little has been investigated on Hispanics' contribution to public education (Hernandez et al., 2014; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016).

It is essential to prepare Hispanic educational leaders that serve communities. Bordas (2015) reminds us that Hispanics grow up with tight family units and develop those values of cooperation and generosity that they can bring to their leadership early; fostering collaboration and working together for a common good and the “yes we can” attitude. In order to promote students, success principals must understand students, as well as the factors that contribute to student success or failures, being aware of the factors that contribute to either success or failure, allows principals to develop interventions (Fry & Gonzales., 2008; Sable et al., 2010).

## **Leadership Styles of Hispanic Leaders**

### ***Transformational Leadership***

Hispanic leaders tend to have the quality of being transformational leaders. Burns (1978) introduced the term transformational leadership, and it has become a contemporary leadership term which was inspired by Robert House's 1976 theory of charismatic leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2017) state that transformational leaders are empathetic, trusting, and respectful when implementing systemwide change in schools. Transformational leaders focus on leading with a visionary model that focuses on collaboration. Bass and Riggio (2006) defined transformational

leaders as inspiring and empowering leaders who motivate followers to share their commitment to the vision. Transformational leaders tend to have high levels of support, commitment, and satisfaction from their team. This form of leadership brings about positive change and success because it is aspirational (Smith & Bell, 2011). Hall and Hord's (2015) framework noted that change is initiated by a developed shared vision, resources, investing in professional learning, checking for progress, and creating a culture of change. Transformational leaders seek to achieve results through influence, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio, 2016). Transformational leaders develop relationships with students to create a sense of belonging and competence (Salisbury et al., 2019).

Empowering youth to grow in their selves through modeling leadership is transformational in itself. Poon and Cohen (2012) stated that student activism for educational change cannot be ignored because it can improve schools and support transformational school leaders in their mission. Leaders must recognize that youth have the ability to transform themselves as well. They can identify what inequities they see in their communities and work towards improving their environment (Lac & Cumings-Mansfield, 2018). It is transformational when leaders provide the space for students to recognize their academic needs (Mitra, 2008). Transformative schools also promote change within the community by engaging with leaders, students, and teachers to discuss social justice (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2017).

### ***Affiliative Leadership***

Student voices allow students the opportunity to impact their school community. Students can motivate the student body to participate in school-based activities and decision-making (Cook-Sather, 2007; Mitra, 2008). Students can provide school principals data through interviews, focus groups, or surveys. School principals can collect data and develop solutions

with active students (Fielding, 2001). The more students can design solutions; the more authentic results come about (Sussman, 2015). Students feel more connected to their school communities when their teachers and leaders are invested in their success (Mitra, 2004). Principals allowing schools the leadership to share their experiences and background and how that affects them provides students the opportunity to change existing school practices that are not working (Gross & Mitra, 2009). Providing the space for student voices to transform school communities can be transformational for schools (Mansfield, 2014).

Educating students on social justice is important because if students can identify oppression and privilege, they can better recognize the needed changes (Welton et al., 2017). Social justice courses can give students the tools to develop as transformative leaders. Leaders are open to sharing responsibilities with shareholders, addressing racial/cultural biases and tensions, and creating a collaborative environment (Cooper, 2010). Leadership that is open to sharing power can be complex because some leaders resist sharing power. Establishing partnerships that share power, validate parent views, and acknowledge experience transforms school cultures. Leaders set on their agendas and have no room for shared power do not create authentic relationships. Stakeholders who want to participate in school reform but cannot share the power fail to create engagement and reinforce the status quo. Auerbach (2010) suggested authentic connections with families can create a strong partnership. It is implicit in the literature that educational leadership based for social justice stops oppressive policies and inequalities from continuing. Stakeholders must have trust, respect, a sense of integrity, and care (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Teachers, parents, and students must genuinely see each other as partners. Lunenburg (2013) contends that leaders must shift their focus from teaching to learning to

understand their school communities better. Niño et al. (2017) state that it is important to understand how instructional leaders have the power to evolve instructional practices and set a culture of continuous learning that serve diverse students' needs.

### ***Adaptive Leadership***

The principal's responsibility is to develop a school environment that allows for best practices to occur. Leaders must believe that all students have the ability to learn. Teachers and principals are responsible for monitoring and providing resources for the student. The role of the principal is of instructional and intellectual leader. Hispanic leaders are transformational leaders and have an additional commitment to social justice leadership (Medina et al., 2014). Change knowledge does not necessarily cause success, but its absence guarantees failure (Fullan et al., 2005).

### ***Directive Leadership***

Directive leadership is when the leader holds all the power. In this case, the leaders have the power and everything is undivided. Directive leaders coach staff and provide clear expectations and provide expectations. Their goal is to support the team and help them prevent roadblocks that might interfere. The goal of a directive leader is to prompt cooperation with all team members. Directive leadership works when coaching novice teachers. Empowering

## **Implications for Hispanic Students**

### ***Demographics of Latino Students***

The U.S. National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) in 2019 notes that public schools are ethnically and racially diverse (De Brey et al., 2019). Hispanics reflect a diverse group with differences in ethnicity, culture, origin, and characteristics (Ramirez & Suarez, 2002). There are 50.5 million Hispanics in the U.S (Thompson, 2013) and compose 16% of the labor

force population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Over 54 million Hispanics in the U.S., including 4 million Hispanics in Puerto Rico (Stepler & Brown, 2015). Traditional immigrant states include California and Texas, but not all immigrants are immigrating to traditional states. Some are immigrating to non-traditional states like Utah and Minnesota (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). This has caused states to become quickly diverse.

Hispanic students account for 1 in 5 students (Marx & Larson, 2012). From 2000 to 2010, the Hispanic population has increased by 15.2 million, accounting for half of the increase in population (The White House, 2011). In 2014 White students became the majority-minority group in public schools (Maxwell, 2014). In the U.S., Hispanics make up at least 15% of the population and 21% of the public school population (Planty et al., 2009; Snyder, 2010). By 2050 Hispanics will account for 60% of the U.S. population (The White House, 2011). Moreover, Hispanics make up the largest underserved minority group in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017a; Rodríguez et al., 2016).

### ***Hispanic Students In The Early Years (Transitional Kinder through Kinder)***

Primary grades are essential to a students' development, and a robust early education program helps students succeed. Research proves that quality early childhood programs are aligned with future academic success. Having a solid academic support system for children five years old and younger reduce the need for special need programs, reduces crime, increases employment and earnings (The White House, 2011). Even though it is clear that early childhood programs provide benefits to students and intern society, there is still a disconnect, and Hispanic children are not being enrolled in early learning programs. Hispanic children are not attending Head Start programs to the same level as their population. Approximately 36% of Hispanic children attend Head Start programs in the U.S. (The White House, 2011). Access to strong



Transitional Kinder (TK) and Kinder programs allow disadvantaged students opportunities to grow cognitive, social, and emotional language development. Students that are not provided with early childhood programs are lagging in vocabulary skills by the time they are three years old.

As the Latinx youth population increases, so does the need for school representation (Vargas et al., 2020). The Hispanic population is the youngest and most prominent group in the twenty-first century, surpassing African Americans (Ramirez & Suarez, 2002). In 2011 Hispanic students in the U.S. made up 24% of the student population in public schools for grades K-12, which is at an all-time high (Fry & Lopez, 2012). De Brey et al. (2019) state that from 2000 through 2017, Hispanic school-aged children have increased from 16 to 25%. Hispanic students now comprise 26.8% of public schools (Snyder et al., 2018).

Out of 100 students, 77 white students graduated from High school, while only 55 Hispanic students graduated (Thompson, 2013). Hispanics experience low educational milestones, and 53% graduate from high school in comparison to the national rate of 68% (Losen et al., 2004). The dropout rates for Hispanic students are still higher than the national average. Hispanic high school students have lower college completion rates than White students (Gurantz et al., 2016; Thompson, 2013). Factors contributing to dropout rates include being part of a low-income household, coming from a non-English speaking family, and being Hispanic or African American (Rumberger, 2006). In 2012, 74% of the growth in college enrollment was due to Hispanic students (Thompson, 2013).

Hispanics' college rates for graduation continue to be low, although the rate of attendance has increased (Kena et al., 2015). Macias and Stephens (2019) wrote that the discrepancy of racial distribution begins in college. Only 25% of majors are students of color. In the U.S., 40% of Latinos are enrolled in a two-year program (Rodríguez et al., 2016). Transferring from a two-

year program to a four-year program brings additional challenges. Hispanics represent 7% of students who attend graduate school and 5% are in doctoral programs (Excelencia in Education, 2015). Improving the degree of college graduation rates needs to improve for a group that has increased since the 1970s (Krogstad & Lopez, 2015). Hispanic students want to stay closer to home when selecting a college, which is a huge factor that can limit choices (Desmond & Turley, 2009). Hispanic leaders at university levels are also underrepresented. In 2011 only 4% of staff at the university level were of Latino descent (Aud et al., 2010). Out of the 4% staff, only 3% were full-time professors (Aud et al., 2013).

The Pew Hispanic Center (2010) states that Texas has one of the second-largest Hispanic populations after California. Many Latinos are in California and Texas (Crawford & Fuller, 2017), yet they have a mismatched number of educators (Lopez, 2014). According to the U.S. census, the population is growing and will continue to grow. Hispanics comprise 17% of the total population in the U.S. (Excelencia in Education, 2015; Motel & Patten, 2013). The Hispanic community in providing U.S. school diversity. Diversity promotes conversation, tolerance, global thinking (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). The more diversity in students and educators in a school, the more positive impacts for all the student body (Frankenberg et al., 2003). Chapa and De La Rosa (2004) note that the Hispanic subgroup consists of 49% Mexicans with no high school diploma compared to 39% of Cubans with a diploma. Puerto Ricans experience high dropout rates in urban cities like New York City and Philadelphia (Nieto, 2004).

There is much diversity within the Hispanic community, and graduation rates vary. Hispanics tend to take unconventional routes to education and, therefore, the pipeline to higher education (Harris & Kiyama, 2015). Research shows that for every 100 Hispanic students entering elementary school in the United States, only 54 will graduate from high school (Huber

et al., 2006). Moreover, Huber et al. (2006) noted that from those 54 students, statistically, only 11 will graduate from college. Furthermore, of those 11 college graduates, only four will be graduating from professional schools.

### ***Hispanic Students as Leaders***

Latino students are the fastest-growing population (Medina et al., 2014; The White House, 2011). Hispanics make up the most significant number of minorities, and 17.1 million are 17 years of age or younger. Hispanic students make up 23% of the 17-year-old students in schools (The White House, 2011) and are rapidly becoming the largest growing minority group in schools. Hispanic students make up more than 12.4 million students in elementary and high schools. In Texas, Hispanic students made up at least 52.4% of public school students (Texas Education Agency, 2018), yet only 24.4% of principals are Hispanic. Also, only one out of five students in K-12 public schools are Hispanic (The White House, 2011).

### **Challenges Faced by Hispanic Students**

Approximately 40% of Hispanic students fail to complete high school because schools cannot provide vital academic programs. Hispanic students attend low-performing schools with high dropout rates, yet they are making gains. Hispanic high school completion rates have risen to 65% which dropout rates have fallen to 13% (Excelencia in Education, 2015). Education researchers find that ethnic students lag in graduation rates and achievement compared to their White classmates (Laird et al., 2007, Marx & Larson, 2012; Tarasawa, 2009). Research shows that 40% of Hispanic students attend high schools with low graduation rates, only 11% (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). Hispanic students' high school graduation rates increase generationally (Kao & Thompson, 2003). A first-generation Hispanic student is more likely to graduate than an immigrant. First-generation students are American-born and whose parents are immigrants from

another country. Immigrant students have additional challenges, for example, language and culture.

Less than half of Hispanic students earn a high school diploma within four years, and those who do are underprepared to attend college (The White House, 2011). Graduating from high school and attending college is a challenge for Hispanic students. 13% of Hispanic students earn a Bachelor's degree, and 4% complete graduate-level programs. In order to pursue higher education, students of color need to overcome challenges. The data shows there is a long way to go for Hispanic students to attend college, but there has been progress. More Hispanic students have been able to progress. Hispanic students adapt, enroll, and complete college at a more significant rate (Thompson, 2013). Hispanic students trail minority groups in STEM majors in college (The White House, 2011). In 2011, 2.1 million Hispanic students were enrolled in college (Thompson, 2013). In 2011 Hispanic students were enrolled in college from ages 18 to 24 (Rodríguez et al., 2016). Fry and Lopez (2012) noted that in 2011 there had been a 13.6% increase in college enrollment for Hispanic students.

Research shows that one-third of Hispanic students are academically below grade level due to a lack of skillset (The White House, 2011). Hispanic students are less likely to receive support to register in advanced and honors courses. Latinos are underrepresented in AP courses districtwide (Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). These practices demonstrate the need for leaders who motivate students to challenge themselves to register for AP courses. Not being part of advanced courses or APA courses creates a barrier to more opportunities. The idea that Hispanic students lack abilities creates a barrier where they are less likely to succeed. The stereotype then becomes the norm. Closing the achievement gap between students of color has become the principals' focus (Beard, 2018). Since 1990 Hispanic students have lagged in math and reading by 19 points

compared to white students (De Brey et al., 2019). From 1990 to 2006, the number of Hispanic students enrolled in public schools has increased (Fry & Gonzales, 2008).

### ***Poverty and the Impact on Hispanic Students***

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic reaffirmed that students who live in poverty require additional support. In Texas, one out of 10 students live in poverty, and it became difficult to track these students during the pandemic (Texas Education Agency, 2020). Hispanic children hold the most significant percentage living in poverty. Roughly 31% of Hispanics live in poverty in comparison to 10% of non-Hispanic (Murakami & Kearney, 2020). Hispanic students who drop out of high school have higher unemployment rates and are less likely to hold full-time jobs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017b). Hispanic students tend to attend impoverished schools and struggle with performing in math, science, and reading compared to their White peers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Simply living in an impoverished community, Hispanic students are not provided with solid teachers, principals, or community support. In a community primarily based on low-income Hispanics, principals make an effort to develop the connection. Hispanic students identify leaders as those who have relationships and connections (Douglas et al., 2018).

### ***Impact of Mentorship***

Traditionally mentorship was defined as the partnership between a person in power who is willing to teach, encourage, and advance a protege (Kanter, 1977; Schwiebert, 2000). Researches state that mentorship has three approaches. Crow and Matthews (1998) stated that the three approaches include career development, psychosocial development, and professional development. Research shows that Hispanic principals serve as role models, and because of that, people of color belong in academic spaces (Hagedorn et al., 2007). Students need to see school

leaders that they can relate to and find similarities. If students feel connected, then they will be open to mentorship and collaboration. There is a lag in the numbers of Hispanic leaders due to a lack of mentorship. Barriers in mentorship and guidance for Hispanic college students lead to students not seeking out education leadership (Ramirez, 2011). The climate of collaboration can be fostered through mentorship (Grissom et al., 2021a). It is essential to prepare educators and school leaders because they are more attuned to the needs of Hispanic students given their shared backgrounds (Rodríguez et al., 2018). Principals have innate influences and can shape student outcomes, but many leaders need adequate training and professional development. Mentorship between same-race individuals makes an impact. Principals have found mentorship vital because it provides on-the-job support valuable to gaining experience (Johnston et al., 2016). Mentoring, walkthroughs, and conversations support principals as change agents (Acton, 2021). Hispanic leaders have emphasized the need for mentorship because it prevents isolation, institutional bureaucracy, and discrimination (Martinez et al., 2020). Hispanic leaders said that mentorship brought benefits because leaders could understand experiences and had the ability to support student needs. Sharing experiences allows for the development of solidarity (Tatum, 2003). The best type of mentorship is long-term building relationships and moving protégés with support to develop and take action (Reed & Swaminathan, 2020). Mentoring not only supports students and future leaders achieve goals but it also provides influences that can determine their willingness to succeed.

School districts can create culturally responsive programs to mentor school administrators (Méndez-Morse, 2004). The mentoring programs can be purposeful in providing a collaborative space. Mentors must be able to create connections through shared experiences and understanding. Hispanic principals who mentor Hispanic students have shared experiences and

beliefs that allow them to connect better. School districts can also support Hispanics in holding leadership roles by partnering with organizations that purposely mentor Hispanic teachers. The Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents focuses on creating a network of mentors for Hispanic leaders and is an organization that districts can support to increase mentorship. In the U.S. Hispanics account for 2.7% of superintendents (Quilantan & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). And often Hispanic superintendents are placed in schools with a majority of Hispanic students (Glass et al., 2000). There is a need for mentoring programs to support future Hispanic school principals (Magdaleno, 2006). New and aspiring principals believe that mentorship is greatly needed (Ng, 2015). Mentorship opens opportunities because it opens up the possibilities for teachers to seek out leadership roles. Mentorship is essential, but some researchers argue that similar backgrounds do not have an impact. According to Nieto (2006), mentors do not have to share the same race or ethnic background to make an impact. The race is often a topic that is not part of the conversation when seeing if people of color are needed in schools (Tillman, 2004).

The National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP; 2018) outlines specific educational leadership programs that support school leaders. Additionally, NELP supports principals by providing knowledge, skills, data, equity, and cultural responsiveness. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP; 2019) created similar standards that support developing high-quality educators. However, the development for mentoring programs educator programs is limited (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). It has been challenging to match mentors and protégées that can share job skills and field experience. Field experience or internships are also a form of supporting programs, because they provide support from someone with experience in leadership. Further, field experience can provide leaders perspective when

working with students with unique educational opportunities, economic status, and ethnic makeup (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). Principals with greater field experience are open to others perspectives and can develop better training programs for novice leaders. Research shows that quality principal training programs are lacking fundamental pillars (Briggs et al., 2013).

Having opportunities for teachers to receive promotions through training and mentorship opportunities. Researchers state that schools with high teacher expectations and promote teacher responsibility have lower dropout rates (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Some states fund mentorship programs that promote opportunities for Hispanics to hold principal positions (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). Leaders have success when they are provided with extensive mentorship by leaders who become role models. Thirty-two states mandate mentoring programs for novice principals to provide the needed support for success (Reed & Swaminathan, 2020). Institutional agents like clergy, teachers, and athletic coaches can create a strong impact through mentorship (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). A school-based program that operates after school provides students social time. Programs like sports, activities, or the arts allow students to connect with their school leaders. Woodland (2008) writes that an effective after-school program can provide social and academic enrichment.

### ***Skills***

Skills that Hispanic leaders have as school principals include collaborating with students, developing trust, managing personnel's needs, establishing policies that promote equity to all students, and strategic management. Trusted leaders have the ability to create a trusting atmosphere. This set of skillset provides principals the ability to thrive in schools in need. Resilience to overcome physical, cognitive, and social challenges that arise when leading a school (Sutton & Gong, 2021). Principal focusing on their physical well-being because they can



neglect eating, resting, and taking breaks during the day. The job can take a physical toll on principals. Cognitively principals are shared traumatic experiences with children that can impact them. As principals, they are expected to establish mandates with little to no funding. Socially principalship can be isolating, and collaborating time with teachers is not a time to discuss their challenges. This is why socially, principals struggle to receive the proper supports. Since principals cannot use PLC time to discuss frustrations and challenges, meeting with other principals becomes extremely important. Meeting with colleagues who share the same challenges and frustrations is needed support for school administrators (Sutton & Gong, 2021). Newly appointed principals benefit from professional development opportunities and reflection (Armstrong, 2014). According to Skrla et al. (2009), scholars advocate for professional development that advocates for inclusion through social justice. Therefore, Hispanic leaders face obstacles and need to be armed with the most skills and tools to deal with them. Jean-Marie et al. (2009) stated that it is important to have high expectations on academic performance while considering school leaders who are prepared to foster multicultural, multiethnic, multi-religious, and multinational communities.

Hispanic students have suffered racism and therefore become at-risk (Capper et al., 2000). Gaines (2004) explained that racism is a set of negative beliefs that view humans as biologically distinct. Hispanics in the past two years have experienced racism, discrimination, and anti-immigration in the U.S (Glick, 2010). As the Hispanic population increases the number of immigrants has decreases because of job security and anti-immigration sentiment (Flores, A., 2017).

Hispanics suffer oppressive strategies and deliberate racism that prevent candidates from reaching leadership status and the freedom to make positive change (Boske et al., 2016). Often

they are viewed as having deficits in language, academics, family, and intelligence (Marx, 2006). Some principals suffer from imposter syndrome, where a person believes that they do not belong or lack the abilities to carry out a role (Fernandez et al., 2015). School leaders that doubt their ability to lead and make choices struggle to build relationships and establish policies. Fernandez et al., (2015) noted that Hispanic leaders can suffer from imposter syndrome and question if education is for them.

The term “Latino” stems from Latin-American, which connects the values and differences of a large group of people. People of color make 71% less than white males, and Hispanic women make even less (Benson, 2016). Latinas face an increase of obstacles because they focus on family first. Many Latinas tend to take lower-paying positions and are discouraged from applying for promotions (Johnson, 2016). Women describe themselves more as facilitators instead of leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). They can also be perceived as less valuable than men because they have less training and experience. Gonzáles-Figueroa and Young (2005) stated that Hispanic women often experience challenges because of their gender and society's expectations, including assumptions labeling the submissive.

### ***Equity in Learning***

Hispanic parents tend to lack cultural capital in schools. Cultural capital can be gained by providing parents the opportunity to be informed about the school’s processes and by supporting teachers and school leaders through clear communication (Lareau, 1987). Parents’ income levels also make an impact on school cultures. Providing low-income and immigrant parents the opportunity to develop knowledge and the opportunity to make decisions can influence schools and school systems immensely (Mediratta et al., 2009). Foreign-born parents are less likely to feel welcome in their child’s school (Turney & Kao, 2009). Principals can support immigrant

parents by providing opportunities where they feel welcomed. This can be done by having meetings, parent information, and any other form of communication in Spanish.

Education yields people with more opportunities, career choices, and higher earnings. Those with higher levels of education can provide central roles in society and development. Educational equality challenges school segregation and promotes equality in schools. Educational segregation has not been shown to have benefits (Orfield & Lee, 2004; Toohey, 2000), yet many Latino students attend Latino populated schools primarily. Segregated learning environments do not provide adequate instructors or resources (Kozol, 2005). Most Hispanic students attend schools where the majority of students are Hispanic (Marx & Larson, 2012). Schools in the U.S. have unequal school financing, which impacts students directly (Education, 2008). Martinez et al. (2020) stated that leadership, in effect, is power, and leaders have the power of influence and change. Paolo Freire (1972) states that oppression can be done through an institutionalized educational system because it prevents growth from marginalized communities. Oppression can come from educators of color and white educators because they perpetuate the set norms (Valencia, 2010). Freire (1972) wrote in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "to surmount the situation of oppression, and people must first critically recognize its causes so that through transformation action can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (p. 4). Race still plays a part in Hispanics' lack of professional opportunities (Macias & Stephens, 2019). Oppression is complex, and simply increasing the number of minority representation will not solve racism and biases. Boske et al. (2016) wrote that minorities face microaggressions in the workforce, affecting their career choices.

Researchers noted that schools in low-income areas are often isolated from educational advancement (Green & Gooden, 2014). Huynh (2012) states that overt forms of discrimination during adolescence can impact future educational and professional goals. Hispanic students who have experienced microaggression or forms of discrimination have less academic motivation and achievement (Umanã-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). Experiences can also lead Hispanic students to have experience discriminatory negative experiences are less likely to attain academic goals or have high-income levels (Araújo & Borrell, 2006). Hill and Torres (2010) note that discrimination is not the only challenge experienced by Hispanic students. Hispanic students also face other barriers like lower teacher expectations, lack of teacher support, underrepresentation, limited resources, and lack of access to information (McWhirter et al., 2013). The barriers that present themselves are in external and internal forms.

There has to be a community-wide change to create a more equitable school community that enhances student outcomes (Patterson & Silverman, 2013). Developing a community does not have a straightforward framework because it is complex since it has many distinct but important factors (Reich & Timpane, 1997). Community programs can also support students with nurturing students of color with ethnic identity (Wong, 2008). The goal of the programs is to support students by creating safe spaces where they can grow and learn about their culture (Wong, 2010). Literature affirms that when family, community, and schools unite, it promotes growth and decreases dropout rates (Harris & Kiyama, 2015). By connecting students with caring adults who support them emotionally and academically, students can perform better in school. Creating community programs that are safe and relevant is a difficult task. Safe space can include safety from physical and social environments that can cause harm to students. School reform is connected to community building (Green, 2018).

Connectedness refers to the involvement, relatedness, and a strong sense of belonging (McWhirter & Townsend, 2005). School connectedness is associated with positive academic outcomes (Osterman, 2000). Increasing Hispanic students' sense of connectedness must encompass district-wide strategies to decrease bias and increase positive student behaviors (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). Principals must work towards building civic capacity to create a community alliance with the sole goal of improving neighborhoods (Goldring & Hausman, 2001). Community-based programs focused on socio-political views support students becoming change agents in their own lives (Richards-Schuster, 2010). Salisbury et al. (2019) state that student development in a social-cultural context includes three facets agency, belonging, and competence (Mitra, 2004). *Agency* is defined as the act of exercising power in any situation. Students with agency can articulate their views, have goals, construct ideas more clearly, and face obstacles (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016). Bertrand (2016) notes that with the development of agency, students can change due to a higher sense of social responsibilities. By establishing strong connections, students can foster a sense of belonging with their peers, teachers, and principals (Mansfield et al., 2012).

Programs rooted in Ethic Studies support students in their development of belonging (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016). The development of belonging includes self-love, racism, and the ability to recognize injustice and oppressive policies. Supporting students in marginalized communities to develop their voices provides students empowerment (Murphy 2002; Tillman, 2002). School leaders nurturing students in developing their voices through education can help support their community and school. Leaders must construct and share the school vision, build norms, create collaboration, procure and distribute resources, focus on teacher growth, monitor the growth, establish a strong school climate (Zepeda, 2013).

## Conclusion

As the role of school leader is ever-evolving Hispanic leaders are too growing. Although the number of Hispanic leaders is not growing quickly in comparison to the Hispanic population, some factors contribute to the slow growth. The role of principalship is developing, and there is room for Hispanic leaders. Hispanic leaders are innately transformational; Researchers agree that there is a gap in the study of Hispanic leaders since most focus on parent involvement, English Language learners students, and their pathway to superintendency (Delahunty, 2011). Hispanic leaders' professional experiences are unique, and many factors contribute to why there is still a disproportioned number of Hispanic students and Hispanic leaders. Hispanic principals are successful when they establish a collaborative environment where individuals can be creative and innovative. Innovative instructional leaders can build community and question the status quo. Strong schools have leaders who trust and are trusted by teachers and parents. Principals who support educators and create a life-long learning culture allow teachers to think critically when developing curriculum and helping to establish policies. Strong relationships between principals, families, and students help develop a strong school community with a shared vision. Family connections increase students' test scores, engagement, and graduation rates (Dika & Singh, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Reform is difficult, so principals need to develop a strong relationship with parents and teachers. Parent and teacher support is needed in order to be successful in school reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Warren (2005) states that community groups are essential in bridging the gap between principals, teachers, and parents. Promising outcomes occur when parents and principals work together and hold each other accountable (Mediratta et al., 2009). Scholars note that principals in urban areas must be open to collaboration and be open to success in order for principals to gain

success (Warren et al., 2009). Any resistance to change prevents growth and innovation (Gold et al., 2002). The evolution of the role of the principal has created a generation of new school leaders who focus on building relationships with low-income parents to support better the student body (Fullan, 2016; Shirley, 2009). Thus, “understanding” is essential because it creates powerful partnerships that improve schools and enable student success—fostering an environment with shared beliefs with schools that include parents and community members creates momentum for reform (Giles, 2006).

## **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

### **Introduction**

Chapter 3 will discuss the research design and methodology employed in this research project. This phenomenological qualitative study seeks to investigate the impact Hispanic leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. The areas covered include the re-statement of the study's purpose, nature of the study, methodology, research design, interview protocol, statement of limitations and personal bias, and data analysis. The study uses a phenomenological approach that focuses on exploring people and why they do what they do. The presentation of the research will also share how human subjects were selected, considered, and protected. The protection of human subjects and their data was of great importance to the researcher. The process of collecting and analyzing data will be discussed in detail, including choosing the population in the research and the interview techniques and protocols.

This study aims to investigate the impact Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. The researcher wants to explore if a principal who shares the same background and life experiences as the students they serve is better equipped to support them. In this chapter, interviewed participants will share their personal experiences. The researcher will attempt to understand better if having the same backgrounds significantly impacts students. Hispanics are one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the U.S. yet are still underrepresented in leadership roles.

### **Re-Statement of Research Questions**

This study has four central questions that aim to understand Hispanic leaders' impact on Hispanic students. This chapter narrates the research methods used to guide this study. The following four research questions guided this phenomenological study:



- RQ 1: What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools?
- RQ 2: What are the challenges when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies?
- RQ 3: How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools
- RQ 4: What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders?

### **Nature of the Study**

This study is based on phenomenological qualitative research that focuses on understanding individuals, groups, and events through an in-depth examination (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Conceptually qualitative study is concerned with understanding human behavior from an individual's lived experiences and perspectives (Minichiello et al., 1990). Minichiello et al. (1990) state that qualitative studies have a systematic empirical inquiry (Shank, 2002) and methodological component that collects data through interviews and observations. Creswell and Creswell (2018) define qualitative research as an approach that attempts to explore and understand social or human problems that affect groups. It is a style of inquiry that encompasses social construction, interpretivism, global justice, and social justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research is based on a holistic approach that collects data through interviews, observations, procedures, and data analysis (Yildirim, 2009). By asking questions, data is collected, analyzed, organized into general themes, and interpreted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research is reflective, and it respects having an inductive style, individual experiences, and the importance of understanding how situations are complex. Denzin and Lincoln (2017) define qualitative research as an approach that is multifaceted in focus because it requires interpretation and a naturalist approach on the issue. Researchers study social issues in a

natural setting in order to understand the phenomenon and people's perspectives on the phenomenon.

It is assumed that the interviews provide a safe space for participants to share their experiences. Those experiences will create data points that will be analyzed and develop common themes. Qualitative research is descriptive and subjective because a non-numerical report can provide a social reality (Descombe, 2010). A strength of qualitative data is that interviews can include unique audio, video, and text. It also provides the opportunity to study a phenomenon never before studied. The different forms of collecting data provide the researcher with more opportunities to share perspectives. A weakness of qualitative studies is that there is room for interpretation from the researcher. Researchers have criticized the validity of the data collected in Qualitative studies since it is subjective. Another weakness is that participants are not allowed to explore their responses and meanings; instead, the researcher analyzes the responses (Carr, 1994).

## **Methodology**

The qualitative research study in this paper employs a phenomenological design. Phenomenological studies focus on studying lived experience and an individual's experience of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell & Poth (2018) defined *phenomenological study* as a connection between everyday individuals' lived experiences and phenomena. Phenomenological studies aim to explore the phenomenon and how events were experienced (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The structure of the study is focused on the first-person perspective. The researchers identify the phenomenon, reflect and interpret the experiences to create themes. This form of study allows the researcher to describe, understand, and interpret life experiences.

Phenomenological studies focus on an individual's experiences and perceptions of events. Since the data collected can be viewed as subjective, the researcher needs to be aware of possible biases. Husserl (2001) discovered epoché or bracketing, which blocks out biases, prejudices, and judgment when analyzing data. The researcher needs to reflect on their biases. Epoché is of great importance because it provides the opportunity to trace a phenomenon from its development, and the process can be painstaking (Bossert, 1974). It can be painstaking because the researcher has possible biases that are difficult to overcome.

### ***Structured Process of Phenomenology***

This study uses transcendental phenomenology, a philosophical approach to qualitative research that describes the individuals' experiences instead of the researcher's interpretations (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) states that transcendental phenomenology focuses on looking at an experience with an open mind to acquire new knowledge. Epoché focuses on the researcher reflecting and understanding if biases will impact the study and remove judgment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers have used the term epoché and bracketing interchangeably (Gearing, 2004). The experiences of individuals are recorded, and the meanings are interpreted simultaneously (Moustakas, 1994). Through discourse, the interviewer develops the meaning of their experiences. The researcher practices epoché prior to collecting the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Before the study, the researcher brackets and segments their perspective with equal value (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018) the researcher will place the experiences shared in themes to develop "textual description" (p. 78). Significant statements are used to construct themes and descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

**Appropriateness of Phenomenology Methodology.** Selecting a transcendental phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to

interview participants and provides them the opportunity to share experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus is not the researcher's views and interpretation but instead allows participants to make their own conclusions. Interviewing participants also allows for a more in-depth understanding of Hispanic school leaders' impact in primarily Hispanic schools. Bracketing will provide the researcher the opportunity to have a fresh, unbiased point of view. This approach allows the researcher to focus on a single topic and a rigorous collection procedure (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The phenomenological approach is suited for this study because participants can reveal the phenomenon instead of focusing on why the phenomenon occurred. The semi-structured interviews provide researchers with data that can be analyzed. The data provides patterns that intern lead the researcher to the development of themes.

***Strengths.*** Like all research, there are strengths and weaknesses. This transcendental phenomenological study aims to better understand the impact Hispanic leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. Interviewing Hispanic principals with open-ended questions will allow the researcher to get another individual's perspective through their lived experiences. The study will focus on gathering data that will lead to textual and structural experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews will provide a thick description, deep inquiry, and direct quotes on people's perspectives. The purpose of the interviews is to correlate a person's perspective with their experiences (Patton, 2002). A strength of qualitative phenomenological studies is that they can give a unique perspective on the study (Taylor et al., 2016).

***Weaknesses.*** Using transcendental phenomenological research has weaknesses which include philosophical assumptions that the researcher has the ability to identify (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher must have a background and interest in the phenomenon being studied. A challenge that also arises is the ability for the researcher to know their own biases

honestly and not allow them to influence the study. In this case, the researcher must recognize their own biases and be open to their beliefs being disproved. Another challenge is finding participants that have experienced the same phenomenon.

### **Research Design**

The research design of this transcendental phenomenological study is to recognize the impact Hispanic school leaders have in primarily Hispanic schools. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defines *research design* as a process that states the research question, collects data, analyzes data, and interprets data. The researchers will follow an established process that includes analysis of the unit, the population, the sample size, and purposive sampling.

### ***Analysis Unit***

The analysis unit employed in this study was one of Hispanic school principals leading a school within the United States. Each member must possess a minimum of three years as a school principal in a public, private, or charter school in the U.S.

### ***Population***

The study depends on the population selected and consists of school principals leading schools within the United States. The population selected must have the ability to provide the researcher with the needed data (Kumar, 2014). The results of this study will benefit Hispanic principals, teachers, and staff members in schools who desire to increase representation and diversity in school leadership, increase student growth, increase mentorship, and better understand if having the same background and a student population makes an impact on students. The study aims to create best practices for supporting future Hispanic school principals. The sample population must be done purposely with specific criteria relevant to the study. The selection of the population must benefit the researcher's problem and research question (Creswell

& Creswell, 2018). The researcher is responsible for finding people that meet the stated criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### ***Sample Size***

A combination group of participants must be selected for this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that three to 25 participants must be interviewed. Bernard (2013) suggests a phenomenological qualitative study benefits from a 10-20 minimum of knowledgeable people. Parse (1990) recommends between 2-10 participants to achieve redundancy and saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) state that saturation is an essential element in a qualitative study. In this study, 15 participants were interviewed, and the number was deemed appropriate by the researcher. The researcher was aware that acquiring participants with this level of education and experience could be challenging.

A qualitative phenomenological study can have a small sample size. The sample size must be large enough to understand the phenomenon and small enough to provide data that can be divided into themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher will formulate themes and patterns from the data collected. The goal is to get enough information from participants that can be coded. The number of participants in a qualitative study is a source of debate because it depends on the study (Sim et al., 2018). Emmel (2013) reminds researchers that the size of the sample size does not determine the data collected has values. What is essential is the actual participants' participation.

### ***Purposive Sampling***

Purposive sampling is used in qualitative studies because it provides the researcher with rich information on a set phenomenon (Duan et al., 2015; Patton, 2002). This method requires the researcher to find and select participants that are knowledgeable and interested in the study

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Bernard (2002) notes that participants must be available, willing, and open to participate. Participants must be able to express their experiences in an expressive manner (Spradley, 1979). Qualitative research studies utilize purposive sampling—the sampling criteria are crucial to the study. A small sampling size allows the researcher to dive deeper and better analyze the data. The purpose of purposive sampling is for the researcher to have intent when selecting their population and sample size. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants who will contribute to the study and share their personal experiences.

### ***Participant Selection***

In this study, the participants must be Hispanic, hold the title of school principal, have a minimum of three years of experience, the school site can be private or public, the school population must be a majority of Hispanic students. In this study, a “school” with a majority of Hispanic students is defined as having a minimum of 70% Hispanic student population. The researcher searched online for local school websites and contacted school principals directly via email or phone call. Many school websites share school demographics and principal contact information. The researcher also googled Hispanic school leaders in public schools, Hispanic school leaders in private schools, Hispanic school principals in public education membership, and Hispanic leader organizations. The selection of participants also continued by looking up public LinkedIn and Facebook profiles.

### ***Sampling Frame to Create a Master List***

The sampling frame creates a master's list of the population studied (Acharya et al., 2013). The researcher compiled a list on an excel document of participants in a master list. The researcher committed to the following steps:

- The search of participants led to a list.
- The list was created with all possible participants and later narrowed down to 15 individuals that meet the participants' criteria.
- The sample frame was further refined by using criteria for inclusion.
- A final/master list was created.

**Criteria of Inclusion.** The following five benchmarks for the participant inclusion were:

1. participants must be of Hispanic heritage and living in the United States,
2. participants must be 30 to 65 years of age,
3. participants must hold a leadership role (principal) in a public or private elementary or high school,
4. participants must have three or more years of experience as a school leader in a private or public elementary or high school, and
5. participants must work in a school that serves Hispanic students.

**Criteria of Exclusion.** The following were the criteria of exclusion for participants who did not meet inclusion criteria previously listed:

- five or more years of experience,
- possess a graduate degree,
- works at a school that serves a majority Hispanic population,
- participants who are 50 years and older will be excluded,
- unable to be interviewed between December 2021 to February 2022,
- unable or refusing to sign the consent form, and
- refusal to have the interviews recorded by the researcher.



**Criteria for Maximum Variation.** The study selection was based on a maximum variation where steps were taken to increase the diversity of participants before finalizing a master list (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants' requirements include position/employment title, years of experience, ethnicity, age, geographic location, and school population. Additionally, allowing private and public schools adds to the diversity in the study. No limitations like health or income level were taken to account. Therefore, 15 final participants were selected using inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, and maximum variation criteria.

### **Consideration of the Protection of Human Subjects**

In order to protect the human subject, the researcher did not contact possible participants until gaining approval from Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the researcher's IRB is approved, possible participants were contacted and informed of the study's voluntary participation requirements. The participant could voluntarily choose to participate in the study or choose to decline the invitation. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the interview protocol, and how data would be collected. The researcher provided the participants with the privacy protocol and how their identities and data would be protected. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities. Privacy, confidentiality, and the safety of all participants are the researcher's priorities. The researcher shared potential benefits and risks associated with the study in detail. The goal was to fully communicate with participants before moving forward with requesting a signed consent form. Researchers were informed that the interview would be recorded. Participants were informed that the purpose of the interviews was to use any data collected in the study. After participants received information on the study and decided to participate, they signed the required consent form before engaging in the study. The participants were provided a copy of the signed consent form and access to the

Pepperdine Interview Protocol prior to the interview. Participants could opt out to participate at any point in the process. They were informed of the full scope of the nature of the study.

Researchers only interviewed participants who freely wanted to be in the study.

The researcher focused on protecting the participants in order to create a safe space to share. Pseudonyms were used for all participants to protect the identity and data of the participants. The researcher was responsible for keeping all information confidential, and therefore no distinct information that can identify the participant was used. The process of participating was optional and could be terminated anytime. The researcher shared the importance of privacy with participants and that this particular study had little to no risks. All data was stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Any digital recording or documents were stored in the researcher's laptop that is password protected. The participants were provided a copy of the final study per request.

Interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. The researcher created an excel sheet password-encrypted that included the participants by numerical code to protect their confidentiality better. The participants were provided the opportunity to select their pseudonyms. Their numerical code would be determined by their date of interview. Since participants are leaders of schools, the schools' names were also protected. No actual school names or school sites were identified in the research. The researcher had one document with the participants' actual names and school site names, but it was password protected. Only the researcher had access to the laptop where information was kept.

The researcher collected the data, analyzed it, and organized it into themes. The interviews were transcribed, and the participants' participation was held confidential. Any information printed or kept as a hard copy document was kept in the researcher's home filing

cabinet. The information will be kept for a minimum of five years. The researcher will be the only one able to access the locked filing cabinet that has the coding sheets. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded by the researcher. The only indication of the actual name of each participant was on a coding sheet available only to the researcher who interviewed that subject. The coding sheet containing the lists of names of the subjects will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher contacted the 15 participants in the master list through an electronic email or phone call. The researcher utilized the approved Pepperdine University's IRB recruitment script to contact each participant directly. Participants were invited to join the study and informed of how their privacy would be protected. Once participants agreed to be part of the study, their contact information was requested. The researcher reminded participants that the study was voluntary and that they could choose to stop the process at any time.

After the participants signed the consent form, the researcher scheduled a personal interview via zoom starting in March 2022. Selecting a time and date that works for the participant is essential. Once the researcher and participant agreed on time and date, the researcher scheduled a zoom meeting. The researcher emailed a zoom invite to the participant. The researcher emailed the participant the 10 interview questions prior to the zoom and explained the study's purpose and the benefits of the study again. A confirmation email was sent out a day before the interview in case the participant needed to reschedule.

The researcher logged in 15 minutes before the zoom interview and confirmed that the consent form was signed and the interview questions were readily ready. Prior to the interview starting, the researcher once again informed the participant that the interview would be recorded.

Once the interview started, the researcher shared that the interview was semi-structured to leave room for follow-up questions. Follow-up questions are important because they allow the researcher to gain additional clarity and depth. Semi-structured interviews allow the opportunity to gather data more freely. The information gathered in the interview provided the researcher insight into the impact Hispanic school leaders have in primarily Hispanic schools. After the interview, the researcher contacted the participants via email and thanked them for being part of the study.

### **Interview Protocol**

The researcher created 10 interview questions prior to the interviews. The questions created were structured in an open-ended semi-structured format to allow in-depth quality responses (Patton, 2002). The interview protocol was set to create an open conversation on the participants' life experiences. The 10 interview questions for this study were as follows:

- IQ 1: Tell me about your career and how you got here?
- IQ 2: Can you think of a project you led and the results were exceptional? Can you tell me what factors/strategies made it successful?
- IQ 3: What leadership strategies do you use to recreate success like this?
- IQ 4: How do you get the community, parents, and teachers involved?
- IQ 5: To what extent do you think your heritage contributes to your success?
- IQ 6: What have been the biggest challenges as a school principal?
- IQ 7: What challenges if any, does your heritage bring as a leader?
- IQ 8: How would you define, measure, and track success as a Hispanic leader?
- IQ 9: Out of your leadership efforts, think of one you would want to do over again?

- IQ 10: If there is one piece of advice you would have for young Hispanic leaders in schools, what would it be? Is there anything else you would like to add?

### ***Relationship Between Research And Interview Questions***

The researcher developed open-ended questions that corresponded to the open-ended research question. The study has four research questions that aligned with the 10 interview questions. Both the research questions and interview questions aim to better understand the phenomenon being investigated. The research questions directly aligned with the interview questions. Research question 1 has four interview questions, and questions 2 and 3 each have two interview questions each. Lastly, research question 4 had two interview questions. Both the research and interview questions were developed from the literature reviewed and focused on the participants being able to share their personal experiences to contribute to the study. Table 1 elaborates on the connection between the research questions and the corresponding interview questions.

### ***Reliability And Validity Of The Interview Protocol***

Research must look at the study and ensure that it is reliable and valid (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research and interview questions are focused on collecting data that contribute to the study. The researcher has focused on making the study valid by seeking out outside peer and expert review. Outside parties examined the research and interview questions and provided feedback that aided in the development of the research. Reliability must be present in the detailed interview protocol and analysis process. Coding that removes the researcher's own biases is important to have a reliable and valid study. The researcher assured the study's validity by following three steps that include prima facia validity, peer review validity, and expert review.

### ***Prima Facie Validity***

The literature review influenced the researcher in the development of the interview questions. The goal of the interview questions is to gain insight that will intern benefit the study. In prima facie, validity means “at first sight” (Ville, 2010, p.1 ). The researcher ensures that the interview questions correspond to the research questions. Once the expert and peer review were completed, the researcher edited their interview questions to better gain reliability and validity. The revised interview questions were designed to support the study better. The researcher must align the research questions with the interview questions to assure prima facie validity.

### ***Peer Review Validity***

Peer review validity is the second step to the validity protocol. The researcher sought peer reviewers who could review the research questions and corresponding interview questions. The peer reviewers need to be knowledgeable because they would help determine the relevance of the interview questions and can provide a deeper insight. Two Pepperdine University Doctoral students were selected and reviewed the original interview questions. The researcher provided them with a copy of the research questions and interview questions, providing a space for comments and notes. When reviewing the research question and interview questions, the peer reviewers were asked to do the following, review and analyze the questions, see if the research questions and interview questions are aligned and whether the interview questions provide data that will benefit the study. The reviewers were asked to mark the questions with any feedback they felt was needed. If the interview questions aligned with the research questions, no marks were made. They also crossed out any questions they felt needed to be removed because they did not contribute to the study. The peer reviewers interpreted the questions and provided feedback

in writing. Creditability in the study is developed by providing peers with the opportunity to give objective recommendations to a study with no biases.

### ***Expert Review Validity***

The third and final step to validate the study is the expert review validity. The dissertation committee acted as the experts and reviewed the interview questions. Experts can support the researchers because they might not be able to come to a consensus with peer reviewers' suggestions. Expert review is a source that can provide additional feedback and support. In the preliminary defense, the dissertation committee accepted the 10 interview questions.

**Table 1**

#### *Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Corresponding Interview Questions</b>
RQ 1. What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools?	<p>IQ 1. <i>Tell me about your career and how you got here?</i></p> <p>IQ 2. Can you think of a project you led and the results were exceptional? Can you tell me what factors/strategies made it successful?</p> <p>IQ 3. What leadership strategies do you use to recreate success like this?</p> <p>IQ 4. How do you get the community, parents, and teachers involved?</p> <p>IQ 5. To what extent do you think your heritage contributes to your success?</p>
RQ 2. What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies?	<p>IQ 6. What have been the biggest challenges as a school principal?</p> <p>IQ 7. What challenges if any, does your heritage bring as a leader?</p>

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ 3. How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools?	IQ 8. How would you define, measure, and track success as a Hispanic leader?
RQ 4. What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders?	<p>IQ 9. Out of your leadership efforts, think of one you would want to do over again?</p> <p>IQ 10. If there is one piece of advice you would have for young Hispanic leaders in schools, what would it be?</p> <p><i>Is there anything else you would like to add?</i></p>

### ***Interview Techniques***

The researcher employed a semi-structured interview in this qualitative study. A semi-structured interview has pre-prepared interview questions to avoid missed opportunities and allows the participants' room to expand their responses and have a deeper exploration. It is a flexible interview that allows insight into the participants' perspectives and views on the phenomenon. A semi-structured interview is in direct contrast to an unstructured interview. In an unstructured interview, the questions are adapted and improvised during the interview. If the unstructured questions are going with the flow, and structure means using the same questions with no alterations, then semi-structured is in the middle and thus, works best for this study. Semi-structured interviews reduce bias and keep interviews focused. They allow the researcher to align the research question to the interview questions and stay on topic. The constructive inquiry-based conversation is present in semi-structured interviews and allows participants to give context to their experiences.



### **Statement of Limitations and Personal Bias**

The researcher possesses their own experiences and interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. It is important to be aware of preconceptions that can influence the interview questions and interpretation of the data collected. It is necessary for the researcher to be aware of biases prior to interpreting data. In this study, the researcher is a Hispanic leader in a primarily Hispanic school population. Her own experiences create bias on the impact Hispanic leaders have.

### ***Bracketing and Epoché***

The researcher addressed their limitations and personal biases by suspending judgment through the process of epoché. The act of bracketing and epoché allows the researcher to remove preconceptions and instead focus on the participants' truth. The researcher reflected on their own experiences and how they interpret their own experiences as a Hispanic leader. The researcher attended Catholic School in Los Angeles, surrounded by a diverse community. As an elementary, high school, and college student, she did not have any Hispanic mentors that guided her to pursue a leadership role. It was not common to have Hispanic instructors, teachers, or professors. She attended a HSI during her undergraduate program.

Most if not all of the researcher's mentors in college were white men and women. Using the bracketing process, the researcher started a journal to write down her personal biases and assumptions, allowing herself to freely write what she felt was her bias towards Hispanic leaders and her perceptions of herself as a Hispanic school leader. Acknowledging her biases allowed the researcher to bring a new fresh open perspective to the study. The goal of the epoché process was for the researcher to be aware of presuppositions, acknowledge biases, experiences in the phenomenon, and leave the worldview and their own beliefs aside for the purpose of the study.

The researcher worked through these biases to ensure the study was conducted with an open mind and without interference of thoughts and assumptions that could otherwise affect the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of interpreting data to create universal themes that provide a benefit for this study. The data collected from the 15 interviews were interpreted and analyzed. Data was reduced through exclusion and grouping. There are six procedural steps in a qualitative study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The first step is managing data and doing a preliminary read-through. The researcher recorded the interviews via zoom and transcribed each interview verbatim. It was helpful to have a recording to go over in order not to miss any data. The researcher listened to each interview several times in order to successfully collect all data. The first time the researcher heard the recording, the goal was to listen transcribed and paused several times. Once the researcher transcribed the recording, the next step was to memo. The researcher took notes of the transcribed interviews and attempted to map out the data and find a pattern (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Step three was to write a description of the interviews. The next step was proofreading to make sure the information was clear and understandable. The fifth step was to interpret the data and divide data into themes. Step six was to present the data interpreted using graphs and charts. The graphs and charts create a visual representation of the data. During the data analysis process, the researcher read, made memos, and coded themes.

### ***Reading and Memo Making***

Reading and memo making are key parts of data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher began by actively reading the transcripts of the interviews and wrote memos next to keywords. The memo making process allowed the researcher to interpret and make connections between the interviews. The purpose of memo writing is to understand how data was organized

and develop key ideas. This process allowed the researcher to start the interpretation process. The memo notes allowed the researcher to be aware of biases within the coding.

### ***Describing, Classifying, Interpreting (Coding)***

Coding follows memo making because it analyzes the data. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that coding is a process where the researcher can look at data with detail and intent and make sense of the information collected. The researcher desegregated the data and coded the key ideas by categories. The researcher analyzed the interview questions individually, and interview questions were grouped into the research questions. This study followed the data analysis process. Bazeley (2013) recommended memoing and theme development. The researcher memoed thematic ideas, highlighted key quotes, then divided the quotes into themes. Coding using a theme book was done to connect central themes from the literature review.

### ***Interrater Reliability And Validity***

Interrater reliability solidifies the study by increasing its validity and rigor by having peer review on coding and hearing their input. Coding can be subjective due to the researcher's personal biases therefore peer reviewers can provide some objective feedback. Creswell and Poth (2018) remind the researcher to have a minimum of two peer experts to review the coded findings. The two peer-reviewers were Pepperdine University doctoral students. The researcher followed the four-step process of inter-rate reliability and first began by coding three interviews.

- Stage one- Interview notes were read. The interviewer transcribed the interviews. The first three interviews were coded, and central themes were noted.
- Stage two- The researcher shared with their two peer review committee. The committee was able to freely share their input on the three interviews. They identified themes, provided recommendations, and modifications. The researcher attempted to

come to a consensus on the coding themes. Once the committee created a coding approach, the researcher was better equipped to code the remaining interviews. The researcher continued to code the remaining seven interviews.

- Stage three- The researcher coded the remaining interviews. The committee was once again asked to review the coding, provide feedback, and determine if they agree with the researchers' findings. The researcher and two-peer committee collaborated and were open to resolving differences and offered clear reviews.
- Stage four-The Pepperdine peer committee received the researcher's findings via email. The researcher and committee struggled to reach a consensus at some point, but the conflict was resolved through open discussion. The committee supported the researcher and made her aware of biases. If consensus would have not been possible between the researcher and the committee, then the dissertation committee would have been called for support. Two peer experts provided external validity and supported the finalization.

Lastly, the researcher created graphs and charts to summarize the coding process, show the data was desegregated, and show the findings. The charts and graphs showcase the participants' viewpoints and key phrases.

**Representing, Visualizing.** Once the researcher reached a consensus with the two peer reviewers, the universal themes were clearly established. The researcher created connections between the research questions, the interview questions, and the responses from the interviews. This process aligned the universal themes and allowed for nuance to be discovered.

## Chapter Summary

In Chapter 3, the researcher detailed the data analysis, research design, and phenomenological methodology process in the study. The researcher began the chapter by discussing the qualitative component of the study in an introduction. The four research questions were reinstated. The researcher stated why the study follows a qualitative examination through a phenomenological study, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of the phenomenological design within the chapter. The chapter research design section focused on unit analysis, population, sample size, and purposive sampling. The participants' selection broke down the sampling frame, criteria of inclusion, criteria of exclusion, and criteria of maximum variation. The section on the protection of human subjects detailed the researcher's IRB process. The researcher detailed how participants were contacted and developed the semi-structured interview protocol. There was a focus on protecting participants and following clear coding protocol to develop themes that would benefit the study. The researcher's personal biases were discovered through the epoché process. In this chapter, the researcher concluded the data analysis procedures through the support of peers. Peer reviewers increased the interrater reliability and validity of the study and the awareness of personal biases. The researcher will report findings in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter summarizes the findings of a phenomenological qualitative study aimed to investigate the impact Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. This study attempted to understand Hispanic school leaders' impact on their school communities and the complexity of serving primarily Hispanic students. Leadership is subjective, and adding the heritage component creates a unique perspective because it allows the leader to reflect on the influence their background plays when leading a school community. Leaders must also establish positive school cultures (Gerhart et al., 2011) that allow schools to flourish. Leaders establish policies that impact students, teachers, and communities. In this study, the researcher made an effort to understand Hispanic school leaders, hear their perspectives, and learn what motivates them. The study sought to answer four research questions geared toward Hispanic school leaders.

- RQ 1: What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools?
- RQ 2: What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies?
- RQ 3: How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools?
- RQ 4: What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders?

The researcher used the four research questions to develop 10 interview questions. The researcher employed 10 interview questions using the interview protocol developed by utilizing inter reliability and validity procedures. The following interview questions were asked to participants in the following order:

1. Tell me about your career and how you got here?
2. Can you think of a project you led, and the results were exceptional? Can you tell me what factors/strategies made it successful?
3. What leadership strategies do you use to recreate success like this?
4. How do you get the community, parents, and teachers involved?
5. To what extent do you think your heritage contributes to your success?
6. What have been the biggest challenges as a school principal?
7. What challenges if any, does your heritage bring as a leader?
8. How would you define, measure, and track success as a Hispanic leader?
9. Out of your leadership efforts, think of one you would want to do over again?
10. If there is one piece of advice you would have for young Hispanic leaders in schools, what would it be? Is there anything else you would like to add?

The 15 participants in this study were asked to answer 10 open-ended interview questions that focused on their experience as Hispanic school leaders. During the interview, the researcher provided a comfortable and open environment where the participant could ask for clarification on questions or the ability to skip questions. The researcher's tone was similar to a “platica” when participants were provided the opportunity to reflect and answer questions honestly because the questions were open-ended. The responses collected provided rich material on the perspective of Hispanic school leaders, and the inclusion criteria were not altered. This chapter provides insight into the participants and the process of collecting the data. In this chapter, the researcher will describe the inter-rater review process and how it validates the findings through coding themes. The 15 participants and findings will be described in detail in the following section.

## **Participants**

In this study, 53 participants were recruited, and 15 were finally selected. Fifteen principals were selected to participate in this interview protocol, and 93% of participants identified as female. In terms of experience, all participants were school administrators for 3 to 10 years. All the participants were of Hispanic backgrounds. Approximately 87% of participants were of Mexican background. The participants were from schools where the Hispanic student population was the majority. The researcher interviewed principals with master's degrees (100%) and nine who held doctoral degrees (60%). Participants were selected from diverse geographic locations and diverse student age ranges. Two participants served in private schools (13%), 11 in public schools (73.3%), and two in charter schools (13%) in California. Five were elementary school leaders (33%), two were middle school leaders (13%), and eight were high school (53%) leaders. All participants were informed that their participation in this study would be confidential to make them feel comfortable when answering questions. In conclusion, the collected and coded data allowed for saturation because participants' responses provided similar themes. The interview process concluded after 15 interviews because saturation was accomplished.

## **Data Collected**

The researcher completed the required CITI human subjects certification (Appendix A) and received IRB approval on February 25, 2022 (Appendix B). Data collection started on March 8, 2022, and concluded on March 18, 2022. The researcher waited on contacting participants until IRB approval was received. The researcher conducted an Internet search and a LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com>) search for Hispanic school leaders. At least 53 leaders were connected via LinkedIn and were emailed with the IRB approved recruitment script (Appendix C), inviting them to the study. For leaders whose email information was not on LinkedIn, the



researcher used a web search software, such as Google, to find their contact information. Many of the potential participants had public emails on their schools' websites. Each potential participant was emailed using the Pepperdine University school email. The email provided an introduction to the researcher and the purpose of the study. The initial email was formatted as an introduction and formal invitation. Out of 53 emails, 19 individuals responded and were willing to participate in the study. Initially, it was not easy to get responses to emails.

Once potential participants were contacted via email, the researcher needed to gauge if the individual met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The researcher sent out the criteria of inclusion that gave a more specific criterion for participants, for example, years of experience, background, and serving school communities with a majority Hispanic student population. The researcher also provided the study's abstract to participants interested in additional information. The researcher created a master list on an Excel spreadsheet of all possible participants. The sheet consisted of the persons' name, years of experience, school name, and school population information. The spreadsheet allowed the researcher to keep track of who was contacted and who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria, using the spreadsheet allowed participants to be marked as potential candidates. Out of the 53 individuals contacted, 15 potential participants were selected because they were available and willing to participate, met the inclusion and exclusion criterion, and took maximum variation into mind.

Once the researcher had selected the 15 participants, a schedule was created in Excel with Zoom appointments. The researcher was flexible with the participants' schedules and set up Zoom meetings that were convenient to participants' schedules (Table 2). Prior to the interview, the researcher sent out the Zoom invitation, emailed the consent form, interview protocol, and interview questions ahead of time (Appendix D). Participants were reminded that they would be

recorded and could ask clarifying questions or end the interview at any point. Zoom was used to record on the researchers' computer. Participants could hear that the recording started and see the red recording tab on their computer. The researcher read the interview protocol script and all participants were able to be interviewed at scheduled times, and each interview was, on average, 45 minutes. The 15 participants answered all 10 interview questions. Once the interview was concluded, the researcher thanked the participant and later sent them a thank you email. The interviews followed the interview protocol that was described in Chapter 3.

**Table 2**

*Dates of the Participant Interviews*

Participant	Interview Date
P1	Tuesday, March 8, 2022
P3	Friday, March 4, 2022
P4	Thursday, March 10, 2022
P5	Tuesday, March 8, 2022
P6	Thursday, March 10, 2022
P7	Tuesday, March 8, 2022
P12	Wednesday, March 9, 2022
P13	Tuesday, March 15, 2022
P14	Friday, March 11, 2022
P11	Wednesday, March 16, 2022
P2	Monday, March 14, 2022
P9	Wednesday, March 16, 2022
P8	Wednesday, March 16, 2022

Participant	Interview Date
P10	Thursday, March 17, 2022
P15	Friday, March 18, 2022

### **Data Analysis**

Once the interviews had been completed in this qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher started the coding process. The researcher can interpret and make sense of the interview data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that the coding process provides the opportunity to desegregate data, code, and form themes and overreaching ideas from the participants' responses. The data analysis included transcribing, notetaking, epoche, bracketing, renaming participants, printing the transcripts, analyzing the data by color coding, finding overreaching ideas, and creating an Excel spreadsheet with the key terms.

The researcher used Zoom to administer the interviews and record the interviews. The recordings were saved on the researcher's password-protected laptop to protect the participants' privacy. Each recording was saved using a numerical signifier, for example, P1-P15. The name of the participant is not used to label the recording. The researcher transcribed the recordings, and the document was labeled by number once again.

The researcher took handwritten notes during the interview and wrote down key terms that stood out. Notetaking was helpful because it allowed the researcher to start making connections and reflect on the participants' responses. During the transcribing and notetaking, the researcher was aware of personal biases on the subject matter and practiced epoche. As discussed in Chapter 3, epoche and bracketing allowed the researcher to be self-aware of any personal biases and free of judgments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Notetaking and memoing provided a space for the researcher to self-reflect and understand the thematic ideas of the participants'

responses. Ahern (1999) advised notetaking as a way to self-reflect on biases prior to analyzing the data.

The recordings were transcribed verbatim, placed on a Word document, and saved on the researcher's laptop. The recordings were heard three times to capture the participants' responses. The responses were proofread to ensure they were accurate. The accuracy of the transcripts was of great importance to the researcher. The transcripts were read carefully, and once the researcher believed the transcripts were accurate, the transcripts were printed, and the audio was destroyed. The interviews provided a rich source of data for the study. It was important for the researcher to be familiar with the data collected (Huberman & Miles, 2002). The researcher labeled all participants by number and examined the notes and transcripts of the interviews. The interview responses were analyzed, interpreted, and coded by the researcher. The printing of the transcripts allowed the researcher to circle keywords by the response and highlight any possible quotes or phrases that could be used in the study. The researcher reviewed each participant's response and highlighted similarities and similar words or concepts. The similarities were noted and highlighted on the printed document. Significant quotes were highlighted. Then the responses were coded with the emerging keywords on an Excel spreadsheet. The researcher sought to find overarching themes by coding each response by question. The more significant overarching themes provided an umbrella of key terms and clusters. The researcher coded the first three interviews and created a google document table to review overarching themes and similar codes.

### **Inter-Rater Review Process**

In the inter-rater review process, the researcher asks two Pepperdine University colleagues in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology ELAP program to review the

initial three interviews that the researcher coded. The doctoral students selected were well versed in qualitative research. First, doctoral students shared the Excel spreadsheet document, three transcripts, interview questions, and research questions using the google drive folder. The documents were shared through google invitations and sent out through their Pepperdine emails. The invitation included an email with instructions. They were asked to go over the initial three interviews and coding and feel free to make edits directly on the google document.

Once the invitations were accepted, the doctoral students had access to three interviews and the coded spreadsheet. The researcher's spreadsheet had color-coded umbrella themes and keywords. The students independently reviewed the coding. The researcher reviewed the changes and agreed with the suggestions given. Specific suggestions were made regarding the themes. Later the researcher completed coding the remaining 12 transcripts and attempted to keep the consistency in the coding process. Once again, the students were given access to the coding spreadsheet on Google drive and asked to review the researcher's coding. The doctoral students analyzed the bucket themes and aided in expanding or reducing themes. The researcher reviewed and took into consideration the inter-raters suggestions and feedback. The consensus was easily found through discussions which made the process seamless. The suggestions allowed the researcher to reflect and employ the changes made. In conclusion, the doctoral students' reviewed and provided feedback for all 15 interviews.

### **Data Display**

The data collected was organized with the research questions and related interview questions. The 10 research questions are cataloged next to the research question it pertains to. When analyzing qualitative data, the researcher follows several modes of qualitative research. Huberman and Miles (2002) note several qualitative modes, including grouping, analyzing,

reviewing, and comparing data. This phenomenological study investigates the impact Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. Themes were first color-coded, then each word was reviewed. Some words were deleted or added. The researcher followed a three-stage process with the inter-rater reliability procedure to improve the coding accuracy.

The chart had columns that stated the research questions in accordance with the interview questions. The researcher logged the words and phrases that stuck out under the interview questions. The columns noted different themes and buckets that included keywords, phrases, and quotes.

- Two Pepperdine doctoral students looked over the initial three interview questions, themes, and buckets. Their recommendations were that the coding was precise and they agreed with the initial three interviews coding.
- The interrater recommendations were discussed and a consensus was easily reached.

The researcher created bar graphs to summarize the results. Each graph state the interview question and coding results. Participants' quotes were used to elaborate on the buckets created, and quotes used were stated verbatim to protect the accuracy and context. Each participant was had a numerical number assigned to protect their privacy. For purposes of this study, participants were referred to as Participant 1 or P1. This was done for Participant 1 (P1) through Participant 15 (P15). Quotes and phrases were used because they provided a personalized perspective.

### ***Research Question 1***

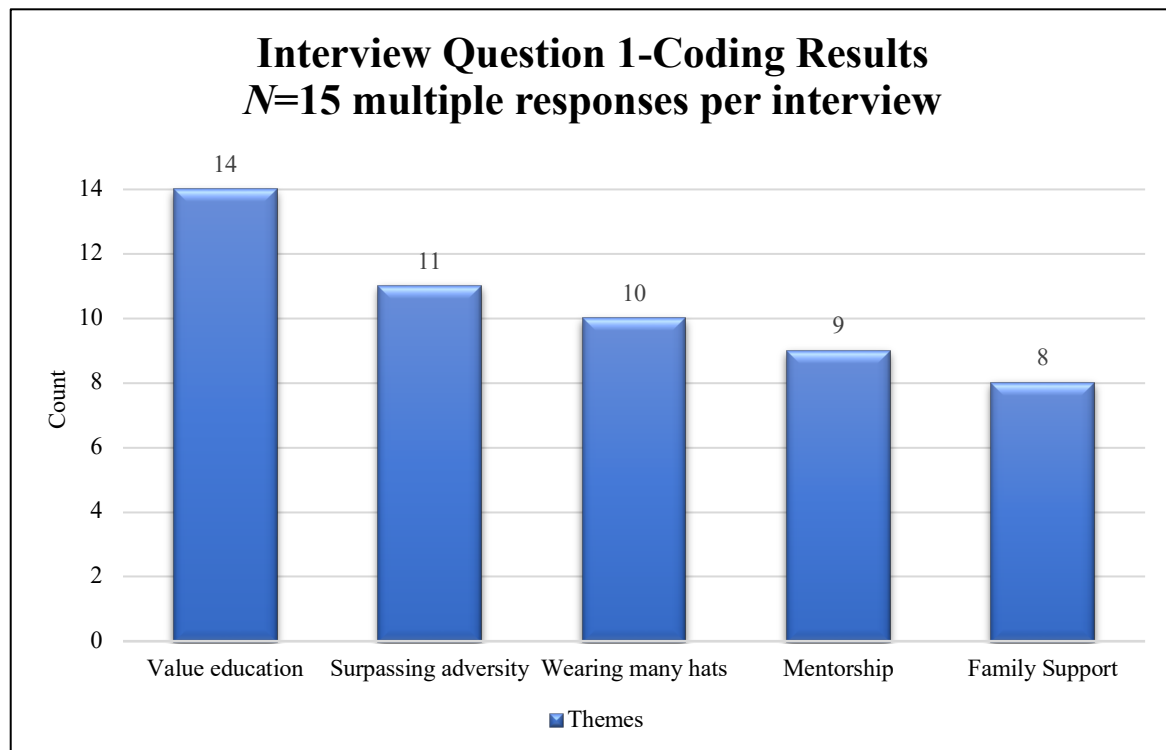
RQ1 asked, What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools? Five interview questions were assigned to the first research question in order to better understand the phenomena. The five questions that were employed were:

- IQ 1: Tell me about your career and how you got here?
- IQ 2: Can you think of a project you led and the results were exceptional? Can you tell me what factors/strategies made it successful?
- IQ 3: What leadership strategies do you use to recreate success like this?
- IQ 4: How do you get the community, parents, and teachers involved?
- IQ 5: To what extent do you think your heritage contributes to your success?

**Interview Question 1.** IQ 1 was an introduction question. It asked them to discuss their careers and how they got here? This question provided five themes that included: (a) value education, (b) surpassing adversity, (c) wearing many hats, (d) mentorship, and (e) family support (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*IQ 1 Coding Results*



***Value Education.*** The first theme displayed in IQ 1 was education. Nearly all participants, or 14 out of 15 (93%) participants noted the importance of education in their development. They knew that only through schooling would they be able to grow. Their focus was to move forward and gain academic success. The participants in this study received their master's degrees (100%) and doctorates (63%). P6 noted, "I grew up knowing that if you don't get an education, what future will you have." P9 responded, "we were always encouraged to do well in school."

***Surpassing Adversity.*** The second theme brought to light in IQ 1 was surpassing adversity. Surpassing adversity was mentioned eleven times by participants. Roughly 73% of the participants shared that many had to surpass difficult times like learning English, being immigrants, being children of immigrants, growing up in low-income communities, and teen pregnancy. P8 answered, "I was raised in a low-income family in a rough area. Many of my friends didn't make it out. I am one of the lucky ones."

***Wearing Many Hats.*** The third theme for IQ 1 is wearing many hats. Ten out of 15 (67%) participants noted that they wear many hats at work and home. Participants shared that they moved from teachers to administrators because they wore many hats and volunteered to lead groups, events, and clubs. They went the extra mile giving time and energy to their school communities. P4 said, "I took on leadership roles like being a coordinator, running clubs, department chair, and specialist."

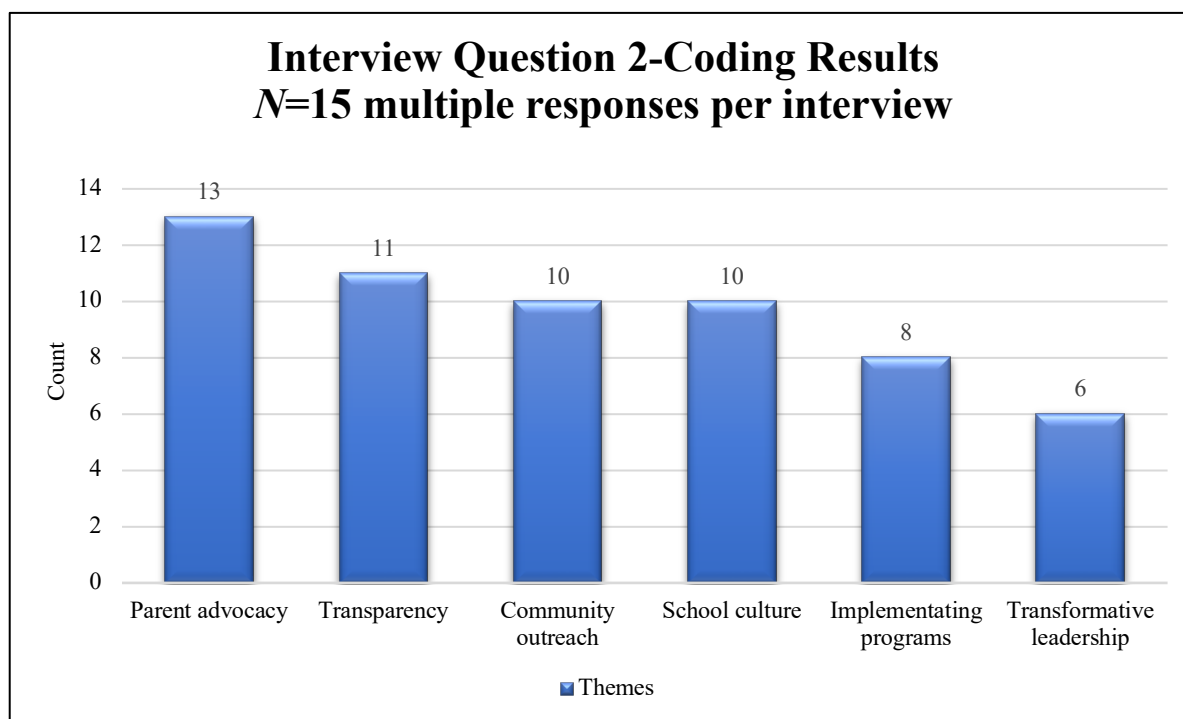
***Mentorship.*** The fourth theme of mentorship was highlighted because 60% of the participants noted the importance of having mentors during their studies and professional careers. This theme encompassed the support teachers, coaches, and colleagues provided to the participants. Mentors provided *conjesos* which is advice that supported participants in their



careers. Supportive mentors guided them when deciding on their future goals and offered unique insight. P1 stated, "through all my challenges, I had people pushing me and taking me under their wing. And I've been lucky to work with really, really great people who are incredibly supportive." P2 remembered colleagues that continued to mentor and said, "he is one of the people I can pick up the phone and call whenever I need assistance."

***Family Support.*** The fifth theme from IQ 1 was the importance of family support. Eight out of 15 (53%) participants attribute family support as essential to their success. Participants stated that their parents motivated them to grow academically and advance in their careers. Family support gave them an example of a solid work ethic, empathy, respect, resilience, and pride in their culture. Participants shared that coming from families that immigrated to the United States and left their original countries of origin focused on having strong family units that supported their children. P9 responded, "My parents did a good job, they had six children, and they taught me never to give up no matter the profession. It doesn't matter if you're a professional with a doctoral degree or a person who cleans."

**Interview Question 2.** IQ 2 asked, Can you think of a project you led, and the results were exceptional? Can you tell me what factors/strategies made it successful? This interview question yielded six themes: (a) parent advocacy, (b) transparency, (c) community outreach, (d) school culture, (e) implementation programs, and (f) transformative leadership (Figure 2). The researcher coded six themes because all six provided insight and are linked. Participants described themselves as transformative leaders who are transparent when advocating for parents, work on community outreach, and implement programs that lead to exceptional results in their schools.

**Figure 2***IQ 2 Coding Results*

***Parent Advocacy.*** In IQ 2, parent advocacy is the first theme as 13 out of 15 (87%) participants value parent advocacy. A leading theme was establishing Spanish-led parent groups that provide parents with social capital and a voice. P4 noted, "my parents were immigrants who did not speak English and worked to understand what I needed in school. They had to make a great effort. I feel as though it is not my responsibility to advocate for parents." P10 responded, "sometimes we confuse not caring with not feeling welcomed. Parents care about their children's education."

***Transparency.*** The second theme for IQ 2 was transparency because 11 out of 15 (73%) participants mentioned the importance of transparency. They communicate the goals or upcoming projects verbally or in writing through newsletters, phone calls, emails, text messages, mailers, and social media. Elements of this theme included sharing, asking questions, and

openness. P6 said, "I think being transparent and sharing with them whatever involved. Getting their opinion and incorporating them in the decision making removes the invisible wall and is a benefit, no doubt."

***Community Outreach.*** The third theme that emerged from IQ 2 was community outreach programs that were developed. Participants shared that they were proud of leading outreach programs that focused on supporting their community and neighborhood. Ten out of 15 (67%) participants noted that community outreach was essential when yielding exceptional results. The community outreach included students going out to the community, including neighborhood beautification and service. P11 answered, "I created a service program for our high school students to clean the neighborhood and paint. Beautifying the community helps students feel like they belong to a bigger environment."

***School Culture.*** School culture is the fourth theme for IQ 2. Ten out of 15 (67%) participants noted that having a school culture based on transparency and advocacy is essential. A school culture includes having a clear mission statement, vision, pillars, and philosophy that all shareholders recognize and uphold. P8 noted that "our school culture is based on five pillars: leadership, empathy, achievement, preparation, and safety."

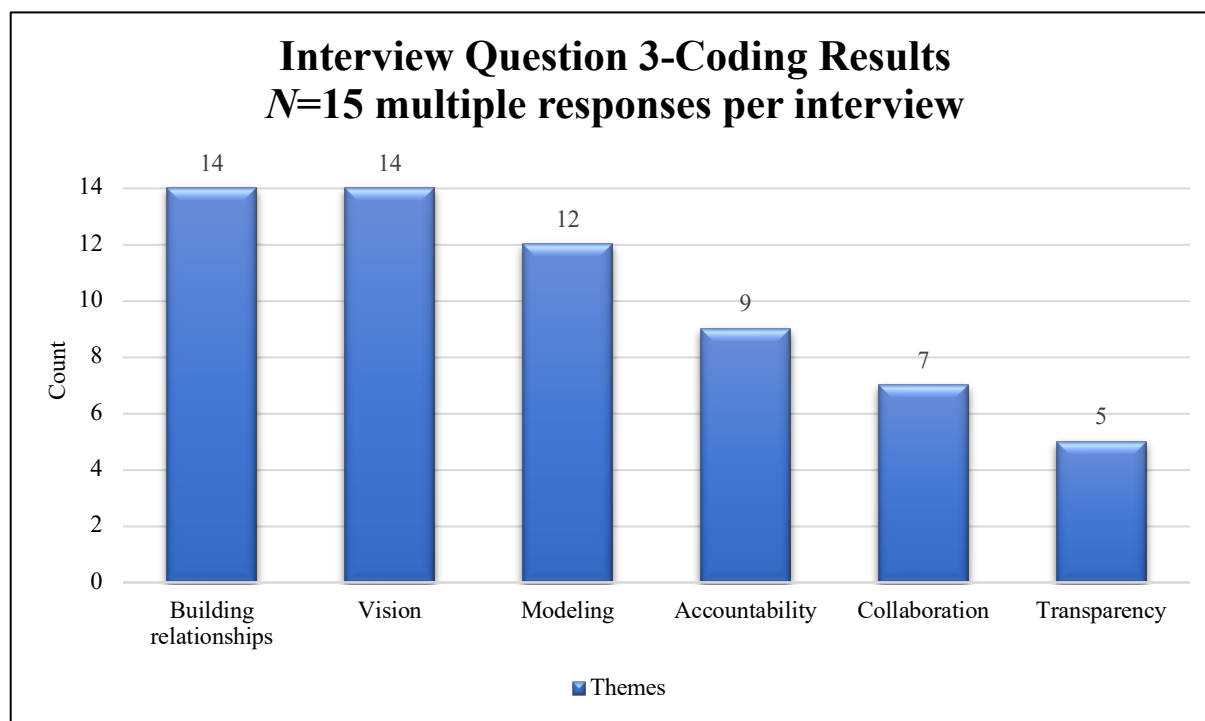
***Implemented Programs.*** The implementation of programs was the fifth theme that was brought from IQ 2. Eight out of 15 (53%) participants shared that implementing programs is vital in developing thriving school communities. The response encompassed the programs created by teachers and administrators like after-school programs, reading programs, events, and Hygiene closets. P4 responded, "one of my biggest successes occurred as a teacher implementing criminal justice academy. I wrote the curriculum, recruited instructors, and the academy is over 10 years old."

**Transformative Leadership.** Being a transformative leader is the sixth theme in IQ 2. Six out of 15 (40%) participants described themselves as transformative leaders. This theme included leadership that nurtures, changes, and develops school culture. Participants felt that transforming school cultures is a quality all administrators should share. P15 offered, "As a principal, you can create systematic change and be a transformational leader with vision who stirs the pot."

**Interview Question 3.** IQ 3 asked, What leadership strategies do you use to recreate success like this? IQ 3 materialized in six themes: (a) building relationships (b) vision, (c) modeling, (d) accountability, (e) collaboration, and (f) transparency (Figure 3). These themes were identified because the researcher found them equally valuable when recreating past successes. Leaders hold themselves accountable for decisions, are transparent, and model their visions to build relationships.

**Figure 3**

*IQ 3 Coding Results*



***Building Relationships.*** The first theme in question three was building relationships. Approximately 14 (93%) participants shared that building relationships was vital when recreating past successes. Labels under this theme include making connections, people skills, building community, associations, links, and communication. Building solid relationships include nurturing an open work environment where each member is valued. Participants noted the importance of giving all shareholders praise, support, and a voice. P7 responded, "build relationships with all shareholders, including teachers, parents, students, and community. Through shared leadership, we can change school culture."

***Vision.*** The third theme notable theme for IQ 3 was vision. Vision was a theme 14 participants shared (93%). The theme included a clear mission, expectations, goal, big picture, and forethought. P1 vouched that "sharing with parents and teachers my vision for students provides them with the big picture idea."

***Modeling.*** The final theme of question three was modeling. At least 12 (80%) participants noted the importance of modeling when attempting to recreate a successful project. Elements in this theme included doing, showing up, getting hands dirty, executing projects, and being present. P8 "teachers know I will get in there and get dirty with them as well. Modeling is big because you need to walk the walk if you're talking the talk."

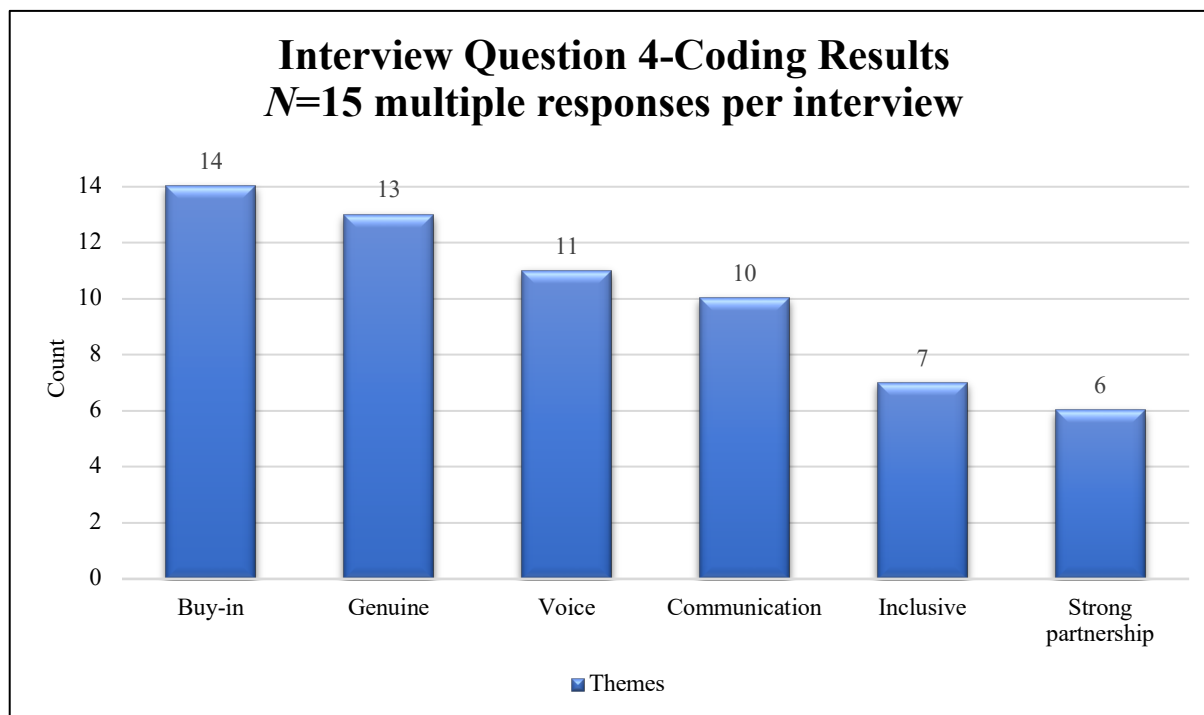
***Accountability.*** Accountability was the second theme to emerge in this question. Nine out of 15 (60%) participants shared that taking accountability for decisions and behaviors as leaders is essential. The theme covered terms like taking ownership, being vulnerable to mistakes, and responsibility. P2 remarked, "be sure each stakeholder understands their roles and expectations because a thousand things can go wrong but highlight the ones that went well and keep working

on what didn't. When stakeholders feel like they are part of the process, they take more ownership of the process, and they become accountable to it."

***Collaboration.*** Collaboration was the fourth theme to emerge from the research. Seven out of 15 (47%) of participants noted collaboration was essential for success in a project or policy that is being established. The themes linked to collaboration were a partnership, listening, working together, and team building. P12 notes, "success is created by working together and everybody being on the same page."

***Transparency.*** Providing transparency was the fifth theme that was found. Five (34%) participants agreed that transparency through sharing ideas, asking questions, and hearing shareholders were indicative of recreating success. Transparency allows leaders to build trust with all shareholders because everything is out in the open and clear. P15 stated, "transparency gets parents and teachers to have buy-in and follow you."

**Interview Question 4.** IQ 4 asked, How do you get the community, parents, and teachers involved? The interview question brought about six key themes that included: (a) buy-in, (b) Genuine, (c) voice, (d) communication, (e) inclusive, and (f) strong partnership (Figure 4). These six themes were selected because they were consistently present in the participants' responses and in the thematic analysis.

**Figure 4***IQ 4 Coding Results*

**Buy-In.** The first theme for IQ 4 was buy-in. At least 14 (93%) participants mentioned buy-in. The themes that stemmed from buy-in included ownership and support. P4 responded that "you need teacher buy-in in whatever you're doing, and buy-in only comes with being authentic and transparent, so get the staff buy-in." P15 "buy-in comes with creating space when people feel confident to come in and provide feedback. Validate people's experiences."

**Genuine.** The second theme in IQ4 was being genuine. Approximately 13 (87%) participants spoke on the importance of being genuine when attempting to get the community, parents, and teachers to get involved. Elements of this theme include being authentic, keeping it real, staying true to self, being honest, and being sincere. P10 answered, "I am genuinely here for students and parents. I am authentic to my native self." P7 said,

So it's fundamental, lead authentically when I say that I mean my heritage, my culture, my language is always there, it exists, there's nothing hidden, they know our culture is

valued. We play Spanish music. I play it and honor it. Have students' backgrounds valued. My assistant principal and I start dancing out there. It's crazy, but that's who we are. During the pandemic, the staff showed up every day. People do that when the culture is positive. I talk about not speaking English at home. Me speaking only Spanish and needing to learn English.

***Voice.*** The third theme was providing the community, parents, and teachers with a voice.

Approximately 11 (73%) participants stated that voice is essential when attempting to get buy-in. Community leaders, parents, and teachers want to be heard and have the freedom to express their opinion. Elements of voice included having an idea, listening, view, input, and feelings. P3 said,

Really using what students need. Student voice should be at the forefront of making decisions, like really allowing students to share what they are doing and thinking. Making them feel heard has been key to my success. Have you ever seen that video of the lone leader, and he is a hill alone? He's dancing. Eventually, you just get the right people on board, and it creates momentum.

***Communication.*** Communication is the fourth theme for IQ 4. According to 10 (67%), participants' communication is essential when getting all shareholders involved. Communication included having parent meetings, faculty meetings, and assemblies to discuss the school's vision better. P5 responded that "over-communication is good communication." The more information shareholders have, the more they will trust the administrator and have buy-in.

***Inclusive.*** Being inclusive was the fifth theme that came from the research. When responding to IQ 4, seven (47%) participants responded that being inclusive was important when getting shareholders involved. Terms related to being inclusive included inviting, making feel welcome, getting groups involved, connecting, and bringing in. P11 remarked, "everyone is invited in the conversation. They can tell me face to face whatever they are feeling, and we decide together."

***Strong Partnership.*** The sixth theme in IQ 4 was strong partnerships. Six (40%) participants noted that strong partnerships are essential when getting the community, parents, and

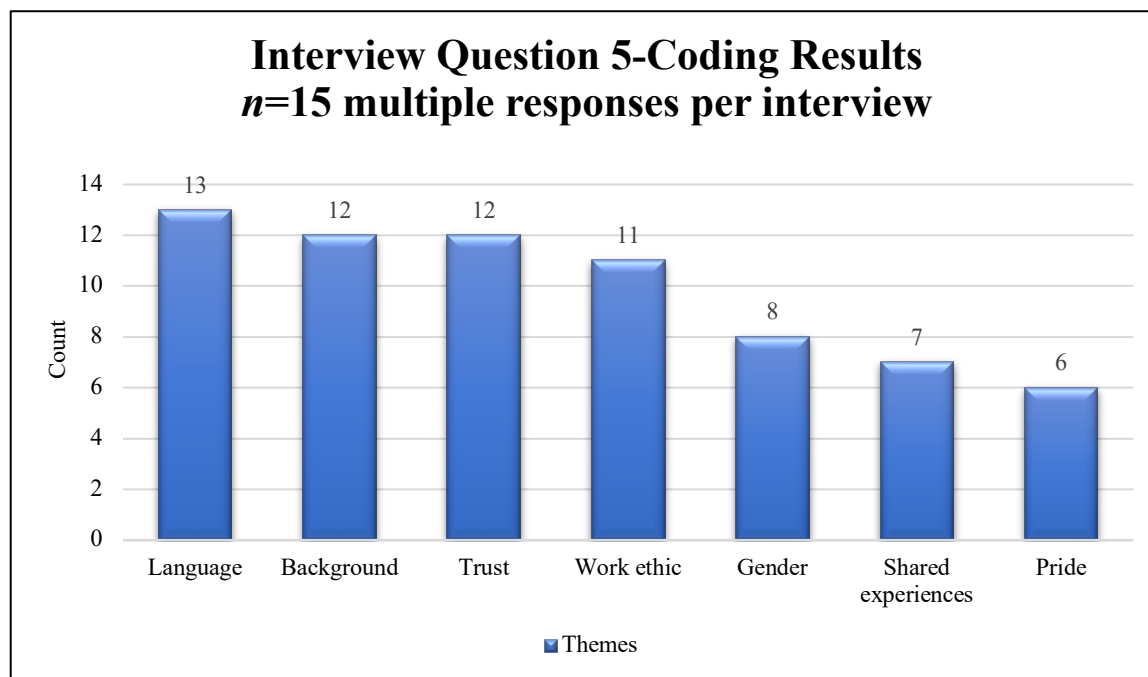


teachers involved. Strong partnerships include sharing the same vision, working together, relationships, a strong team, and connections. P4 responded, "parents are busy but if they feel included they will become strong partners who share the same goals for their children."

**Interview Question 5.** IQ 5 asked, To what extent do you think your heritage contributes to your success? There were seven themes identified with how one's heritage contributes to success. The themes included: (a) language, (b) background, (c) trust, (d) work ethic, (e) gender, (f) shared experiences, and (g) pride (Figure 5). Seven themes were selected because the participants noted all of them as being key to their success and Hispanic leaders. The researcher believed all seven themes contributed to the findings.

**Figure 5**

*IQ 5 Coding Results*



**Language.** Language was the first theme in IQ 5. At least 13 (87%) participants mentioned language as a factor in their success. This theme was linked to building connections, communication, and collaboration. P15 responded,

I can go back in forward between English and Spanish and say the same jokes, listen, and share the same stories. I, too, didn't know English as a child. I didn't know the system. I was able to get here through great effort. And now, I am able to guide parents and students. So, it's easy to have a parent meeting and sit across from them when they're upset and say, "Madre yo la comprendo." I completely deescalate any situation because I am honoring the way that I treat my mom in the same respect.

P6 said, "I speak their language, and there is no communication barrier." P10 answered,

It makes a difference that I speak Spanish. It makes a huge difference because I was able to connect and really explain to parents who are maybe oftentimes left out or wondering. I am available and value in explaining in their native language.

P11 answered, "Spanish is my first language, and I get to practice it with my students."

**Background.** The second theme in IQ 5 was background. Roughly 12 (80%) of participants agree that their background does play a part in success. Participants linked the terms background, heritage, legacy, and culture. P1 responded, "I often think my heritage plays a part in my success because it allows me to have a deeper connection with my students and teachers." Participants shared that sharing the same background with students provided for a deeper connection.

**Trust.** The third theme in IQ 5 was trust. Roughly 12 (80%) participants responded that their heritage contributes to their community, teachers, and students trusting them and the decisions they make. P2 responded,

When you speak the same language and can relate to shared experiences, there is a trust that comes with it. When they can relate to you, they can trust you more." P8 noted, "It takes a village, and we are the village, for the students to understand that you know, we are here so you can succeed, and they trust us.

**Work Ethic.** Work ethic was the fourth theme in the research. Approximately 11 (73%) participants' responses centered on work ethic and included hard work, highly driven, passion, and hustle. P4 answered, "when people see you hustling trying to do the work, I think they kind of jump on board." P12 said,

I am Mexican, I'm a little woman, and I am dealing with high schoolers that are primarily male, and they are rough around the edges. I am a listener, and sometimes people might confuse that for weakness. As a woman of color and a first-generation immigrant, you bring it all to the table and must work twice as hard.

P6 responded,

I have an extra sense of responsibility. I arrive at 6 am and leave at 6:30 pm. I think it brings an extra sense of responsibility. I work long hours because I feel responsible. The kids are from the neighborhood I came from. If they don't get an education, they don't have a mom or dad to bail them out with a trust fund. It is that sense of responsibility. I'm here 11 hours on average.

**Gender.** Gender was the fifth theme for IQ 5. Eight (53%) participants said that gender contributes to their success as Hispanic administrators. P8 said,

Being a woman is a plus. Nothing is holding me back. I am Latina and a woman, and the community relates to me. I have never seen it as it holds me back. It makes me a unicorn, like unique, yes I'm a woman, yes, I'm Latina, and I'm doing what needs to be done.

P11 answered, "I think having a powerful woman really is important. My aunts are extremely educated Mexican American women. Being a woman is a positive." P13 said, "They see me as an older sister whom they respect." P4 said, "sometimes I take a motherly approach with them because I remind them a lot about their mom. So I become a kind of role model. We have built a relationship, and they feel that I understand them better than anybody else. There is some sort of a connection. We come from similar backgrounds."

**Shared Experiences.** The sixth theme in IQ 5 is shared experiences. Seven (47%) participants stated that shared experiences like personal struggles, being children of immigrants, and learning English as a second language allowed them to build relationships and empathy toward students. P7 noted, "I often bring up my upbringing being an immigrant, a child of immigrant parents. That goes a long way because they connect with my experience, and I'm genuinely here for my students and families."

***Pride.*** Pride is the last theme for IQ 5. Six (40%) participants mentioned the pride that they have for the heritage. Honor and pride were used when describing their background. P15 responded, "I am proud to work for my people." P13 said,

I have pride for the community. We have to work with each other and learn from each other as well. It is truly an honor to be of service." P10 said, "embrace your roots, and don't be afraid of sharing your story.

**Summary of RQ 1.** The focus of RQ 1 was to discover what the best practices held by Hispanic leaders were in their school communities. Participants were highly educated in their field and have more than three years of experience. When responding to the interview questions, the participants noted that mentorship, valuing education, wearing multiple hats, facing adversity, and family support led them to where they were today. Their organization was successful when it developed community outreach, implemented programs, led with transformative leadership, focused on parent advocacy, developed school culture, and was fully transparent. The participants believe that a leader must be able to build relationships, have accountability, vision, collaboration, transiency, and model. Leaders must be genuine and include all shareholders in order to create strong partnerships. By communicating with shareholders and allowing them to share their voice, they will gain buy-in. Participants noted that their heritage brought benefits like language, shared experiences, work ethic, trust, pride, and gender.

### ***Research Question 2***

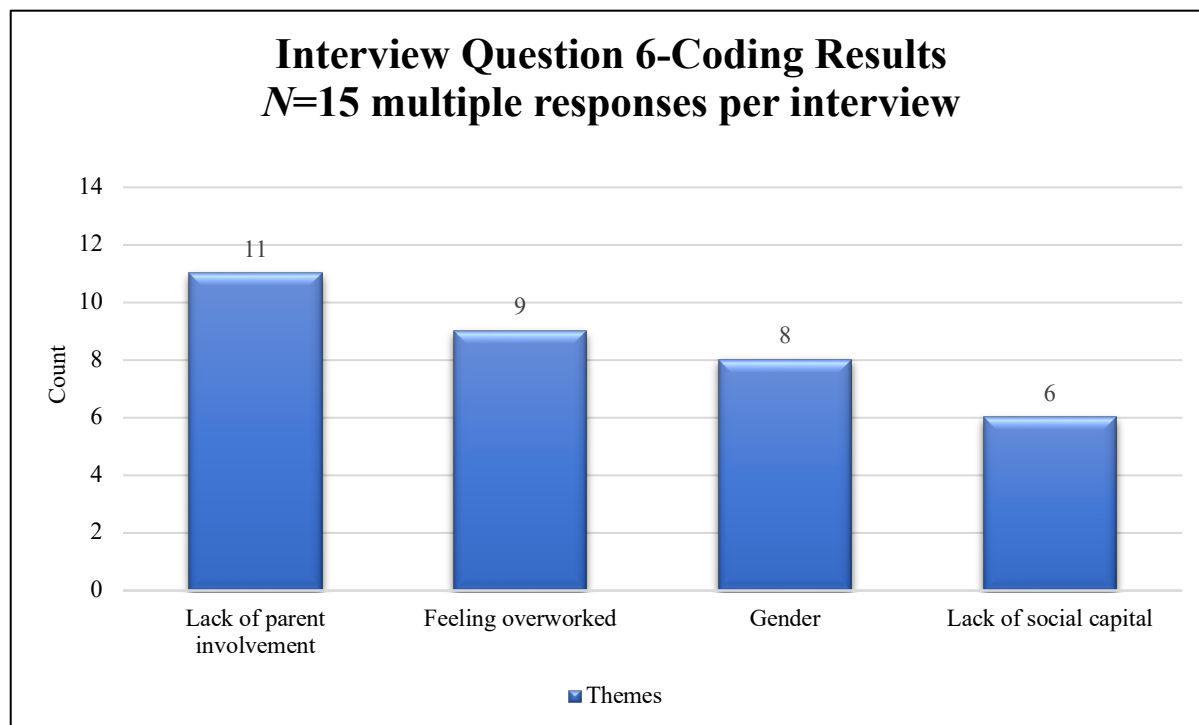
RQ 2 asked, What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies? Two interview questions were created to answer research question two:

- IQ 6: What have been the biggest challenges as a school principal?
- IQ 7: What challenges if any, does your heritage bring as a leader?

**Interview Question 6.** IQ 6 asked, What have been the biggest challenges as a school principal? The question provided four themes: (a) lack of parent involvement, (b) feeling overworked, (c) gender, and (d) lack of social capital (Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

*IQ 6 Coding Results*



***Lack of Parent Involvement.*** The thematic analysis for IQ 6 showed the first theme was the lack of parent involvement and was the most prevalent theme for this question. Roughly 11 (73%) participants noted that parent participation is a challenge. There is a lack of parents attending conferences, parent meetings, back-to-school nights, or events. These meetings generally have low numbers. P2 said,

Parents are busy, but they will show up for good news. They will show up for celebrations like graduations, so we need to create more positive opportunities where parents feel comfortable showing up—making a positive visit to campus. Where they can feel proud of their kids.

Additionally, P7 said,

Parents can be a challenge. I often speak about my own parents who had a third and fourth-grade education and make a connection that it wasn't that they did not want to be involved, but they just didn't know how to get involved. They lacked capital.

**Gender.** The third theme for IQ 6 was gender. Eight (53%) participants shared that their gender played a challenge when serving primarily Hispanic communities. P1 remarked,

Being a woman has been the most challenging thing because I have gotten a lot of pushback from white male teachers. The superintendent kinda resembles them and shows them a different level of respect. I believe deep down I'm pretty sure that I am treated differently because I am a woman.

P9 said, "eventually, hopefully, we will change their minds that males and females can do the job equally."

**Lack of Social Capital.** The fourth and final theme for IQ 6 was social capital in this research. Six (40%) participants stated that the lack of social capital is challenging in their schools. Administrators in schools support and nurture students, but they also must provide structure and set expectations. Providing students with social capital as well where they feel connected and have the needed resources. Terms that were linked to social capital included a sense of belonging, voice, diversity, trust, and safety. P4 noted,

As an administrator, building a school's social capital is important because students feel safe, like they belong, and have a voice. They feel like we are a family. When you enter my school, people always say it feels different. The biggest challenge is making sure everyone is on the same page all the time. You will always have those teachers that follow you, they believe in what you do, and those teachers always going to be on board. They have social capital. You will have those outliers that always say nope. There's never going to be 100% buying on everything.

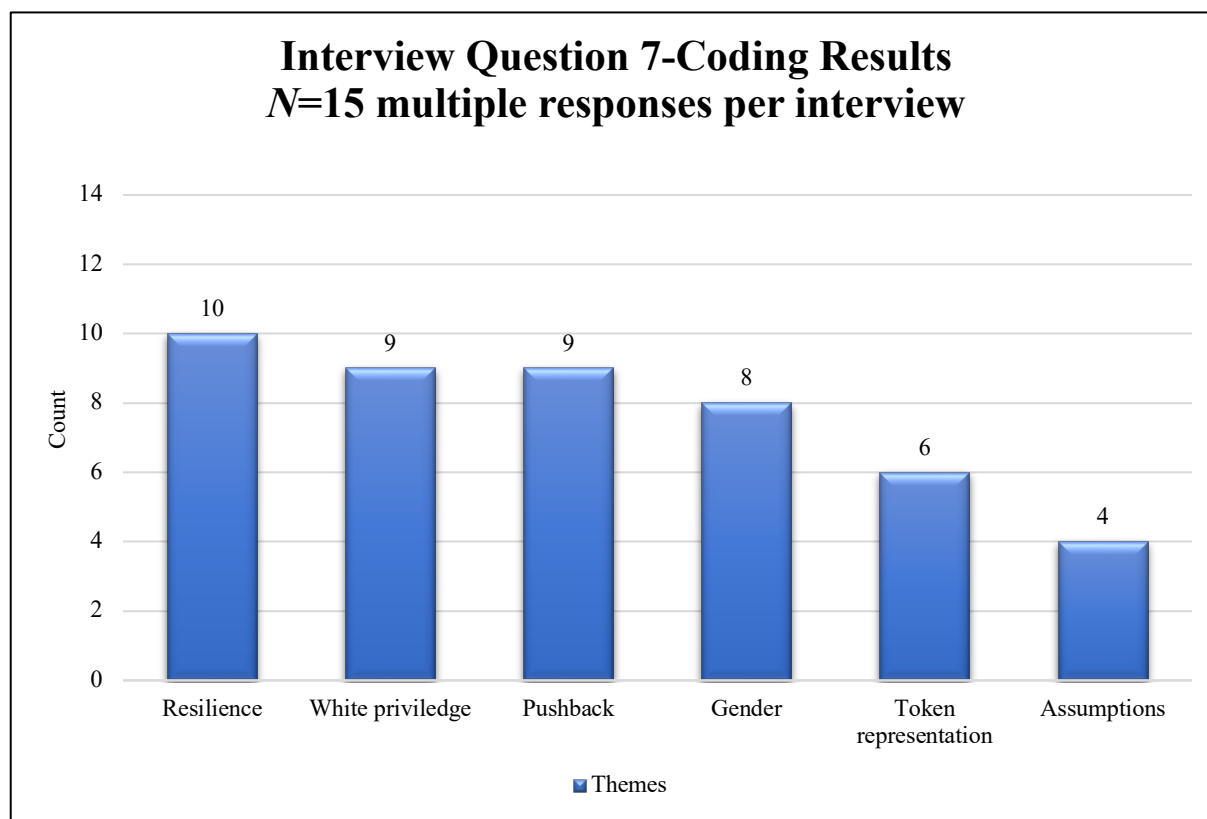
**Feeling Overworked.** The third challenge participants shared in IQ 6 was feeling overworked. Nine (60%) participants shared that they feel overworked in their positions and need to prove themselves constantly. Participants shared that they had strong work ethics and felt responsible for their community but also felt burned out. P2 stated,

In the Hispanic culture, work ethic is just ingrained in us like you show up to school on time. You show up to work on time, you work hard, and that's where you're gonna get somewhere. But it is also important to take time for oneself." P15 said, "I have felt super overworked.

**Interview Question 7.** IQ 7 asked, What challenges if any, does your heritage bring as a leader? IQ 7 materialized six themes: (a) resilience, (b) white privilege, (c) pushback, (d) gender (e) token representation, and (f) assumptions (Figure 7). Six themes were identified in the findings as being challenges the participants experienced due to their background. Resilience was a critical trait to share because it allowed the participants to surpass many challenges they mentioned in their responses.

**Figure 7**

*IQ 7 Coding Results*



**Resilience.** The first theme for IQ 7 was resilience. At least 10 (67%) participants shared that all the challenges they faced as an administrator pushed them to be strong and resilient. They described themselves as strong, intense, tough, never giving up, and persistent. Participants shared that they held many resilience pillars, including self-awareness, positive relationships, and mindfulness. P1 responded, "when I get resistance, I am tough and continue because I don't care. I'm here to do my job." P8 answered, "My heritage is a source of strength and pride, and when mistakes happen, they only make me stronger. Growth can only come from resilience and never giving up." P9 remarked, "my parents are immigrants, and they pursued the American dream, and they are the epidemic of resilience."

**White Privilege.** White privilege was the second theme for IQ 7. Nine (60%) participants shared that they felt that they were treated differently by white superiors and peers. Participants were clear in their responses that they did not see their background as negative; however, they were aware that they had been treated differently because of it. Three (20%) participants shared that being fair skin tone or having a non-Hispanic last name has unintentionally helped them. P15 answered,

Being a woman of color in a district setting with an accent has been challenging because I have felt white privilege. White males exercise their white privilege. I have to prove my intellectual capacity and that I'm up to par. I have had to learn the politics of the school and realized that there are so many roadblocks, and it's about using the big words; I didn't use the big words.

Additionally, P3 said,

I remember I was in a school where I was the darkest person in the room. Everybody's male and white in the room. I could feel that I needed to prove I deserved the space I was taking up. Unlike them, I am not sure they felt they needed to prove that they belonged in that room.

P7 said, "White privilege is in schools. That's a reality."



**Pushback.** The third theme in IQ 7 was pushback. Nine (60%) participants shared that they face pushback as Hispanic leaders. The theme was linked to themes like questioning and resisting change. P1 noted,

White district leaders pushback. Yes, I think it would be different to implement a policy if I was white. If I was white, would I get pushback? Would I have gotten the same response had I been a white woman instead of a Latino woman? I do feel strongly about the fact that my heritage does play a role. 50% of the team is Latina women. Yet, I feel like it definitely feels they talk down to me.

Parents and teachers also push back, and P8 responded, "the biggest challenge I face is my interaction with adults more than children. Trying to get the, to understand the vision and mission getting people on board is the biggest challenge because they tend to push back."

**Gender.** The fourth theme in IQ 7 was gender. Eight (53%) participants shared that being female in a Hispanic community can be challenging. P12 answered, "sometimes parents will listen more to my male vice principal than me because I am a woman. Our culture has a lot of machismo. The belief I should be home." P7 said,

I leverage my assistant principal, who is a male, because parents see him as an authority figure simply because he is a male. A mom called me upset and said she didn't understand why I wasn't home tending to my husband and kids. I realized it was deeply embedded into our culture.

Also, P9 said,

They see me as the weak gender. I believe immigrants sometimes see men as authority figures. They think maybe I am weak as a woman or not as strong as a male. Parents question, "can she do a job as well as a man?" In our heritage, women are always set aside and told to make home a priority.

**Token Representation.** The fifth theme in this question was token representation. Six (40%) participants share the term token or only Hispanic representation. P3 noted,

A challenge I have faced is being the token Hispanic. I have felt it was hard finding a voice, and my opinions were minimized. When I was in a white district, I felt like the token Hispanic, and I don't know if it was because I was Hispanic or female. I think everyone assumed I speak Spanish assumptions, but I don't.

**Assumptions.** The sixth and final theme in IQ 7 was assumptions. Four (27%) participants shared they needed to fight assumptions about giving Hispanic students preferential treatment over African American students. P4 said,

My Black students have assumed I am going to side with the Latino teachers or students. They feel that they are not supported. I guess they have preconceived notions of who you've gonna be because I am Latino. And yeah, of course, like you check off some of those boxes. African American students just assume that you're going to be racist towards them. Latinos are racist towards African Americans, so I need to be aware.

Also, P14 answered,

I struggle with being accused of favoritism toward my Latino students. I do not have favoritism for ethnic background. I care for my African American students and colleagues. I had an employee alleging, you know like, favoritism due to ethnic background, which is just their opinion. False allegations.

P12 "I make a conscious effort to treat my African American students equally. Because I have been told,

You like only your own. I have to be really careful of all the other groups. You gotta be able to give them either an equal amount of love or a little bit more. Some parents say "he's Mexican of course he's helping him." So, I need to be extra aware of assumptions.

**Summary of RQ 2.** RQ 2 examined the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implemented strategies. Participants shared that their challenges as leaders included gender, lack of social capital, feeling overworked, and lack of parent involvement. As Hispanic leaders, their challenges were due to white privilege, assumptions, being a token representation, pushback, and gender. Resilience was a theme that shined through when getting over challenges.

### **Research Question 3**

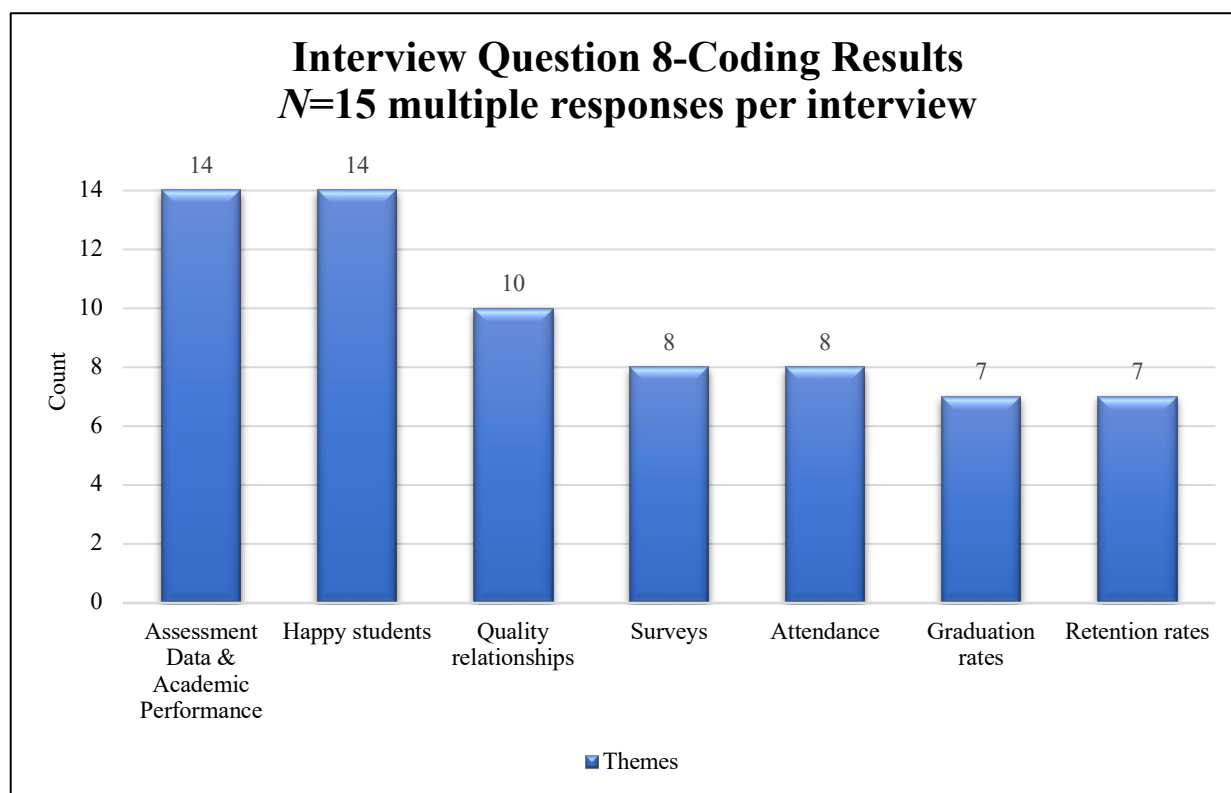
RQ 3 asked, How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools? To answer RQ 3, only one interview question was employed.

- IQ 8. How would you define, measure, and track success as a Hispanic leader?

**Interview Question 8.** IQ 8 asked, How would you define, measure, and track success as a Hispanic leader? The question surfaced seven themes: (a) assessment data and academic performance, (b) happy students , (c) quality relationships , (d) surveys, (e) attendance, (f) graduation rates, and (g) retention rates (Figure 8). These seven themes were noted as significant findings because they supported each other in answering RQ 3. Assessment data, surveys, attendance, graduation rates, and retention rates are measures that can easily be tracked. While having quality relationships and happy students was not easily measured, they are just as important. According to the researcher, all seven themes were shown to be significant and needed to be analyzed further.

**Figure 8**

*IQ 8 Coding Results*



***Assessment Data & Academic Performance.*** The first theme in IQ 8 was assessment data. Approximately 14 (93%) participants shared that standardized or state testing, formative and summative assessments, increased Lexile levels, Early Intervention Program (EIP) classifications, exit tickets, progress reports, report cards, and grade point average (GPA) all provided imperative data. The participants believed that it was important to collect data that was measurable and could determine student success in subjects. P5 stated, "I measure success through formative and summative assessments because they show us if students are growing academically." P6 noted that "data is collected through ITBS standardized tests and scores, and it is desegregated to lead instruction." P14 stated, "data needs to be collected and analyzed, and it cannot be just anecdotal. I see EIP compliance and classification rates to determine success. Show me numbers and data."

***Happy Students.*** The second theme for IQ 8 was happy students. Fourteen (93%) participants shared that having happy students who smile, laugh, and enjoy school is one of the greatest successes that data cannot measure. P6 said, "I see success as do people feel happy, safe, and important?" P3 answered, "success to me is when students say, 'I love my school. I love my teachers' that's a success." P13 noted, "success is the accomplishment of set goals. Do I see the staff and kids happy? I also define success as meeting the proficiency levels. We celebrate our kids as well." P4 said, "I define success as students learning, having fun at school, the big picture of success in everybody like their classroom. They are having fun; they are engaged; they are learning."

***Quality Relationships.*** The third theme identified was quality relationships. Ten (67%) participants said that success is determined by students having healthy quality relationships with their peers and teachers. P11 said, "some success cannot be tracked with numbers but with

feelings. When students have positive relationships with those around them, I know we are succeeding."

**Surveys.** The fourth theme for IQ 8 was surveys. Eight participants (53%) agreed that parent surveys, student surveys, teacher surveys, exit interviews, and evaluations are valuable ways to define, track, and measure success. P7 answered, "data assessments are important and valuable, don't get me wrong, but I think culture surveys also tell another story that doesn't always transfer over to data. For example, surveying parents and students. Social-emotional surveys as part of our accountability." P11 "I send out parent, teacher, and student surveys in May to determine what stakeholders perceive as things we need to work on and what we perceive we are excelling on. It is definitely a humbling process but helpful."

**Attendance.** The fifth theme identified was attendance. Eight (53%) participants mentioned attendance as an important form of data. The attendance theme includes tardies, early leaves, and truancy. Eight (53%) participants that lead high schools noted that many of their students sometimes missed school because of work or having to help a parent with a younger sibling. P2 answered "Every morning I look at who is absent and track it because if a student is absent more than three days, a doctor's note is required. It is difficult to catch up when you miss a lot of days of school."

**Graduation Rates.** The sixth theme for IQ 8 was graduation rates. Seven (47%) participants noted that students graduating from high school as a measure of success. P1 said, "we see graduation rates and acceptances to college as a success." P14 "I look at graduation rates to see if we are moving forward and if we are providing the proper supports."

**Retention Rates.** Retention rates was the final theme for IQ 8. Seven (47%) principals shared the importance of retention in a school. Retention of students can solidify a school

because it shows a strong school culture, academic success and that students and parents are happy. P15 noted, "I know I am being successful when I look at attendance rate, passing grades, retention, graduation rates. When students stick around and graduate from my school, it shows that we are creating a legacy." P5 answered, "we look at it, if students register for the following year as a success."

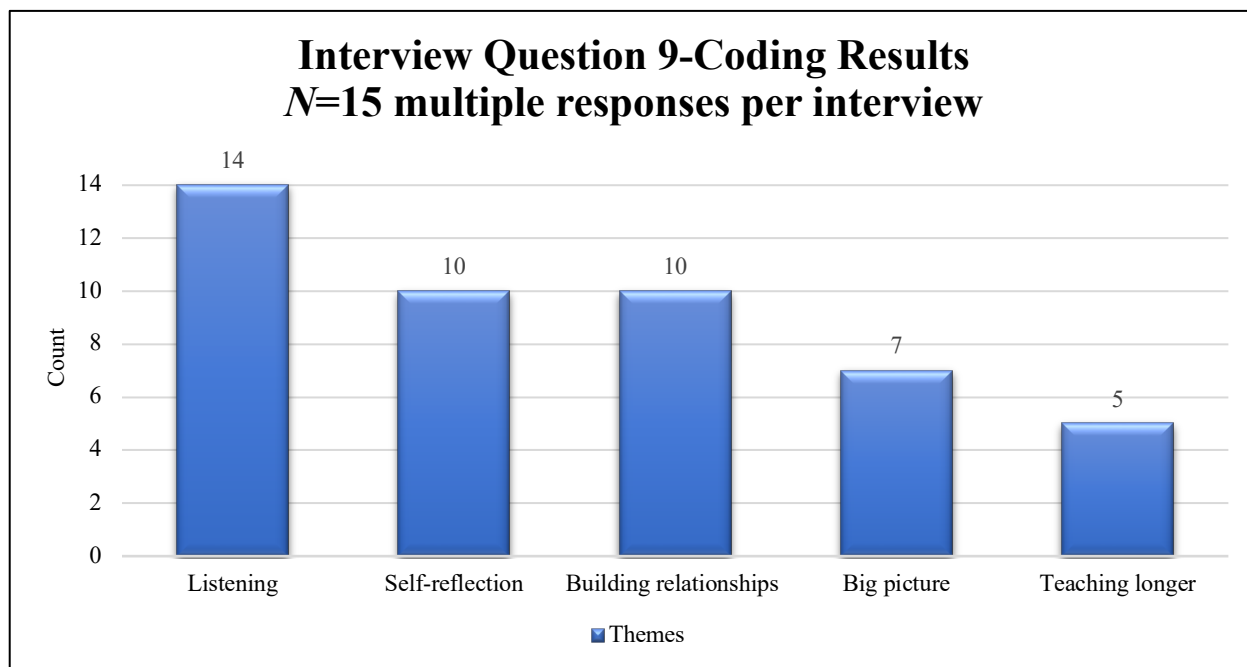
**Summary of RQ 3.** RQ 3 examined how Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools. Participants shared that they measure and track success with assessment data and academic performance, surveys, retention rates, and attendance. Those are measurable forms of data that are helpful and can help when making decisions. Participants also shared that they determine success in forms that cannot be necessarily measured, like quality relationships and happy students.

#### ***Research Question 4***

RQ 4 asked, What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders? Under RQ 4, there were, the following two interview questions were compiled to answer the research question:

- IQ 9: Out of your leadership efforts, think of one you would want to do over again?
- IQ 10: If there is one piece of advice you would have for young Hispanic leaders in schools, what would it be? Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Interview Question 9.** IQ 9 asked, Out of your leadership efforts, think of one you would want to do over again? IQ 9 brought five themes: (a) listening, (b) self-reflection, (c) building relationships, (d) big picture, and (e) teaching longer (Figure 9).

**Figure 9***IQ 9 Coding Results*

**Listening.** Listening was the first theme for IQ 9. Approximately 14 (93%) participants stated that listening was essential and fewer mistakes would occur if one took the time to listen. P11 shared, "my advice is to listen. Learn." P14 answered, "my advice is to just wait it out a bit, assess, listen, try to find out why things are the way they are. Are there political implications? Listen to shareholders because they might you a different view."

**Self-Reflection.** The second theme for IQ 9 was self-reflection. At least 10 (67%) participants shared that looking back at what they could redo would be being a little more self-reflective. Thinking before acting and also being able to be introspective, evaluate situations, think, and speculate. P1 answered,

Self-reflection is important before making any decisions. I remember one of my biggest mistakes. I purchased all new Chromebook and smart boards for classrooms. I acted with good intent but then realized the teachers were not ready for such a fast shift. I should have prepared more. Sometimes you think if we get the items everything will work out, but that's not the case. There's a lot that does into success.

***Building Relationships.*** The third theme that stemmed from IQ 9 was building relationships. Roughly 10 (67%) participants shared building relationships is important, and from that theme, they said working on soft skills, making connections, and developing bonds. P6 responded, "I wish I would have known the importance of relationships with families from the get-go. If you build relationships with students and families, it pushes children to reach their God-given talents."

***Big Picture.*** The fourth theme for IQ 9 was seeing the big picture. Seven (47%) participants noted that being aware of the big picture when implementing policies and activities is important. P2 said, "sometimes you get caught up in the weeds and miss the bigger picture. One of my biggest mistakes happened when I didn't allow myself to think outside the box."

***Teaching Longer.*** The fifth theme is teaching longer. Five (33%) participants shared that they should have taught longer before entering an administrative role or being an administrator first before teaching. P2 said,

My best friend is a principal too, and we often say instead of being a teacher first and then principal, it should be backward. Everybody should have to be a principal, and then you can go back and be a teacher. So, you can see that it is a difficult task to manage adults. Adults are more difficult than children.

P11 answered,

If I could get a do-over, I would spend more time with students. Just having more time with my students and not worrying about things that are not important. Less drill and kill. Spend quality time with students and parents. I wish I knew that was more important.

P13 said, "I would stay in class as a teacher longer."

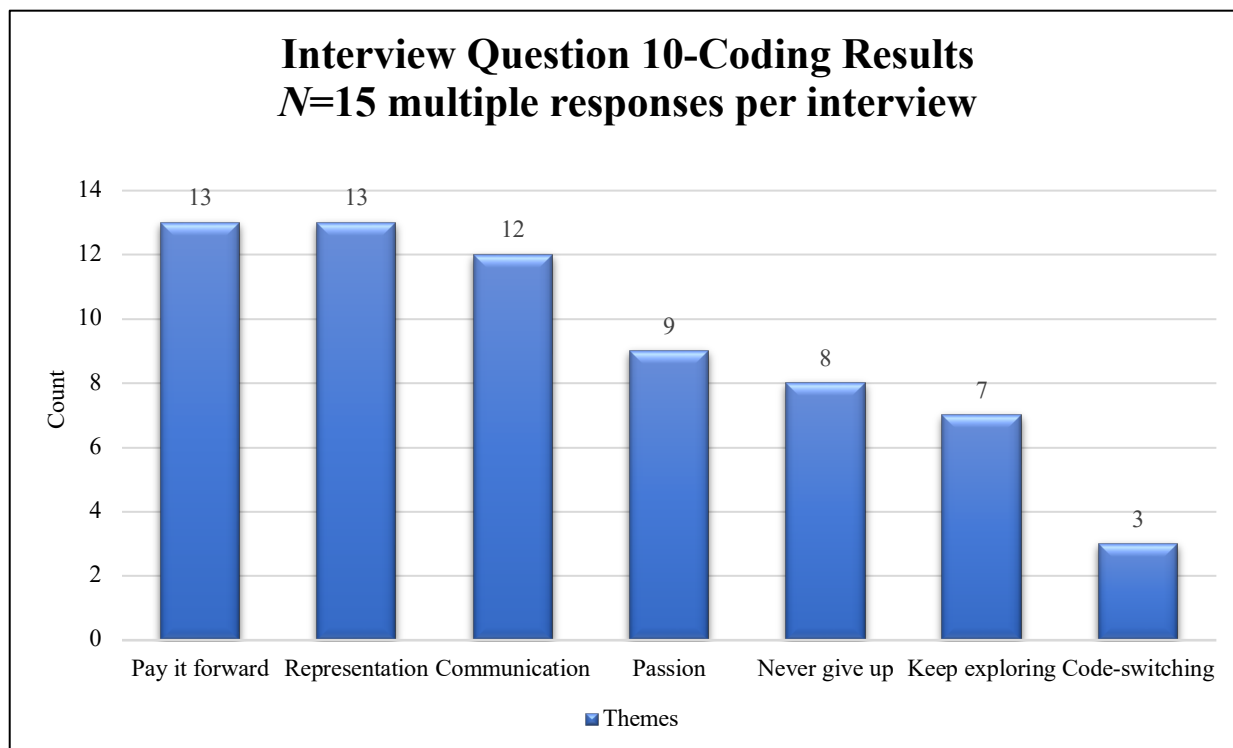
**Interview Question 10.** Finally, IQ 10 asked, if there is one piece of advice you would have for young Hispanic leaders in schools, what would it be? Is there anything else you would like to add? IQ 10 brought seven themes that included: (a) pay it forward, (b) representation (c) communication, (d) passion, (e) never give up, (f) keep exploring, and (g) code-switching



(Figure 10). The thematic analysis for IQ 10 brought out seven themes because the participants were eager to provide future leaders advice and support. This question brought more emotion, as two (13%) participants became emotional and had tears in their eyes.

**Figure 10**

*IQ 10 Coding Results*



***Pay it Forward.*** The first theme of IQ 10 was to pay it forward which was the most prevalent of the themes with 13 (87%) participants. The keywords linked to this theme were give back, provide support, do not forget where you came from. P1 said,

You are not going to learn the job until you get in the job. Reach out to others no matter the platform and lookout for the next generation; whatever you face, you are not alone and have someone behind you. You need to pay it forward.

P12 responded, “pay it forward. We walk in the footsteps of those before us, and we stand on their shoulders. Everything is in line with that. When you give back, when you serve your brothers, it’s a way of healing.”

**Representation.** The second theme was representation. Thirteen (87%) participants agreed that representation is important. The themes that were linked to this theme were seeing more of us, having a seat at the table, having a voice, and being present. P2 said, "it's no secret there is a shortage of teachers and of course administrators. We need the right people in the field."

**Communication.** The third theme for IQ 10 was communication. Roughly 12 (80%) participants shared that sharing and being open to all stakeholders is important. Leaders who communicate with one another and develop interpersonal communication with everyone are transparent, and are more able to adapt to situations as they change.

**Passion.** The fourth theme in IQ 10 was passion. Nine (60%) participants shared that being passionate about one's profession is important. Words linked to this theme were drive, goal, motivation, and *ganas*. P12 said, "*ponte las pilas* and follow your passion." P2 answered, "when passion comes through, it's like fertilizer. It's gonna grow whatever you invest in it. And so just keep working hard, keep exploring, and don't get in a rush to do things." P11 said, "when I am driving to school, I have butterflies. I cannot wait to arrive. And when I leave, I cannot wait to come back."

**Never Give Up.** The fifth theme for IQ 10 was never to give up. Eight (53%) participants shared the importance of perseverance, being tenacious, keeping going/exploring, having no limits, and being resilient. P7 said,

One of my biggest frustrations is that change doesn't happen quickly. Learn balance to bring change. Work with the system that exists. Public education is constantly changing, so what hill are you willing to die on. Pick your battles, and don't come in with guns a-blazing. Wait. We have multigeneration in public education. You have to learn to work with them and bring them along with you versus constantly fighting. What hill are you willing to die on? You can't fight them all.

P9 responded,

My advice is never to give up. You can do it! There's always going to be challenges down the road and always make sure that those challenges are met with an open mind, and you always learn something from challenges. Ask for help and never give up; ask questions because you are alone. Ask for help from other principals or anyone. Other people's experiences can help you in the future.

P13 said, "perseverance mindset when it comes to leadership."

**Keep Exploring.** The fifth theme is to keep exploring. Seven (47%) participants that it is important to not settle to look onto other opportunities and go for them. P2 answered,

Take your time to explore. Explore and enjoy the ride because so much learning happens in the process of where you're going. It is ok to change your mind. Enjoy the ride. I tell my children at home and students I don't care what they wanna be as long as they are good.

P9 said, "you need to have the ability to give clear expectations and responsibilities." P12 responded "don't limit yourself. Forget imposter syndrome. Don't limit yourself to that mindset you know yourself and put yourself out there and give it a try."

**Code-Switching.** Code-switching is the final theme for IQ 10. Three (20%) participants shared this theme. Code-switching was also linked to language alteration. P7 noted, "it is important to be authentic. Bring your own flavor. Code switch. There's nothing wrong with code-switching." P3 said,

You will be in different settings. How to code switch, you know, speak the language in one setting. Also, maintain your realness be true to yourself, and love your heritage and your background. But that doesn't always have to be at the forefront of what you're doing as a leader. Connect with your community.

**Summary of RQ 4.** RQ 4 wanted to analyze what recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders? Participants shared heartfelt advice for future leaders. Participants emphasized the importance of paying it forward, being passionate, and code-switching to be authentic, representing, and never giving up despite adversities. This question

provided participants the opportunity to advise future leaders with the tools they wished they knew before taking on their own leadership. This research question allowed participants to become vulnerable, and two participants became emotional when sharing their advice for future leaders.

## **Chapter 4 Summary**

This qualitative phenomenological study sought to investigate the impact Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. The researcher sought to determine if it makes a difference to have a Hispanic leader leading a Hispanic school community. The researcher explored the challenges faced by Hispanic leaders and gathered recommendations for future Hispanic school leaders. In order to succeed in this goal, 15 school leaders were interviewed and asked 10 semi-structured interview questions. The 10 interview questions were classified in accordance with four central research questions.

- RQ 1: What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools?
- RQ 2: What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies?
- RQ 3: How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools?
- RQ 4: What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders?

The 15 participants' interviews were recorded, transcribed, reviewed, coded, and peer-reviewed by two Pepperdine University doctoral students who understand qualitative studies. The interview responses yielded 59 overarching themes. Chapter 5 will provide an in-depth examination of the themes, potential implications, possible future research, and conclusions of this study.

**Table 3***Summary of Themes for the Research Questions*

<b>RQ1. What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools?</b>	<b>RQ2. What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies?</b>	<b>RQ3. How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools?</b>	<b>RQ4. What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders?</b>
<b>Communication</b>	Assumptions	Data	Self-reflect
<b>Developing trust through transparency</b>	Gender	Quality relationships	Keep exploring
<b>Building solid partnerships</b>	Pushback	Happy students	Pay it forward
<b>Having a clear vision/mission</b>	Lack of balance/feeling overworked		Never give up & Passion

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

In the U.S., the Hispanic population continues to grow fast, and in many states, Hispanics have become the majority group. In 2018, over 50.7 million students were enrolled in primary, elementary, and secondary public schools. Hispanic students make up a large majority of the student body in the U.S. Hispanics are increasing from 11.0 million (22%) to now 13.8 million (27%), a trend that does not seem to slow down. As the Hispanic population increases in schools and the workforce, there is still a gap in Hispanic leader representation (Flores & Matkin, 2014). By 2024 the Hispanic student population will make up 54% of the student body, yet elementary and high school educators are still predominantly white (Turner, 2018). By 2050 the Hispanic population looks to come makeup 29% of the U.S. population (Abascal, 2015; Ylimaki et al., 2007). Furthermore, by 2060 one out of three people will be of Hispanic descent in the U.S (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Leadership roles continue to evolve, and many leaders aim to transform school communities to better support their majority group in need. The role of principalship has become complex (Grissom et al., 2021b). The principal's role primarily is to create change in schools that will directly impact student growth (Carter, 2008). As educational leaders prepare to lead school communities, it is essential to look at the school leaders making decisions that directly impact students (Manna, 2015). In this research study, the researcher aims to investigate the impact Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic.

Leadership is ever-evolving in schools, and school administrators experience unique challenges, influences, and motivators to make an impact. The researcher hopes to identify Hispanic leaders' unique traits that make them special to their school communities. The researcher wanted to identify if similar backgrounds, shared experiences, language, and

education positively influence their leadership strategies. Crawford and Fuller (2017) note that teachers that share the same background as their leaders have an increased positive perception of the school and leader. Principals who share the same background as their teachers focus more on decreasing the pay gap between teachers. The research data collected in this study can be implemented in large school districts, local school sites, and current, and future leaders of all backgrounds who want to understand better the impact schools leaders have. The researcher provides us with a Hispanic leadership model that can be used throughout the United States when training school administrators and district leaders. Thus, Chapter 5 summarizes the research study, reiterates the purpose of the study, discusses the findings and results, provides recommendations for future studies, and shares the final conclusions drawn from this study.

### **Summary of The Study**

The researcher discovered that the principal's role has evolved over the years. School leadership roles are not defined easily and are not as clear-cut. Principals are now responsible for being change agents and improving school curriculum to better support marginalized communities (Marx & Larson, 2012). Fullan (2016) argues that change must be sustainable and meaningful and, therefore, takes time. A school principal's role is to develop diverse and inclusive schools and support social justice causes for all of its shareholders (Payne & Smith, 2018). The role can become overwhelming at times because it is believed that a successful principal must be a strong communicator, visionary, coach, and mentor (Alvoid & Black Jr., 2014; Spillane et al., 2004; Zepeda, 2013). Mentorship becomes integral because principals, teachers, and students are best served when receiving support through mentorship. Students need caring and supportive instructors and leaders who advise them (Harris & Kiyama, 2015). Parent involvement and strong family connections provide students additional support and lead to

significant achievement (Mo & Singh, 2008). For parents to feel welcomed and have social capital at school, a principal must assist in developing that connection (Auerbach, 2010; Cooper et al., 2010). Parents can have linguistic capital when speaking Spanish and English because they can leverage resources to build relationships and establish goals (Yosso, 2005). For reform to occur in education, there must be a relationship and connection between school and family (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). School connectedness has decreased dropout rates (McWhirter et al., 2018). Connectedness is vital but is difficult to cultivate in a community because it requires leaders to share power with all shareholders (Cooper, 2010; Gold et al., 2002). When principal leaders opt to share power, the outcomes include solidarity, shared knowledge, empowerment, and can be transformative schools.

Hispanic leaders serving Hispanic school populations share unique connectives with their communities because they share similar backgrounds, upbringing, and language (Magdaleno, 2006; Murakami et al., 2018). Representation matters, and leaders with the same background provide the knowledge and skills to effectively engage students of diverse backgrounds (Vargas et al., 2020). Strong school communities promote communication between all shareholders and affirm the school's culture, language, and traditions (Grissom et al., 2021a). Cooper (2010) noted that leadership is messy, and principals need to be willing to shift their focus and support students, parents, and teachers. Hispanic's work ethic and passions allow them to make a profound impact in the United States because they show a deep commitment to family, faith, hard work, and service (The White House, 2011).

This qualitative phenomenological research study aimed to investigate Hispanic leaders' best strategies and practices in Hispanic school communities. In a phenomenological study, the researcher can find a common meaning from the individuals' life experiences to create a



phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 shared the background of the study, the problem, the purpose of the study, four research questions, the significance of the study, limitations of the study, limitations, and definition of terms. The study identified four overarching research questions. Chapter 2 presented a literature review on the role of Hispanic leaders, Hispanic students, education, representation, and leadership. Chapter 3 focused on the nature of the study, methodology, and research design. The research design included analysis unit, population, sampling, criteria of inclusion, and exclusion. Chapter 3 also included human subject consideration, data collection, interview protocol, statement of limitation, and epoché. Chapter 4 provided the interview protocol and the data collected from the 10 interview questions. Chapter 5 concluded the findings and shared future recommendations.

Ten open-ended interview questions were developed and directly aligned to the four research questions. The researcher identified 15 participants that fit the inclusion criteria by doing Google and LinkedIn searches. Additionally, the researcher looked up Hispanic principals' work emails. Many of the emails were found on the participants' schools' websites or the California DOE school directory. The participants were also featured on their school websites, including photographs. Some websites shared school demographic data as well. Once the person was identified, the researcher contacted them via email to invite them to the study. The researcher's invitation email included the title of the study, abstract, and inclusion criteria for possible applicants. Altogether, 53 people were contacted, and 19 responded to the email. A total of 15 participants were chosen because they met the criteria and were available to participate in the study. Two participants originally wanted to join but later stated they were unavailable due to time restrictions. There was a minimum level of education and experience needed for the

participants. Participants were required to be Hispanic, 30-65 years of age, hold a leadership role in a school, and have three or more years of experience. Participants needed to be available for a virtual interview. The researcher was flexible when scheduling interviews because many participants were busy and worked long hours. In order to achieve maximum variation, participants held leadership roles in public, charter, or private institutions in primary, middle, and secondary schools. The participants' Hispanic descent was the controlled variable in the study.

Data for this study was collected through interviewing 15 participants using 10 open-ended questions designed to expand on the best strategies and practices Hispanic school leaders do. The researcher developed the interview questions, and later the questions were validated by two Pepperdine University doctoral students who are families with qualitative phenomenological research studies. The research questions were also reviewed by the researchers' dissertation chairperson, co-chairs, and committee members. Once the participants agreed to participate in the study and selected a time and date for the Zoom, the researcher emailed them the consent form. All participants in the study received the approved consent form, research question, 10 interview questions, and a Zoom link. The researcher logged in 15 minutes prior to the interview and checked that the consent form was returned signed. Once the participant logged into the Zoom, the researcher reminded them that they would be recorded, that a pseudonym would be used, and that they could pause or end the interview if they felt uncomfortable. It was essential to share that personal information, including district or school names, would not be used in the study. This allowed participants to feel more comfortable and open to sharing.

The interviews were recorded using Zoom and stored on the researcher's password-protected laptop. The researcher transcribed the recordings and saved them in a Microsoft Word document. The researcher initially transcribed three interviews and coded for common themes.

Two Pepperdine University doctoral students peer-reviewed the three coded transcripts to ensure validity. The two students provided feedback and recommendations. The researchers considered and implemented the recommendations and proceeded to transcribe and code the remaining interviews. Once the researcher coded all 10 interviews and highlighted common themes, the researcher created a bar graph for each question. The researcher created these bar graphs to provide a visual for the common themes in each question. The semi-structured interviews provided rich and descriptive data.

### **Discussion of Findings**

In this study, the researcher sought to identify the best strategies and practices Hispanic leaders employ when working in primarily Hispanic school communities. The four research questions that guided this qualitative phenomenological study were:

- RQ 1: What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools?
- RQ 2: What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies?
- RQ 3: How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools?
- RQ 4: What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders?

The findings were analyzed, compared, and contrasted with current literature.

### ***Results for RQ 1***

The first research question asked What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools? Research question 1 has 30 overall themes. The researcher funneled four key concept for RQ 1.

IQ 1 asked participants to share about their careers and how they attained a leadership role. This question allowed participants to feel comfortable sharing their journey to leadership and what they believed impacted them. In this question, the researcher found that the participants value education, surpassing adversity, wearing many hats, mentorship, and the importance of family support. Many shared that they had surpassed adversities and how the family unit was important. Surprisingly this question brought to light that many participants never sought to become educators and went into the educational field with great hesitation. In IQ 2, participants were asked to share about a project that led them to exceptional results. They were asked what specific factors or strategies they used to make the project successful. Participants' responses included parent advocacy, transparency, community outreach, school culture, implementing programs, and transformative leadership.

IQ 3 asked participants to elaborate on what strategies they would use to recreate successful results. Participants noted that the strategies that lead them to succeed in their school communities are building relationships, vision, modeling, collaboration, and transparency. IQ 4 asked how they get shareholders involved, specifically the school community, parents, and teachers. The participants' responses found that getting buy-in, being genuine, providing a voice, open communication, being inclusive, and having a solid partnership. Lastly, the five interview questions asked if they believed their heritage contributed to their leadership success. The researcher found that participants believed language, background, trust, gender, shared experiences, and pride contributes to their success.

**Discussion of RQ 1.** The data collected revealed that there are various practices and strategies that Hispanic leaders use to create success in their school communities, and their background plays an active role in their decision-making. In this section, the researcher will

focus on narrowing the 30 original themes into four key concepts. The four main findings included:

- communication,
- developing trust through transparency,
- building solid partnerships, and
- having a clear vision and mission.

***Communication.*** Communication skills are essential when leading a group of people because leaders must be active learners (Fullan, 1993). Both leaders should be able to share clear expectations, allow participants to have a voice, and listen. Creating a culture where open communication is valued and supported is imperative. Communication is vital because a leader must be able to communicate with all shareholders via email, phone calls, newsletters, and meetings. Hispanic leaders share that communicating in Spanish with parents is essential because it allows non-English speaking parents the opportunity to gain social capital in their school community. Clear communication provides a bridge to building connections.

***Developing Trust Through Transparency.*** Leaders shared that cultivating trust through transparency is important. Trust was an umbrella concept of buy-in, being genuine, authentic, and sharing past experiences. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) stated that school leaders who foster trust have effective school climates. Leaders need to be genuine and authentic when communicating with their school community to foster trust. If a leader is genuine, the community will trust them and follow them. When leaders have trust, then buy-in follows. Trust directly impacts school positivity and student behavior and facilitates school improvement (Finnigan, 2012). Participants shared the importance of having buy-in when creating new policies. A leader must be trusted by their shareholders, which can only occur if the leader is authentic. They are

genuine in their shared experiences, pride in their background, and an example. Surpassing adversity and shared experiences are connected to trust because students can connect more with individuals they can fully trust. Participants shared that they had to surpass adversity growing up in low-income households, not speaking English, and having immigrant parents. One shared that she was a teen parent. Communicating with students that they too had nights where they went to bed hungry creates a deeper relationship. If teachers trust leaders, it builds collective efficacy (Pierce, 2014) and teachers are more open to taking risks (Hollingworth et al., 2018). Teachers will trust leaders they view as competent and reliable (Handford & Leithwood 2013).

***Building Solid Partnerships.*** Building solid partnerships that exemplify a productive school climate is a practice school leaders demonstrate because it nurtures collaboration, an inclusive environment, and strong relationships. The ability to develop solid relationships that are transparent and genuine directly impacts a school's culture (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Community outreach and parent advocacy allow leaders to share with their parents, teachers, and students. Davies (2000) notes that successful school partnerships incorporate a mutual understanding, a voice in the decision-making, and access to opportunities. Principals can set the tone in their school communities and provide opportunities for all shareholders to have a voice. Parents, teachers, and students need to be heard and allowed to share their perspectives. Successful partnerships promote the idea that the interests of the school directly align with the school families, community, and staff because all are directly responsible for student learning. Davies states that partnerships should recognize the differences in students' races, religions, and academic status. When developing policies, administrators must mediate, negotiate, and compromise. When developing community outreach programs, parent advocacy, and

professional learning, leaders must provide various opportunities like parent education, volunteer opportunities, communication, and fostering communication.

***Having a Clear Vision and Mission.*** Having a clear vision of the school's mission and school culture allows the implementation of programs and policies. *Vision* is defined as a shared picture of the future (Senge, 2006). The principal's change is driven by their vision of what they want the school to be. Each school has a culture that drives change. Leaders are responsible for establishing a shared vision and must have the ability to garner support from teachers and staff (Dearman & Alber, 2005). When parents are part of the vision, they gain *internal social capital*, defined as having trust, sharing information, and having a shared vision (Leana & Pil, 2006). Leana and Pil (2006) note that having internal social capital in a school community predicts students' higher test scores and growth. Developing inclusive environments where shareholders feel that there are safe spaces to communicate (Hill, 2020). Communicating the school's vision allows parents and teachers to reflect if the school is the right fit. Not having a shared vision can cause subordinates to create their own agendas and can prevent productivity (Canavero et al., 2007).

RQ 1 noted four key concepts communication, developing trust through transparency, building solid partnerships, and having a clear vision and mission. As leaders of school communities, participants noted that clear communication is critical. Parents and students understand what the vision/mission of the school is. Without all shareholders understanding the mission/vision of the school, a school cannot have congruency. All shareholders must share the mission/vision and understand that any policies created will align with the mission. Principals develop trust by being transparent and honest. The teachers and parents must trust the leader's

vision for a school to succeed. Through clear communication and transparency, solid partnerships are developed.

### ***Results for RQ 2***

Research question two asked What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies? RQ 2 has 10 overall themes shown. The researcher funneled four key concepts for RQ 2.

**Discussion of RQ 2.** Participants shared openly the challenges they face as Hispanic leaders. The participants noted four key factors that challenge them as Hispanic leaders. The themes were as follows:

- assumptions,
- gender,
- pushback, and
- lack of balance and feeling overworked.

**Assumptions.** Participants shared that as leaders, a big challenge is the assumptions parents, leaders, and students make about them. Parents in their schools sometimes see them more as their children than leaders. For example, when P13 said the parents called her *Mija*, a word of endearment towards a younger female. There is an assumption that Hispanic leaders will side only with Hispanic students. Participants shared how they have been called racist by African American students. African American students have told them to punish them harsher than Hispanic students. Participants shared being aware of this assumption and being extra careful to be objective and as fair as possible without fearing these allegations. Participants shared that the assumptions bothered them not because they were true but because they wanted all their students to feel supported by them. Participants shared that they see



themselves first and foremost as leaders. Their background does influence how they lead their schools because it guides their actions to a certain extent, but they are there to support all backgrounds. Their background allows them the opportunity to relate to all their students because they serve students who have faced different types of traumas. In schools, people also assume that all Hispanic leaders speak Spanish. In this study, P3 shared that she did not speak Spanish, and she felt that people judged her by her last name and color. She shared that she spoke little to no Spanish, and she was viewed negatively when she was unable to not translate.

**Gender.** The researcher interviewed 15 participants, and all but two were female. All participants, even the male ones, shared that a challenge for them is gender. Female participants shared that being a Hispanic female is challenging because they sometimes are the only Hispanic and female in the room in-district meetings. Many districts leaders are white men, and they feel that sometimes they are the token Hispanic and token woman. P3 stated that sometimes she is the darkest person in the room. In public schools, 52% of principals are female, and 64 % of principals in primary grades are female; in middle school, 42 %, and in high school, 30 % are female in the U.S. (Goldring et al., 2013). In private schools, 55 % of principals are female, and in Catholic schools, 75 % are female (Goldring et al., 2013). Goldring et al. (2013) shared NCES data that states principals' ages range from 48-52 years of age. P7 shared that white privilege exists in districts and wondered if she would be questioned about this if she was not a Hispanic woman. P12 shared that as a small Hispanic woman who leads a high school with many male Hispanic students, she sometimes faces the challenge of being seen as small and weak. She said, "I am Mexican, I'm a little woman, and I am dealing with high schoolers that are primarily male, and they're rough around the edges. I am a listener, and people might confuse that as a weakness." She has to use her personality and tone to overcompensate for her size and gender.

P12 said, "as a first-generation Mexican American woman, I am supposed to cook and clean, not go to school and get a doctorate." The two male participants that were interviewed stated that being a male leading a Hispanic community has been a plus. They admit that parents see a male as a leader and provider in a Hispanic community. The research does not show that gender plays a role in student outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021b). Latinas struggle to balance cultural expectations and norms that affect their leadership (Onorato & Musoba, 2015).

***Pushback.*** Pushback is a challenge Hispanic leaders felt when attempting to create a thriving school community. It is vital to get buy-in from all shareholders, including the community, parents, teachers, and students. Unfortunately, in school communities, there will always be those teachers that are supportive and follow the leaders and those who question everything and push back on change. P11 said, "be an active listener, arrive first, leave last and make them feel like they are the only ones in the room because they will back you up and defend you." P9 responded that success is making change no matter how small it is because challenges will arise.

***Lack of Balance and Feeling Overworked.*** External factors can be challenging, but one of their biggest challenges is the lack of balance/feeling overworked by the participants in this study. Participants shared their level of work ethic, which meant feeling a huge sense of responsibility (Louis et al., 2016) and therefore working longer hours. Because many serve communities they grew up in, they felt that they needed to work hard to close the educational gap and provide their students with the support they did not have. Both the principals and teachers share a sense of responsibility for student learning (Sanzo et al., 2011).

RQ 2 brought about four key elements: assumptions, gender, pushback, and lack of balance/feeling overworked. The researcher saw a link between assumptions Hispanics have

towards other Hispanics. The idea is that some Hispanics gain leadership positions simply to be seen as tokens. In the Hispanic community, there is a level of machismo, and gender does become a challenge for some leaders in a career where women hold teaching positions while leadership roles are reserved for males. Participants shared that they question if they receive pushback because of their background or gender. Participants asked themselves, would a man receive this amount of pushback? Having a high level of work ethic can be challenging because there can be a lack of balance. Having a lack of balance leads to feeling overworked and burned out. It is important for leaders to be aware of the challenges they face so they can prepare.

### ***Results for RQ 3***

The third research question asked How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools? RQ 3 had seven overall themes. The researcher funneled the themes into three central concepts.

**Discussion of RQ 3.** Participants stated that they define success in two ways; one can be easily measured and the other cannot. In this section, the researcher outlined three key concepts that stemmed from RQ 3. The thematic analysis produced the following themes that provide the overall answer to RQ 3:

- data,
- quality relationships, and
- happy students.

**Data.** Participants shared that educational leaders value quantitative data because it gives data that can be measured, tracked, and analyzed. Data includes formative and summative assessments, exit tickets, standardized test scores, attendance records, retention rates, graduation rates, college acceptances, report cards, progress reports, and lower behavioral referrals.

Standardized test scores provide administrators data that show if a student has had growth in reading and math, and it can also guide teaching. Student report cards show if students are doing well and meeting goals. In private and charter schools, student retention is essential because if students re-register for the following year, they find value in the school community. P1 said that she was data-driven and set goals that can be identified using benchmarks. P12 noted that attendance is essential in the public because it monitors whether or not students are present and receiving the support needed. P12 stated, "success is measured by attendance and graduation rates."

***Quality Relationships.*** Participants shared that quality relationships are key to student success, although not easily measured or tracked. If students trust their administrators and teachers, then they will be able to meet goals. Students who can develop relationships built on trust and love will be able to grow. Nine (60%) participants shared that mentorship impacted their lives. Those relationships where teachers, coaches, and principals provide support make an impact that is not necessarily measurable. P1 defined *success* as supporting people and building relationships. P9 shared that "success is measured by the influence you have on your colleagues and the students. Success is supporting and being supported by staff." P12 stated that they measure success on the quality of relationships with parents, teachers, and students. Finally, P13 shared quality relationships are key because "it's a huge challenge to create the system of self-confidence and belief in themselves."

***Happy Students.*** Participants shared that they measure success in their schools if they see their students happy. The smiles and laughter in the hallways are what participants shared as being successful. P11 said that when she first became a principal, she focused on the data, which she agrees is important, but soon realized that students need to love their school and be happy.

P11 said, "If my students are happy and my community is thriving, that is a success." Socio-demographic factors contribute to a student's level of happiness (Göksoy, 2017). Research shows that there is a direct correlation between a person's happiness and their relationship with others, job satisfaction, efficacy, vitality, and willingness to learn. Happy students do better in school (Sarıcı, 2016).

### ***Results for RQ 4***

RQ 4 asked participants what recommendations they had for future Hispanic leaders? RQ 4 had 12 overall themes. After the thematic analysis of the interview questions that correlated with this research question, five themes were found.

**Discussion of RQ 4.** Participants had several heartfelt recommendations for future Hispanic leaders. Participants emphasized five themes which were as follows:

- self-reflection,
- keep exploring,
- pay it forward,
- never give up, and passion

***Self-Reflection.*** Participants shared that having self-reflection is key to success. Being able to stop, reflect, ask questions, and communicate is extremely important. Participants share that many mistakes can be avoided by simply slowing down, not reacting quickly, and self-reflecting. It is essential and valuable to ask shareholders their opinions through PLC meetings, parents' meetings, or surveys. Participants shared that they have a great passion for their careers, and because of that, they feel a sense of responsibility that drives them to make a difference, but sometimes being overzealous can be a detriment. The up-and-coming advise leaders to self-reflect and make decisions based on data, not feelings. P15 said, "be informed, so no one takes

advantage of your lack of information. Make decisions based on information that backs up the decision." P14 shared, "before you act, unless necessary, listen, assess, gauge, try to understand why things are the way they are. It is hard to see things being done incorrectly, but do not act immediately." Principals in successful schools help teachers accountable and self-reflect on what needs to be improved so their schools were more successful.

***Keep Exploring.*** Keeping exploring and being fearless is important for future leaders because there will be many obstacles, but knowing that options are out there is important. P2 tells future leaders, "you can do anything. Take your time to explore. Explore and enjoy the ride because so much learning happens in the process of where you are going. It is okay to change your mind."

***Pay it Forward.*** Participants shared the importance of paying it forward and supporting colleagues. Many participants who share duty had mentors that helped them, and now they are paying it forward by mentoring the next generations. P4 noted the importance of asking questions and giving advice. Representation matters, and only through supporting others will more Hispanics enter the education field and grow in leadership. P4 said, "representation makes an impact. Having role models who encourage future educators. There need to be more Hispanic teachers and Hispanic leaders." P7 said they do whatever it takes to help students and colleagues succeed because they need to know that there are opportunities; they need to grab them.

***Never Give Up and Passion.*** Never giving up and resilience are key concept for participants in this study. P5 noted, "my biggest advice I would give to people is always learning from your mistakes. Be proud when you make mistakes and own up to them." P3 shared that future leaders need to "be hungry, humble, and smart." P3 said she lives by the motto "good, better, best, never let it rest, until the good is better and the better is best." P7 reminds future

leaders to learn to work in the system to make changes. P5 said, "I think it is important that you believe in the work you are doing because if you end up working very hard and have a very demanding position, you will not mind the work, you will not find that you are spending all those extra hours." P12 said, "don't fall on the pressure to conform, Be genuine because you deserve a seat at the table."

### **Implications of the Study**

This study aimed to find the best practices Hispanic school leaders use to create successful schools and their impact on Hispanic students. The findings from this study focused on supporting Hispanic, non-white, and white administrators (principals, assistant principals, superintendents), teachers, parents, students, and society by providing a framework that focuses on school administrators' best practices when working with Hispanic students. The framework can be used in different ways, including as a training model. The training model can be used at local sites or on a larger scale with district training. Superintendents can also benefit from this framework. On a district level, superintendents can use it to train principals of schools whose majority group is Hispanic. Districts with a large number of Hispanic students can use the framework as a training model. The training can be held yearly and include district principals of all backgrounds. The training will include all principals who wish to support their large Hispanic communities. The principals can then take the model to their sites.

The framework will benefit Hispanic, non-white, and white principals because all school leaders working in the U.S will work in schools that serve Hispanic students who face traumas, have needs, and academic gaps. Hispanic students are becoming the largest population and need additional support to succeed, thus, the framework will describe what best practices leaders can use to support them. Principals can use the training in weekly staff meetings to assess how

Hispanic students are being supported. Incorporating the model in faculty meetings is important because professional development has been shown to enhance students' quality of education (Edwards et al., 2019).

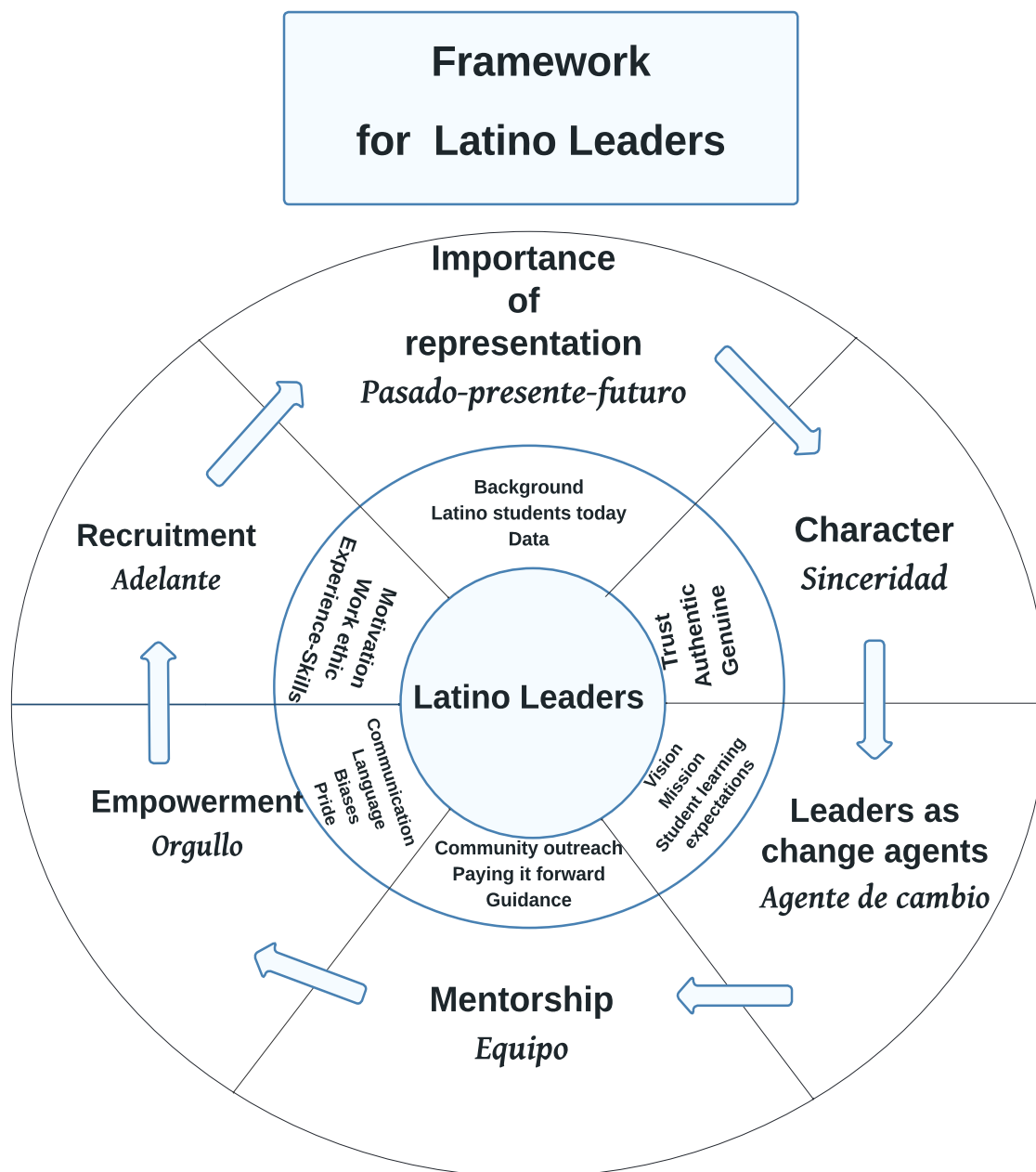
The framework will benefit students and parents because it can be incorporated by principals in schools when leading parent meetings, events, school activities, and implementing policies. Teachers will bring those takeaways from effective professional development into the classroom and directly benefit students. Students will directly benefit from teachers gaining tools that they can use in the classroom when working with Hispanic students in order to increase student achievement. Parents will benefit because it will provide teachers and principals with tools to support Hispanic parents and help them gain social capital in their children's schools.

Lastly, the training will support society as a whole because Hispanics are a community that is growing in numbers but still not where it should be academically and financially. Individual academic success is a huge factor if they will gain financial independence. Children under 18 years of age and younger are among the most prominent groups living in poverty (Walker, 2006). As President Obama said, the nation's success is dependent on the success of the Hispanic community. Students who drop out later become dependent on government help, affecting society as a whole (Aldridge et al., 2017).

## **Application**

This framework was developed to benefit Hispanic school administrators (principals, assistant principals, and superintendents), teachers, parents, students, and the whole of society (Figure 11). The framework can be applied in different spaces, including a training model.



**Figure 11***Framework for Latino Leaders*

*Note.* A framework was developed to target best practices used by Hispanic leaders.

This framework was developed to support school leaders and their Hispanic student body. Current literature speaks about the growing number of Hispanic students and young Hispanics entering the workforce, but little is written on Hispanic leaders' impact on their own community. Hispanic leaders bring unique ways of connecting with their students that cause favorable outcomes. The framework can be used as a training model. The training will be divided into two days and each day will consist of four hours.

### ***Importance of Representation***

The first day will begin with historical data, the state of Latinos currently, the importance of building trust, and culture. This introduction will provide participants with an idea of the challenges Hispanic students currently face in the U.S. educational system. Data shared will emphasize that the Hispanic population is increasing yet still underrepresented in leadership roles (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). Hispanic students make up a large number of the student population. They face challenges that include living in low-income communities, language barriers, and immigration status. It is important to emphasize what state Latino students are currently in the U.S. and what needs to be done by school leaders to create positive outcomes. In order to increase representation in leadership roles, current students must gain academic strides so they can hold future leadership roles. Districts in this portion can share student attendance rates, standardized test scores, student retention numbers, IEP data, and college acceptance rates.

**Character.** Day one will also discuss the importance of building trust and acknowledging students' cultural similarities and differences. Trust is built by being genuine, authentic, honest, ethical, *sincero*, and sharing with students past experiences they can relate to. When working with Hispanic students, culture is critical because they value family, faith, language, and traditions. Building trust through shared culture is a gateway to gaining buy-in and

support. Communicating in Spanish is important because parents want to be part of the conversation, and when flyers, emails, or newsletters are translated, they are more likely to participate and gain social capital. Both leaders and students feel more connected to students when they share similar past experiences. Teachers of color bridge knowledge because they bring similar stories, share experiences, and bring to light social injustices (Frankenburg, 2008). Leaders understand the importance of listening to parents, teachers, and students.

**Leaders as Change Agents.** On day two of the training, the presentation will focus on vision and mission. Having a clear vision of the schools' mission and root beliefs is important when developing policies or transforming school culture. Each stakeholder should be able to communicate the school's vision, mission, student learning expectations, and pillars. In this part of the training, participants will unpack their school's mission statements and pillars and reflect on their own root beliefs as leaders. This activity will allow participants the opportunity to reflect and align their beliefs as educators and if their views align with the school's policies.

**Mentorship.** Community outreach through mentorship is the next part of the training. Providing the school sites programs they can develop where students can be mentored by alumni, teachers, and coaches that have similar stories. Building deep relationships is not an easy process, but it significantly impacts once it is developed. Hispanic leaders share stories that benefit students and future Hispanic leaders, growing students' capacity by developing after-school clubs or programs, inviting Hispanic guest speakers, and providing networking opportunities, through developing a solid connection with the community through service. Bordas (2013) and Komives et al. (2005) share their leadership models that include mentorship as a vital component of leadership development.

**Empowerment.** A part of the framework is empowerment since Hispanic students and parents have a lower level of social capital in schools. There are biases that teachers and leaders have when dealing with Hispanic students and parents. For example, Hispanic parents do not care about their child's education because they do not participate in parent meetings or school activities. In many cases, the reality is that parents are working and lack the confidence to visit schools and ask about their child's progress. In training, it is essential to discuss unconscious biases and microaggressions in the training and the importance of empowerment. Districts and leaders can empower students by incorporating a culturally relevant curriculum.

**Recruitment.** The training will focus on recruiting future teacher leaders and school administrators. Work ethic is important because Hispanic leaders believe that work ethic is ingrained in their culture, and supported students will show their motivation and work ethic. Turner et al. (2018) note the critical junctures Hispanic teachers and leaders go through to become educators. He describes the pipeline that includes a high school diploma, access to attending college diplomas, teaching credentials, and, lastly, a teaching job. This pipeline has many challenges and is untraditional (Ocasio, 2014). Recruiting minority groups in leadership roles will increase diversity (Cook & Glass, 2017) in schools and increase representation.

The training will conclude with a reflection on the best practices Hispanic leaders believe impact Hispanic students. Each district, school site, school administrator, and teacher must reflect on what they view as success and if that aligns with the school's vision and their own root beliefs. This is why this model is significant because it can be transferred district-wide and locally. The impact will be on the school community and society as a whole.

## Study Conclusion

This study sought to understand the best practices Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. The researcher was passionate about the subject and wanted to see if there was a formula that Hispanic leaders incorporate into their school communities that led to success. Prior to interviewing participants, the researcher reflected on personal biases. The researcher collected interview data from 15 participants who taught in public schools, charter schools, and private schools. The 15 participants all had higher degrees in education and over three years of experience. The interview consisted of 10 open-ended interview questions that directly aligned with the four main research questions. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, coded, peer-reviewed by two Pepperdine doctoral students for validity, and developed themes. Through the development of themes, the researcher answered the four research questions.

The participants in this study were true leaders who encourage their students and teachers through mentorship, have a high level of work ethic and passion, and that representation matters. Mentorship, whether formal or informal, makes an impact on students and teachers. Participants shared how they had mentors when they were young students and later when they became teachers. Their high work ethic and ability to wear many hats propelled them to leadership even when they hesitated. Having a deep passion for their careers and genuinely love what they do, even when many initially fought against becoming educators. They resisted their calling originally because they knew the responsibility it entails to become a teacher and impact students like them. Even through Zoom interviews, the researcher could sense the commitment, passion, and gratitude the participants had for their craft.

The research questions were designed to identify best practices and strategies, challenges they face, how they measure and track success, and any recommendations they have for future Hispanic leaders. As a result, a framework was developed that could be used in districts or local school sites as a training model. The impact of this study ranges from school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and society. The training is comprised of the following importance of representation, character, leaders as change agents, mentorship, empowerment, and recruitment.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

This study focused on Hispanic school leaders who have shown exemplary results in their school communities. This study sought to understand if Hispanic leaders have a more significant influence in their school communities through their best practices. Through the interview process, it is clear to the researcher that the study can be expanded. Future studies can consist of:

- Interviewing Hispanic students and getting their viewpoint if they believe they have a greater connection with teachers and administrators that share the same background.
- The current study was limited to Hispanic leaders, and a further study would be on other non-white leaders, for example, African American school leaders. Do African American school leaders have best practices that create successful schools for African American students.
- More research is needed on the impact of formal and informal mentorship.

### **Final Thoughts**

This study was a result of scholarly and personal interest in Hispanic leadership. The researcher has been a Hispanic school leader for over a decade who hoped to develop a model to better support administrators, teachers, parents, students, and society. When working on this study, the researcher had to remove personal biases. Many of the participants had doctoral

degrees and participated in the study as a way to pay it forward. It was not surprising to learn that there is no one formula for improving schools or supporting Hispanic students yet the core of the solution is family and community influences. The literature shared the urgency of supporting Hispanic students because they will be the future of the U.S. and eventually become the majority group. As the future majority group, they need the support to receive an education and have careers. The researcher hopes to express the urgency in supporting Hispanic students and providing them with needed support that will benefit the nation as a whole. This study surprised the researcher in many ways, including how many participants did not seek out education as a career choice. Many of them just fell into teaching because a mentor saw their potential and skill set. Mentorship is at the heart of why many Hispanics go into the education field and pursue leadership. It is important to note that, yes, many Hispanic students have challenges, but they have the grit and resilience to overcome them.

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## APPENDIX A

## CITI HSR Certificate

**Figure A1***CITI Human Subjects Certificate*

## APPENDIX B

### IRB Approval Letter

**Pepperdine University**  
**24255 Pacific Coast Highway**  
**Malibu, CA 90263**  
**TEL: 310-506-4000**

#### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: February 25, 2022

Protocol Investigator Name: Linda Guzman

Protocol #: 21-10-1694

Project Title: Hispanic school leaders and their impact on education

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Linda Guzman:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

## APPENDIX C

## Recruitment Script

Dear [Name],

My name is Linda Guzmán, and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a qualitative research study examining the impact Hispanic school leaders have in schools that are primarily Hispanic. You are invited to participate in this study.

If you agree, you are invited to participate in a Zoom interview to discuss your leadership as a school principal. The interview is anticipated to take no more than an hour. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. Confidentiality will be maintained using a series of security measures, including password-protected email communication using university firewall protections, a password protected Zoom meeting, de-identification of data using pseudonyms as well as compartmentalization of the various data elements, keeping all information separate. If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me via email. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Linda Guzmán, Doctoral Candidate  
Pepperdine University | Graduate School of Education and Psychology

## APPENDIX D

## Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES  
BEHAVIORAL ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT**IRB #: 21-10-1694****Formal Study Title: Hispanic school leaders and their impact on education****Authorized Study Personnel: Dr. Gabriella Miramontes**

Principal Investigator: Student, Linda Guzmán

**Key Information:****If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:**

- ☒ (Males and Females) between the ages of (18-80)
- ☒ Procedures will include (Contacting participants using the recruitment script, informed consent, data collection via structured interview, transcription of data, analysis of data, documentation of findings)
- ☒ One virtual visit is required
- ☒ This visit will take 60 minutes total
- ☒ There is minimal risk associated with this study
- ☒ You will not be paid any amount of money for your participation
- ☒ You will be provided a copy of this consent form

**Invitation**

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Why are you being asked to be in this research study?**

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a leader in the education industry. You must be 30-65 years of age or older to participate.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?**

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact Hispanic school leaders have in primarily Hispanic schools. The study's objective is to identify strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools. Additionally, the goal is to identify the challenges Hispanics are faced with when implementing those strategies and what they did to overcome those challenges. Finally, it is crucial to identify how Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools once they have implemented their strategies—later empowering the school community by passing down their knowledge to their students to increase their school

success. Hispanic leaders are committed to educating their student population to provide them with the life skills they need to succeed. Therefore, a need exists to study Hispanic school leaders and their impact on schools that are primarily Hispanic.

**What will be done during this research study?**

You will be asked to complete a 60-minute semi structured virtual interview. The PI will ask you a series of questions aimed at figuring out what strategies are used by leaders in your field. While the research will take approximately 26 to 52 weeks, your interview will only take 60 minutes.

**How will my data be used?**

Your interview responses will be transcribed, analyzed, and aggregated in order to determine the findings to the established research questions.

**What are the possible risks of being in this research study?**

This research presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional and/or psychological distress because the interview involves questions about your leadership practices. You may also experience fatigue, boredom, or anxiety as a result.

**What are the possible benefits to you?**

You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this study.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

The benefits to society may include better understanding of leadership strategies used within your industry. Other emerging leaders might also benefit from any additional recommendations that are shared through this process.

**What are the alternatives to being in this research study?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. There are no alternatives to participating, other than deciding to not participate.

**What will participating in this research study cost you?**

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?**

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

**What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?**

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.



**How will information about you be protected?**

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be deidentified and stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and until the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

**What are your rights as a research subject?**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

*For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.*

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305

Email: [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu)

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

**Documentation of informed consent**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (a) you have read and understood this consent form, (b) you have had the consent form explained to you, (c) you have had your questions answered and (d) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Participant**

**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(First, Last: Please Print)

**Participant**

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX E

## Peer Reviewer Form

Dear Reviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The table below is designed to ensure that may research questions for the study are properly addressed with corresponding interview questions.

In the table below, please review each research question and the corresponding interview questions. For each interview question, consider how well the interview question addresses the research question. If the interview question is directly relevant to the research question, please mark “Keep as stated.” If the interview question is irrelevant to the research question, please mark “Delete it.” Finally, if the interview question can be modified to best fit with the research question, please suggest your modifications in the space provided. You may also recommend additional interview questions you deem necessary.

Once you have completed your analysis, please return the completed form to me via email. Thank you again for your participation.

**Table E1**

*Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions*

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ1: What are the best strategies and practices used by Hispanic leaders who create successful schools?	<p>IQ 1. <i>Tell me about your career and how you get got here?</i></p> <p>IQ 2. Can you think of a project you led and the results were exceptional? Can you tell me what factors/strategies made it successful?</p> <p>IQ 3. What leadership strategies do you use to recreate success like this?</p> <p>IQ 4. How do you get the community, parents, and teachers involved?</p> <p>IQ 5. To what extent do you think your heritage contributes to your success?</p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question -<b>Keep as stated</b></p> <p>b. The question is irrelevant to research question-</p>

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
	<p><b>Delete it</b>  c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested</b>:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ2: What are the challenges faced when Hispanic leaders implement those strategies?</p>	<p>IQ 6. What have been the biggest challenges as a school principal?  IQ 7. What challenges if any, does your heritage bring as a leader?</p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question <b>-Keep as stated</b>  b. The question is irrelevant to research question-  <b>Delete it</b>  c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested</b>:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ3: How do Hispanic leaders define, measure, and track success in their schools?</p>	<p>IQ 8. How would you define, measure, and track success as a Hispanic leader?</p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question <b>-Keep as stated</b>  b. The question is irrelevant to research question-  <b>Delete it</b>  c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested</b>:</p> <hr/> <hr/>

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
	<p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ4: P What recommendations do Hispanic leaders have for future Hispanic leaders?</p>	<p>IQ 9. Out of your leadership efforts, think of one you would want to do over again?</p> <p>IQ 10. If there is one piece of advice you would have for young Hispanic leaders in schools, what would it be?</p> <p><i>Is there anything else you would like to add?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question -<b>Keep as stated</b></li> <li>b. The question is irrelevant to research question-<b>Delete it</b></li> <li>c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested:</b></li> </ul> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>