SOCIAL JUSTICE EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS DISRUPTING
INEQUITABLE SYSTEMS FOR LATINX STUDENTS

A Dissertation

by

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MS, The University of Texas Pan American, 2002

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

Research on early college high schools exists, however a gap in literature reveals that "there is an absence of studies that specifically address the ways in which leaders enact justice" (Theoharis, 2007, pg. 222). Numerous stakeholder groups such as educational leaders, public servants, and researchers can benefit from the outcomes of social justice leadership and practices that impact marginalized student preparedness.

This qualitative case study explores the strategies implemented by four Texas early college social justice high school principals about their social justice initiatives and efforts to disrupt the inequities faced by underserved, underrepresented Latinx students. Emergent design flexibility was implemented in this naturalistic inquiry. After interviewing the four participants and coding their responses, a thick description of the participants' background and motivation depicted a shared identity to lead for social justice. Additionally, four major themes emerged: Leading for Social Justice, Addressing Inequities, Engaging Latinx Parents, and Preparing Principals for Leading Social Justice. The findings of this study are anticipated to contribute to the research literature in order to improve underrepresented, underserved students' postsecondary success as well as to inform principal preparation programs that prepare social justice leaders.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my two loving children Sydney and Trey, thank you for inspiring me every day. Sydney, you are so special, you have a humble and pure heart, and you can do anything, the world is yours to take. Trey, you changed my life and taught me how to love deeply and appreciate the little things that life has to offer. T3 keep chasing your dreams. Sydney and Trey, always remember that both of you are my greatest accomplishment. I love you both, forever.

Additionally, my dissertation is also dedicated to my mother, Maria Ofelia Leanos whose unconditional love and relentless support has motivated me to always believe in myself and follow my heart. As a single mother, raising my five sisters and brother, you removed all barriers from our lives by modeling exceptional work ethics, providing a humbling loving environment, championing us, and setting the expectations that each one of us would change our demographic trajectory by pursuing an education. Thank you for being such a loving mother, sacrificing yourself, and always being my biggest supporter. Mom, this is for you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I caution us all to consider that decades of good leadership have created and sanctioned unjust and inequitable schools. The kind of leadership that needs to be defined and discussed as good leadership is the leadership . . . centered on enacting social justice. Social justice is indeed what good leadership should be.

Theoharis, 2007

Educational systems in the United States are becoming increasingly diverse, requiring social justice principals that challenge inequities and embed equitably structured support systems that enhance the academic success and college preparedness for underserved, underrepresented students (Hammonds, 2016). Social justice issues have come to the forefront of realization exposing and intensifying the inequities faced by underserved, underrepresented, marginalized students in our nation's educational system (Simmons, 2020). Moreover, poor, underserved students continue to live with a history burdened by academic and post-secondary disparity, and school leaders continue to encounter challenges with inequitable student preparation. Educational systems that ostracize economically disadvantaged, underrepresented students of color have an obligation to accept responsibility and establish schools led by school principals that promote social justice environments for all students (Hammonds, 2016).

According to the data from the National Center for Educational Statistics, by the year 2023, minorities will make up nearly 58 % of the student population in K-12, while Whites make up 42 % (Hussar & Bailey, 2016). Moreover, Latinx's account for more than half of the total population growth, and there will be significant increases in the Latinx population which is anticipated to double from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million by 2060, resulting in one in

every three citizens being of Latinx descent (U.S. Census, 2012). As the Latinx population continues to expand, there is a growing concern that Latinxs continue to face educational challenges in America. As the fastest growing minority group, Latinx students, and the educational inequities they experience in the diversifying school system warrant exploration, as they endure the largest academic and college preparedness gap compared to other ethnicities (Ortiz et al., 2012). The literature indicates that as schools continue to culturally differentiate across the United States, they will require a social justice principal to lead them in meeting the escalating academic and post-secondary needs of underserved, marginalized students (Wang, 2016).

One promising solution to reduce the inequitable academic and postsecondary challenges faced by underserved and underrepresented students has been the early college high school (ECHS) initiative led by social justice principals who can and do work to disrupt marginalizing conditions and promote achievement for all students (Saenz & Combs, 2015; Theoharis, 2007). The early college model fosters opportunities for underrepresented students to obtain up to two years of free college credit while taking dual credit courses during high school. While early college high schools have been praised as a favorable design to facilitate college access and achievement for underrepresented and underserved students, not enough is known about the role of effective social justice principals who lead these campuses (Edmunds et al., 2017).

Personal Rationale

It feels like just yesterday, I was walking down a caliche street to catch the school bus in the mist of morning darkness. Cold, rain or shine I woke up every morning for sixteen years, following the same routine to get an education. Rain was never my friend, because the mud on my shoes was the mark of scarcity, death with eyes that looked down at me. The mud was a

symbol of poverty in the eyes of the privileged beholder at my school. They did not know my struggles, or my single parent mother who was working countless hours to make ends meet to provide us the basic needs, yet still, a life filled with happiness. I was a very reserved student who kept my inner struggles of poverty to myself because I knew my self-worth and refused to have anyone lower my standards based on my social economic status.

At that time, I was too young to know that the school system that my mother put her trust in, could hinder me from reaching my potential, if I allowed it to. I was a naive first-generation Latina who could have fallen victim to the dehumanization and oppression that many like me still combat today. The mere fact that I am sitting here today typing this paper for my doctoral dissertation is a testament of my family's determination to break free from the shackles that tied many of my generations down before me. Moreover, Freire (2000) has granted me an opportunity to reflect on my life and recognize that we must take a stance against oppression and awaken to critical consciousness by finding solutions that empower marginalized individuals to gain a voice and not fall victim to society.

As I ponder on my own schooling experience and the injustices that occurred to me and many other students through oppression, I find myself looking deeper at the inequalities and social justice issues that the educational system faces in our country. I think about the disparities that underserved and underrepresented students of color still face due to societal hierarchies that hinder them from reaching their educational potential by not preparing them for the rigors of post-secondary attainment. I am committed to challenge the status quo and champion social justice leaders. My experiences as an economically disadvantaged Latina student and former early college high school principal have set me on a path to seek solutions for social justice

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leadership and examine how social justice early college principals disrupt inequities for marginalized, underserved minority students and prepare them for postsecondary success.

Academic Rationale

Leadership Behind Early College High School Success

The literature indicates that early college principals are the school level leaders accountable for implementing early college objectives, and confirms that leadership influences student success (Good, 2008). Early college high schools are designed to ensure that every student reaches success (Saenz & Combs, 2015). However, success by design requires a principal who is committed to every student's academic and postsecondary victories; hence, Kaniuka & Vickers (2010) proffer that the success and progress of the early college high school's environment is directly credited to the leadership practices of the campus principal.

The Early College High School Initiative was initiated in 2002 by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as an innovative approach to close the achievement gap for underserved, underrepresented students. Early college high schools offer students who are conventionally underrepresented in postsecondary education the opportunity to complete their high school requirements as they simultaneously earn an associate degree or up to sixty college credit hours (Barnett et al., 2015). Research indicates that early college high schools have thrived in supplying increased participation in early access towards college coursework to underserved, underrepresented, and underprivileged students of color (Berger et al., 2010). Moreover, a study of 2,500 early college students, Berger et al. (2013) found that students attending an early college campus had a higher likelihood of concurrently earning a high school diploma and college degree upon high school graduation, and earned a significant amount of college hours, in

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addition to enrolling in college after high school graduation. Other experimental research interview and survey data results demonstrated that early college high school students:

- Obtain higher dual enrollment college course completions at 91% compared to 84% of traditional students,

- Have higher high school graduation rates at 86.2% versus 82.6% of traditional students,

- Are deemed to be comparably college ready, in parallel to traditional postsecondary students,

- Acquire readiness skills to succeed in college courses during high school and beyond. (Edmunds et al., 2017)

Additionally, in their national study Jobs for the Future (2016) approximately 100 early college high schools and the comprehensive data outcomes indicated evidence of success for underrepresented students in higher education in the following areas for early college students:

- 90% earn a high school diploma compared to 78% nationally,

- 30% obtain an associate degree or college certificate in comparison to a modest few nationally,

- 94% transferable college hours compared to 10% nationally,

- 86% persist to second year of college after high school graduation compared to 73% of students that attend college,

- 21% earn a college degree one year after high school compared to 1% of students,

- 25% earned a college degree two years after graduation compared to 5% of students.

The research on the accomplishments of the early college model has emphasized the need to investigate the areas of improvement for early college high schools (Duncheon, 2020).

The success of early college high schools and positive outcomes of traditionally underserved students warrants the examination of the methods utilized by ECHS principals (Hammonds, 2016). "In fighting against the social injustices, schools are not the only battlefield, but they are the frontline for the principal" (Wang, 2015, p. 674), thus, further research in this area is needed to learn about the factors that contribute to the success of underserved students.

The extant research acknowledges the success of early college high schools, but only a few studies have examined the principals' influences on college readiness, hence, a knowledge gap exists in that there is a need to examine college preparedness through a principal's lens, because the approach taken to close the college gap for underrepresented students has explicit repercussions for students' postsecondary opportunities (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018).

Leading for Social Justice to Address a Changing Demographic

The social justice leader is the shirt made with dyed thread, as the dyed thread is woven into a shirt, the social justice is woven so deeply into the leader that there is no separation. Social justice ingrained into the very being of the social justice leader means that each decision, every aspect of that principalship, and all details of the school are examined and seen from a social justice perspective.

Theoharis, 2008, p. 20

The vision of social justice accentuates the reality that an educational system should empower students with the necessary skills to bring forth change in social order that will result in righteous communities across the nation (Wang, 2015). Today, more than ever, social justice leadership is necessary to provide an equitable education to disadvantaged, underrepresented students.

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Case studies have found that social justice principals are committed and persistent leaders (Feng & Chen, 2018; Theoharis, 2008). Social justice principals hold a notable devotion to equity, and the schools they lead result in positive school environments for underserved and underrepresented students (Zembylas & Iasonos, 2016). According to Feng & Chen's research (2018) there is an increasing recognition amongst stakeholders that principals are critical to creating equitable socially just and equitable schools that support learning for all students, and explicitly for marginalized and economically disadvantaged pupils.

There are startling opportunities and outcomes in educational disparities that are prominent in diverse student groups according to race, social class, gender identity, and primary language that is "unjust and oppressive" (Furman, 2012). As a result, principals leading for social justice aim at providing underserved students access to academic and college success. Theoharis (2007) studies imply that principals enact in creating social justice for all their students in the following ways:

- Increasing student achievement,
- Enhancing school buildings,
- Focusing and improving staff capacity,
- Bosting school culture.

Wang (2015) implies that principals take part in a crucial role that encourages and provides social justice in their schools and therefore, "understanding of their beliefs, attitudes and perceptions towards social justice is essential to understanding their choices, decisions and practices in delivering social justice in their schools" (p. 670). Recognizing the social justice actions of principals can provide an insight on their role to serve all students. Moreover, Ryan (2010) discovered that research on student marginalization issues have only been addressed for a

relatively short period of time; thus, the existing literature is minimal regarding how social justice principals accomplish their goals. "Social justice in schools has not happened by chance and it takes more than what traditionally has been understood as good leadership to achieve greater equity and social justice leadership is indeed what good leadership should be" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 253).

Critical Gaps of Social Justice Principal Preparation Programs

The literature has demonstrated that there is a lack of models or real-life examples of principals performing social justice work in schools across the nation (Marshall & Ward, 2004). Principals that lead for social justice need progressive strategies that disrupt inequities to best meet the demands of all student's needs. Principals upholding marginalized students at the core of their practice requires inclusive social justice leadership that prepares them to be motivated, knowledgeable, and ready to achieve equitable outcomes for students in the educational system. (Furman, 2012). However, findings imply a necessity for coherent principal preparation programs with course offerings and internships that permeate equity, diversity and social justice that prepares administrators for a diversifying student population (Kose, 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008).

Research conducted by Miller and Martin (2014) signified the critical need for principals to be equipped to tackle diversity issues associated with equity, race, and social justice in schools to be able to address the academic disparities amongst underserved students. However, literature findings indicate that principal programs' primary focus is to prepare administrators to work in traditional school settings, and there is no regard to the increasingly changing demographics of communities across the nation, or new school styles such as early college high schools (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018). The literature attests to the lack of emphasis that principal

preparation programs offer to social justice to address student diversity issues and needs, and principals associated with the study believed that their preparation programs did not prepare them with the skills necessary to lead for social justice (Marshall & Ward, 2004).

The exploration of literature points out that social justice principals have additional obligations, and therefore need the tools to be able to serve as change agents for their diverse student populations. Social justice leadership strives to attain equity and distinction for diverse, underserved students (Feng & Chen, 2018). Hence, studies reveal that a high demand to meet the needs in the changing population has prompted a few researchers who have begun to recommend social justice theoretical frameworks to institutes of higher education for principal preparation programs, such as a social justice interwoven theoretical frameworks inclusive of adult education, transformative learning, and critical social theory, however there is a greater need of work in this area (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014). The critical gap of social justice principal preparation programs exists, as stated by Brown (2006)

Schools in a racially diverse society will require leaders and models of leadership that

will address the racial, cultural, and ethnic makeup of the school community . . .

eadership preparation programs must change in a way which provides increased knowledge to improve equity and equal opportunities for all racial and ethnic groups (p. 588).

Statement of the Problem

Demographics across the country are quickly shifting and diversifying to predominately economically disadvantaged minorities with Latinxs now the majority of student populations in schools throughout the country thus representing the major current and future workforce (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2019). Just 11.0 percent of Latinx adults have attained a bachelor's degree compared with 23.7 percent of White adults (Education Trust, 2014). Moreover, the scholarly

literature exposes the increasing afflictions of inequalities faced by underserved, under-represented, minority students in school systems across the United States (Jean-Marie, 2008). As a result, equity and social justice is a primary concern for educational practitioners that recognize the need for social justice principals who can lead schools which afford an equitable education that promotes academic and college preparedness for all students (Barnett et al., 2015; Miller & Martin, 2014). To build on the limited extant literature regarding how principals enact social justice, this study will investigate the strategies implemented by several early college principals in Texas that have successfully disrupted inequities for the fast-growing Latinx minority population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies implemented by early college principals and seek to understand the social justice leadership approaches that strive to close the academic and college preparedness gaps for underserved and underrepresented Latinx students. While some limited similar studies have been conducted, this study is unique in that the context of COVID-19 amplified challenges of leading on both metropolitan and rural campuses in South Texas close to the U.S./Mexico border. Research has consistently indicated that economically disadvantaged students in the U.S. are less likely to connect to college and complete a post-secondary degree compared to their more privileged peers (Hersh & Merrow, 2005; Madrid, 2011). Hence, this study is critical particularly as the population of this region ranks 149th in educational achievement among similar metropolitan areas (McCann, 2020). The challenges of educating students in deep South Texas requires principals that lead with social justice and equity mindsets.

Research Questions

The following overarching questions guide this qualitative case study:

1. What are the perceptions of early college high school principals regarding the strategies needed to implement support of Latinx students' postsecondary preparedness?

2. How do early college principals execute social justice?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study will offer valuable information on the daunting reality of social justice education inequities encountered by marginalized Latinx students that have not been examined through the lens of the principal. According to Duncheon & DeMatthews (2018) studies indicate that the early college high school model offers an approach to support college transition for underrepresented students, yet "little to no research has examined the role of the principal specifically in facilitating students' postsecondary preparation" and only a limited number of studies have examined the contributions a social justice principal makes to college preparedness, signifying a literature gap that warrants exploration (p. 269). Moreover, literature on early college high school programs exists, however, it generally focuses on student outcomes, rather than the leaders that facilitate student success (Berger et al., 2013; Duncheon & DeMatthews 2018; Furman, 2012; Hammonds, 2016). In addition, studies signify that principal preparation programs are failing to prepare social justice leaders that are ready to face the educational crisis of disparity (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014).

Several stakeholder groups such as school leaders, district leaders, public servants, and researchers can benefit from this study and discover in what ways effective social justice leader practices impact college preparedness and postsecondary transition success for minority students

who are rapidly becoming the majority workforce in the country. This new emerging research can also offer recommendations for structuring schools that are led by social justice principals that specifically support marginalized students in college success. Furthermore, as the concept of social justice leadership is still evolving, providing evidence of supported practices, these findings will add to the literature and inform institutes of higher education principal preparation programs in what ways to prepare principals for social justice. It is anticipated that this research will have a positive effect on convincing educational and political stakeholders on the need for social justice leaders who disrupt inequities and support the success of each child, all while enhancing the future trajectories of underrepresented and underserved students.

Limitations

Limitations of the research study are characterized as the issues that a researcher cannot control (Creswell, 2018). Even though there are limitations on all recommended research, there is no flawless design (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Every study will have implications that will place constraints on the design.

The researcher has a combination of fourteen years' experience in the capacity of serving as an early college high school leader or district central office senior leadership. Additionally, while the researcher's leadership experience in early college high schools may place limitations in terms of bias and subjectivity when serving in the role of the researcher, that bias will be mitigated by not the implementation of multiple strategies for trustworthiness and credibility, but also value is added with the researcher as insider (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007).

Delimitations

A delimitation is described as a constraint enacted by the researcher to the focus of a study (Creswell, 2007). To narrow the focus of the research, the researcher concentrated on four

Texas early college social justice high school principals regarding their social justice initiatives. Participant criteria included five criteria those being: 1) the principal must serve in an early college high school that carries a Title I designation; according to the Texas Education Agency, 2) the campus must serve a student population of 75% or more economically disadvantaged Latinx students; 3) the principal must have served at the early college high school for at least two years and have one graduating class; 4) the principal's background had to include professional development and knowledge in the realm of social justice; and, 5) the principal holds a doctoral degree and leads an early college high school.

Assumptions

Creswell (2007) defined assumption as a set of rational beliefs that are not supported by evidence and utilized to offer a foundation to both qualitative and quantitative research. This study involved some underlying assumptions, including that early college high schools were led by principals that reduced barriers to college access for underserved and underrepresented students who might not otherwise go to college. A second assumption was that it was assumed that the early college high schools were led by social justice principals who had well established programs that provide high-level college preparedness success for economically disadvantaged Latinx students. Finally, the researcher assumed that the early college principals answered the questions in an honest and candid manner.

Definition of Terms

Early college high school: Early college high schools permit underrepresented students to receive college credit towards an associate degree, or up to 60 college hours at no cost, all through community college partnerships (Duncheon, 2020).

Educational equity: An indicator of achievement, justice, and opportunity that provides

students the means they need for academic and college preparedness upon completing high

school (Theoharis, 2010).

        Latinx: Signifies a person with Spanish heritage and depicts an individual of Mexican

American, Cuban, Puerto Rican, South or Central American Spanish origin (U.S. Census, 2012).

        Marginalized students: Students who are underserved, disregarded, or ostracized because

of their race, class, or economic status (Theoharis, 2009).

        Social justice leadership: School leaders who advocate and centralize their practice in

offering an equitable and quality education for all students of diverse racial, ethnic, and

linguistics backgrounds (Feng & Chen, 2018).

Chapter Summary

This qualitative case study sought to understand how social justice early college

principals disrupt inequities and promote college preparedness success for underserved,

underrepresented Latinx students. The success of the early college high school program has been

documented, but little is known of the principals whose social justice leadership drives the

students to postsecondary achievement, thus breaking the barriers of marginalization that they

have encountered for years. The outcome of this research has the capability to influence change

in leading schools for social justice and meet the differentiating needs of diverse student

populations in the United States.

Chapter I provides an introduction and includes the background of the study, personal

rationale, brief overview of the literature, statement of the problem, purpose of the study,

research questions, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and

definition of terms utilized in the research. Chapter II presents a review of the literature to better

understand how the leadership practices and actions of socially just early college high school

principals support the success of underrepresented student's college preparedness and examines

the following areas that reveal a gap in the literature including: Latinx Educational Challenges, Early College High School Model, and Social Justice Early College Principal Leadership. Chapter III is a comprehensive description of the research design, research methodology, trustworthiness, and credibility of the study. The remaining chapters will concentrate on the research conducted in this study. Chapter IV will include the research results and Chapter V will provide the interpretation of the research findings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The growing literature on early college high schools has concentrated primarily on measurable student outcomes, program implementation, and the perceptions of students and teachers (Berger et al., 2010). Additionally, the existing literature has focused on the early college high school designs and achievements of supporting underrepresented, marginalized students earning a two-year college degree and high school diploma; however, the literature indicates the need to examine the role of the principal and their contributions to the school's accomplishments, because to date "little to no research has examined the role of the principal specifically in facilitating students' postsecondary preparation" (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018, p.272). The literature points to a substantial literature gap that recognizes the impact that principal leadership contributes to school success (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018). Moreover, the unsettling disparities in the nation's educational system calls for social justice leaders who recognize the essential role that they play in creating a socially just culture for underserved and underrepresented students (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014). The focus of this study was to explore how social justice early college high school principals implement college preparedness strategies to disrupt inequities for marginalized Latinx students.

A comprehensive literature review provides the foundation for answering the two research questions. Moreover, to better understand how the leadership practices and actions of socially just early college high school principals support the success of underrepresented student's college preparedness, this literature review examines the following areas of study:

Latinx Educational Challenges, Early College High School Model, and Social Justice Early College Principal Leadership.

Chapter II begins with a brief overview of the research literature focused on the challenges that Latinx students face in the educational system. Next, an overview of the Early College High School Model that concentrates on college preparedness and success for underrepresented students is provided. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on social justice early college principal leadership and the exploration of social justice leadership preparation programs.

Shifting Demographic Trends

The Latinx population continues to be the prominent rising race in the United States and leading minority group in the country (Hope, 2015). Hence, between 2000 and 2010, Latinxs contributed to more than half of the growth in the United States (Bauman, 2017). There are no signs of slowing down for the Latinx population, as it continues to rapidly increase. As a result, Latinxs are expected to be the future United States population majority.

As the overall population of America becomes further diverse, so will the public educational school system. Over the past 30 years, there has been a significant increase in Latinx student enrollment in the K-12 educational system (Gandara, 2009). In 2016, Latinxs became the largest ethnic or racial minority in the United States and totaled 57.5 million, representing 17.9% of the nation (Bauman, 2017). Subsequently, Latinx students are the only group that are increasing, and currently account for 25 percent of the K-12 population in our nation (Hope, 2015). The U.S. Census Bureau forecasts that by the year of 2060, one in every three school-age citizens in the nation will be of Latinx descent (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

Latinx Students in Texas. Economically disadvantaged status significantly influences the lack of achievement of Latinx students attending schools (Williams et al., 2010). In the state of Texas, economically disadvantaged Latinx students are not completing high school preparation and are lacking the necessary college readiness skills to transition to postsecondary (Educate Texas Communities Foundation of Texas, 2018; Texas Education Agency, 2020a). The United States Census Bureau identifies 40% of the 2019 Texas population as Latinx origin. In addition, in both 2016-17 and 2017-18 approximately six of each ten pupils were classified as economically disadvantaged, representing nearly 3.2 million of Texas's 5.4 million student population (Texas Education Agency, 2018).

Educational Challenges Faced by Latinx Students

Latinxs have the lowest educational level in the nation. Nonetheless, the growing Latinx community has become the cornerstone of the future workforce in the United States of America. Subsequently, economically disadvantaged Latinx students face additional barriers that can hinder their educational goals. A contributing component to the achievement gap is the lack of sufficient resources needed to educate Latinx students (Madrid, 2011). As the Latinx community becomes more prevalent, the achievement gap continues to increase for this majority minority population due to high dropout rates, high school graduation rates, college access, and completion rates.

A Silent Epidemic. Latinx students are the least educated people in the United States and enter school with a gap that only widens as they matriculate through the educational system. In 2000, the Latinx dropout rate was 100% more than the African American dropout rate and 200% larger than white students (U.S. Census, 2012). The alarming dropout rate is an indication of school inequity and failure to Latinx students across the country. Moreover, the dropout rate is

a widespread ailment that contributes to low Latinx student achievement (Henry et al., 2011). Additionally, the underperformance of Latinx students in the United States is a problem that is being faced by educators in the school systems (Madrid, 2011). Latinxs are in desperate need of an equitable education, so they can break the plague of poverty and reach their goals and dreams.

    Barriers to College Success. Regardless of college aspirations, completion gaps continue to be an obstacle by ethnicity, household income, and the level of student's parental education (Kena et al., 2015). College access and completion rates are disproportionately lower for underrepresented minority and economically disadvantaged students compared to other groups (Otero et al., 2007). Likewise, minorities' first year college persistence rates were at lower levels compared to their white counterparts (Feldman & Zimbler, 2011). Saenz & Combs (2015) identified that achievement gap challenges persist posing barriers to higher education for economically disadvantaged Latinx students accordingly

- Students finishing a college degree has declined,
- Concerns related to student achievement equity and access,
- Lack of post-secondary preparation amongst high school graduates,
- First generation and students of color endure a surging school dropout rate that diminishes their probability of scholastic success.

In pursuit of their dreams, Latinx students continue to face barriers to college attainment. Unless the school system changes and becomes equitable, the future is worrisome for Latinx students across the nation.

    The Texas Gaps to Success. The literature recognizes that poverty driven factors contribute to the marginalization and achievement gap of economically disadvantaged Latinx students, as a result, they are graduating at lower rates than their counterparts. For instance, the

four-year graduation rate of Texas students classified as economically disadvantaged was lower at 86.9 percent, than those of students identified as non-economically disadvantaged which was 92.6 percent (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Moreover, economically disadvantaged students have a greater dropout rate at 1.85 times higher than their peers (Texas Education Agency, 2018). The Texas Education Agency reported in 2016-17 those 30,296 students in grades 9-12 dropped out of high school, 68.7 percent were classified as economically disadvantaged in comparison to 31.3 percent that were not (Texas Education Agency, 2018). The socio-economic status of a student continues to be a predictor of their high school completion. Thus, the educational system is failing Latinx students, and they are underprepared to lead and compete in our nation.

Removing Barriers to Achievement

Over six million Latinx children live in poverty compared to 4.4 million White children, and five million Black children (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). Moreover, Lopez & Velasco (2011) revealed in their study that Latinxs accounted for more than six million impoverished children in comparison to 4.4 million White children and represent 3 in 10 of the country's poverty-stricken residents. In addition, a Latinx family is four times more prone to be deprived in comparison to a White household (Kim & García, 2014). The odds are against these families from the start, for the literature reveals that they are more likely to live in poverty in comparison to other ethnicities or racial groups (Kim & García, 2014). In 2010, the poverty level in Latinx families soared due to high childbirth rates of these immigrants in the United States (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). Subsequently, Latinx children's households are typically guided by parents with limited English language and a minimal education compared to other ethnic groups (Gandara, 2009). As the

demographics shift in the nation, access to an equal education remains a disparity for marginalized minority students.

Educational resource inequities for Latinx students create challenges for an equitable education that can heighten their academic achievement. Thus, the research indicates that segregated economically disadvantaged students experience elevated truancy levels, unwarranted expulsions, and high dropout rates (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). The significant Latinx growth has not corresponded with an increase in academic attainment. Underprivileged Latinx students endure constant marginalization that deprives them from experiencing success in their educational studies. Moreover, Kim & Garcia (2014) recognized a study that identified that high school completion was an obstacle experienced by Latinx students due to their economically disadvantaged status. In addition, disproportionality in receiving a post-secondary education while Latinx students are enrolled in high school is evident and proliferated by inequitable resources, inexperienced teachers, limiting of access to dual enrollment, advanced placement courses, and college knowledge (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010). Additionally, Zoghi & Malmeer (2013) detailed components that add to the expanding college enrollment gap for Latinx students and other minorities:

- rising dropout rates,
- equitable access to a college preparatory curriculum,
- underrepresentation in postsecondary institutions,
- underprepared with college readiness skills,
- remedial course enrollment.

The lack of opportunity for Latinx students to graduate high school, be college ready, and get college connected hinders their hopes of college completion. Also, Bradley and Renzulli (2011)

discovered that economically disadvantaged students experience a range of challenges such as low-grade point averages, disengagement in extracurricular school activities, and inability to form a strong social network with peers and school personnel (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011). As a result, Latinx students' struggles with high school and college completion persists, because they do not feel connected to the school. Furthermore, Rodriguez et al. (2014) conducted a study that identified considerations that cause a decline in college enrollment as follows:

- Latinx join the workforce to offer financial support to the family,

- lack of college knowledge,

- failure to recognize the advantages of obtaining a college degree,

- low expectations for Latinx students set by educators,

- inadequate financial literacy,

- deficit student support services,

- college advising support, and,

- policies that encourage job placement versus long term careers (p. 209).

The cultural Latinx pressures to join the workforce to provide for the family, lack of self-confidence, perceptions, and scarcity of support services to help gain college access contributes to the ongoing Latinx achievement gap. "Although students of color are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings" (Bernal, 2002, p. 105). The educational journey of a Latinx student can entrench negative beliefs that prevent them from trusting that they can attain a college degree. The belief ideology of several educators and policymakers is to blame economically disadvantaged families for their child's learning and developmental challenges (DeMatthews, 2015). Vela-Gude et al. (2009) described that Latinx

student's choice to not pursue enrolling in an institution of higher education was due to the low expectations of success projected by their school administration, teachers, and staff. A research study indicates that student's school social interactions have a powerful effect on their academic success (Woolley et al., 2008). These relational perceptions can deter a student's path as they stop believing in themselves and their potential. The lack of confidence by stakeholders in Latinx students must be addressed because it has a direct impact on social, emotional and student academic achievement (Woolley et al., 2008). These issues can impact a student's decision to graduate from high school and enroll in college.

Indicators of Success in Latinx Students

Studies indicate that the Latinx population continues to show rapid growth across the United States (Colby & Ortman, 2015). A researched solution for unrelenting inequalities is graduating from college (Lin, 2001). Institutions of higher education must strategize for forthcoming college access of underrepresented minority Latinx students and take into consideration how they will address the changing demographics in the nation. Studies have demonstrated that college completion can change the trajectory of the economic and social differences that will create opportunities for marginalized groups at a comparable level, similarly to more affluent individuals (Williams et al., 2010). A postsecondary education can positively impact the life course of Latinxs and future generations.

As schools begin to be more culturally diverse, the mindset of demanding that the families and students adjust to the educational system has shifted to one that creates a learning environment that meets the student's needs (Moreno & Gaytán, 2013). Chan et al. (2014) emphasized that school accountability has raised the expectation of student achievement for students and teachers. Hence, Latinx students require a campus composition that can impact the

opportunities for student success. Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011) suggested that Latinxs who are in a student center environment surrounded by regular staff interactions are more prone to persist in higher education. In a study, Otero et al. (2007) revealed that optimistic teacher and student relationships can be valuable in the educational endeavors of Latinx students. Strong teacher relationships lead to increased student engagement and a good quality school environment.

Exploring programs that will provide equitable systems to improve high school and college completion can be beneficial to marginalized, poor minority students. Duncheon & DeMatthews (2018) pinpoint that scholars encourage schools to establish a college going environment that supports all students in achieving a higher education. Researchers have found that the early college high school initiative is a probable solution to reduce the postsecondary challenges faced by minority students (Saenz & Combs, 2015). The early college models take a collective approach to bridge high school and postsecondary environments together that afford students early access to college coursework (Muñoz et al., 2014).   Early college high schools establish partnerships with institutes of higher education to develop a comprehensive dual enrollment plan that can provide early college access to underrepresented minority students of color, such as the Latinx population. The persistent actions by school systems are essential to cultivate a consciousness of both equity and social justice that will safeguard the hope that marginalized students will receive the education they deserve (Theoharis, 2007). As a result, students will trust that they are holders of knowledge who can transform the planet into a just environment for everyone (Bernal, 2002).

Early College High School

The development of the Early College High School Initiative by Bill and Melinda Gates started in 2002 with the two aspirations of enhancing students' high school and postsecondary

experiences (Berger et al., 2010), as well as, with the focus of increasing postsecondary rates through simultaneously blending high school and college (Barnett et al., 2015; Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018). The first early college high schools emerged in 2002 across the United States as a solution to increase the odds of underrepresented students to obtain a postsecondary education (Hoffman et al., 2009; Kaniuka & Vickers, 2010). By fall 2009, over 200 early college high schools launched their doors wide open and targeted underrepresented, first generation, minority, economically disadvantaged and English language learner students (Berger et al., 2010). Hammonds (2016) examined how in 2002 the early college initiative impacted high schools across the nation that sought to increase their graduation percentages, student achievements, college bearing, and postsecondary success for underrepresented students. Therefore, early college high schools built a college readiness culture that would offer underrepresented targeted populations head starts to college. The ECHS initiative was devised to furnish habitually underrepresented students in post-secondary institutions with the likelihood to earn an associate degree before graduating from high school (Hoffman et al., 2009; Saenz & Combs, 2015). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's strategy aimed at improving the ailment of secondary education to concentrate efforts on increasing the probability for underserved students to achieve a college education (Berger et al., 2010). Studies have indicated that early college high schools in the United States improve access and equity for first generation, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, and minority students of color (Saenz & Combs, 2015). Therefore, success by design was the only approach to prepare underrepresented students strategically better for postsecondary success. The literature indicates that various policy and practice adjustments have occurred to make certain that more students are college ready (Edmunds et al., 2017). Early college high schools have been recognized as one of

the most innovative methods that provides early college access and preparation to all students (Edmunds et al., 2017). The early college high school mission was clearly focused on creating a reality of college success for underrepresented students that were less likely to attend a post-secondary institution (Kaniuka & Vickers, 2010).

Early College High School Design

Early college high schools have been applauded for their ability to boost college entry admission for underrepresented students in grades 9 through 12 and provide them with the opportunity to receive up to an associate degree, before graduating from high school (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018). Early college high schools target underrepresented students in higher education (Saenz & Combs, 2015). The underrepresented students are generally identified as first-generation college goers, minority students, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged (Nodine, 2009). Moreover, partnerships between districts and institutions of higher education allow early college students to start their college coursework as early as their freshmen year through dual enrollment programs (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018; Muñoz et al., 2014). The ECHS initiative affords the opportunity to get students engaged in college as early as ninth grade and gives them the access to go further at an earlier age.

Many school systems depend on dual credit college bearing programs that have been commonly available to high school students, however studies indicate that dual enrollment curricula in isolation does not increase student success (Berger et al., 2010). Underserved students are at an academic disadvantage if they are enrolled in isolated college courses that do not provide strong student support systems. A solution, early college high school programs which offer students the opportunity to earn college credit as part of a long-standing dual credit program that includes support systems. In collaboration, schools and institutes of higher

education can create two-year degree plan pathways that allow students to complete college before graduating from high school (Duncheon, 2020). A study provided positive indications that demonstrated that students that participated in college classes during high school had a better perspective of completing high school, registering for college, enrolling full time in a university, and persevere, in comparison to students that did not participate in dual enrollment (Berger et al., 2010). Moreover, economically disadvantaged and minority high school students have increased educational outcomes if they enroll in college courses (Barnett et al., 2015).

Early college high schools implement core principles that distinguish them from traditional high schools. The core principles emphasize scaling approaches that provide historically underrepresented students the opportunity to succeed in college. Jobs for the Future (2015) identified the Early College Core Principles as follows:

- committed to serving underrepresented students in institutes of higher education.
- cultivate a collaborative robust and viable partnership with an institution of higher education.
- develop a two-year aligned coherent program of study towards a college degree.
- college courses offered by early colleges uphold rigorous high standards of quality.
- engage students in a social, emotional, and academic support system (p. 4).

Success by design increases college completion rates for all underrepresented students that attend an early college high school.

The Texas Experience

In Texas, the United States Census Bureau identified 40% of the 2019 population as Latinx ethnicity. In both 2016-17 and 2017-18 the Texas Education Agency (2018) recognized 3.2 million of the 5.4 million students classified as economically disadvantaged, resulting in

nearly six out of every ten pupils. Underserved economically disadvantaged students face

obstacles in the Texas educational system. Economically disadvantaged student data findings in

Texas indicate the following (Texas Education Agency, 2018):

- Four-year graduation rate of Texas students who were not economically disadvantaged

  was higher at 92.6%, than those of students identified as economically disadvantaged at

  86.9%.

- Economically disadvantaged students' dropout of high school at a higher 1.85 rate.

- In 2016-17, 68.7% of the reported 30, 296 students in grade 9-12 were economically

  disadvantaged compared to 31.3%.

Texas is compromised by a vast underserved student population (Educate Texas Communities

Foundation of Texas, 2018). Edmunds et al. (2017) indicated that a dual enrollment study in

Texas composed of economically disadvantaged and minority students revealed that they

experienced slight positive effects and a few negative effects in correlation to dual credit and

college outcomes. The data findings suggest that underserved students in Texas are faced with

alarming educational obstacles.

To make an impact in the lives of underserved and underrepresented students, the Texas

Education Agency obliges all early colleges to be governed by the Early College Blueprint that

provides the foundational principles and guidelines for partnerships with institutions of higher

education. Early college high schools in Texas are held responsible for applying fidelity to the

model by meeting the required outcomes-based measures on access, attainment, and achievement

data indicators (Texas Education Agency, 2020b). The Texas ECHS Blueprint benchmarks are

measured annually on the targeted student population, institute of higher education partnership

agreement, leadership initiatives in P-16, set of courses and student support systems, and academic rigor concentrated on college readiness attainment.

Preparing Students for College

Early College High Schools were established to increase the likelihood of underserved students' getting a college degree by providing them targeted support systems of success as they begin college while they are still in high school (Barnett et al., 2015). Ongaga (2010) noted that early college high schools commit to an undeniable promise to raise the expectations for all underserved minority students. The underlying success of the early college high schools design that prepares students for college provides a probable solution for the challenges faced by underserved students.

Saenz & Combs (2015) describes that the accomplishment of the early college initiative concentrates on four facets of challenges faced by underrepresented students, thus in succession also exemplify the ECHS's benefits as access and equity concerns, dropout problems in secondary schools, lack of college and career ready preparation, and postsecondary completion. Research indicates that the benefits of attending an early college high school includes reduced dropout rates, increased attendance, improved end of course results, and dual credit college course attainment (Vargas & Quiara, 2010). Additionally, Saenz and Combs (2015) stated that students that are enrolled in an early college high school graduate at higher rates than students attending a traditional high school. Thus, a study revealed ECHS students surpassed the national average graduation rate by 92% in comparison to 69% (Steinberg & Allen, 2011). Moreover, Nodine (2009) reported that students that attend an early college high school experience higher graduation rates, enhanced college readiness skills, increased college connection and completion rates. Other studies demonstrate that students enrolled in college courses during high school

earned more college hours and higher grades compared to those students that did not engage in dual credit (Duncheon, 2020). Grubb et al. (2016) added that students that participate in college courses are less prone to remedial coursework and more prone to earn an associate degree before high school graduation.

Every early college high school across the nation intends to provide underserved students a successful bridge to college completion (Berger et al., 2010). As acknowledged by Edmunds et al. (2017), early college high schools are settings that are constructed to safeguard and prepare all students to be successful in an institute of higher education. Existing studies indicate that students that attend an early college high school experience positive outcome (Jobs for the Future, 2016):

- The national graduation rate for early college students is at 90% in comparison to 78% of students in traditional high schools.

- 94% of early college high school students earn college credit free of tuition.

- 30% of early college students concurrently graduate with an associate degree or college certificate and a high school diploma.

- The national college enrollment after high school graduation is higher for early college high school students at 71% compared to 68%, additionally 54% of economically disadvantaged students enroll in college upon graduation (p. 3).

Role of the Early College High School Principal

Early College High Schools were designed to meet the needs of underrepresented students and close the college access gap (Hoffman et al., 2009). Various studies on the early college initiative have exceedingly captivated their scholarships on the early college model, program implementation, student outcomes and student and teacher perspectives (Berger et al.,

2010). Yet, early college principals are held accountable to effectively uphold the school's operations, implementation, and supervision of the model's goals and objectives (Good, 2008). According to Duncheon & DeMatthews (2018) a substantial component of the choices and actions taken by the principal determines the success of college transition for underserved students through dual enrollment in an early college high school. Studies have found that principals that serve underrepresented minority students must sustain high academic and college expectations for every student by establishing a culture of trust between students and staff (Edmunds et al., 2017). The literature discloses that the development of the early college environment is directly attached to the leadership practiced by the school principal (Hammonds, 2016).

Findings revealed that principals advocate for college and career readiness by building capacity amongst the staff and establishing a shared vision that fosters trust, as well as forming strong partnerships with all stakeholders (Malin & Hackmann, 2017). Duncheon & DeMatthews (2018) indicated that to advance a school's college and career readiness itinerary, an early college high school principal engages in an assortment of instructional leadership practices. Moreover, several researchers have argued that school principals play an essential part in cultivating a professional learning community in their campus (Kose, 2009). As a result of a professional learning community, teachers build a shared culture of learning that improves their pedagogy and translates to student success. Additionally, an increasing body of literature implies that the school's college culture is highly influenced by the principals' teacher development (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004). Early college high school principals are dedicated to addressing and closing the achievement and college gap for underserved students by preparing all stakeholders. Numerous studies of work have proven the impact that early academic and college acceleration

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make to prepare students for college success and the principals focus to build a college going culture (Conley, 2014).

Rigorous instruction, focused interventions, in class support systems, and student enrichment opportunities are four themes that were indicated to depict how early college principals champion students' college preparedness and transition to postsecondary institutions (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018). Early college high school principals make college and career preparation a priority in their campus and embed a variety of support systems to prepare all students for a positive postsecondary education. Additionally, as socially just leaders, early college principals advocate, and are dedicated to battling inequities for underserved, as well as underrepresented students (Zembylas & Iasonos, 2016). Theoharis (2007) describes social justice principals as raising the bar, because they are inspired, driven, and steadfast to the equity of the marginalized students that attend their schools. The literature indicates that early college principals' commitment to social justice leadership is required to disrupt the inequities of attaining a post-secondary education for marginalized students.

Leadership for Social Justice

"Educators have good reason to be concerned with social justice in today's schools" (Ryan, 2006, p.4). As the pandemic forced school systems to shut down, COVID 19 has become an equity check in our educational system that is bringing luminosity to the inequities that are still being faced by marginalized students today (Simmons, 2020). As schools across the nation become more troubled by social and inequality concerns, principals are anticipated to take on the role of promoting and guaranteeing equitably just campuses for the growing diverse populations (Furman, 2012).

The origins of social justice leadership originate from Freire (1970) whose philosophy indicates that an educational system should liberate, likewise, individuals employed in making the planet a more equitable environment for everyone ought to engage in continuous reflection from the start. Other studies indicate that leaders should be change agents that challenge the economically disadvantaged and minority student's academic and degree attainment educational system's status quo (Foster, 2004). Hence, schools in the nation are rapidly diversifying and will necessitate principals that can lead with social justice. Principals play a crucial role in establishing social justice schools. Therefore, social justice principals are essential to create equitable schools that afford opportunities for underserved, marginalized, minority students that have faced a negative history in our nation's educational system (Hammonds, 2016).

Defining Social Justice

Several scholars agree that defining social justice is not simple, due to its various meanings (Furman, 2012; Marshall & Ward, 2004). Furman (2012) states that social justice "encompasses a range of terms—some more powerful than others—such as equity, equality, inequality, equal opportunity, affirmative action, and most recently diversity" additionally, that each term "takes on different meanings in different national contexts (pg. 193). Regardless of these uncertainties and critiques, a mutual belief among various leadership scholars is that social justice focuses on the inequities and educational prospects of marginalized students (Albritton et al., 2017; Brown, 2006; Jean-Marie, 2008).

Marginalization. The literature implies that the focal point of social justice is to address and abolish marginalization in schools (Albritton et al., 2017; Freire, 1970; Ryan, 2010; Theoharis, 2010). Moreover, critical consciousness and oppression in the educational system should remain at the forefront (Freire, 1970). The essential tenets that social justice necessitates

within an education paradigm is to see students for who they truly are and where they come from. Likewise, the beliefs and morals of leaders are of extreme importance because they influence social justice in schools (Albritton et al., 2017).

Underserved and Underrepresented. Theoharis (2008) defines social justice leadership to mean that principals "advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States" removing and tackling marginalization in school settings are key factors of this definition (p. 5). Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) describe social justice "as the exercise of altering these institutional and organizational arrangements by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining, and advancing inherent human rights of equity, equality, and fairness in social, economic, educational, and personal dimensions" the social justice concerns focus on marginalization of minorities (p. 162). Other studies indicate that the theory and definitions of social justice leadership accentuate ethics, justice, equity, attention, and esteem that concentrate on marginalized groups (Feng & Chen, 2018). Dantley and Tillman (2010) state "the concept of social justice focuses on . . . those groups that are most often underserved, underrepresented, and undereducated and that face various forms of oppression in schools" (p. 23).

Critical Reflection. The literature reveals that critical reflection is the foundation of social justice leadership because principals can engage in self-reflection targeted at personal awareness and development. Brown (2004) asserts that critical reflection includes the profound analysis of personal beliefs, assumptions, and values that will assist a leader come into grasp with their biases and assumptions of diverse cultures. Dantley (2008) states that critical reflection is required so an educational leader can come to grasps with their personal individuality and

encourages educational leaders to "come clean with their own prejudices and their own issues that in many ways serve as the very foundation for their professional practices" (p. 455).

Social Justice Leadership Attributes

Social justice principals are committed to the equity and justice of all students regardless of their backgrounds, as they build positive educational environments. The disparity in literature demonstrates that investigations into social justice leaders' commitment are necessary, so there is a better understanding of who they are. Furman (2012) concluded from a literature review that distinct social justice leadership is notably essential in schools serving diverse students.

Theoharis (2007) identified that social justice leaders ratified their individual opposition by increasing student success, enhancing schools, boosting staff capability, and improving the campus and community culture. Additionally, Theoharis (2007) identifies approaches taken by social justice principals to create an equitable environment for students and staff as the following:

- Purposeful and authentic communication,

- cultivating an organizational network,

- change agents,

- continuous professional development that fosters learning,

- building and nurturing relationships with all stakeholders (p.244).

To acquire social justice in schools across the nation, principals will have to do more than what they are customarily accustomed to and lead with equity for all students. Research conducted by Theoharis (2008) investigated the motivations and leadership traits of seven school principals who self-identified as social justice advocates in Midwestern urban schools and found that the three leadership traits that the social justice principals had in common as they led schools

were humility, enthusiasm, as well as persistent devotion to social justice. Also noted in the literature is that commitment, persistence, developing caring relationships, and generating wide ranging practices for social justice is vital to support diverse student populations (Furman, 2012: Ryan, 2006). Moreover, McKenzie et al. (2008) argued in their studies that educational achievement, critical consciousness, and school wide practices must be connected to social justice. Likewise, current case studies confirm that social justice leaders are advocates, persistently at working for significant change in their schools (Furman, 2008; Jean-Marie, 2008; Theoharis, 2007).

Supporting Social Justice Leadership by Developing Critical Consciousness

Paulo Freire (2000) outlines a pedagogical approach that delineates his theories of education that will generate a critical consciousness that achieves knowledge, awareness, and realization that division occurs amongst self and others. Moreover, Freirean leadership pedagogy exists because it acknowledges that leadership models are a way of oppressing leaders, and the cause for the enduring oppression of others (Kaak, 2011). In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, five concepts are identified that support social justice educational leadership dialogue that redistributes power equally and creates trusting opportunities for everyone for a shared common vision and purpose

- a combination of reflection and action known as praxis,
- naming process which undergirds educational leadership and allows leaders to engage members in an open discussion that provides each participant a voice,
- fostering trust by creating a safe, nurturing environment that encourages collaboration so individuals can reach their goals,

- liberation that stimulates people's awareness, thinking process and provides freedom of mind to the oppressed (Freire, 2000).

The role of politicians and their educational ideologies continue to influence the educational platform across the nation (Spring, 2011). Freire (2000) indicated that school reform dehumanized educators to the lowest humane stages that an individual can belong to, because it robs their humanity and brands them as objects, rather than a human being. Likewise, there are indications that politicians are turning to wealthy foundations that are dehumanizing educators across the nation by robbing their humanity and creating a landscape dominated by wealthy foundations that have become the drivers of school reform and policies. As Spring (2011) points out, there are politicians who are deciding what is being taught in our schools and it is not always in the best interest of those it impacts the most. Social justice leadership suggests that educational experts should have the autonomy to strategically service their student needs to close the academic and college gap that exists. Thus, Hersh & Merrow (2005) emphasized that a college degree has replaced the high school diploma, and political decisions impacting in education must consider the attainment gaps that continue to leave numerous unprivileged and underserved students behind.

Social Justice Principal Preparedness

The literature uncovers that there is a need for social justice leadership for school leaders. Researchers are exploring the type of leadership that is required for social justice, connotations of social justice, and suggestions for social justice leadership programs (Furman, 2012). Social justice leadership empowers principals to play a part in the modernization and reorganization of school leader programs (Zembylas & Iasonos, 2016). A coherent social justice preparation program for educational leaders is important, so leaders have the skills to support our growing diverse student population.

Marshall & Ward (2004) emphasized that social justice leadership models are vital and an essential component for present and future leaders to create a purpose of social justice in schools that promotes equity and justice for all students. Kose (2009) emphasized that principal's professional development frameworks fail to analyze or formulate teaching and learning for social justice. Additionally, research findings summoned leaders to operate as change agents that challenged systemic functional beliefs in the educational systems in relation to economically disadvantaged students of color and their barriers to academic achievement and degree attainment (Hammonds, 2016). Research indicates that principal preparation programs "should promote opportunities for critical reflection, leadership, praxis, critical discourse, and develop critical pedagogy related to issues of ethics, inclusion, democratic schooling, and social justice" (Furman, 2012, p.199). Moreover, a social justice leadership study conducted by Theoharis (2007) focused on endorsing social justice in schools and the findings revealed the following three shared leadership traits that can be beneficial in preparatory courses: humility, passionate leadership, and persistent commitment to social justice. Additionally, equity is a theme in social justice amongst principals, and recognizing their beliefs, mindsets and views towards social justice is vital to recognizing their inclinations, outcomes, and practices in providing social justice in their campuses, in addition, studies suggest that beliefs and perceptions facilitate actions and practices (Wang, 2015). A study by Zembylas and Iasonos (2016) indicates that the social justice leader confronts inequalities in numerous approaches that include forming an environment of belonging, increasing student achievement, enhancing the essence of teaching, and by advocating inclusion, access, and opportunity.

The literature reveals that there are limited details around what a social justice preparatory leadership program looks like for practicing or future educational leaders that need

to instill social justice practices in their schools. Moreover, only a few researchers have initiated social justice leadership theoretical frameworks for education preparatory programs for institutions of higher education (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014; Furman, 2012). Most school preparation programs concentrate on preparing school administrators to work in traditional school settings, but districts across the nation progressively have new school types, such as early college high schools that prioritize underserved and underrepresented students that call for a social justice leader (Duncheon, 2020). As discussed in the literature, to develop as culturally capable school leaders, principals must have chances to develop a critical consciousness, and as stated, have "time to reflect on in what way their attitudes, values and past experiences affect their leadership" (Miller & Martin, 2014, pg. 138). Finally, as others have suggested, a coherent principal preparation program that permeates "equity, diversity, and social justice within all (rather than one or two) course offerings and internship experiences seem warranted" (Kose, 2009, pg. 148).

Educational leaders are molded and inspired by their preparation programs to develop into social justice instructional and community service leaders (Albritton et al., 2017).   The literature in Theoharis (2008) clearly states that to gain an understanding of the knowledge and skills that social justice leaders retain to make them effective leaders for social justice, future effort is necessary to go beyond the identities and leadership characteristics of social justice leaders.   Jean Marie (2008) implied that social justice preparation programs, "should promote opportunities for critical reflection, leadership praxis, critical discourse, and develop critical pedagogy related to issues of ethics, inclusion, democratic schooling, and social justice" (p. 20). Principals that serve students in poverty driven schools face additional challenges that require them to leverage on their social justice practices and individual strengths. DeMatthews (2015)

suggests that scholars must persist in learning from social justice principals and explore how social justice theories contribute to creating awareness to solve problems and challenges that influence socially just campuses. "Schools in a racially diverse society will require leaders and models of leadership that will address the racial, cultural, and ethnic makeup of the school community." Therefore, "leadership preparation programs must change in a way which provides increased knowledge to improve equity and equal opportunities for all racial and ethnic groups" (Miller & Martin, 2014, p. 129). The literature has revealed that principal preparation programs must address specifically the shifting demographics and concerns of inequities. Studies presume that traditional leadership preparation programs have not drawn enough high-quality social justice candidates to work in high-poverty schools, which are customarily the toughest to staff (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014).

Contribution of the Study

The present-day study is substantial because educational systems across the United States are experiencing increased diversity in schools that will necessitate social justice principals who focus on achieving equity and excellence for all students. The research contributes to the body of knowledge around social justice principals who promote equitable academic and college preparedness opportunities for underrepresented Latinx students who have experienced a history of immense reluctance in schools. Additionally, the research will provide an opportunity to explore how social justice principals are at the forefront of transforming schools and disrupting inequities for underrepresented minority students. Moreover, the literature implies the implications for the lack of social justice principal preparation programs available to prepare leaders to meet the equity issues faced by marginalized, unrepresented students.

The novelty of the proposed research examining socially just early college principals is more relevant today as it dominates our nation's dialogue due to a recently experienced global pandemic, systemic racism, and social justice movements across the United States. To meet the needs of our growing diverse school system, principals must be prepared to promote equitable social justice for the students they serve. Theoharis (2008) argues that "This literature has shown that there are no constructive models or real-life examples of principals doing this work" (p. 22). Additionally, "work is needed to better understand the knowledge and skills these leaders possess that make them successful at leading for social justice (Theoharis, 2008, p.22).The literature attests there is a need to research social justice early college principals who prepare underserved students for post-secondary success. This study can support present and future school leaders learning from the purposeful social justice actions taken by social justice early college principals to transform schools with equity and righteousness for all students.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies implemented by early college principals and seek to understand the social justice leadership approaches that strive to close the academic and college preparedness gaps for underserved and underrepresented Latinx students. The entire experience under investigation is recognized as a multifaceted method (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Research indicates that regardless of the high aspirations amongst minority students, college completion gaps continue; hence, student college persistence and attainment depend largely on the principal who facilitates postsecondary success (Kenna et al., 2015). As the educational school system diversifies and shifts, the nation must have a solution to address the needs of the growing majority Latinx population, as well as other minority groups, to compete in the future of a global workforce (Kose, 2009). Exploring how early college principals prepare underrepresented and underserved students for postsecondary completion is important, not only to better recognize the social justice leadership actions that remove barriers of inequities, but also to strengthen the limited literature on the integration of school leadership and college access, as well as social justice leadership (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Jean-Marie, 2008; Miller & Martin, 2014; Wang, 2015).

Research Questions

The following overarching questions guide this qualitative case study:

1. What are the perceptions of early college high school principals regarding the strategies needed to implement support of Latinx students' postsecondary preparedness?

2. How do early college principals execute social justice?

Research Design

A qualitative case study design was applied to this research which allows the reader to learn about the experiences shared by the study participants. Qualitative research puts the scholar in the world and seeks to gain a profound understanding to discover new thoughts (Creswell, 2018). Qualitative data is information that can be recorded, observed, and include document analysis. There are four distinctive methods used to make logic of evaluation findings that include: analysis of data for its patterns; interpretation of their significance; judgement of the results; and recommendations for action. (Saldana, 2016). Moreover, qualitative design encourages individuals to find out in what manner outcomes can influence people, in addition to what adjustments need to be made to create equity for all, so the outcomes frequently consist of critical interpretation and explanation from the data findings (Saldana, 2011). Therefore, the researcher's determination to use qualitative methods was driven by the need to cultivate a deep understanding of early college high school social justice principals that disrupt inequities for underserved, underrepresented Latinx students and support them on a pathway to postsecondary success.

Naturalistic Inquiry

The qualitative case study utilizes naturalistic inquiry, and human as the instrument in a natural setting which provides the researcher the opportunity to conduct a discovery-oriented study with no preset outcomes in real world situations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The naturalistic study engages in building a shared meaning and understanding from diverging realities from numerous personal, circumstantial, real-world perceptions of the participants and the examining researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher believes that the naturalistic

study is suitable to explore the questions that will be asked regarding marginalized Latinx students' postsecondary success and social justice leadership. A gap in literature discloses that "there is an absence of studies that specifically address the ways in which leaders enact justice" (Theoharis, 2007, pg. 222). "Marginalized students do not receive the education they deserve unless purposeful steps are taken to change schools on their behalf with both equity and justice consciously in mind" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 250).

Emergent Design Flexibility

The researcher employs emergent design flexibility which requires realistic factors of open mindedness, so the participants' responses form the direction of the study. As researchers delve into their study it is critical that they give participants a voice, "If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?" (Saldana, 2015, p.10). As a result, a researcher may discover findings that lead to new inquiries that need to be explored, and the only way to accomplish this is to avoid getting locked into a predetermined research design, so researchers ought to be able to adapt to their new discoveries (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 104). Based on the researcher's personal encounter with social justice, a development of heuristic significance may incite curiosity to "further explore, research, or act on the research in the future" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p.27).

<div align="center">

Research Methodology

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Case Study

Case study research is a qualitative approach that necessitates a study of a case, or cases in which the researcher investigates a real-life situation or setting throughout time within a bounded system, bounded by place and time (Creswell, 2018). A case study will concentrate on a specific component of analysis, such as one person, group, or event and provide in-depth

analysis (Saldana, 2011). The case study includes various sources of data collection that can generate a description of identifying themes and include observations, interviews, audiovisual, documents, reports, or fieldnotes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

For this research, an instrumental case study was applied, and according to Creswell and Poth (2018) "the researcher focuses on an issue or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue" (pg. 98). This research studied four early college principals focused on social justice leadership that will inform educational stakeholders on how to better prepare underserved and underrepresented Latinx students by disrupting inequities and promoting college preparedness for all.

Numerous processes are accessible for conducting a case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In Creswell and Poth (2018) Yin's procedure's for conducting a case study were used, and declare the following:

- Determine if a case study approach is appropriate for studying the research problem.

- Identify the intent of the study and select the case, or cases.

- Develop procedures for conducting the extensive data collection drawing on multiple data sources.

- Specify the analysis approach on which the case study description integrates analysis, themes, and contextual information (p. 100).

Social Justice Leadership as Praxis Approach. Furman (2012) states" leadership for social justice is conceived as a praxis, in the Freirean sense, involving both reflection and action" (pg. 191); moreover, praxis entails recognizing and comprehending "systemic social justice issues, reflecting on these issues, and taking action to address them" (p. 203). Furman (2012) further argues that praxis "has the potential to be a powerful, unifying concept in regard

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to leadership for social justice, because it captures both the reflection and action needed for such work . . . focused on social justice" (pg. 193). The principle of praxis was employed by the researcher in discussions with the participants regarding social justice leadership that focuses on marginalized students and inequities.

Instrumentation

  Researcher as Instrument /Reflexivity. The researcher uses herself as an instrument, as a result, it enables the data collection and interpretation to be an emerging development that will enrich the quality of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Utilizing human as the primary instrument in the study, the researcher employed an assortment of methods such as interviews, handwritten notes, voice recordings, journaling, and field notes for data collection with the four early college high school principals (Erlandson et al., 1995). Additionally, the reflection process was used by the researcher, where reflexivity is the researchers' "conscious awareness of . . . cognitive and emotional filters compromising their experiences, worldviews, and biases that may influence their interpretation of participants' perceptions" (Saldana, 2015, p 8).

  Personal Experience and Engagement. The researcher used her own experiences to engage with the qualitative inquiry. The researcher's experiences provided her an insight to the study. The researcher's subjectivities were not only adjustable, but they are intimate and accordingly reveal the individuality of the person that can allow for connections to the study that was conducted (Saldana, 2015). Individual familiarity and commitment allowed the researcher to interact and get close to the partakers during the research. The scholar entered the field with the notion that she can interact with her participants to gain a better understanding of the study at hand (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The engagement allowed the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the participant's perceptions and experiences.

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Role of the Researcher

The researcher practiced epoche or bracketing, in which the researcher put her

experiences on the side to the greatest degree possible and took a new-found perspective on the

study under investigation that cultivated curiosity (Creswell, 2018). The researcher shared her

experiences in the beginning of the study and bracketed out her beliefs prior to proceeding with

the experiences of the research participants.   As a result, the researcher excluded her own

interpretations of the study and focused more on the narrative that the four early college

principals shared and ensured that biases insignificantly impacted the data collection.

Participants

The researcher utilizes snowball sampling where the selection was purposefully based on

the knowledge of the study and population; hence, the case study offers illumination on the topic

in question. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Snowball sampling is "a group of cases that are selected

by asking one person to recommend someone suitable as a case of the phenomenon of interest,

who then recommends another person who is a suitable case or who knows of potential cases; the

process continues until the desired sample size in achieved" (Gall et al., 1996, p. 770). As a

result, the researcher was able to concentrate on the depth of the research to best understand the

needs of social justice leadership for marginalized students.

Additionally, the researcher used purposive sampling where the selection was based on

the knowledge of the study and population; hence, the case study offers light on the topic in

question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a result, the researcher concentrated on the depth of the

research to best understand the needs of social justice leadership for marginalized students.

Moreover, determinations about the selection of individuals and experiences were considered

ahead of time, simultaneously, with decisions about the detailed data assortment procedures that

were applied (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The momentum that came from the researcher's elevated degree of individual curiosity, or partiality, was communicable and quite useful for obtaining access with the four early college high school principals (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The implementation of purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to create a deliberate focus of the study, rather than looking at a large sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participation of the early college principals was voluntary and anonymous. Additionally, each of the participants was provided with a copy of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form that detailed the purpose of the study.

The researcher selected the participating four early college high school principals from Texas. The researcher established five criteria indicators for the potential study participants. First, the principal must serve in an early college high school that carries a Title I designation, according to the Texas Education Agency. Second, the campus must serve a student population of 75% or more economically disadvantaged Latinx students. Third, the principal must have served at the early college high school for at least two years and have one graduating class. Fourth, the principal's background had to include professional development and knowledge in the realm of social justice. Fifth, the principal holds a doctoral degree and leads an early college high school.

Procedures

District permission was obtained by the researcher as part of the IRB approval, so the interviews could be organized with the four early college principals participating in the study. The interviews were scheduled at the time that was appropriate to the principals. In addition, the interviews were conducted virtually. The data collection will be safeguarded for a minimum of three years and then be properly destroyed.

Two one-hour semi-structured, open- ended interviews with four ECHS principals were conducted, two of whom were purposefully selected and two of whom were recommended via snowball sampling. The thick description provided by the participant data in these interviews was digitally voice recorded utilizing an auto recorded device. Thereafter, each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher (Robson, 2002). Creswell (2018) acknowledges that qualitative open-ended question interviews do not hinder a participant's voice as they share their experiences and increases the trustworthiness and comparability of the data that is collected. To assist in the interview process, the researcher utilized an interview guide with open-ended questions. To elaborate further, each participant participated in two one-hour semi-structured interviews that incorporate clarifying and elaborative probes. Yin (2018) suggests that multiple data sources are suitable for case studies, therefore, the researcher used field notes and documents for additional data collection that resulted in a thick and rich description of the information.

Data Analysis

The data analysis uses systematic theming strategies applied by naturalistic inquiry that permit the researcher to gain knowledge and growth from the study. The researcher begins with data analysis of the study to look for emergent themes, patterns, interrelationships, followed by inquiry (Saldaña, 2011). All interviews were analyzed, coded, and cross checked with field notes and documents. Coding is a method of discovery and gives meaning to the individual data collection thus, the codes function by patterning, classifying, and creating emergent categories for further analysis (Saldana, 2011).

The interview responses were transcribed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, according to the questions asked. The researcher analyzed each response and pre-code segments of the

answer or key words from the interviews on the excel sheet to determine emergent themes pertinent to the guiding questions of the study. The researcher also analyzed the influence that holds patterns in position and how individuals agree or disagree with them (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Thereafter, wide-ranging themes were constricted to four critical themes that uncovered injustices (Saldaña, 2016). As a result of the analysis, attention was garnered towards the lessons learned from injustices that are revealed to bring forth change (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The researcher was not judgmental and was fully present in the research that was being explored. The researcher respects the viewpoint and has compassion for her participants to gain clear comprehension of their perspectives (Saldana, 2015). One of the most important objectives of qualitative research is to understand what it entails to be a human being, so the researcher recognizes the ample diversity of individual experience. (Saldana, 2015). This qualitative study includes authenticity, reliability, integrity measures, and dialogue to foster trustworthiness from the participants, for a genuine understanding of their views (Saldana, 2016). In addition, the process of triangulation was used by the researcher to clarify meaning and achieve a deep understanding of the multiple data collections to gain trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Lincoln & Guba (1985) indicate that credibility is deemed the most essential principle in creating trustworthiness and suggest that peer debriefing is a beneficial technique to create credibility. Therefore, each participant was delivered a draft of the research findings from the researcher for their examination, feedback, and truthfulness of the subject matter. The researcher also requested for an acknowledgment of delivery from each participating early college principal

upon sharing the draft research. Lincoln & Guba (1985) imply that to keep a researcher honest, debriefing session engagement will permit the researcher to clear their mind and refrain from being hypercritical. A final essential measure taken by the researcher was to preserve the identities and confidentiality of all participants by safeguarding confidentiality of the district and principals by applying pseudo names.

Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study explores the strategies implemented by four early college principals and seeks to understand the social justice leadership approaches that disrupt inequities to close the academic and college preparedness gaps for underserved and underrepresented Latinx students. The researcher conducted two one-hour, one-on-one face-to-face, or virtual in-depth interviews with the district principals that met the established criteria. The goal of the researcher included establishing trustworthy relations with the research participants, gathering quantities of multiple data, debriefing with each participant for data truthfulness of interpretation, and representing the data wholly so it offered thick, rich understanding for the readers of the study. The findings of this study are expected to have an impact on underrepresented student postsecondary success and the preparation of social justice leadership in the educational systems across the nation.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies implemented by early college principals and seeks to understand the social justice leadership approaches that they use to strive to close the academic and college preparedness gaps for underserved and underrepresented Latinx students. A qualitative case study design was utilized in this research which allowed the researcher insight as shared by the study participants (Creswell, 2018). The researcher's determination to use qualitative methods was driven by the need to cultivate a deep understanding of early college high school social justice principals that disrupt inequities for underserved, underrepresented Latinx students and support them on a pathway to postsecondary success. Four Texas early college social justice high school principals were interviewed regarding their social justice initiatives. Emergent design flexibility afforded the conduct of a discovery-oriented study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Shared meaning-making facilitated understanding of diverging realities from numerous personal, circumstantial, real-world perceptions of the participants and the examining researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research on early college high schools exists, however a gap in literature reveals that "there is an absence of studies that specifically address the ways in which leaders enact justice" (Theoharis, 2007, pg. 222). Moreover, the literature indicates the need to examine the role of the principal and their contributions to the school's accomplishments, because "little to no research has examined the role of the principal specifically in facilitating students' postsecondary preparation" (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018, p.272). The literature points to a substantial gap regarding the impact of principal leadership on school success (Duncheon & DeMatthews,

2018). As a result, the unsettling disparities in the nation's educational system calls for social justice leaders who recognize the essential role that they play in creating a socially just culture for underserved and underrepresented students (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014).

While some limited similar studies have been conducted, this study is unique in that the context of COVID-19 amplified challenges of leading on both metropolitan and rural campuses in deep South Texas close to the U.S./Mexico border. Research has consistently indicated that economically disadvantaged students in the U.S. are less likely to connect to college and complete a post-secondary degree compared to their more privileged peers (Hersh & Merrow, 2005; Madrid, 2011). Hence, this study is critical particularly as the population of this region ranks 149th in educational achievement among similar metropolitan areas (McCann, 2020). The challenges of educating students in deep South Texas requires principals that lead with social justice and equity mindsets.

Participant Selection

Participant criteria included five criteria those being: 1) the principal must serve in an early college high school that carries a Title I designation, according to the Texas Education Agency; 2) the campus must serve a student population of 75% or more economically disadvantaged Latinx students; 3) the principal must have served at the early college high school for at least two years and have one graduating class; 4) the principal's background had to include professional development and knowledge in the realm of social justice; and; 5) the principal holds a doctoral degree and leads an early college high school.

Data Collection

Two one-hour semi-structured, open- ended interviews with four ECHS principals were conducted, two of whom were purposively selected and two of whom were recommended via

snowball sampling. Creswell (2018) acknowledges that qualitative open-ended question interviews do not hinder a participant's voice as they share their experiences and increases the trustworthiness and comparability of the data that is collected. The thick description provided by the participant data in these interviews were digitally voice recorded utilizing an auto recorded device, transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and themed for common threads across the conversations (Robson, 2002; Saldana, 2014). For this study pseudonyms were used to protect the participants identity and maintain confidentiality.

Participant Overview

The researcher collected perceptive data from four Texas early college high school principal participants that were interviewed regarding their social justice initiatives. One principal was male and three were female with their ages ranging from 39 to 62 years old (see Table 1, pg. 53). The male principal was Latinx, two female principals were African American, and one was Latina. Their years of experience as early college high school principals varied from two to eleven years, for a total of 22 years of collectively leading an early college campus. Additionally, together, the principals participating in the study have served for 96 years combined, ranging from 15 to 39 years of experience in the field of education. Moreover, all of the four principals hold a doctoral degree from varied universities across Texas. Two of the principals hold a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and two hold a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction.

Table 1

Early College High School Principal Participants Experience

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	# Of Years in Education	# Of Years ECHS Principal	Doctoral Degree
Dr. Pais	39	Male	Latino	15	3	Educational Leadership
Dr. Abella	47	Female	Latina	23	6	Educational Leadership
Dr. Davis	49	Female	African American	19	2	Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Hill	62	Female	African American	39	11	Curriculum and Instruction
Total Years Experience				96 Years Education	22 years ECHS Principal	

The participants led varied early college high school models in different geographic areas across South Texas that differentiated in student enrollment (see Table 2, pg. 54). One early college high school was a wall-to-wall early college high school that serviced all of the 1,761-student population. Two early college high schools were a school within a school model that were autonomous school programs within the comprehensive high school. One school within a school model targeted 160/1234 of the student population and the other targeted 425/2863 students. Additionally, a stand-alone early college high school is located on the college campus and serves 410 students.

Table 2

Early College High School Model, Geographic Area, and Student Enrollment

Participant	Geographic Area	ECHS Type	ECHS Campus Enrollment
Dr. Pais	Urban	School Wide Model	1761
Dr. Abella	Urban	School Within a School Model	160/1234
Dr. Davis	Urban	School Within a School Model	425/2863
Dr. Hill	Urban	Stand- alone School Within a College Model	410

The first section of this chapter will exemplify each participant's journey towards social justice leadership that resulted in capturing their shaped identity. Of the four participants, two were first generation. Each of the principals shared numerous parallels in their path to social justice leadership. They each framed their stories with what has become their shaped identity for social justice. The participant's motivation, self-reflection as social justice leaders, and personal experiences provide an insight into their passion and commitment to social justice. As stated by Theoharis (2008) "social justice ingrained into the very being of the social justice leader means

that each decision, every aspect of that principalship, and all details of the school are examined

and seen from a social justice perspective" (p. 20). Moreover, all the participants conveyed

genuine interest in the study and insightful commentary in anticipation that it might benefit

underrepresented, marginalized students, principals, communities, and principal preparation

programs across the country. Detailed examples of experiences and perceptions are provided in

anecdotes, quotes, and narrative summaries for each of the participating early college high

school principals.

The second section of this chapter provides the findings of the study after systematic

theming strategies were applied by naturalistic inquiry. Additionally, data analysis of the study

disclosed emergent themes, patterns, interrelationships, followed by inquiry (Saldaña, 2011). All

interviews were analyzed, coded, and cross checked with field notes and participants to secure

trustworthiness of the study.

Shaped Identity

Dr. Pais

Dr. Pais leads a comprehensive school wide early college high school that services 1,761

students that are enrolled in the campus. Dr. Pais has served his campus as principal for three

years and has six years of experience as an early college high school administrator. Additionally,

Dr. Pais has a total of 15 years of experience in the field of education in different secondary

capacities that include teacher, assistant principal, early college director, and principal. A few

years ago, Dr. Pais continued his education and now holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership

from a university in South Texas, in addition to his superintendent certificate. In the course of the

interview, Dr. Pais shared that he felt compelled to make a difference since the inception of his

career as a teacher stating, "I started to teach and then fell in love with the profession, right?

Being a servant, teacher servant leader, learning more about what it was that I could do as an educator to help educate students." The two interviews were scheduled via Microsoft Teams and Dr. Pais's passion, devotion, and pursuit for social justice was evident in our discussions. Dr. Pais expressed, "Whatever you need, you know that you can reach out to me so I'm willing to always help . . . research is going to add a really great piece to the gap of missing literature."

Dr. Pais is a 39-year-old male Latinx and shared that he is not a first-generation college student. Dr. Pais is the middle child among three brothers who are also in the education field as coaches or campus administrators. Both his parents earned a bachelor's and master's college degree. His father was a respected head coach in the community and his mother was a school administrator. He mentioned that both his parents were devoted to helping underserved populations in the district and community.

 Dr. Pais shared that his parents instilled his motivation for social justice, "I grew up from a very early age, listening to conversations about education, about serving underserved populations, my dad coached in a city which demographically… community was a poor demographic area at the time in the 1980s." Though his parents were educated, his grandparents were not, and they were the first to instill the importance of an education for the family. Dr Pais shared the following:

> Education for my parents was a key to getting out of poverty and the key to success in
> life. And so, my grandparents were very high on education, and I remember growing up
> around them, and them, instilling into us their grandchildren.   I'm the oldest of the
> grandchildren, telling us how important it was to get an education, so really there was no
> option for us to like, well no you can't start a business, or no, it was you're going to have

to go to college, and you need to get a college degree, and there was no real other option for any of us.

Accordingly, while he grew up privileged, Dr. Pais shares that his mother has been a motivational inspiration for his aspiration to become a social justice leader. Dr. Pais discloses that his mother grew up in a poverty-stricken environment and was the eldest of five sibling sisters. At a young age during Christmas time, his mother would always be the last to leave the classroom before the Christmas break, as she asked the teacher for the Christmas tree in hopes to bring holiday cheer to her five sisters and parents at home. She waited until the last student left so her father could come and pick her up, and others would not see her take the classroom Christmas tree home. This story is so dear to Dr. Pais's heart, and he cherishes it as a reminder that he still has students in those same scenarios today. Dr. Pais recalls meeting with his campus administrators:

> I told my administrators that it still happens today. And that was my mom, 60 years ago, but it's still happening today. Yes, know that has not changed, you know what I mean, and some of that social justice hasn't changed now. So, I think this is a great study because as you say, what are we going to do as leaders right now to change those things, and to make an impact.

with the support of their parents, Dr. Pais's mother and five sisters followed an educational pathway and graduated from college. He treasures their stories, advice, and continued support as he leads for social justice.

Framing Social Justice. Dr. Pais defines social justice as "providing equity and equality for all, regardless of race, regardless of sex, regardless of sexual preference, gender, regardless of that, I would say that social justice is providing equity and equality for all people." He believes

that social justice leadership is focused on serving all stakeholders with innovative approaches that afford equitable opportunities and access for underserved students. Additionally, he stressed the importance of communication and developing genuine relationships with students to be able to learn their story, "I think as leaders in this arena of social justice, we have to seek out more students like that, and try to help them and create more opportunities for them to be successful."

As Dr. Pais prepared to describe himself as a social justice leader, he once again referred to the lessons learned through the lens of his mother's experiences as a young girl. Dr. Pais shares:

> It really impacted me to become the leader I am today to see the social injustices that they encountered when they were younger, as children. I think about my experiences with my parents and my family. And then things that I've seen as a teacher with students of a certain demographic that have had difficulties getting access to college or getting access to an education. So, I think that my experiences with that, it really prepared me or has given me life to be more compassionate, more understanding of students that are encountering those things.

He describes himself as a compassionate and strategic social justice leader that provides opportunities to students who may be subjected to experiencing inequities. Moreover, he takes the time to form relationships with students by speaking and listening to them. He encourages students who are encountering issues and are deterring, to move forward. Dr. Pais portrayed himself as being fully committed to helping each student facing barriers to a solution for success.

Dr. Davis

Dr. Davis is the principal in a school within a school early college high school model that is an autonomous small learning community within a large comprehensive high school. She

serves a targeted population of 425 students out of the 2,863-student enrollment. Dr. Davis has been principal for the early college high school for two years. She has a total of 19 years' experience in public and higher education. Her educational career experience includes teaching, administration, and Director of Academic Affairs for a college. Dr. Davis holds a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from a Texas university, as well as her superintendent certificate. The two interviews were scheduled via Microsoft Teams and Dr. Davis was highly engaged and motivated to share her perceptions to contribute to the research "This work, it is a much-needed topic of discussion. The interview is very productive for work in the field, as we evolve." Her zeal for social justice was evident throughout the interviews, "I am very, very passionate and I do see me advocating for that social justice within the school system for my students, because of course these are students that are you know, our students, they wouldn't have chances."

Dr. Davis is a 49-year-old African American female who is a first-generation college student. Dr. Davis was raised by her grandmother, a mother who raised six children and valued the importance of an education. She encouraged Dr. Davis to focus on school, "stay in your books." Moreover, throughout her educational journey, Dr. Davis had several mentors that provided guidance and support.

> And so that's why I push so much to get the best for our students, because without these opportunities, then it may not be there, or without the guidance of different mentors and different leaders. And so when they see me . . . it's really about, you know them seeing me as a role model, in that they can be anything, to achieve anything that they put their mind to.

Dr. Davis attributes her founding motivation for social justice to her mother. She shares:

My mother is my biggest motivator, you know, and I, you know, rest in peace. She

passed with cancer, but you know she raised me, she always said, you know stay in your

books. And then just seeing that I have these opportunities that she didn't have during,

you know, civil rights and different things growing up in a different time.

Dr. Davis's mother played a vital role in setting an educational mindset for Dr. Davis, as she

often reflects on the injustices her mother endured, and her own entitlement to now walk into a

desegregated school, "just seeing those kinds of inequities, and you know I can walk through the

classroom door and, you know, without security."

Contentedly, at the age of 73, her mother earned a GED, which became one of the

proudest moments in Dr. Davis's life, "she sacrificed, you know, for her family." The

experiences endured by her mother have provided Dr. Davis the inspiration to make a difference

in the lives of others. As Dr. Davis was completing her doctoral degree, she lost her mother. Dr.

Davis persevered by staying focused on the lessons her mother taught her at a young age

regarding the value of an education.

The day of her funeral, I went to class, because I was like she would want me in class,

you know, and so, um, that, that really motivated and pushed me to finish because it was,

it was never for me, it was, it was for her, and a much larger system now that I see of, of

helping students and that's why it's so impactful.

Additionally, Dr. Davis mentioned that her students are also a motivational factor in her identity,

"it is really just seeing the kids rewarded to have opportunities in society, it really is a much

bigger picture than just school." Moreover, she continues to practice the lessons she learned

from her mother's enthusiasm for education and passes them along to her students.

Yeah, so their mothers are like extremely proud, but, um, and it's the same I'm like, I just

pushed the kids like, I don't care, like, hey, you want to do military, you know, whatever

it is have your plan, you know, so I mean I aspire for them to complete the four years

from like you're so close, you know, you only have two years left.

Similarly, seeing the pride that parents take on their children, as her mother took on her,

continues to drive her to build opportunities for her students that will result in equitable

opportunities.

Framing Social Justice. Dr. Davis described social justice as equality and fairness for

all students and always doing what is best for them. Similarly, she believes that social justice

leadership should focus on equity, "equity to me is the big thing in leadership, and that's a much,

much bigger picture, and lens that you're working with and a difference." Additionally, she

indicates that social justice leaders should always be prepared to set the vision and mission into

action by creating agendas that result in student success. Dr Davis mentions the importance of

social justice leadership being the student's voice and meeting their needs:

Social justice leadership for me is to be an advocate for my students, to learn advocacy

on different things, and so those are kind of like the levels that we do, along with

building, you know, helping my teachers build culturally responsive teaching strategies

in there, and then allowing other individuals to help.

As we discussed her own individuality in the realm of social justice, she described herself

as "evolved." Social justice is rooted in her, and she has personally pursued it to remove barriers

for her students. She avidly discloses, "when I go after equality, like, you know, in equity, all

means all to me, but all children can learn, we're helping them and serve them." Her path,

championing, and commitment is evident throughout our interviews as she shares her social justice narrative of who she is.

As far as a leader that says something, I'm truly passionate about, and I think is important to do this work and important to allow students to be like their, their whole selves and really push for opportunities that they need, and be that mouthpiece for them, you know.

Dr. Hill

Dr. Hill serves 410 students that are enrolled in a stand-alone school within a college early college model. Her early college high school is in the second-floor building within the college campus. Dr. Davis has a total of fourteen years of leadership capacity in her campus. She has been principal at her school for eleven years and was the former assistant principal for curriculum for three years. Moreover, she is a veteran educator with 39 years of experience in the education field that include different roles such as principal, assistant principal in an early college setting and comprehensive high school, and an English teacher for 19 years. In 2006, Dr. Davis earned her Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from a university in Texas. The two interviews were scheduled via Microsoft Teams and Dr. Davis's passion for her students, social justice, and the early college program were manifested throughout our conversations. Her humility, leadership, tenacity, educational and life experiences embodied her advocacy for social justice. Dr. Hill conveyed, "So, I think, because you are in a leadership position, and you are, your school is what you are. And I think it would do well to integrate social justices' practices."

Dr. Hill is a 62-year-old African American female. She was born and raised in a college community by parents who held college degrees. Her father was a professor, and her mother was an all but her dissertation (ABD) graduate student. Dr. Hill is not a first-generation college student and has five siblings who are all graduates from various universities. She shared that

college was never an option because she was raised in a college culture that set that expectation for her and her siblings. She realizes that the college mindset that was instilled in her made a positive impact in her trajectory. She shares:

> All we knew growing up was that you go to college . . . and I'm ever so grateful for being a part of that culture, but needless to say, when I left the college community, I was kind of in shock, because I did not realize that everybody didn't go to college. I often wonder sometimes what life would have been like if I had not grown up in that, you know, culture.

Additionally, Dr. Hill is the mother to two daughters and grandmother of six grandchildren, three boys and three girls. She enjoys spending her extra time volunteering in different community organizations and her church.

Dr. Hill mentioned that "belonging to a community of learners, has been a big motivator." Although she is not a first-generation college student, and grew up privileged, she mentions that facing racial discrimination is her personal motivation for social justice which began at a young age, as integration was taking place, "I experienced racism, social injustices. And so, I always said that I never wanted any other child to experience that feeling of not belonging." Therefore, she has made it a personal mission to champion for her students. She avidly shared:

> For me as a leader, I often am reminded when I took on the role to become principal here at the early college high school, if I don't do my part in affording the students the opportunity to become, you know get college degrees, to get an associates further with a bachelor's, I'm not living up to what I feel is very important and that is that education can take us a long way. You know, there are more opportunities when we know this.

Dr. Hill's motivation is apparent through her commitment to foster social justice for all her students, as she commits herself to implementing equitable systems in her campus that will continue to break barriers for marginalized students.

Framing Social Justice. Dr. Hill describes social justice as offering equity across diverse populations by making certain that all students have the support and opportunities to succeed. She shared that social justice is an area that alters with the times, and therefore, social justice leaders must also adapt as factors change, "you have to adapt, and make sure you are doing what is best for children." Moreover, she emphasized that social justice leaders must understand the population that they serve," so just having people from that culture that understand the way the Latinx population learn, understand some of the cultural celebrations that are important to them, and immersing that into the educational setting is very important."

Dr. Hill describes herself as an accountable social justice leader. She is not fearful of challenging the status quo as she demonstrates foresight that champions solutions that bring equity to her students, "give the best to your students, it's really amazing that you're walking through and trying to figure it out." Moreover, she radiates confidence and knows her purpose.

> And if I'm going to be a leader for an early college high school, I have got to put my best foot forward, in making sure that some of the students being first generation, some not being first generation are afforded those opportunities. And you would think that, hey, you got the process down but no we don't have the process down, because every year you deal with different kinds of kids.

As a social justice leader, she believes in serving her students wholeheartedly and appreciating their cultural individuality. Additionally, she promotes positive engagement that

values the needs of her students by demonstrating a leadership commitment to the student population that they serve. She conveys the following:

> I don't think we need to be colorblind, I think we need to be color aware, because to serve all populations, you have to understand their background, their cultural, their creations. We get the blind yourself, and we miss out on opportunities to serve people.

Dr. Abella

Dr. Abella leads a school within a school early college program within a large comprehensive high school. She serves 160 out of 1,234 students who are enrolled in the early college. Moreover, Dr. Abella is the founding principal for the early college high school and has been leading the campus for six years, ever since the Texas Education Agency early college designation was granted in 2015. She takes pride in serving her alumni district and community for the past 23 years. Her educational experiences include principalship, Dean of Instruction, and secondary teacher. She also holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from a university located in Texas. The two interviews were scheduled via Microsoft Teams. During the interview Dr. Abella's enthusiasm about the research study and her devotion to assist others was evident as she said-

> I love being able to help, and whenever you know in education we can get together and to share ideas and make sure, like, we just provide more teeth to our studies, you know, like there's more information out there that helps everybody. It helps everybody out there.

Dr. Abella expressed that she is highly invested in her school and community. She encourages her students to take advantage of all the opportunities, "do the best that you can and be the best that you can."

Dr. Abella takes pride in being a 47-year-old Latina, mother to her collegiate daughter, and son who attends high school. She is an only child and was raised by both her parents who have played an integral part in her life. Her father is a teacher, and her mother was a high school dropout who later persisted and earned her graduation equivalency degree (G.E.D.). Although she is not a first-generation college student, she shares that throughout high school, college was never placed in front of her. She left her Latinx community upon high school graduation to attend the University of Texas where she learned how to navigate college, "I did everything on my own and then I learned from my mistakes." Today, she leverages those experiences to help her students get ahead, "I just share what I've learned through all my experience from being a high school student, a college student and as a teacher, and I just put that into what we share with our students."

Dr. Abella attributes her motivation for social justice to her parents, grandparents, and students. She begins by sharing that her parents impacted her life journey by setting an example of perseverance. Her father was the first in his family to go to college, and walked over 20 miles to get to campus, or hitched rides along the road. His persistence allowed him to earn a college education. Similarly, her mother endured life obstacles and earned her GED. She uses her parents' journey to education as an example," I tell my kids, if you really want something you're going to find a way to accomplish it. So, a lot of that background that, you know, I, I've been exposed to has helped." Additionally, Dr. Abella's grandparents have impacted her principles. Her grandparents did not complete high school, but their wisdom instilled very important values, "they were workers, they worked hard, whether it was in the fields or later my grandpa got hired by a company, but he was like a custodian, he was a janitor." She transfers the importance of work ethics to her students,

The realization of this is the hard work that was put in for the past four years, and you get

to see the success. It's seeing their faces when they get accepted to their four-year

university.

Moreover, Dr. Abella emphasized that her students inspire and drive her to build a college

foundation that prepares all of them for postsecondary success.

Seeing these kids when they cross the stage, kids come to us and they don't have any type

of, I guess, like a background of what college is, or they don't have like a focal point,

because they're just coming to us fresh. They don't know anybody who has gone to

college. So, we need to make sure that we arm them with all this type of knowledge, you

know, before they leave us.

Framing Social Justice. Dr. Abella is confident that an educational system has the

resources to close student gaps and prepare them with an equitable education that will help them

reach their career aspirations. She defines social justice as, "make sure that my students receive a

fair and equitable education and that they receive everything that they need to be successful, and

that they're not deficient in any respect due to their background." Moreover, she deems that

social justice leadership involves advocating for your students and making sure that they are

treated equally and fair. She adds that social justice leaders should make it their personal mission

to also educate parents on college.

As Dr. Abella begins to describe herself as a social justice leader it is apparent that it is

ingrained within her, because she regards it as a natural action, "I think, I just normally react in a

way, and how can I best help our students, and that just, you know, takes in the social justice."

She is a compassionate leader that is always ready to support her students, as a school within a

school model, she wishes she could accept all the students that apply, because she believes in the

impact it has during student's lives, "I wish the only thing I could change is that I wish I could accept everybody . . . We can, you know, be successful with accepting more students and providing more opportunities. But, as far as making sure that our students reap the benefits." Furthermore, as a social justice leader she believes that her role is to champion all academic and college opportunities to her students and parents. She believes in empowering her parents so they can support their child's postsecondary success.

> As a principal I do my very best to, for lack of a better way to say it, to advertise all of the opportunities that we offer in our school district. And I want to make sure that all of our parents in our community realize that we have, you know, the early college system, because we're a school within a school. It's just a large part of what I hold value in. I want to make sure that our parents know about college.

Findings

This section will present the findings gathered from this naturalistic case study. After numerous analysis of the transcribed interviews from the four participants, common themes emerged. Studying the data collection that surfaced from the questions revealed the participant's commonalities for social justice leadership that disrupts inequities for Latinx students. Additionally, the data findings revealed COVID heightened the necessity for social justice leadership as principal's faced the pandemic and demonstrated initiative so their students could persist and succeed. Various participant responses will be utilized to present the emerging themes.

After interviewing the four participants and coding their responses, a thick description of the participants' background and motivation depicted a shared identity to lead for social justice during the analysis. Additionally, four major themes were revealed. These themes reflect the

unsettling disparities in the nation's educational system. The four themes that emerged from the interviews with the four early college principals were the following: Leading for Social Justice, Addressing Inequities, Engaging Latinx Parents, and Preparing Principals for Leading Social Justice.

Leading for Social Justice

Social justice principals reflect precisely how schools are unjust for underserved, underrepresented students, and they envision how their leadership role will create an equitable school environment (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014). All the principals in this study shared their commitment to lead for social justice by being reflective visionary leaders that demonstrate courage, initiative, and perseverance. Additionally, each one of the participants shared their devotion to bring about meaningful change by championing solutions. Each principal recognizes that they play a decisive role in establishing social justice campuses. They are aware that their leadership actions determine the success of student's postsecondary success.

Dr. Pais's capacity in leading a school wide early college high school focuses on equitable outcomes for his students. Dr. Pais talks about how serving 1,761 designated early college students is accomplished through success by design that includes social justice awareness and action.

> We're now at a point that we became early college for all. If we know what social justice inequities are, and where they persist, and where they exist, then we're able to focus and pinpoint some of those inequities, and work toward them. If we don't know what social justice is, we just take it for granted.

He is highly motivated and confronts challenges by pushing the status quo, "taking risks, taking risks." He is a visionary leader that encourages postsecondary success by affording all his

students access to college. Moreover, he is ready to tackle obstacles, innovate, and support students with goal setting and strategic planning that will result in student success. His belief is that there is a need for the state accountability system to concentrate on social justice to ensure that underrepresented, underserved students have equitable access to success.

> Right up there with that accountability needs to be social justice, right. And breaking those barriers for them. If they're not able to do it on their own, providing more opportunity for them, sitting alongside with them.

> Dr. Hill takes ownership for her leadership role as the early college high school principal and holds herself accountable for the success or failure of her campus. She believes that her student's achievements are an indicator of her leadership actions "it's my job, carried out through my leadership." She also adds:

> If the students are not successful here, then we leave them out, you know, we put them in a nation where they have to struggle and try to figure it out for themselves. Whereas we are here as a resource. Let's do what we have to do, you know, help these students be successful.

Additionally, Dr. Hill is a reflective leader who regularly reflects on her leadership actions and develops solutions to safeguard the decisions she makes. Dr. Abella is aware that her decision making will affect the stakeholders that are involved.

> Leadership has a big point, in which as leaders, we have to often remind ourselves, how is this the question that should be asked at all times is, how is this going to affect the population that I serve?

Moreover, she never loses sight of her student's needs and uses her voice by demonstrating valor to interrupt unjust systems that can create barriers for her students, "we have to be reminded that there is an inequitable situation, when we want opportunities for all."

Dr. Davis is a principal that demonstrates a robust commitment to fairness and equitable access that result in student opportunities. She is driven by ensuring that all her students receive a fair education that will result in life success. She maintains a sharp equity focus, "Equity to me is the big thing in leadership, and that's a much, much bigger picture, and lens that you're working with, and a difference, that you're working." Dr. Davis demonstrates courage, initiative, and perseverance by seeking meaningful change. She has a norm of high expectations in her campus by establishing a shared vision through words and actions that result in optimal just results for her students. She believes that a vision needs to come to existence, so it becomes a reality.

> For students, we want, you know what's best for them, and so being able to transform some of that, those words on paper. Like you might have a mission and vision, but you know really putting some of that into action.

Dr. Davis is an advocate for social justice. She focuses on championing for her students and will not accept excuses, "me advocating for that social justice, within the school system, for my students, because of course these are students that, you know, our students, they wouldn't have chances." Moreover, Dr. Davis's diligence propels her to pursue equity to meet her students' needs, and practices setting social justice focused itineraries with stakeholders, "and so, you have to put that at the forefront, and sometimes create your own agendas to get that work done."

Social Justice Leadership During a Pandemic. The intensified crisis brought forth by the pandemic forced school systems to shut down as COVID 19 brought light to the inequities faced by marginalized students today (Simmons, 2020). The schools led by the four principal participants were distressed by social emotional and disparity concerns that steered the principals to champion and heighten social justice practices that promote equity and disrupt disparities. All the principals in the study shared that the pandemic called for enhanced social justice leadership to create equitable schools that afford opportunities for underserved students.

Each one of the principals shared that safety became the district's priority as students transitioned to high school and college virtual learning, and several staff members, including the college professors were working remotely. The virtual platform created additional barriers for underserved, underrepresented students in need of academic support. Some participants shared those students struggled with asynchronous learning and lacked the teachers and professors in-person assistance. In our interview, Dr. Davis shared that she fiercely reached out to college Deans to advocate for her students, as she stressed the importance of understanding a student's situation during the pandemic, as professors refused to take late work and empathize with them. She shares the following:

> I'm not taking late work, so, oh well your Wi-Fi was down today. So then, we have to
> start that whole process of some of that social justice in an email to our dual credit office,
> and you can connect with the Dean of professors. You know, being unreasonable like,
> you know, yeah, we're in the middle of a pandemic.

Dr. Davis's campus was located within one of the state's COVID hot spots "yeah, we had a zip code that was high in COVID cases, and so it was that fear of the community." She shares that no one prepares you for the challenges of leading during a pandemic.

I don't know, you cannot duplicate the experience, you know, that I've had as a city

principal in the city, like during this whole pandemic, like you know, I didn't sign up and

they were like hey, COVID coming in.

However, as a principal who leads with a social justice mindset, she was aware that it is her

obligation to champion for student equity and help them persevere in one of the most challenging

times that they have faced. Dr. Davis describes her advocacy efforts to get technology devices

for her students:

But I'll give you one example, which would be technology, our district is not one to one.

And so, when the pandemic hit, you know it's like what are we going to do? And so, we,

you know, we checked out everything through carts or whatever. Our district could not

do a non-tech option. They can come and pick up paper packets, but I was like no, they're

in college, there are no paper packets like these. Professors want their work, they have to

get a Wi-Fi hotspot, or something, so those are the kinds of things that they need to help

with that. I get chills when I say that.

Additionally, Dr. Davis shares that not being able to see her students hardened the situation,

because she couldn't gauge their well-being. However, that did not keep her from taking

initiative and meeting with district leaders to ensure her student's needs were met.

You know, some of them, they wouldn't even tell us until later what was going on. We

couldn't see them, like, you know, maybe somebody died of COVID, or they're in the

household with a mother that had a COVID, and then they didn't have any food. So, I'm

reaching out now to the district and superintendent like, hey can we get them some food,

you know, and so they're taking stuff to the doorstep. So those kinds of things because

math was here yesterday, you know, extremely important, if we don't take care of those basic needs of our babies.

Dr. Pais's social justice leadership led him to advocate and set systems in place to support his student's persistence during the pandemic. He shared that his students experienced comparable encounters with some of his staff and college professors, as they displayed lack of compassion. He expressed in our interview that he expected staff to be more present in each student's life as students faced the hardships of COVID.

One of our college algebra teachers, when I met with him at the end of the semester, he said, well, so and so's mother died and he's failing the course now. I said did you reach out to him, and he said no, I didn't reach out to him. I said, the mom died. He said yes, but did you reach out for support, is there anything that I can do, he said, no I haven't. So, changing that mindset right, we still have to do our part.

Moreover, some of Dr. Pais's students that were impacted by the pandemic struggled to balance school and their home environment. He emphasized in our interview that he expected staff to be connected to each student during remote learning and be aware of their well-being, "Changing the mindset because we still need to do our part. The hardships of COVID . . . we needed to be more present in the situation of each student."

Dr. Abella also saw the struggles of COVID 19 impact her campus with a decline of student enrollment, because recruitment became extremely challenging as families focused on safety. She was determined to keep her student's parents informed, and together collaborated in supporting their children. Dr. Abella leveraged the technology platform that became the norm due to the pandemic and initiated weekly communication with her student's parents to keep them connected. She shared the following:

I also have meetings where because of COVID and all that stuff, it really opened the

possibility to be more accessible. And so, I'll have kind of like office hours, but more like

evening hours. And so, I make myself available, the parents can log in and I'm online if

they have any questions. We can talk about things that they're wondering about, because

a lot of it is a learning process for them too.

In the interview, she also shares that the pandemic jeopardized in person college visits for

students who have never experienced being in a college campus. Additionally, there was a

decline of college entrance exams participation, "Getting that advertisement out there to register

with ACT, you know, sign up for one of the tests, or a site, we're an ACT site, but with COVID,

we didn't offer any tests." At the end, Dr. Abella's perseverance to keep her students focused and

motivated led them to the college finish line, as she celebrated their success of graduating from

college, "seeing the excitement on their faces and the fact that we actually got to walk the stage."

Addressing Inequities

Addressing inequities was a central theme amongst all four principals that embraced

common strategies focused on building an equitable campus culture of success, in addition to

student's sense of self belonging and self-advocacy. All the four principals described the

challenges, barriers, and resistance that they faced. Moreover, how their leadership inspired

social justice action to help their students persevere and achieve academic and postsecondary

success.

All four principals had systems in place that focused on building a positive academic and

postsecondary culture of success for their students. They focused on transformational strategies

that inspired action and created an unbiased mindset from the staff that supported student

learning. Principals implemented strategic approaches early on, to ensure that their students were on pathway to postsecondary attainment and achievement.

Campus Culture. Dr. Pais addressed student inequities by "breaking barriers for them." One of his first approaches to accomplish this mission is by establishing a campus culture that supports student success by ensuring that his staff is familiar with the student population that they serve and the early college high school initiative. He spends time reviewing the early college blueprint with his staff and engages them in discussions about their student population needs during the back-to-school staff development sessions and throughout the school year. Dr. Pais shares how he has accomplished to shift the staff's mindset in a school wide early college, as he encountered resistance from teachers who did not understand the campus purpose and the importance of their role to prepare all students for postsecondary achievement.

> I think a lack of understanding, not just social justice, right, but a lack of understanding of where they fit in as an individual, whether it's as a dual credit teacher, or counselor, or a student, or a parent. Not knowing enough about the program, or the goals of the school, or the vision of the school to do that. We've had some difficulties with some of our teachers, right, with high failure rates, and it seems like we'd never get through to them right, no matter how much we ask, or tell them, or sit with them…And so, I guess, continuing with the process of letting them know what their role is in the bigger picture, right, is going to be important to facilitate the success of students, the early college high school, and then of course social justice.

Similarly, Dr. Pais has faced challenges with IHE professors that serve his students who were not proponents of the early college program.

Professors that they send in may not want to teach high school students, but there is no choice but to send them, and then they're upset, and they don't want to teach, and so then they take it out on the students.

He addresses these issues by engaging in difficult conversations and advocating for his students with the IHE Early College Dean and coordinators that support the program. He combats the resistance by having the same equitable expectations from the college professors that he has from his staff. He mentions that he has managed to decrease this resistance by having frequent conversations with the staff members and connecting them to the school which has generated shared interest in student attainment.

So, we make sure that the Early College High School Director is in constant communication with them. If we're going to use biology, as example, with the resources they need, and with the lab materials they need, checking up on them if not on a daily basis, but on a weekly basis, letting them know that we're here to support them, providing them with a laptop or keys to the classroom. Things where they feel like they're part of the school, there's no other setbacks or roadblocks for them, so that they're happy right, so we include them with our teacher appreciation stuff that we do throughout the year, so that they feel like they're a part of it anyway.

Additionally, Dr. Pais's administrative team plays a significant role in supporting teachers. He believes that supporting the teachers and providing them with the strategies to support student's postsecondary success will empower them to help students achieve.

Dr. Hill shares that she addresses inequalities with an early start to creating a college campus culture for her students, so they understand college. Dr. Hill reveals that she does not want college access to be a barrier for the underrepresented population that she serves. Therefore, she

helps her teachers build culturally responsive strategies for her students. This is what Dr. Hill said regarding the question of addressing inequities for Latinx students.

> We have structures in place. We take students from the eighth to the ninth grade, and so many of them, although they hear the word college, don't understand, you know, what they are really getting into. And so, once they are selected to come here, the first thing we do is we have our summer bridge program for incoming freshmen. It's all about team building, it's all about emphasizing that you can do this, your purpose for being here, getting to know this student, and a little bit about their background. And so, making them feel welcome as part of the family, that's the first thing that takes place in the summer. Yesterday and today, we want to make sure that they understand, you are going to college, because you were selected for this program, you can go to college . . . getting them their college ID number, so that they can immediately feel that hey, I am a college student, and I have the right to privileges, access to all of the things that the college has to offer.

Similarly, Dr. Davis also believes that setting the student's early college mindset early on will disrupt inequities. She shares that after having students return in person following the pandemic she focused on transition, "summer bridge, coming off of a gap year, to give them some intentional support." Additionally, she is strategic in her course planning and sets support systems in place for her students. For most students, this is the first time anyone in their family will be in college, therefore, to eliminate any obstacles, all her freshmen students are enrolled in a course that assigns each student a teacher facilitator who is responsible to mentor the student in college knowledge skills. Dr. Davis states, "you really set the foundation in that class, it can really be life changing for the whole four years that you're in the program."

Dr. Abella has built a campus culture of student empowerment in her school to disrupt inequities. For most of her students, this is the first time that anyone in their family will experience the rigors of college. To set them on a pathway of success, she has established a mentorship program that is student led and allows students to support each other in the college process. Dr. Abella describes this program as a strategy that supports her students and enables them to assist their peers as they face challenges, as a result it keeps them driven to pursue their educational goals. Dr. Abella shares the following about the mentorship program.

I feel we've established a really strong foundation. And we really rely on our older students, our seniors, our juniors, even our sophomores. They are always mixed in with our younger classmen, like our freshmen and our sophomores. And so, those students learn throughout the process because we have a mentorship program and they're paired together, that they can rely on the upperclassmen to ask. We have found in our program that when they hear it from one of their peers, it really resonates with them. I think that the mentorship program that we've established really, really helps. And they also see, oh there's Ashley, Ashley the cheerleader, and she's in NHS and she's in Student Council. I want to be like Ashley, Ashley is going to graduate with all these chords, and they see the upperclassmen as models. So, they know that if Ashley can do it, they can do it.

Building Student's Sense of Belonging and Self Advocacy. All the principals in the study believed that for underserved, underrepresented students to succeed in college they must be empowered to recognize that they belong and have a voice. The principals acknowledged the importance of creating opportunities to enhance their students' sense of belonging. All four principals are devoted to building up their students by practicing inclusivity that will promote motivation, self-efficacy, and self-advocacy to shape their readiness for postsecondary success.

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When Dr. Pais became the principal, he recalled the need to create a culture of belonging for his students who are majority first-generation college bound and who live in afflicted neighborhoods. He transformed his school by setting high expectations for his staff that focused on creating a welcoming culture that celebrates all students. He explains how he and his staff empower their students to believe in themselves.

So, the thing that we do here is making sure that every student is able to connect to the school, that every student is able to connect as a Cougar and the spirit of the school. And I don't just mean like football games and things like that, but ensuring when I got here, that students were able to feel like they belonged. And by creating different things for them, whether it be through more leadership programs, more student council, more pep rallies, more involvement in extracurricular activities, the involvement in academics and providing more academic successes for them. Making sure that teachers understood what their role was and how we had to do more for students because there was not a connection right there, and students weren't able to connect. So really making students feel, letting, or allowing them to be accepted as who they were. Valuing who they are in the big scope of things as a school, and caring for them... But making sure that we talked to every single student was one of my goals, so that they understood what they needed to do as high school students . . . I guess really acceptance of every student, connecting them to something. Teachers are now understanding that we accept everybody no matter of what color of skin, no matter what ideals, no matter of religion. Everybody can be a part of our program in our schools. Every year students feel like they belong.

Dr. Pais emphasized the importance of leaders focusing on their students. He shared that he has learned that underserved, poverty-stricken students may lack self-confidence. Therefore,

he makes it his mission to get to know his kids and sets them up for success, "I worked closely with them to give them opportunities to lead." Dr. Pais is cognizant that students may spiral when they lack a sense of belonging, an obstacle that too many students find difficult to withstand. Nevertheless, he is confident that his team is prepared to help students overcome this uncertainty, "they're feeling a sense of accomplishment, they're feeling a sense of pride and belonging."

Dr. Davis shared that she prioritizes arming her students with self-confidence commencing in their early years on campus. She disclosed that her underrepresented students may face academic obstacles that devalue their scholastic abilities, so she takes a proactive approach to disrupting those barriers by encouraging them to believe in themselves and use their voice.

I think you can do anything you put your mind to, but definitely the support, and I'm giving that competence early, because it's all about persistence and confidence, and getting that self-efficacy, you know, building through the system. And so, I think if, yeah, if you got to take a class, like, oh, it's your third time, retaking this class, you know, it just kind of does something to your self-esteem. You know, it's like, oh, well, maybe college isn't for me, because this is just the junior college, it isn't even four year you know, and it gets bigger. But I really believe that you can, you know, you have that family support and school support, you know, you can really overcome those things . . . put in work academically to be successful . . . You need to reach out to your professor, come up with a plan, and do what you need to do. So, having those conversations.

Additionally, Dr. Davis mentions that her strategic approach to student self-advocacy creates opportunities for them to connect to the community and work together to promote social

justice issues. This provides them real life experiences of learning how to advocate for themselves when they are faced with life obstacles. For instance, she discusses how her students engaged in the events that transpired across the country and found their voice to speak up.

> So just making more of a connection with the community and change, enlighten our students. Like our students have spoken out and met with, you know the mayor, and the police chief and just really getting involved in things that you know transpired through George Floyd, Black Lives Matter, and continuing, so I've been really proud of them to see them advocate for themselves.

When asked about how she addresses inequities, Dr. Hill shared that she wants all her students to know that they have a purpose. It is evident that Dr. Hill is committed to making all her students feel welcomed and part of the campus family, she shares the following, "I always said that I never wanted another child to experience the feeling of not belonging, belonging to a community of learners has been a big motivator." She leverages on her campus community to prepare students for life challenges by igniting their self-discovery. Dr. Hill takes pride in her students and the steps they have taken to find their voice, because it will assist them in navigating through college and life. She shares the following about the importance of self-advocacy, "they learn about advocating for themselves, because once they, you know, go into the college classes they have to be able to use that."

Dr. Abella promotes all her early college students to be involved. She shares that she has observed that student involvement boosts the campus culture and motivates student's belongingness. She shares that she is witnessing how this momentum is also impacting her student's resilience.

Because we want all of them to be not just, you know, in a student council

organization, but to be in as many organizations as possible, and to bring about

like a positive change to the culture. So, when our teachers start seeing the great

things that our students are doing it bolsters them in a sense to say I want to make

sure that I'm part of this team, that I'm part of this, this great thing that's

happening. And vice versa, like the student may see, oh you're that teacher you're

the decathlon coach, and I see all your medals in your classroom, and I see the

plaques. I want to be there. I want to join that team, so a lot of it is just the scene

and the doing and putting it out there and making sure that everybody you know

kind of joins in, and we kind of move forward with this momentum.

Finally, Dr. Abella stress the importance of embedding opportunities for students to collaborate

and learn from each other in the classroom. She revealed that this strategy allows them to find

their voice and be prepared to use it as they move along their educational pathway, "they learn

from each other, and they learn to strategize and to ask questions and to advocate for

themselves."

Engaging Latinx Parents

The principals in the study share those disparities among Latinx parents often result in a

lack of parental involvement. All four principals in the study agree that parental involvement

plays a vital role in the academic and postsecondary success of their students. Each principal

demonstrated awareness about the high aspirations that Latinx parents have for their child to

succeed. While engaging Latinx parents can be a challenge, each principal shares their relentless

commitment to parents by establishing parent connections and enabling parents with college

knowledge to support their child's postsecondary attainment success.

Parent and School Connections. The principals in the study shared those disparities among Latinx parents often resulting in a lack of parental involvement. All four principals in the study agree that parental involvement plays a vital role in the academic and postsecondary success of their students. Each principal demonstrated awareness about the high aspirations that Latinx parents have for their child to succeed. While engaging Latinx parents can be a challenge, each principal shares their relentless commitment to parents by establishing parent connections and enabling parents with college knowledge to support their child's postsecondary attainment success.

Dr. Pais expressed eagerness as he discussed the educational tools, he wants to give his families to assist their children "we need them to help support their child at home." Dr. Pais had this to share about the importance of making the parent connection as he sets goals to help to inform the parents on how they can make a difference in their child's school success.

One of my goals for this coming year at my campus to provide those things because what I've seen is that a lot of our students who are first generation or whose parents don't know about college don't understand the importance of the study skills and the habits that students need to have in order to be successful in the course. So, providing those opportunities whether it is to students at the campus, whether it's to their parents, that educating the parents on what it's going to take to be a college student, what it's going to take as a parent to help support the students to and through these courses through their high school years to get them to college, to understand that right.

Dr. Pais further shares that it is important for leaders to establish family connections, so they are familiar with their student's home environment and can provide additional support to families, because most do not come from privileged home settings.

I'm doing this for you, because a lot of our underserved students whose parents don't have

a say in their education, or maybe it's not because they don't have an interest, but because

they're working, or they're trying to provide for their family for clothes, for gas, things

like that.

He shares that several of his students are faced with poverty and live with hard working parents

that work relentlessly, so their children can have a fulfilling life.

Dr. Davis shares that communication can lead to increased parent involvement;

communication piece is so important…they deserve the information just as much." She makes it

a best practice to visit different businesses and libraries that are in proximity to her student's

neighborhoods to make certain that families have access to school communication materials.

We send out a weekly newsletter. And so that's key to that communication piece to the

families. Then making sure that they have access to our counselors, you know, when they

have questions or whatever it is.

Moreover, she makes these remarks regarding the importance of interacting with parents in their

native language and applying these practices of communication this past year throughout the

pandemic.

And so even on zoom, we had a translator on there that could speak fluently in case we

needed to have a breakout room, or you know, another session. And then of course, it

requires us to have our marketing brochures in both English and Spanish, or we're

sending out the message via school messenger, making sure they're in English and

Spanish.

Dr H said the following about working with families that have language barriers:

We don't work just with the student, but it's a family . . . it's the same concept with early college, this is a family thing, you know, we've got to work with parents, we got to work. So, you know, I have a lot of parents who are hesitant about even volunteering or coming to the school because they don't feel like they're knowledgeable enough. They feel like language can be a barrier, and just their background in general is a barrier. And so, we try to remove all of those. We work hard to remove all those barriers, by doing a lot of one on ones with families. We might have a joint session, and then break off into breakout groups. And one of the things that we are very big on, is making sure that anything that takes place here is a dual language, Spanish, and English because we don't want that to be a barrier.Dr. Abella demonstrates her heartfelt commitment to her students by also focusing on "helping parents." She is committed to helping her parents get involved by providing them with professional development educational opportunities. She shares the following:

> For our parents, we have the family involvement conference. . . We have coffee with the principal, every month, and during those sessions that parents can come to campus, or they can log in virtually and there's usually an agenda and we cover certain talking points that we want to address to our parents such as, you know progress reports are coming out, or this is what a credit means now that your students in high school. It's like just little topics throughout each month that we cover and then we open it up to question and answer.

Parent College Knowledge. The four principals in the study acknowledged that a great proportion of their Latinx parents have a lack of college knowledge. Additionally, the challenge is intensified when there is a language barrier, and their child is a first-generation college student. The principals shared that the lack of families understanding college can lead to their

students not pursuing their postsecondary endeavors. All four principals believe that they need to lead the efforts in educating their parents with college preparation information, so their children continue in a trajectory of college success.

Dr. Pais discloses that the lack of a college going culture at home can impact a student's decision to pursue their postsecondary education to provide for their family. He shares that he is committed to educating parents on the benefits of letting their children go to college. He passionately communicates the following narrative:

There are still some students that still won't want to go right, or they are scared of going, and I think that one of those reasons is leaving their families behind. I think that we have to do better as a Latinx community, as a Mexican American community too, because we think we do good as a school district by exposing them, and getting them connected, but I think a limiting factor is their family at home, saying like, if you stay, you know, instead of going. . . and not letting our children take a risk, and take a step out, but that's our culture, it goes back to our culture. I feel too, the Latinx culture of providing for your family and getting a job and helping your family, especially if they don't have the means to do well for themselves, or if I leave, who's going to take care of them, or I'm going to go to school for four years and not make any money, and who was going to be helping with the bills at home . . . we need to do more for our parents too, who may not know exactly, you know that there are no risks. So, to speak, if they let their students go to college, how it's going to better their children, and then in turn as a family. To change some of those things, to change that trajectory of the path in which they're on, to better help them. I think we've come a long way, as a Latinx community, to overcome that, but I still think that it is not enough.

Dr. Hill mentions that one of the contributing factors in the lack of college knowledge is that most of her Latinx parents have never attended college, so they lack the understanding of financial assistance opportunities. She takes a proactive approach of educating her first-generation students and parents by holding frequent individual conferences and workshops for them.

Finance is the barrier, and we don't want it to be a barrier. And so that's why we, even in our district, put on a financial aid workshop. We have college access advisors in my building here, he puts on a financial aid workshop. He has individual conferences with every senior at the very beginning of the year, ending of their junior year, and beginning of their senior year to talk to them about the importance of financial aid and the process to apply. We have a lot of families, you know that are hesitant to reveal their financial information and so it's working with not just the student but working with the entire family in a secure way, so that they don't feel that they cannot apply for scholarships or financial aid. More emphasis is placed there next to you know, getting accepted, applying, and accepted to a university.

Dr. Abella mentions that the student's parents are integral in their child's college process. She is a proponent for teaching her parents about college, so they can support their child's postsecondary education, "I want to make sure that our parents know about college. . . It's a learning process for them too." Dr. Abella sets systems in place in her campus to bring the parents for the journey of college with their child. Her initial step is to demystify financial aid because she has found that the lack of understanding keeps families from sending their children to college.

Knowledge is everything and making sure our students and parents know when they fill

out the FAFSA, the ins and outs, like what they're applying for, how they're filling it out,

and to do so as soon as possible you know, making sure that we get everybody ready to

go. I think once they leave high school, the biggest thing that I've seen is, it's financial,

and then it's the family.

Dr. Abella also shares that she tries to prepare her students for college, but on many occasions,

"It's the parents that don't want them going off, they can't go . . . They want them to stay home."

She shares circumstances that she has experienced with families that find it difficult to let their

child go, because they play a role in the family livelihood.

So, it's a constant battle. I think the culture might have something to do with it, or a lot of

our kids, they're the oldest in their family, and I saw that, especially during COVID,

you're going to stay home because you need to watch your brother and sister. You know

that kind of thing. No, you're not going to go and compete in sports anymore because you

need to stay home and you know to watch your brother and sister, and I know sometimes

it's hard for the family because the parents can't provide the childcare, because they're

working so much, and then it's too expensive to have childcare, you know, why are we

working if we're going to have to pay for a sitter so they use the oldest child, you know,

in the family to be that caretaker, or sometimes the oldest child in the family becomes

part of the income, so that child has to work. I've seen it where my students may not be

able to take as many college classes just because they're working so much, after hours,

and so that really, that really hinders things as well.

Dr. Abella is determined and continues to explore strategies to educate her parents by involving them in campus college initiatives and keeping them informed with aspirations that her students will reach postsecondary success.

Preparing Principals for Social Justice

All four principal participants have earned a doctoral degree from a university in different geographical areas in Texas. Each has had different experiences with social justice preparation that took place in their graduate course, or by pursuing their own equity-focused professional growth. All four principals agree that there is a demand for principal preparation programs and professional development that build capacity for social justice leaders that emphasize equity orientated practices that address the changing demographics.

Dr. Davis had this to share about social justice leadership readiness, "I personally went after it myself. No one has given it to me." She also had a suggestion on how to prepare principals and discloses that there is a need for principals to receive social justice professional development opportunities, in the same way that teachers do.

> I would say it is needed . . . Like, when you start the school year like teachers, hey, we need to take, you know, three, hours' worth of math, and three of this, and you know whatever to get your annual compliance in. There's not like a social justice strand or thread . . . But as far as a leader that says something, I'm truly passionate about and I think is important to do this work and important to allow students to be their whole selves and really push for opportunities that they need, and be that mouthpiece for them, you know.

As Dr. Hill reflects, she shares that for the duration of her early career, there was no mention of social justice, though it existed. She recalls gaining a multicultural lens during her

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doctoral program. She mentioned that with the changing demographics across the country, she believes that social justice preparedness would make ready leaders to support and respond to the needs of underserved students.

> There is going to continue to be social injustice, but us knowing how to respond to social injustice. I think that just a couple of months ago, when they were getting ready to release the verdict of George Floyd, I remember my assistant superintendent called a meeting of the high school principals so we could brainstorm on what we do if students react to the verdict, whether they were for it, or against it. As a leader, how do you respond? So, I think because you are in a leadership position, your school is what you are. And I think it would do well to integrate social justice practices.

Dr. Abella vividly recalls taking one course in her undergraduate studies that tapped into social justice. Additionally, she recollects having some professional development opportunities as a teacher to learn about how poverty impacts children. Moreover, she shares that social justice is not a strategic component of her district's professional development plan, "It comes kind of in waves, I saw it at the very beginning of my educational career . . . I haven't seen it since, it's kind of reemerged recently, but it hasn't been like at the forefront of things." Although her district does not provide a social justice leadership strand, Dr. Abella's self-drive and commitment to her students obliges her to embed equitable practices in her campus.

> But again, it's something like I haven't really, you know, I don't have like a checklist, we haven't covered this, and it's kind of like something that just comes naturally, like you just expect it, or you act on it, because we do teach. We have kids that we supervise and that we educate, and so we want to make sure everybody, everybody is, you know, counted and everybody matters.

This is what Dr. Pais said when asked the question on his experiences with social justice leadership preparedness.

I don't feel like I was prepared with the social justice component of leading, or as a topic either, in my undergrad, or my master's level, or my doctoral, or even at the district level. To be provided those professional developments for administrators to know what it is, and what do we do, and I would even say that even as a district. Maybe we do things that maybe are not called social justice, we help towards it, but it's not a term that you hear frequently in our district. I don't think in many districts, not even in this region . . . what are we doing to prepare these leaders that are facing this new type of student, right? And so, giving them the tools that they need to be successful in social justice . . . I think that we do need more, there needs to be more conversation around it, and more information shared so that we are able to properly prepare them right.

Dr. Pais has described his championing for social justice leadership preparedness that can arm campus leaders with the knowledge to successfully lead equitable schools that meet the needs of students.

Summary

The purpose of practicing social justice leadership is to build equitable schools that make every effort to support all students to attain academic and postsecondary achievement. This qualitative study was driven by the need to cultivate a deep understanding of early college high school social justice principals that disrupt inequities for underserved, underrepresented Latinx students and support them on a pathway to postsecondary success.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To begin to understand the principals committed to social justice, it is necessary to investigate who social justice leaders are and why they do this work.

Theoharis, 2007

Social justice leadership recognizes the essential role that leaders play in transforming the school culture to best support underserved, underrepresented students (Zembylas & Iasonos, 2016; Theoharis, 2007). Trujillo & Cooper (2014) acknowledge, "social justice leaders consider why and how schools are unjust for some students, and they imagine the role schools and principals can play in reconstructing a healthy social order" (p.146). Building school cultures contextualized in social justice necessitates principals who engage in a vital starring role that encourage and convey that equity approach (Wang, 2015). The literature affirms that school leaders should be in the forefront of school transformations that equate to equitable and just environments (Theoharis, 2007).

Research on early college high schools exists, however a gap in literature reveals that "there is an absence of studies that specifically address the ways in which leaders enact justice" (Theoharis, 2007, pg. 222). Moreover, the literature indicates the need to examine the role of the principal and their contributions to the school's accomplishments, because "little to no research has examined the role of the principal specifically in facilitating students' postsecondary preparation" (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018, p.272). The literature points to a substantial gap regarding the impact of principal leadership on school success (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018). As a result, the unsettling disparities in the nation's educational system calls for social justice leaders who recognize the essential role that they play in creating a socially just culture

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for underserved and underrepresented students (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014).

As the pandemic obliged school systems to shut down, COVID 19 brought light to the inequities, heightened by that crisis, faced by marginalized students today (Simmons, 2020). As schools across the nation become more troubled by social and inequality concerns, principals must assume the role of promoting and guaranteeing equitably just campuses for increasingly diverse populations (Furman, 2012). Schools in the nation are rapidly diversifying and will necessitate principals that can lead with social justice. Social justice-oriented principals are essential to create equitable schools that afford opportunities for underserved, marginalized, minority students that have faced a negative history in our nation's educational system (Hammonds, 2016).

Participants

The principals involved in the study serve predominantly economically disadvantaged Latino students. All participants have served in their early college campus for at least two years and have one graduating class. Additionally, each principal holds a doctoral degree and has a background in the realm of social justice.

All four early college principals led varied early college high school models in different geographic areas across Texas that differentiated from 160 to 1,761 in student enrollment. One principal was male and three were female with their ages ranging from 39 to 62 years old. Additionally, their years of experience as early college high school principals differed from two to eleven years. The principals participating in the study have 15 to 39 years of experience in the field of education.

Statement of the Problem

Demographics across the country are quickly shifting and diversifying to predominately

economically disadvantaged minorities with Latino's now the majority of student populations in schools throughout the country thus representing the major current and future workforce (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2019). Just 11.0 percent of Latinx adults have attained a bachelor's degree compared with 23.7 percent of White adults (Education Trust, 2014). Moreover, the scholarly literature exposes the increasing afflictions of inequalities faced by underserved, underrepresented, minority students in school systems across the United States (Jean-Marie, 2008). As a result, equity and social justice is a primary concern for educational practitioners that recognize the need for social justice principals who can lead schools which afford an equitable education that promotes academic and college preparedness for all students (Barnett et al., 2015; Miller & Martin, 2014). To build on the limited extant literature regarding how principals enact social justice, this study investigated the strategies implemented by several early college principals in Texas that have successfully disrupted inequities for the fast-growing Latino minority population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies implemented by early college principals and seek to understand the social justice leadership approaches that strive to close the academic and college preparedness gaps for underserved and underrepresented Latino students. While some limited similar studies have been conducted, this study is unique in that the context of COVID-19 amplified challenges of leading on both metropolitan and rural campuses in deep South Texas close to the U.S./Mexico border. Research has consistently indicated that economically disadvantaged students in the U.S. are less likely to connect to college and complete a post-secondary degree compared to their more privileged peers (Hersh & Merrow, 2005; Madrid, 2011). Hence, this study is critical particularly as the population of this

region ranks 149th in educational achievement among similar metropolitan areas (McCann, 2020). The challenges of educating students in deep South Texas requires principals that lead with social justice and equity mindsets.

This chapter includes dialogue and future research opportunities to support answering the research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of early college high school principals regarding the strategies needed to implement support of Latino students' postsecondary preparedness?

2. How do early college principals execute social justice?

Analysis of Data Summary

The purpose of exercising social justice leadership is to foster equity in schools and close the gaps for underserved, underrepresented students that will lead to academic, as well as postsecondary achievement. Early college principals execute social justice by implementing equitable systems that support student's postsecondary preparedness and is in the following four themes: (a) Social Justice Leadership, (b) Addressing Inequities, (c) Engaging Latino Parents, and (d) Preparing Principals for Leading Social Justice. Some considerations relate primarily to the individual, their experience with the realm of social justice, and some are a combination of both elements. All the factors contribute to disrupting inequitable systems for Latino students.

Social Justice Leadership

Trujillo & Cooper (2014) stated that social justice principals are reflective, visionary leaders that utilize their leadership to establish equitable campuses for underserved, under-represented students who are encountering unjust school environments. Something that came through from all the principals in this study is their commitment to be reflective leaders that act

and create a positive environment and bring upon meaningful change by championing solutions aligned to the campus vision and goals. Each principal is aware that their leadership actions impact a student's trajectory, therefore, they strive to demonstrate a robust commitment to fairness, equitable access, opportunities, and resources for student achievement. Furthermore, this study meets Furman's (2012) call for examples of social justice in praxis in the field.

"Social justice ingrained into the very being of the social justice leader means that each decision, every aspect of that principalship, and all details of the school are examined and seen from a social justice perspective" (Theoharis, 2008, p. 20). All the participants in this study share social justice parallels thru their shaped identity which is influenced by their personal experiences and upbringing which motivates them to advocate for equitable schools for all students. Moreover, the findings from this research concur with Theoharis's conclusions, because all four principal's viewpoints promote justice and disrupt inequalities.

Case studies have uncovered that social justice principals are committed and persistent leaders (Feng & Chen, 2018; Theoharis, 2008). Social justice principals hold a prominent commitment to equity and focus on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools for underserved, underrepresented students (Albritton et al., 2017; Freire, 1970). The findings of this research concur with these studies because all the participants demonstrate these rightful qualities through their varied personal experiences and social justice leadership. Additionally, each leader provided genuine examples of leading for social justice and actively engaging in disrupting inequities for Latino students. Each of the relentless high school principals said that they take ownership for their leadership and are willing to take risks by tackling inequities and developing solutions that will challenge the status quo.

Addressing Inequities

When asked the question about the contributions that social justice leadership makes to disrupt inequities for underserved, underrepresented students the consensus was that it has a positive impact on equity. A study by Zembylas & Iasonos (2016) suggests that social justice leaders confront inequalities with various approaches that consist of constructing an environment of belonging, rising student attainment, increasing the essence of teaching, and advocating inclusion, access, and opportunity. The findings of this study indicate that each principal designs systems and structures to support all students for optimal academic and postsecondary success. All the principals implemented conventional strategies that centered on equitable access, campus culture of success, student's sense of belonging, and student self-advocacy.

A researched solution for unyielding inequalities is graduating from college (Lin, 2001). A study by Duncheon and DeMatthews (2018) suggests that early college high school principals apply a variety of strategic instructional leadership practices to advance a school's college and career readiness trajectory. This research provided insight into the social justice strategies that were implemented by all four principals to support underserved, underrepresented students in acquiring the academic and college preparedness proficiencies and understanding of how to be successful in college. The aggregate findings of this study indicate that social justice principals inspire change by addressing barriers, challenges, and resistance to create support structures so students can have an equitable pathway to success. The principals encourage collective collaboration and motivate staff, as well as students to assume responsibility and be prepared in pursuing postsecondary excellence.

According to Wang (2015) the vision of social justice emphasizes the important reality that educational systems ought to empower students with the essential skills to bring forth

change in social order that will lead to virtuous communities across the country. To address

inequities, all the principals interviewed had the same perception about the necessity to build up

student voice, empowerment, and self-advocacy for underserved, underrepresented students. The

four principals enabled students by providing opportunities through mentorship programs,

leadership, and courses that resulted in a mind shift which promoted greater equality.

Engaging Latinx Parents

Irrespective of elevated college ambitions by students, completion disparities continue to

be a hindrance, corresponding to ethnicity, household income, and the level of a student's

parental education (Kena et al., 2015). Moreover, Latinx families are habitually led by parents

with limited English language and a marginal education compared to other racial groups

(Gandara, 2009). The outcomes of this research support the literature assertions of how Latinx

parents' inequalities can impede a student's education. The principals mentioned that language

barriers, parent's knowledge of the educational system, poverty, and their educational level can

influence a student's decision to pursue a postsecondary education. All four principals in the

study indicate that Latinx parents have high aspirations for their child, but disparities often cause

a deficiency in parent involvement. Moreover, each principal agrees that parental involvement is

essential, therefore, forming parent connections and empowering parents to obtain the skills and

confidence to help their children will have a positive effect on a student's educational trajectory.

Rodriguez et al.' eight factors that bring about a decline in college enrollment included

that Latinos enter the workforce to offer financial support toward the family, lack of college

knowledge, and failure to understand the benefits of acquiring a college degree (Rodriguez et al.,

2014). This study offers insight into the motivations of social justice principals to actively lead

the efforts to educate parents with college knowledge and reveals student's rationales behind the

struggles they face at home when there is a lack of college culture understanding by their families. The principals disclosed that many students feel compelled to enter the workforce and assist in supporting the family, no matter how much they want to attend college.

In a study by Duncheon (2020) the participants came from traditionally underrepresented populations who were Latinx, economically disadvantaged, or first generation college students, suggesting that their parents were not college graduates. The early college model targets the population described by Duncheon, and this research supports the notion that most Latinx parents have never attended college. Additionally, this study found that parents need the understanding of college knowledge and to learn about the benefits of earning a college degree. All the principals in this research clearly indicated their interest in empowering parents with college knowledge, so they can support their child's postsecondary success and increase the Latinx college degree attainment.

Preparing Principals for Leading Social Justice

In a study, Duncheon (2020) signifies that most administrator school preparation programs focus on preparing leaders for traditional school settings, whereas the early college high schools prioritize serving underserved, underrepresented students that call for social justice leaders. The findings from this research support the underlying literature that principalship program's primary focus is to prepare leaders that work in conventional school settings and fail to provide principals with social justice leadership competences to address the changing demographics. The principals in this study indicated that they were not prepared to lead for social justice in their education administration programs, and each voiced a call for action designed for the presence of social justice leadership programs that prepare leaders to strategically address the needs of underserved, underrepresented students. Moreover, all the

participants in this research agree that there is a need for principal preparation programs that emphasize on equity-oriented practices to develop capacity for social justice leaders.

Miller & Martin (2014) signified the demand for principals to be prepared to confront diversity and social justice in schools to address the academic disparities among underserved students. In a study conducted by Theoharis (2007) principals disclosed that they did not feel that their preparation programs had prepared them to lead for social justice. This research supports the notion that principals need proactive strategies for equity and social justice work to close the marginalization gaps that exist. The findings in Kose (2009) indicate a need for coherent principal preparation programs with course offerings and internships that focus on social justice. All the principals in the study indicated the need to embed social justice coursework in school administrator programs. Others mentioned that they pursued their own staff development opportunities by joining organizations that advocated for social justice. Every participant agreed that there needs to be an increased focus on social justice leadership preparation programs that prepare leaders to build equitable campuses.

Albritton et al. (2017) stresses that educational leaders are inspired and shaped by preparation programs to grow into social justice and community service leaders. Although, it is important to note that the literature findings attest to the lack of emphasis of social justice within leadership preparation programs. This research supports the perception that social justice leadership school administrator preparation programs and professional development empowers and prepares principals to serve underserved students. All four participants in this study have earned a doctorate degree and have an insight to social justice, along with being encouraging pillars in their community. Regardless of their insight to social justice, each principal in this study expressed that they have had to champion their own social justice readiness by going after

it themselves. Each principal conveyed that leading for social justice calls for integrating social

justice into principal preparation programs that will mold individuals and provide a deep

understanding of preparing school leaders to advocate for social justice.

Implications and Significance of the Study

Zembylas & Iasonos (2016) stated, "In the last decade, there has been a growing

acknowledgement that school leadership may not always serve the entire population . . . social

justice leadership recognizes the important role leaders play in school development and

transformation to benefit marginalized students" (p. 289). According to Feng and Chen (2018) as

educational systems continue to be afflicted by inequalities, principals are anticipated to

encourage and safeguard equitable, just schools that ensure diverse, disadvantaged populations

receive an equitable education. The research of Trujillo and Cooper (2014) revealed that there

are few details and studies about the practice and preparation that aspiring leaders need to

acquire for social justice leadership. This underscores the relentless necessity for social justice

leaders that enact justice and be prepared to support underserved students in today's diversifying

nation.

This study is significant for it contributes to the existing literature of social justice

leadership because it shared the perspective of social justice early college principals that are

devoted to disrupting inequities for predominately economically disadvantaged Latinx students.

It is clear that principals must enact social justice to create equitable learning environments that

maximize student achievement and college access for underserved, underrepresented students.

This study provided insight and examined strategies implemented by social justice early college

principals to promote the academic and postsecondary success of Latinx students. Wang (2015)

acknowledges that school leaders play a decisive role in establishing and championing social

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justice schools. The principal's willingness and motivation to champion social justice despite barriers, challenges, and resistance speaks to other school leaders. Educational leaders must consider the context and student demographics of their schools, then seek social justice leadership and implement equitable strategies that create successful student outcomes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study situated in Texas, where educational attainment must improve, supported by committed social justice principals, can impact stakeholder groups and ways to support critical impact on underrepresented student postsecondary success and the preparation of social justice leadership in the educational systems across the nation. These findings can also support innovation in principal preparation programs which must shift away from traditional pedagogies and prepare social justice leaders that are ready to face the educational crisis of disparity (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014). Additionally, inquiry is needed to understand the new Texas 268/368 principal exam that came into effect in September 2019 and includes Standard VI Ethics, Equity, and Diversity, as one of six standards (Texas Education Agency, 2019). A recommendation for future research is to utilize the social justice principal themes and attributes from this study to explore how they have yielded principals grounded to equity before the Texas 268/367 Standard VI Ethics, Equity, and Diversity was included. The findings parallel with the literature affirming that principal leadership contributes to school success (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018).

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPLICATION

Date: July 13, 2021
To: Gerri Maxwell
CC: Gerri Maxwell, Linda Uribe, Vedika Salunke
From: Office of Research Compliance
Subject: Exempt Determination

Dear Gerri Maxwell,
On 07/13/2021, the Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi Institutional Review Board
reviewed the
following submission:

Type of Review: Submission Response for Initial Review Submission Packet
Title of Study: Social Justice Early College High School Principals Disrupting Inequitable
Systems for Latino Students
Principal Investigator: Gerri Maxwell
IRB Number: TAMU-CC-IRB-2021-0064

Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi Institutional Review Board has reviewed the above-
referenced
submission and has determined the project is exempt. This submission was approved by the
review process in
accordance with the policies and procedures of the Human Research Protection Program.
**Therefore, this
project has been determined to be exempt from IRB review under the following category:**

Exempt Category: Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational
tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or
observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the
following criteria is met: i. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a
manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through
identifiers linked to the subjects; ii. Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the
research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be
damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or
reputation; or iii. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that
the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers
linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination
required by .111(a)(7).

You may proceed with this project.

This approval corresponds with the versions of the application and attachments in the electronic
system most
recently approved as of the date of this letter.

A Reminder of Investigator Responsibilities: As principal investigator, you must ensure:

1. **Informed Consent: Ensure informed consent processes are followed** and information presented
enables individuals to voluntarily decide whether to participate in research.
2. **Amendments:** This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and
does not apply should any changes be made. **Any planned changes require an amendment** to be submitted to the IRB to ensure that the research continues to meet the criteria for exemption. The Amendment must be approved before being implemented.
3. **Completion Report: Upon completion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a Completion Report must be submitted**.
4. **Records Retention: All research-related records must be retained for three (3) years** beyond the completion date of the study in a secure location. At a minimum, these documents include the research protocol, all questionnaires, survey instruments, interview questions and/or data collection instruments associated with this research protocol, recruiting or advertising materials, any consent forms or information sheets given to participants, all correspondence to or from the IRB or, and any other pertinent documents.
5. **Adverse Events:** Adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately.
6. **Post-approval monitoring:** Requested materials for post-approval monitoring must be provided by the dates requested.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact us at irb@tamucc.edu.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Ballard, JD
Office of Research Compliance

APPENDIX B: IRB, CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

Protocol Title: Social Justice Early College Principals Disrupting Inequitable Systems for Latino Students

Principle Investigator: Dr. Gerri Maxwell

Study Objectives:
The purpose of the study is:
1. To explore the strategies implemented by early college principals and seek to understand the social justice leadership approaches that disrupt for underserved and underrepresented Latino students.
2. To contribute to research based on perceptions of successful college preparedness strategies implemented by social justice principals for economically disadvantaged students in the country who are less likely to connect to college and complete a post-secondary degree compared to their more privileged peers (Hersh & Merrow, 2005).
3. To bring attention to the changing demographics in the school system that will call for principals that lead with social justice.
4. This research can provide potential solutions to disrupt academic and college preparedness inequities for underrepresented students in our nation.

Background:
Educational systems in the United States are becoming increasingly diverse requiring social justice principals that challenge inequities and embed equitable structured support systems that will enhance the academic success and college preparedness for underserved, underrepresented students (Hammonds, 2016). We are living in the present time where social justice issues have come to the forefront of realization exposing and intensifying the inequities faced by underserved, underrepresented, marginalized students in our nation's educational system (Simmons, 2020). The research indicates a substantial literature gap that indicates the need to examine the role of the principal and recognizes the impact that principal leadership contributes to school success (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018). Moreover, the gap in literature reveals disparities in the nation's educational system calls for social justice leaders who recognize the essential role that they play in creating a socially just culture for underserved and underrepresented students (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014). School leaders, district leaders, public servants, and researchers can benefit from this study and discover ways effective social justice leader's practices impact college preparedness and postsecondary transition success for underrepresented students. Additionally, the findings will add to the literature and inform institutes of higher education principal preparation programs in what ways to prepare principals for social justice.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:
- Be a principal who potentially holds a doctoral degree and leads an early college high school.
- Serve a student population of 75% or more economically disadvantaged Latino students.
- Serve in an early college high school that carries a Title I designation.
- To establish social justice leadership, the principal practices should include professional development and knowledge in the realm of social justice.
- impact and reduce inequities in postsecondary success.
- Principal must have served at the early college high school for at least two years and have one graduating class.
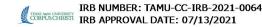
Study Recruitment:

Study Locations

- Two one-hour virtual interviews will be requested from each participant in the participant's natural setting and will take approximately an hour to complete.

Protocol Title: Social Justice Early College Principals Disrupting Inequitable Systems for Latino Students

Principle Investigator: Dr. Gerri Maxwell

Study Objectives:
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1. To explore the strategies implemented by early college principals and seek to understand the social justice leadership approaches that disrupt for underserved and underrepresented Latino students.
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- impact and reduce inequities in postsecondary success.
- Principal must have served at the early college high school for at least two years and have one graduating class.

Study Recruitment:

Study Locations

- Two one-hour virtual interviews will be requested from each participant in the participant's natural setting and will take approximately an hour to complete.

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A
RESEARCH STUDY AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI**

**SOCIAL JUSTICE EARLY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS DISRUPTING INEQUITABLE
SYSTEMS FOR LATINX STUDENTS**

We are asking you to be a part of this research study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before you make a choice to participate.

WHO IS DOING THIS STUDY?

Linda Uribe, doctoral candidate led by Dr. Gerri M. Maxwell is conducting this research study. Other research professionals may help the researcher.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the strategies implemented by early college high school principals and seek to understand the social justice leadership approaches that disrupt inequities to close the academic and college preparedness gaps for underserved and underrepresented Latino students.

WHO CAN BE IN THIS STUDY?

We are asking you to be a part of this research study because you are an early college high school principal in Texas.

To be eligible to be in this study, you must:
- Be a principal who potentially holds a doctoral degree and leads an early college high school.
- Serve a student population of 75% or more economically disadvantaged Latino students.
- Serve in an early college high school that carries a Title I designation.
- To establish social justice leadership, the principal practices should include professional development and knowledge in the realm of social justice.
- impact and reduce inequities in postsecondary success.
- Principal must have served at the early college high school for at least two years and have one graduating class.

4 subjects will participate from various geographic locations in South Texas. 7 subjects will be asked to be in this study at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IN THIS STUDY?

Being in this study involves answering questions in an interview with the researcher.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be in this study for up to three weeks.

If you decide to be in this study, the following things will happen:

- Your participation will **involve collecting information about you**. See Appendix: Study Procedures- Collecting Information to learn more.
- You will be **asked to answer some questions** by an interview with the researcher. Participants will be asked to take part in a series of two virtual interviews that will take about 60 minutes each. See Appendix: Study Procedures- Questionnaire to learn more.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

There are certain risks in this study. The main risk may include:

- You will be asked questions about: Social justice leadership, disrupting inequities for Latino students, college preparedness strategies, and social justice leadership preparation. Some questions may be embarrassing or uncomfortable to answer. Sample questions that you may be asked are: Are you familiar with the term social justice? If so, how would you describe social justice leadership? Do you think social justice leadership can contribute to disrupting inequities for underserved, underrepresented Latino students? How do you implement strategies that disrupt college access inequities for underserved, underrepresented Latino students? Can you describe yourself as a social justice educational leader? You do not have to answers questions you do not want to. You can exit the survey and stop at any time.
- Your participation will involve collecting information about you. You do not have to give any information to the study that you do not want to give. There is a risk of loss of confidentiality. Your confidentiality will be protected to the greatest extent possible. See Appendix: Confidentiality Risks to learn how your information is protected.
- If you choose to participate in this study, your interview will be audio and video recorded. Any audio and video recordings will be stored securely in a password protected file. Any recordings will be kept until it has been transcribed and de-identified. After transcription, the recording will be permanently deleted.

If you have any problems with the risks mentioned above or changes in the way you feel about being in the study, you should tell the study team as soon as possible.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

There may be no direct benefit to you from being in this study. Possible benefits may include learning more about social justice leadership that disrupts inequitable systems for Latino students. By being in this study, you may help researchers learn more about strategies to improve underrepresented, underserved student's postsecondary success and principal preparation programs that prepare social justice leaders.

PROTECTING MY INFORMATION

This study is confidential.

When information collected about you includes identifiers like name, date of birth, addresses, email, phone number, the study can involve confidential information.

Your information will be protected by:
- Restricting access to only authorized personnel, storing data in password-protected, secured location, etc. Some examples are provided below.
- The interview once transcribed will be anonymized (a process by which identifying information is removed) by using pseudonyms (a fictious name). The interview recording will be deleted after transcription.
- Using de-identified information: All direct personal identifiers have been permanently removed from the data. No code or key exists to link the research information to your identifiable information.
- Using coded information: Your direct personal identifiers will be removed from the research record and replaced by a code. The key that links the code to your personal identifiers are stored separately from the research record under restricted access.
- All research records will be kept securely.
- A password protected research record will be created and kept in a personal hard drive owned by the researcher
- Research records will be seen only by authorized research team members.
- We will share your information only when we must, will only share the information that is needed, and will ask anyone who receives it from us to protect your privacy.
- No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any report that might be published or presentation.

Once data analysis is complete, your identifiers will be removed from the research data, after such removal, the de-identified information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator
for future research studies without additional informed consent from the subject or the legally authorized representative.

WHAT ABOUT EXTRA COSTS?

Participation in this study will not result in any extra costs to you. You will not have to pay anything extra if you are in this study aside from the personal time and travel costs it will take to come to all of the study visits.

WHAT WILL I RECEIVE FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO BEING IN THIS STUDY?

Instead of being in this study, you may choose not to participate.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A STUDY PARTICIPANT?

Being in a research study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you choose not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

What if I change my mind?

You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

WHO SHOULD I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS?

Dr. Gerri Maxwell is in charge of this research study. **You may call Dr. Maxwell at 361-825-6034 with questions at any time during the study.**

You **may also call Ms. Linda Uribe at 956-207-7727 with any questions you may have.**

You may also call Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Institutional Review Board (IRB) with questions or complaints about this study at irb@tamucc.edu or 361-825-2497. The IRB is a committee of faculty
members, statisticians, researchers, community advocates, and others that ensures that a research study is ethical and that the rights of study participants are protected.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

The purposes, procedures, and risks of this research study have been explained to me. I have had a chance to read this form and ask questions about the study. Any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction. A copy of this signed form will be given to me.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

STUDY PERSONNEL

I have explained the purposes, procedures, and risks involved in this study in detail to:

_____

Print name of Participant

Any questions that have been raised have been answered to the individual's satisfaction.

_____   _____
                                                    _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date   Time

Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent _____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Please do not participate in this interview if you are under the age of eighteen.
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS
CHRISTI INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN
SUBJECTS.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE EARLY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS DISRUPTING INEQUITABLE
SYSTEMS FOR LATINO STUDENTS**

Interview Protocol

1. What are your years and experience as an early college high school principal? Tell me a little about yourself personally and professionally depending on your comfort level in sharing that information, please. Which university did you attend to earn your doctoral degree? What doctoral degree do you hold?
2. Are you familiar with the term social justice? If so, how would you describe social justice leadership?
3. Can you describe yourself as a social justice educational leader?
4. Describe the importance of social justice leadership in the role of a principal?
5. What contributes to your social justice leadership motivation?
6. What have been your experiences with social justice leadership preparedness?
7. Do you think social justice leadership can contribute to disrupting inequities for underserved, underrepresented Latino students? If so, please explain. If not, please explain why not.
8. What is your vision for leading social justice schools that prepare students for postsecondary success?
9. How do you implement strategies that disrupt college access inequities for underserved, underrepresented Latino students? How often?
10. What do you perceive are limiting and contributing factors of facilitating social justice in the campus?
11. Does student's lack of equity influence their academic and postsecondary success?
12. What impact do you think social justice leadership has had on the culture of the school?
13. What do you think is the biggest obstacle in achieving postsecondary preparedness for Latino students?
14. Are there any comments you would like to add?

APPENDIX E: NIH CERTIFICATES

		Completion Date 08-Apr-2021
		Expiration Date 07-Apr-2024
		Record ID 41930740

This is to certify that:

Irma Linda Uribe

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher
(Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w66b32695-0c6a-465f-9e96-58f8c010e440-41930740

Linda Uribe

956.207.7727| drlinuribe@gmail.com

Academic
Doctor of Education

Texas A&M Corpus Christi
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
December 2021

Superintendent Certificate

Lamar University
Beaumont, Texas 77710
August 2016

Principal Certificate

Region One Instructional Leadership Development Program
Edinburg, TX 78541
August 2007

Master of Counseling and Guidance

The University of Texas Pan American
Edinburg, Texas 78541
May 2002

Bachelor in Interdisciplinary Studies Minor: English

The University of Texas Pan American
Edinburg, Texas
December 1997

Professional Experience

PSJA Executive Officer for College Readiness (July 2016-Present)
Leads to improve the district's college and career readiness program and services to support the district's goal that every student graduating from high school is college and career ready. Assists campuses in the day-to-day efforts of campus improvement by supporting campus-based personnel with the overall administration and campus level operations of the district wide college readiness program. In collaboration with high school principals and early college campus/district leadership teams, develop, lead, and monitor implementation of Early College and PTECH College and Career Ready Plan to drive post-secondary metrics and goals. Planning,

scheduling, and development of dual enrollment programs between Institutions of Higher Education and Early College High School. Serves as the district liaison to higher education partners. Expand dual enrollment pathway options and agreements, Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with post-secondary institutions. Leads, supervises and monitors planning and implementation of dual enrollment and PSJA Academies. Assists with the development of schools' master schedules to ensure equitable access to college and career pathway completion for all students. Facilitates district level learning community (Early College District Leadership Team) of school leaders, IHE Partners and faculty to examine initial findings and experiences, troubleshoot problems, and refine design and approaches. Responsible for the College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) of schools and ensure each student and school is academically successful. Support the development, implementation and evaluation of K-12 College and Career Readiness Programs/Awareness. Supervise College Readiness, Career Technical Education, Counseling & Guidance, and College Transition Specialist to meet student's college and career readiness needs and drive college and career ready, post-secondary outcomes.

PSJA North Ealy College High School, Principal (2016-2013)
Create a safe environment and college going culture for students and staff. Instructional leader; bring together and focus all the educational resources and support services available in the delivery of the best possible educational program and services to students. Provide leadership in establishing educational goals for the school. Provide leadership in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluation of curriculum and instructional programs. Supervision of instruction to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the teacher -student system. Collaborate with stakeholders to improve the learning environment. Monitor academic, college and extra and co-curricular activities to provide all students an early college experience. Collaborate with all stakeholders in obtaining the campus vision to increase student academic success and get all students college ready, college connected and college complete.

PSJA College, Career & Technology Academy, High School Principal (2013-2010)
Foster a positive learning environment for dropout students to engage them to begin college and earn a high school diploma at the same time. Create a sense of belonging for students. Supervision of instruction to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the teacher -student system and conduct regular visits to the different classes in which the teachers are engaged. Work together with the teachers to improve the learning environment. Work with all stakeholders towards the campus vision to increases student academic success. Monitor academic and college initiatives to provide all students at an early college experience.

PSJA North Early College High School, Early College Director (2010-2009)
Oversees implementation of ECHS program. Hire and supervises all program management staff within the ECHS budget. Schedules college course sections for ECHS, ensuring ECHS faculty/section correspondences. Provides all enrollment services for ECHS students. Provides campus orientations and support services to college faculty teaching at the ECHS. Facilitates faculty participation in college orientation and professional development activities. Serves as a resource for district guidance and counseling to facilitate student enrollment in the ECHS. Oversees provision of student support services, including on-site academic testing where necessary to ECHS students taking classes on high school campuses. Assists high school staff

with logistics related to college textbooks. Guides collaborative efforts to support effective delivery of services. Communicates openly and effectively. Along with the principal, reviewed and approve or recommend modifications to new or existing programs. Assisted in yearly teacher evaluations, assisting in providing guidance to staff and students, and encouraging a positive climate in the school.

PSJA North Early College High School, Assistant Principal (2009-2007)
Worked directly under the principal and helped coordinate, direct, and plan the academic or auxiliary activities of the school. Supported committees of staff and parent that function to improve the learning and social environment of the school for the students. Managed and facilitated the teachers, counselors, staff, and students daily. Master Scheduler for campus. Along with the principal, reviewed and approve or recommend modifications to new or existing programs. Assisted in yearly teacher evaluations, assisting in providing guidance to staff and students, and encouraging a positive climate in the school.

PSJA North High School, Counselor (2007-2002)
Advocate for all students. Planned and advised students in their academic and college paths. Guided students in with academic, emotional, and social services. Collaborated with school administrators and teachers for student well-being and success. Also, worked with students to improve their studying and test-taking skills, and provided guidance and advisement for student course selections to meet on-time graduation requirements. Advised students about what college majors to pursue based on interests. Provided workshops for student and parent engagement.

Teaching Experience, **Carnahan Elementary and LBJ Middle School** (2002-1998)
Create a nurturing and welcoming learning student environment. Plan, organize and implement an appropriate instructional program in an elementary or secondary learning environment that guides and encourages students to develop and fulfill their academic, emotional, and social potential. Plan, prepare and deliver lesson plans and instructional materials that facilitate active learning. Encourage and monitor the progress of individual students and use information to adjust teaching strategies Participate in department, and school parent meetings. Communicate necessary information regularly to students, colleagues and parents regarding student progress and student needs. Observe and evaluate student's performance and development.

Professional Awards

2021 Texas A& M Corpus Christi Fall 2021 Outstanding Graduate Nomination
2014 AASA National Women in School Leadership Award Recipient
2014 AASA National Women in School Leadership Award Finalist
2014-2015 Region One High School Principal of the Year
2014-2015 Texas Principal of the Year State Finalist

National and State Conferences Presentations

- ➢ National College Board Preparate Conference Presenter, San Antonio, Texas
- ➢ Texas College, Career Best Practices Leadership Conference Presenter, Plano, Texas
- ➢ South Texas Early College High School Conference, Edinburg, Texas

- ➢ High School Graduation Initiative Conference Presenter, Washington DC
- ➢ Postsecondary Learning Exchange Presenter, Washington DC
- ➢ Rural Dropout Prevention and Recovery Webinar Series Presenter, Department of Education
- ➢ Postsecondary Bridging- Building Pathways to College for All Students, Presenter, Department of Education
- ➢ Can provide additional professional presentations upon request

Professional Affiliations

Texas Association of Secondary
American Association of School Administrators
American School Counselor Association
National Association for College Admission Counseling