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Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders in Community Colleges in Texas: A Narrative Study

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Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders in Community Colleges in Texas:

A Narrative Study

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Estrella Barrera

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mom who has been my inspiration. She was the first and only one in her large family to attend college. She earned her degree in education and taught reading in middle school for many years. She is known as the "pioneer" of education in our large extended family and has been an inspiration to our *familia*. I love you mama!

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"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). I thank God for being my source of wisdom and for blessing me with the right people I needed at the right time to guide and support me.

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To my mom, thank you for raising me to be a strong, brave, and passionate woman. To my brothers and sisters, thank you for always believing in me.

Finally, to my husband, Rudy, I always knew I had your support. Through the long grueling days and weekends, you made sure I had everything I needed to get to the finish line. Thank you for patience, encouragement, and most important, your love. You now have me back for weekend activities. To my granddaughters, Jacqueline, and Aurora, I'll always remember how you sat with me as I was studying and writing, you too were "studying and writing." You fill my life with joy.

Abstract

This study aimed to understand the factors influencing the leadership development of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders serving in Texas community colleges. As the Latino and/or Hispanic population continues to grow, understanding the experiences from middle school to college is critical to gleaning insights into the factors that influence the development of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders. Using a narrative life span approach to leadership development, the study provided themes regarding the critical factors impacting leadership development across the life span of the participants. Through life stories, the study's findings described and illustrated key factors that influenced leadership development for the participants. Through the thematic analysis process, three prominent themes emerged as the most influential factors in leadership development, (1) relationships, (2) regional culture, and (3) socioeconomics. Subthemes included (1a) personal, (1b) professional, and (2a) border towns and other regions of Texas, (2b) language, (2c) discrimination, and (3a) education. Three key conclusions included (1) relationships, and regional cultural experiences represent critical life span factors influencing leadership development, (2) socioeconomics represents the influences on educational experiences, and (3) experiences of discrimination represent critical factors influencing leadership practices. Further, this study contributes to the scholarly literature on community college leadership by expanding the understanding of experiences for Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in community colleges in Texas.

Keywords: Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders (LHMLs), community colleges, leadership development, life span

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to 2020 census data, Latinos and/or Hispanics are the second-largest racial or ethnic group in the United States, with a 2.4% increase compared to a 5.9% decrease in Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Furthermore, statistics showed this demographic will double by the year 2050 (Colby & Ortman, 2015), making the Latino and/or Hispanic population approximately 30% of the people in the United States (Carales, 2020). Parker et al. (2019) asserted the United States is becoming "more racially and ethnically diverse," and current demographic trends indicated that the continued growth of the Latino and/or Hispanic (LH) population might tremendously impact our society (p. 62). Consistent with this population data, higher education institutions in the United States will continue to experience an increase in the enrollment of LH students in colleges and universities (Flink, 2018). For the purposes of this study, the term Latino and/or Hispanics (LH) is defined using the Census definition of "Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

According to National Center for Education Statistics (2021), between fall 2009 and fall 2019, enrollment of "Hispanic students in higher education increased from 2.4 million to 3.5 million," a 48% increase, with many enrolling in community colleges (p. 1). Moreover, Latino/a students represent 34% of the total enrollment in higher education in U.S. colleges and universities (Carales, 2020). With open access to community colleges, enrollments outweigh those of four-year institutions (Villarreal & Garcia, 2016); however, the concern is Latinx men are entering community college but not completing, which is higher than any ethnic/racial group (Chavac, 2021).

In summary, research has determined that LH access to higher education through community colleges is essential (Carales, 2020; Carter & Patterson, 2019; Chavac, 2021; Fry, 2011; Garcia & Garza, 2016; Rodriguezstate et al., 2019; Sanchez & Morgan, 2020; Vasquez et al., 2020) because LH students in higher education increased 31% in 2000 to 36% in 2016 (NCES, 2019). Colleges and universities forecast they will continue to see the increased enrollment of LH students entering their institutions (Chavac, 2021; Flink, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to understand Latino/a students' journey in higher education as their success is needed to preserve a strong and competitive global economy (Carales, 2020; Murdock et al., 2015). Chavac (2021) and Rodriguezstate et al. (2019) highlighted the disparity between Latinas and Latinx men in community colleges, with Latinx men falling behind in degree completion when compared to Latina students.

Context

Community Colleges

Community colleges are the most "responsive segment of higher education in meeting the immediate needs of local communities and are vital to sustaining the competitive edge of North America in the 21st century" (Lowry & Thomas, 2017, p. 46). The concept of community colleges dates to the third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. President Jefferson "supported the idea that an education should be practical as well as liberal and further championed the cause that education should be accessible to large segments of people" (Boone, 1997, p. 2).

From the 18th to 19th century, legislation laid the foundation of today's community colleges. The 20th century propelled community colleges into the ecosystem of higher education (Eckel & King, 2004). According to Kilgore and Wilson (2017), "Community and technical

colleges hold the primary role in awarding certificates and associate degrees in the United States" (p. 7). In the 21st century, enrollment in community colleges continued to expand, enrolling 38% of all postsecondary students in the United States (Hernandez, 2017). Specifically, community colleges enroll over 10 million students yearly, providing a gateway to higher education for underrepresented students (Bailey et al., 2015; Kilgore & Wilson, 2017). Community colleges are the pathway for social and economic mobility for students and the communities they serve (Eckel & King, 2004).

Community Colleges in Texas

The history of community colleges in Texas dates to the 1890s, with arguably the first junior college in the country, Decatur Baptist College, followed by the first publicly funded junior college established in 1922 (Tuttle, 1976). After that, the junior college/community colleges expanded rapidly in Texas (Tuttle, 1976).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the name changed from "junior college" to "community college," and most Texans found themselves living within 50 miles of a community college (Sears, n.d.). Texas community colleges served communities, making higher education available to all citizens across the state (Sears, n.d.). The number of public community college districts in Texas grew from forty in 1968 to fifty in 1995 (Sears, n.d.). According to the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) website:

> Texas community colleges change lives through social and economic mobility; value transformational change, transformational thinking, and transformational leadership; and envision a thriving, forward-looking Texas where all students have an opportunity for education beyond high school. (TACC, n.d.)

As of 2021, the State of Texas had 79 accredited community colleges with an enrollment of 792,026 students (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB] Almanac, 2021). According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2017) and Community College Association of Texas Trustees (2019), in Texas alone, community colleges make up the largest higher education sector in the state, with approximately 46.1% of enrollment. Tajalli and Ortiz (2018) argued, "as early as 1997, Texas state demographer Steve Murdock commented on the social and economic consequences of the prevailing demographic changes if the Hispanic population is not pulled into the institutions of higher education" (p. 330).

However, completion rates in Texas community colleges "remain disappointingly low" (McKinney & Hagedorn, 2017, p. 160). Statistics suggest that community colleges struggle with Latino and/or Hispanic students' persistence and completion rates (Sanchez & Morgan, 2020). More specifically, Saenz and Ponjuan (2011) argued, "the future of our nation's Latino male student population is in peril" (p. 4). This crisis has implications for our country's "future economic prosperity and the well-being of our rapidly growing Latina/o communities" (p. 4). Likewise, Villareal and Garcia's (2016) and Chavac's (2021) research also supported the concern about Latinx men entering community colleges but not graduating or transferring to a 4-year institution. To conclude, Texas is focused on improving the success of Latino male students in community colleges (Saenz et al., 2013) as their success or lack of has long-lasting effect on society and the economy (Rodriguez et al., 2018).

Latino and/or Hispanic Men in Texas Community Colleges

Over the past decade, there has been more focused research on Latino and/or Hispanic men in higher education. For example, Ayala and Contreras (2019), Baker and Robnett (2012), Clayton et al. (2019), and Garcia and Garza (2016) highlighted the challenges Latino and/or

Hispanic males (LHMs) face in higher education. For example, in a 10-year longitudinal study by The Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color, only 36.5% of Latino men in the cohort studied had enrolled in a higher education institution, and fewer than 9% completed a credential (Ponjuan et al., 2017). This gap continued to be a problem in Texas community colleges. Moreover, Ballysingh et al. (2017) and Garcia et al. (2019) added to the literature by emphasizing how institutions need to support Latino and/or Hispanic (LH) male students. Saenz et al. (2015) took steps in Texas to support Latino male students in higher education by developing Project MALES (Mentoring to Achieve Latino Education Success) to continue to close the achievement gap. Closing this gap will help ensure that the pipeline of Latino and/or Hispanic men will fill leadership roles in higher education (Rodriguez et al., 2018).

Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders in Texas Community Colleges

Having a pipeline of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders ready to serve in Texas community colleges is also challenged by the concerns of the Latino and/or Hispanic male student struggles in higher education (Rodriguez et al., 2018). According to Hernandez (2017), "Community college leaders play a significant role in broadening pathways to post-secondary degrees and increasing Latinx/a/o student success" (p. 17). Thus, leadership lenses may provide a perspective to study this population within this context, positively impacting the success of LH students (Garcia, 2017).

Hernandez (2017) argued there is a "void of Latinx/a/o perspectives in both higher education leadership research and practice" (p. 15). Despite growing numbers of Hispanic and/or Latino students in higher education, Latino/a leadership lacks representation in postsecondary institutions (Rodriguez et al., 2016). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) CEO Characteristics webpage, "81% of community college presidents are

white, non-Hispanic" (AACC, 2017). Riggs (2009a) argued vice presidents, deans, and other mid-level leaders are the ones who have the most significant impact on the performance of an institution. Yet, there is a "pervasive devaluing of the important contributions made by mid-level administrators" (p. 3). Supporting those concerns, Rodriquez et al. (2018) argued less research has focused on the "experiences of Latina/os in higher education administrative levels, in particular of Latina/os in mid-level leadership positions and their trajectory" (p. 99). Consequently, there is an opportunity for developing underrepresented groups in mid-level leadership in community colleges (Eddy, 2018). As a result, this lack of representation may impact Hispanic and/or Latino student persistence and completion in higher education (Hernandez, 2017).

In summary, it is critical to explore the narratives of Latino and/or Hispanic males (LHM) with leadership development lenses in the context of community colleges in Texas. As there are several ways to study leadership, this study is significant because it provided a new perspective on the leadership development of LHM leaders in community colleges. This study sought to capture stories and add to the scholarly literature on community college leadership. This perspective is further explained as the concept proposal unfolds.

Theoretical Lens

Critical Race Theory

Legal scholars initially used critical race theory (CRT) to challenge the limited ways issues of race, class, and gender was taught in law school and written about in law review journals" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 110). Then, in the early 90s, it emerged in education scholarly work to assess inequality in education. Ladson-Billings (1998) argued that CRT could and should be "unmasking and exposing racism in its various permutations" within education (p.

11). Moving to the 21st century, while more minorities are in leadership roles in colleges and universities, inequalities persist, especially for ethnic minorities in leader roles (Arday, 2018). Scholars commonly use CRT to give a "voice" to marginalized people in the context of higher education.

Rodriguez et al. (2016) argued CRT could be used to "explain the positive influence that diverse school leaders have on school settings that serve diverse student populations" (p. 141). However, CRT alone cannot address the multidimensional identities of Latinos that are broader than race/ethnicity (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004); therefore, Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) is addressed next.

Latino Critical Race Theory

LatCrit is rooted in the critical race theory in the 1990s, with its value in qualitative research (Arriola, 1997). Commonly used with CRT, it provides "theoretical space to analyze experiences of language and immigration among other lived experiences rooted in the resistance and oppression of Latinas/o" (Davila & De Bradley, 2010, p. 40). It has been used to analyze personal narratives and storytelling of minorities for many years (Aleman, 2009a; Barnes, 2011; Chang & Fuller, 1999; Fernandez, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002).

Over the past 30 to 40 years, scholars have an advanced understanding of how racism influences and shapes postsecondary institutions and their leadership representation (Amiot et al., 2020; Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018; Gasman et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Although Amiot et al. (2020) argued, "the theory has been underutilized as an inventory lens applied to school leadership practice" (p. 200). For this study, LatCrit provided the best framework for me to analyze explicitly and understand the stories (Ayala & Contreras, 2019) of

LHM leaders in community colleges. Therefore, I must also understand leadership development

to capture the stories of LHM leaders in community colleges (Murphy & Johnson, 2011).

Leadership Development

Research on the leader and/or leadership development spans a wide array of theories and

formal and informal development methods with no consensus on the definition of leader

development or leadership (Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2016; Day et al., 2014; Kaiser &

Curphy, 2013; McCauley & Palus, 2021). For this study, the description of leader development

by Liu et al. (2021) is used. They argued leader development is the "process by which one

increases his or her ability to exercise influence in leadership situations that become increasingly

more complex and varied, during the lifespan process with multiple developmental stages and

various contexts" (p. 4). Day et al. (2009) and Kolb (2014) also argued leader development

occurs through practice, feedback, and self-reflection, and it is experiences over time that shape

how leaders learn to lead (Liu et al., 2021; Nica, 2013).

With this argument, narratives from LHM leaders and their development in Texas

community colleges have been collected and analyzed. Additionally, a developmental model was

included in this study to help me understand the narratives from the context of lifespan and how

leadership development is promoted by growth in every stage of the person's life (Brungardt,

1996). This study used Liu et al.'s (2021) definition of leadership development, which argues that

"leader development occurs through experiential windows across the lifespan" (p. 5). These

experiential windows include six stages: (1) nascent, (2) externally driven, (3) experimental, (4)

self and opportunity oriented, (5) purpose-driven, and (6) legacy-making (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Leader Development Model
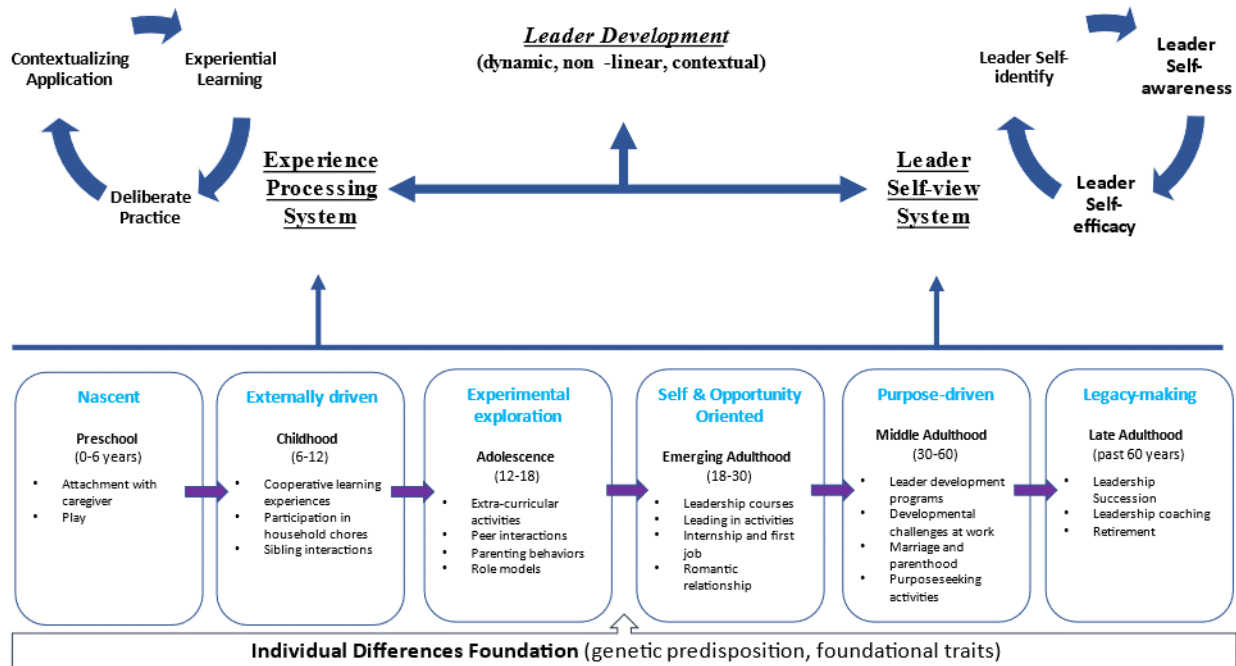
Note. Adapted from "Leader Development Across the Lifespan: A Dynamic Experiences-Grounded Approach," by Z. Liu, S. Venkatesh, S. E. Murphy, and R. E. Riggo, 2021, *The Leadership Quarterly*, *32*(5), p. 4 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101382). Copyright 2021 by Elsevier. Used with permission (see Appendix H).

For the purpose of this study, a focus on Stages 3-5 were considered, as described by Liu et al. (2021; see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Leader Development From Adolescence to Middle Adulthood
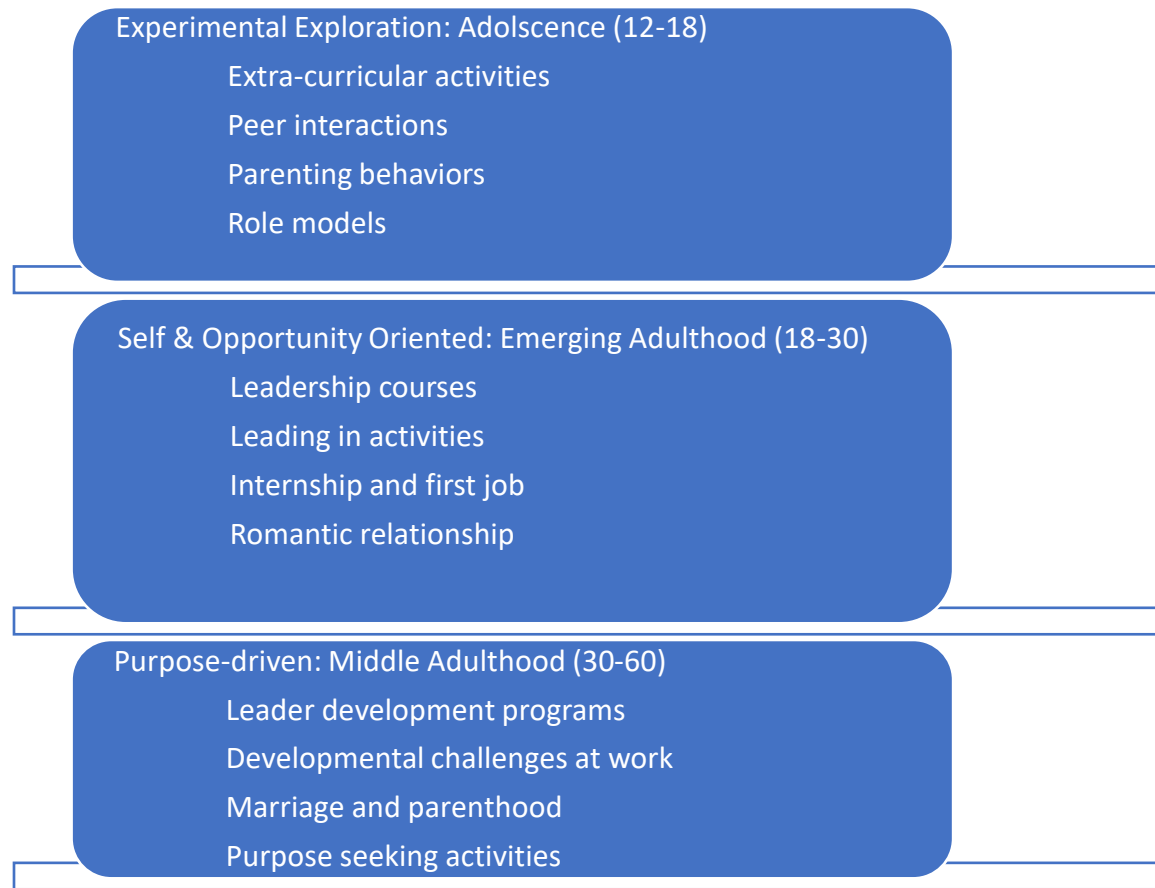
Experimental Exploration: Adolscence (12-18)
- Extra-curricular activities
- Peer interactions
- Parenting behaviors
- Role models

Self & Opportunity Oriented: Emerging Adulthood (18-30)
- Leadership courses
- Leading in activities
- Internship and first job
- Romantic relationship

Purpose-driven: Middle Adulthood (30-60)
- Leader development programs
- Developmental challenges at work
- Marriage and parenthood
- Purpose seeking activities

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Note. Adapted from "Leader Development Across the Lifespan: A Dynamic Experiences-Grounded Approach," by Z. Liu, S. Venkatesh, S. E. Murphy, and R. E. Riggo, 2021, *The Leadership Quarterly*, *32*(5), p. 4 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101382). Copyright 2021 by Elsevier. Used with permission.

I did not discount the importance of leader development from preschool and childhood; however, this study focused on leader development from adolescence to middle adulthood. Scholars such as Brownell and Brown (1992), Erikson and Erikson (1998), Lord and Hall (2005), Lord et al. (2016), and Shondrick et al. (2010) argued that the developmental period from zero to six is when children are engaging in play. During this preschool age, engaging in play

begins to "influence an individual's lifelong leader development" (Liu et al., 2021, p. 5). In the years between six and twelve years, children are engaged in home and school activities that "foster the growth of their communicative, cognitive, and social skills" (Liu et al., 2021, p. 6), which are foundational to later leader development (Liu et al., 2021). Next, I further explained the leader developmental stages from adolescence to middle adulthood.

Experimental Exploration: Adolescence

As stated previously, this study focused on the lifespan covering adolescence to middle adulthood. During the transition period of adolescence, physical, emotional, and mental changes occur in individuals in the process of self-identity and how they fit in the world (Erikson & Erikson, 1998; Liu et al., 2021). Individuals are "grappling with questions of self-identity such as Who am I? and How do I fit in?" (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008, p. 205). Guerin et al. (2011), in longitudinal research data, found the adolescent time of development to be "predictive of leadership potential over a decade later in adulthood" (p. 491).

Furthermore, Liu et al. (2019) and Murphy (2011) have also argued that adolescence is a critical stage for learning and practicing leadership skills. Liu et al. (2019) asserted that "one's behavior, personality, and skills are more malleable at the sensitive period of adolescence than in adulthood" (p. 12). However, despite the crucial developmental stage, there is limited research on how adolescence develop leadership skills during this time of development (Liu et al., 2019).

Self and Opportunity Oriented: Emerging Adulthood

Liu et al. (2021) used emerging adulthood from the scholarly work done by Arnett (2000, 2004). This stage covers the ages of 18-30 (Liu et al., 2021). Arnett, who coined the term "emerging adulthood," explained that this lifespan is considered the most intense time in adult development as many postpone significant life events such as marriage and parenthood until

their 30s (Arnett, 2004). During this stage of development, emerging adults may engage in sports, student government, school or community clubs/organizations, internships, and first jobs (Liu et al., 2021). Additionally, during this time, some may participate in formal or informal leadership development programs and take on leadership roles that help increase "leadership readiness and strengthen and shape leader identity" (Liu et al., 2021, p. 8).

Purpose-Driven: Middle Adulthood

The stage of middle adulthood development is between the ages of 30 and 60 (Liu et al., 2021). During this lifespan, individuals are aging, shifting, and balancing "gains and losses, so that gains typically are expected to be higher in proportion to losses in childhood and early adulthood" (Lachman et al., 2015, p. 24). Individuals may seek leader development programs and developmental challenges at work (Liu et al., 2021). During this stage, individuals are more focused on purpose-driven experiences. The scholarly work by Lacerenza et al. (2017) found that individuals during this stage look for leadership development opportunities that foster purpose and that are meaningful.

In addition to understanding leader development from a lifespan perspective, Liu et al.'s (2021) leader development model include two systems or mediators [experience processing system and leader self-view system] between experiences and leader development. The first system or mediator is the "experience processing system," which includes "experiential learning, deliberate practice, and contextualizing application on leader development" (Liu et al., 2021, p. 9). The second one, "leader self-view," includes leader self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-identity (Liu et al., 2021). Next, I will expand on the two systems or mediators included in the leader development model.

Experience Processing System

Experiential Learning

Liu et al. (2021) built on the construct initially developed by Kolb in 2014, suggesting

that learning occurs from previous experiences and is a continuous process. Therefore, Liu et al.

(2021) asserted that for "effective experiential learning, individuals need to have concrete

developmental experiences, review those experiences, reflect on their performance, and

implement the lessons learned" (p. 11). This experiential learning process is focused (Cathcart et

al., 2010) and provides intentional experiences to learn and develop skills (Guthrie & Jones,

2012).

Deliberate Practice

Engaging in activities that are deliberate and structured supports the development of

skills, and Liu et al. (2021) asserted this type of practice "can effectively enhance experiential

learning because it can enable one to perform tasks with a clear intention." (p. 11). Day et al.'s

(2009) work also supports the use of deliberate practice as an essential role in a leader going

from a novice to an expert.

Contextualizing Application

Several scholars have studied how context is used in leadership theory and practice in

recent years (Ayman & Lauritson, 2018; Day & Liu, 2018; Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Zaccaro et

al., 2018). Liu et al. (2021) asserted the "application of experience through context works

between deliberate practice and new experiential learning in the experience process system" (p.

11). In other words, it is a continuous process of building leadership skills through deliberate,

experiential learning and applying them to a leadership context (Liu et al., 2021). Next, I

explained the second system or mediator in the leader development model. The self-view system

of the cyclical process includes leader self-awareness, self-efficacy, and leader self-identity (Liu et al., 2021).

Leader Self-View System

Leader Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is an integral part of a leader's development and includes the ability to recognize one's strengths and weaknesses and interpersonal influence on others (Day et al., 2009; Hall, 2004). Furthermore, Gardner et al. (2005) asserted that "gaining self-awareness means working to understand how one derives and makes meaning of the world around us based on introspective self-reflective" (p. 375). Self-awareness has been prized as critical to self-efficacy and competency in leadership development (Showry & Manasa, 2014).

Leader Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy has been defined by Bandura (1982) as "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (p. 122). Murphy and Johnson (2011) also argued that motivation is also part of self-efficacy, and without it, "it is unlikely that the leadership role will be pursued" (p. 465). Self-efficacy directly affects leadership performance in any context (Liu et al., 2021).

Leader Self-Identity

Liu et al. (2021) asserted "an individual's identity is multifaceted" (p. 12) and "relates to the way an individual perceives himself or herself in relation to "others" in the environment" (Hall, 2004, p. 154). The work by Day et al. (2009) and, more recently, Lord et al. (2016) also supported self-identity as a development process and includes the person identifying themselves as a leader.

These two systems or mediators interact dynamically with each other across the lifespan of leader development (Liu et al., 2021). The dynamic interaction between these two systems or mediators allows for a richer understanding of how "humans interpret and interact with the external environment and how leader development occurs in a dynamic experiences-grounded way" (Liu et al., 2021, p. 12).

Liu et al.'s (2021) leader development model has expanded on the extensive work of several scholars (Day, 2011; Kolb, 2014; Liu et al., 2019; Murphy, 2018; Murphy & Johnson, 2011) and provided the framework for this study. A lifespan model offers this study the "lens" to explore the leader development of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges.

Problem Statement and Significance

Despite the growing number of Latino and/or Hispanic students in community colleges, there continues to be a lack of minority representation in leadership (Garcia, 2020; Gutierrez et al., 2002; Rodriguez et al., 2016). As previously stated, there is an opportunity for developing underrepresented groups in mid-level leadership in community colleges (Eddy, 2018). Using CRT, more specifically, LatCrit (Ayala & Contreras, 2019) and a leader development lens (Castillo et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021; Quatro et al., 2007) is critical to studying LHM leaders in community colleges.

Dayton et al. (2004) found diverse faculty and staff to be crucial as they brought awareness and helped institutions understand "some of the common challenges minority students face" (p. 34). They further argued that Latino leaders could use their personal experiences to help institutions better understand the needs of minority students on their campuses (Dayton et al., 2004). The lack of LHM leader representation may impact Hispanic and/or Latino student

persistence and completion in higher education (Hernandez, 2017). This study is significant because it provided an understanding of the narratives of LHM leaders with a leader development lens in the context of community colleges in Texas.

There are several ways to study leadership (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Helms, 2012; Jepson, 2009; Raelin, 2020; Spoelstra, 2013). Spoelstra (2013) argued from his research that "leadership always presents itself in the form of an image that would give the follower access to something of a higher order" (p. 186). This study contributes to theory and practice because it provides a qualitative perspective on the theoretical approach to leadership development (Bystydzienski et al., 2017; Hernandez & Longman, 2020) of LHM leaders in community colleges using a critical lens (Denzin & Giardina, 2016; Patton & Haynes, 2014). Therefore, this study captured their "voices" and "recorded" narratives, contributing to the scholar-practitioner literature on community college and leadership studies. Furthermore, the results of this study may assist Texas community colleges' awareness of how LHM leaders develop and serve in these institutions.

Community colleges face the challenge of already qualified leaders in the pipeline, ready to step in and lead as leaders in complex environments (Ebbers et al., 2010; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Eddy & Garza Mitchell, 2017). With retiring leadership in higher education, mid-level leadership positions are likely to be in the pipeline for senior-level administrators (Eddy, 2013; Hernandez & Longman, 2020; Riggs, 2009b; Rodriguez et al., 2016). Therefore, this study adds to the understanding of the leadership development of LHM leaders in community colleges in the 21st century. Studies on leadership development can provide insights into both application and context (Burmicky, 2022; Castillo et al., 2020; Gutierrez et al., 2002; Mango et al., 2019; McCauley & Palus, 2021; Santamaria et al., 2014; Seibert et al., 2017; Zheng et al., 2021). No

known research has sought to understand narratives of Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMs) in the context of Texas community colleges and how their experiences may impact their development as leaders. Therefore, understanding the Latinos and/or Hispanic male (LHM) Leaders' narratives on their leadership development in Texas community colleges can provide knowledge and insights that can contribute to research and practice. This insight may enrich Latino and/or Hispanic leadership scholarly literature and may provide valuable insights for improving institutional policies and practices to decrease the equity gaps in persistence and completion rates for LHM students (Santiago et al., 2017).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this life story narrative was used to understand the critical factors, namely, their lived dynamic, nonlinear, and contextual experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood on the leadership development of Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) in community colleges in Texas. Leadership development was generally defined for this study as lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) across the lifespan (Liu et al., 2021), focusing on adolescence into middle adulthood and individual differences. For the purpose of this study, Latinos and/or Hispanic males are defined using the Census definition of "Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

Research Questions

Two broad questions provided the lens to guide this study. As the inquiry progresses, others could have been added.

RQ1: How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male leaders (LHMLs) understand the impact of critical factors, namely, their lived dynamic, nonlinear, and contextual experiences from

adolescence to middle adulthood on their leadership development in community colleges in Texas?

RQ2: How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) understand the impact, if any, of their identified critical factors on their leadership development in community colleges in Texas?

Positionality Statement

Positionality is a researcher's lens that "may predispose someone towards a particular point of view; however, that does not mean that these necessarily automatically lead to particular views or perspectives" (Holmes, 2020, p. 2). Furthermore, according to Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998), "positionality involves the notion that since our understanding of the world and ourselves is socially constructed, we must devote special attention to the differing ways individuals from diverse social backgrounds construct knowledge and make meaning" (p. 3). Therefore, as I researched Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in community colleges, I was aware of how my background may influence the study.

As a Hispanic woman raised in south Texas, 15 miles from the border of Mexico, my "world" was surrounded by a majority of Hispanics. However, my parents, grandparents, and extended family always commented that the Whites had positions of power in our community. As an adult, I have two older brothers who have shared their stories of experiencing racial discrimination growing up and through their journey in higher education. I have uncles and male cousins who have also shared the social injustices they experienced. These experiences impacted their life trajectory, with many achieving high success, yet many never achieving their dreams of graduating from higher education.

That was the paradigm I lived in for a long period of my life. When I moved to north Texas and started my career in healthcare as an occupational therapist, I was one of a few "professional" Hispanics, with most Hispanic employees working in housekeeping or groundskeeping positions. As a healthcare worker, I witnessed the social injustices against patients of color. The disparities in the services and quality of assistance were tragic to see. I continued to live in this paradigm for many years. My observations reinforced what I was raised believing, and I felt I had to work even harder to build my knowledge and skills.

When I started teaching at a four-year institution, I did not know anyone in leadership positions who were Hispanic, and my colleagues were homogenously White women. However, when I moved to central Texas and started working at a community college, I began to see diversity in students; however, diversity in mid-level to upper-level leadership was lacking. I have heard stories from colleagues of color who have experienced racism, implicit discrimination, and institutional barriers when seeking expanded leadership positions. Much has changed over the past 35 years of my life, and I have had much success in my career; however, I can still hear my grandparents' voices and my brothers' struggles. They worked hard and fought against prejudices and social injustices to have a better life for their children.

As I continue my service at a community college, the "mission of the work" will continue to guide my actions. I will continue to have expectations and be a "voice" that leadership should represent the students we serve at all levels.

Definition of Key Terms

Adolescence. A period roughly spanning the ages of 12 and 18. This important developmental time involves physical, emotional, and mental changes (Erikson & Erikson, 1998).

Emerging adulthood. The most profound adult developmental stage, defined in this study as the period encompassing the late teens through the twenties (18-30 years old; Arnett, 2004).

Latino and/or Hispanic. The term Latino and/or Hispanic (LH) was defined using the U.S. Census definition of "Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders. Riggs (2009a) argued vice presidents, deans, and other mid-level leaders are the ones who have the most significant impact on the performance of an institution. Garza and Eddy (2008) defined mid-level leaders as directors or deans of an academic unit, department chairs, and associate deans (Eddy, 2018). In a study by Bisbee (2007) on leader identification within land grant universities, the director level was also identified as a mid-level leader in higher education.

Leader. An individual who is ethically responsible for attending to the needs and concerns of followers (Northouse, 2019).

Leadership development. This study will use Liu et al.'s (2021) definition that leadership development occurs through experiential windows across the lifespan.

Life story narrative. A lived experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to McAdams (2021), it's "An internalized and evolving story of the reconstructed past and imagined future that aims to provide life with unity, coherence, and purpose" (p. 123).

Middle adulthood. "Pivotal time period in the lifespan journey" and is between the ages of 30 and 60 (Liu et al., 2021, p. 8).

Chapter Summary

Community colleges have been in the fabric of higher education since the 19ᵗʰ century, with "roots dating back to the Morrill Act of 1862, which essentially expanded access into higher education" (Drury, 2003, p. 1). Community colleges respond to the needs and changes in social and economic factors of a community (Palmadessa, 2017) and are seen as the gateway to higher education, especially among many underserved populations (Palmadessa, 2017).

The largest minority group, Latina/os, make up the fastest-growing population in the United States (Carales, 2020) and 39% of the population in Texas (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2017). This is important because community colleges serve as a main entry point for students of color, especially LHM students (Garcia & Garza, 2016). These institutions provide a path for the economic growth of students and the community (Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Levin & Kater, 2013; Mullin & Phillippe, 2013; Palmadessa, 2017; Saenz et al., 2018; Schudde & Goldrick-Rab, 2015).

There is ample literature to support the concerns regarding the lack of degree attainment of Latino and/or Hispanics in higher education, specifically in community colleges (Flink, 2018; Garcia & Garza, 2016; Hagedorn et al., 2007; Rodriguez et al., 2018; Saenz et al., 2013). Respected scholars Saenz and Ponjuan (2009, 2011) have sounded the alarm about Latino male students and their lack of completion in higher education compared to Latina women.

Historically, community colleges have a high Latino and/or Hispanic student enrollment; hence, leader representation should reflect the student population (Espinosa et al., 2019; Hernandez, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2016). Research shows a correlation between leadership and student success (Davis et al., 2015; Gonzalez, 2015; McClenney, 2013; Tinto, 2012). Therefore, Rodriguez et al. (2016) argued, "there is an increasing need to consider how higher education

institutions can better prepare, develop, and retain Latina/o leaders and scholars" (p. 138) to help equalize the "fabric" of an institution.

Understanding leadership development holistically (Castle et al., 2002) and across the lifespan (Day, 2011; Guerin et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2021; Quatro et al., 2007) aligns with a more contemporary manner of understanding how a leader develops and leads (Quatro et al., 2007). Therefore, this study used a developmental model to study the leader development of LHM leaders in Texas community colleges. Additionally, LatCrit provided me with the best framework to explicitly analyze and understand their stories (Ayala & Contreras, 2019).

Furthermore, this framework supported the analysis of the participants' experiences of "language and immigration among other lived experiences rooted in the resistance and oppression of Latinas/o" (Davila & De Bradley, 2010, p. 40). Not least, through the developmental lens and the use of the LatCrit theoretical framework, I hoped to understand better the stories told by the LHM leaders, capturing the "whole" person being interviewed and thus analyzing a rich and authentic narrative.

The following chapter, chapter two, reviewed relevant literature describing community colleges nationally and in Texas. The review also provided critical race theory (CRT) and LatCrit's theoretical framework and explored experiential leadership development across the lifespan.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this life story narrative was to understand the critical factors, namely, their lived dynamic, nonlinear, and contextual experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood on the leadership development of Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) in community colleges in Texas. This study defines the life span as the developmental stage between adolescence and middle adulthood (Liu et al., 2021). Two broad research questions guided this study: RQ1 How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) perceive critical factors from adolescence to adulthood? RQ2: How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) understand the impact, if any, of critical factors on their leadership development in community colleges in Texas?

This chapter reviewed the extant literature to make a case for the qualitative narrative life stories study. Creswell (2009) asserted that a literature review "shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the one being undertaken" (p. 25); however, in a narrative life story study, "the literature review plays a minor role, especially in directing the research questions" (Creswell, 2012, p. 505). Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argued data acquired outside of the narrative does not typically serve the purpose of a life story; however, it is helpful in "positioning the work relative to other streams of thought" (p. 136).

This chapter is used to reveal what is already known about LHM leaders in higher education. The first section starts with a broad review of higher education, narrowing to community colleges nationally and then to the Texas geographic area. The literature review is organized into the following sections: Background and Context of Higher Education; Community Colleges, Nationally and in Texas; Latino and/or Hispanics in Community Colleges; Leadership in Higher Education; Latino and/or Hispanic Leaders; Diversity of Leadership in

Texas Community Colleges; Theoretical Framework; Leadership Development. In closing, this literature review will serve as the lens to build a case for this study (Machi & McEvoy, 2021).

Literature Search Methods

A vast array of research was examined in this literature review. To begin the research, I used terms such as *higher education landscape*, *history of community college*, *changing demographics in community colleges*, *Latinos in higher education*, *Hispanics in higher education*, *national and state outcome databases for Latino and/or Hispanic students*, *Latino and/or Hispanic leaders in higher education*, and *Latino and/or Hispanic leaders in Texas community colleges*. The literature search for this study included using Abilene Christian University online library resources (EBSCO, ERIC, JSTOR, Proquest, Digital Commons @ ACU, Education Source, Online Journals, and Google Scholar). Additionally, "mining" is a strategy used to gather research and categorize the content.

Background and Context

Higher Education

Higher education in the United States, at its inception, was an "elite activity for much of its history, excluding individuals based on gender, religion, race/ethnicity, and social class" (Eckel & King, 2004, p. 1). However, they also asserted that after World War II, "higher education has been engaged in the "process of 'massification,' that is, expanding to serve students from all walks of life (Borjesson & Dalberg, 2021, p. 16) and "has mutated into a societal sector of strategic interest for a large variety of stakeholders" (Borjesson & Dalberg, 2021, p. 346).

During the 20th century, the G.I. Bill of 1944 transformed college from an elite experience to a middle-class entitlement (Eckel & King, 2004; Humes, 2006), creating a gateway

into higher education for women and minorities (Eckel & King, 2004). More Americans started

to view access to higher education as an equal opportunity for social mobility (Eckel & King,

2004; McNair et al., 2016). Higher education continued to broaden its access with the emergence

of community colleges to "ensure open access to higher education for individuals of all ages,

preparation levels, and incomes" (Eckel & King, 2004, p. 1). Franco (2002) argued that

"community colleges are seen as nimble, responsive to needs and opportunities in the towns and

states they serve and providing open access to higher education for traditional and nontraditional

students across the ethnic, income, and age spectrum" (p. 1).

Important to note that the enrollment of Latino and/or Hispanic students in higher

education increased by 48% between fall 2009 and fall 2019. Recent 2020 U.S. census data

shows Latinos and/or Hispanics as the second largest racial or ethnic group, with a 2.4% increase

compared to a 5.9% decrease in Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Furthermore, estimates

show that the Latino population will double in size by the year 2050 (Colby & Ortman, 2015),

making it approximately 30% of the population in the United States (Carales, 2020). Next is the

literature review on community colleges.

National Overview: Community Colleges

The 1947 Truman Commission on Higher Education revolutionized the role of

community colleges in the United States (Bumphus, 2016). Community colleges play a unique

and vital role in the U.S. higher education system by awarding certificates and degrees and

serving as an entry point for many students who ultimately obtain a bachelor's degree (Ingram et

al., 2019; Shapiro et al., 2017). Community colleges' role in workforce development is critical

(Baker et al., 2018; Jacobs, 2015; Schudde & Goldrick-Rab, 2015; Van Noy & Zeidenberg,

2014). Furthermore, community colleges are "the heart of this new higher education ecosystem,

with approximately 1,000 colleges serving 35 percent of the nation's students" (McFarland et al., 2019, p. 1).

Community colleges in the United States provide students with open access to education, leading to economic and social mobility (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Mountjoy, 2021). O'Banion (2007, 2019) argued that community colleges are committed to educating students. O'Banion further argued community colleges became "champions of economic development for their communities and regions, creating partnerships with local business and industry, chambers of commerce, and other agencies to attract new businesses and to meet the workforce education needs of existing business and industry" (2019, p. 220). O'Banion (2007) emphasized that community college is the pathway for many underserved populations.

Furthermore, community colleges tend to attract students from underrepresented backgrounds (Ishitani & Kamer, 2020) who are more likely to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, first-generation, and racial minorities (Bailey et al., 2015; Denning, 2017; Nunez & Carroll, 1998). Community colleges are the gateway to higher education, attracting students who may otherwise not pursue postsecondary education, and they are "admitting students with very diverse skills and backgrounds" (Schudde & Goldrick-Rab, 2015, p. 7). The U.S. Department of Education (2019) affirmed Latinx students had increased their college enrollment, and this growth is concentrated in community colleges.

Despite the challenges historically marginalized students face (Jabbar et al., 2019), over 10 million students across the country enter community colleges seeking an opportunity to better their lives and the lives of their families (Bailey et al., 2015; Everett, 2015). Community colleges enroll many students; however, more students are entering than completing a credential (Margarit & Kennedy, 2019; Price & Tovar, 2014). The lack of completion raises concerns about

the potential social mobility implication (Cunninghame & Trinidad, 2017) and economic mobility for the United States (Bailey et al., 2015; Becerra, 2010).

According to Shapiro et al. (2017), data from the National Clearing House for the 2009-2017 cohort, "overall completion rates for students who started in two-year public institutions were identical for White and Asian students (46.7% and 46.8%, respectively), and much lower for Hispanic and Black students (35.0% and 26.0 %, respectively)" (p. 47). Additionally, a 2020 report by the National Student Clearinghouse capturing a six-year cohort (2014-2020) also reported a decline in completion rates for Blacks and Hispanic students (Causey et al., 2020).

More concern is "the pressing reality that men of color, and Latino males, in particular, lag significantly behind their female peers in terms of both college access and degree attainment" (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011, p. 4). Latino and/or Hispanic students' completion continues to be a concern in community colleges (Caper, 2019; Contreras et al., 2015; Fletcher, 2015; Flink, 2018). Moreover, in the 21st century, community colleges must also be mindful that despite growing numbers of Hispanic and/or Latino students in their institutions, there is a lack of representation of Latino/a leadership in postsecondary (Rodriguez et al., 2016).

Colleges with high LHM student enrollment with few LHM leadership can have challenges "but may hold promise as one way to positively impact students" (Hernandez, 2017, p. 32). LHM leaders can be the most potent image for young Latinos and impact students' success (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Hence, leaders must understand their influence and that self-leadership "is a process of influence for directing behavior toward accomplishing goals" (Neck et al., 2017, p. 6) which cultivates a campus environment (Kiyama et al., 2015) for better student outcomes (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Finally, it is not enough to address national trends because of regional differences and outcomes (Abrica et al., 2020). Eddy and Garza Mitchell (2017) argued, "it is important to recognize that community colleges have differing needs due to size, location, and the communities they serve" (p. 127). Therefore, next, the literature review expands on community colleges in Texas.

Texas Community Colleges

Texas community colleges, or as they were known back then, junior colleges, date back to 1854. Lon Morris College in east Texas opened its doors "to offer a quality liberal arts education within a Christian community that allows the whole person to develop and mature" (Sears, n.d., para. 1). Furthermore, in 1922, the first publicly supported junior college was opened in Wichita Falls. After that, Texas experienced rapid growth in junior colleges (Sears, n.d.). Next, a significant move in higher education occurred when the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) was initially organized in 1947 (TACC History, n.d.). TACC is centered around the core value of "improving educational opportunities within Texas community colleges" (TACC, n.d., para. 2).

In Texas, the state of interest for this study, community colleges have been challenged with record enrollments and an unprecedented demographic shift (Fry, 2011; Hernandez et al., 2015). Texas community colleges offer Texas students a low-cost option to build skills or prepare for further education. According to the Texas Comptroller's website (n.d.), "Texas community colleges provide Texas students with a low-cost option to build skills or prepare for further education, leading to better jobs and adding more than $27 billion to total statewide income."

Community colleges are the largest higher education sector in Texas, capturing 47% of students enrolling in six regions across Texas (Texas Association of Community Colleges [TACC], 2020). Those regions include Central, East, North, South, Southeast, and West Texas. Fifty community colleges across Texas serve diverse and underserved populations (TACC, 2020). The diversity is captured in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Diversity in Texas Community Colleges

Race/Ethnicity	%
Hispanic	47
White	30
African-American	12
Asian	5
Other	6

Note. Adapted from TACC Fact Sheet, 2020, (https://tacc.org/tacc/fact-sheets-policy-briefs)

It is clear to see data reported by TACC in 2020 shows Hispanics to be the largest demographic of students in Texas community colleges, at 47%. These numbers only tell part of the story about Latino and/or Hispanic students in community colleges.

Latino and/or Hispanics in Community Colleges

Around 50 years ago, U.S. higher education institutions did not have Hispanic college or university leadership represented in presidents, chancellors, provosts, deans, vice-presidents, vice-chancellors, associates, or assistant deans (Gutierrez et al., 2002). In recent decades, the United States has seen demographic changes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), and projections are that by 2044 "more than half of all U.S. residents will belong to a minority group" (Hernandez & Longman, 2020, p. 117). Amey et al. (2002) argued, "developing a new generation of leaders at

all administrative levels is imperative if community colleges are to be successful in an increasingly complex environment" (p. 574).

Research by Campbell (2018), Hewlett et al. (2017), and Smith (2014) showed the value of diverse leadership perspectives in an organization. Furthermore, Chen (2017) argued that "true diversity involves an institution-wide focus that considers students, faculty, administrators, and staff" (p. 17). Even though Latinx students represent 44% (Community College Research Center, 2020) of students enrolled in community colleges, Garcia (2020) stated they are "less likely to see people who come from similar backgrounds in all levels of leadership at community colleges" (p. 118). Community colleges continue to serve as an entry path for Latino and/or Hispanic students. They are needed to serve the needs of these students; thus, supporting the completion of degrees develops the pipeline to leadership in higher education (Rodriguez et al., 2018).

Leadership in Higher Education

In higher education, with institutions faced with changes at multiple levels, both internally and externally, leaders are challenged to meet the needs of the ever-increasing diversity of students (Ponjuan et al., 2017; Portugal, 2006). Colleges and universities face looking at a lack of diversity in those leading their institutions (Portugal, 2006; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011). Hernandez and Longman (2020) also argued although some strides have been made to diversify leadership in higher education, factors contributing to limited progress "are deep-seated and complex" (p. 117). Aguirre and Martinez (2002) argued:

> The association between leadership and diversity is synergistic because diversity promotes change as an emergent agent in the structuring of higher education, while

leadership promotes practices that identify diversity as a nested context for achieving

balance in the social relations between higher education and society. (p. 56)

Furthermore, Eddy and Cox (2008) described that as many as 80% of community college

presidents were expected to retire by 2011, meaning community college leadership finally had

the chance to mirror its student body's diversity. Although, institutional leaders have been

hesitant to shift the paradigm and develop institutional "policies and instructional practices that

promote diversity" (Karkouti, 2016, p. 405). Moreover, institutional leaders are positioned to

create a culturally responsive environment and allow for students' success, thus creating a new

generation of leaders who contribute to a "sustainable socio-economic system" (Karkouti, 2016,

p. 408). A culture of diversity in higher education at all levels of leadership brings hope for all

underrepresented students to feel connected and supported in their educational endeavors. Next,

the literature review examines the Latino and/or Hispanic Male leaders in higher education.

Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders

Literature on Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders in higher education has been limited,

and what is reported has focused on college presidents and/or chief executives (Garcia, 2020;

Hernandez, 2017). Over the past two decades, researchers have studied concerns and gaps in

leadership's disproportionate ethnic and racial representation in higher education (Freeman et al.,

2019; Gasman et al., 2015; Gutierrez et al., 2002; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2011). Gutierrez et al.

(2002) asserted, "as Latino student enrollments in American higher education grow, it is

reasonable to expect that Latino leadership in positions of importance at colleges and universities

also will increase" (p. 298). Although there are more Latino administrators at community

colleges (Rodriguez et al., 2018), there is disproportionate representation compared to the

number of Latino and/or Hispanic students in community colleges (Rodriguez et al., 2016).

Gonzalez (2007) further argued higher education institutions must have diverse leadership "to prepare an increasingly multiracial and multicultural population for the knowledge-based economy" (p. 158) of the 21st century. Diversity in leadership fosters student success and inspires Latino faculty and staff to aspire to "leadership positions" (Gutierrez et al., 2002, p. 301). Therefore, the narrative of leadership diversity in higher education also includes understanding the pathway for Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders.

Burmicky (2022), Eddy (2018), Gutierrez et al. (2002), and Rodriguez et al. (2018) have studied the road to leadership roles in higher for Latino and/or Hispanic men and other marginalized individuals. Rodriguez et al. (2018) argued the number of "graduates degrees conferred directly impacts the number of Latinxs who are in the leadership pipeline in higher education as faculty, staff, and administrators" (p. 5). This means ensuring the success of Latino and/or Hispanic males from preschool to higher education (Rodriguez et al., 2018). Ultimately, the pipeline needs to include diversity along the educational path so as leadership positions open in higher education, the possibility of racial equity exists (Eddy, 2018). Next is the literature review that addresses the national diversity of leadership in higher education.

National Diversity of Leadership in Higher Education

The diversity in leadership in the context of higher education has seen changes over the past decade (American Council on Education [ACE], 2019). The report also stated, "According to the CUPA-HR data, in 2017, Whites represented the majority of all administrative positions, although some positions had a larger percentage of people of color (Asian, Black, Hispanic) than others" (p. 263). Additional data presented in the ACE (2019) report stated in "1986, Whites represented 91.9% of all college and university presidents" (p. 26), and also in 2016. However, while Whites remained the majority, the "presidency became more racially and ethnically

diverse" (83.2% and 16.8% respectively; p. 266). Further breakdown by ethnicity, data showed

Blacks (7.9%), Hispanics (3.9%), Asians (2.3%), and individuals of more than one race (1.4%;

ACE, 2019). Figure 3 illustrates the breakdown of race, ethnicity, and gender for college and

university presidents in the United States.

Figure 3

National Representation of University Presidents

2016 College and University Presidents, by Race, Ethnicity, Gender
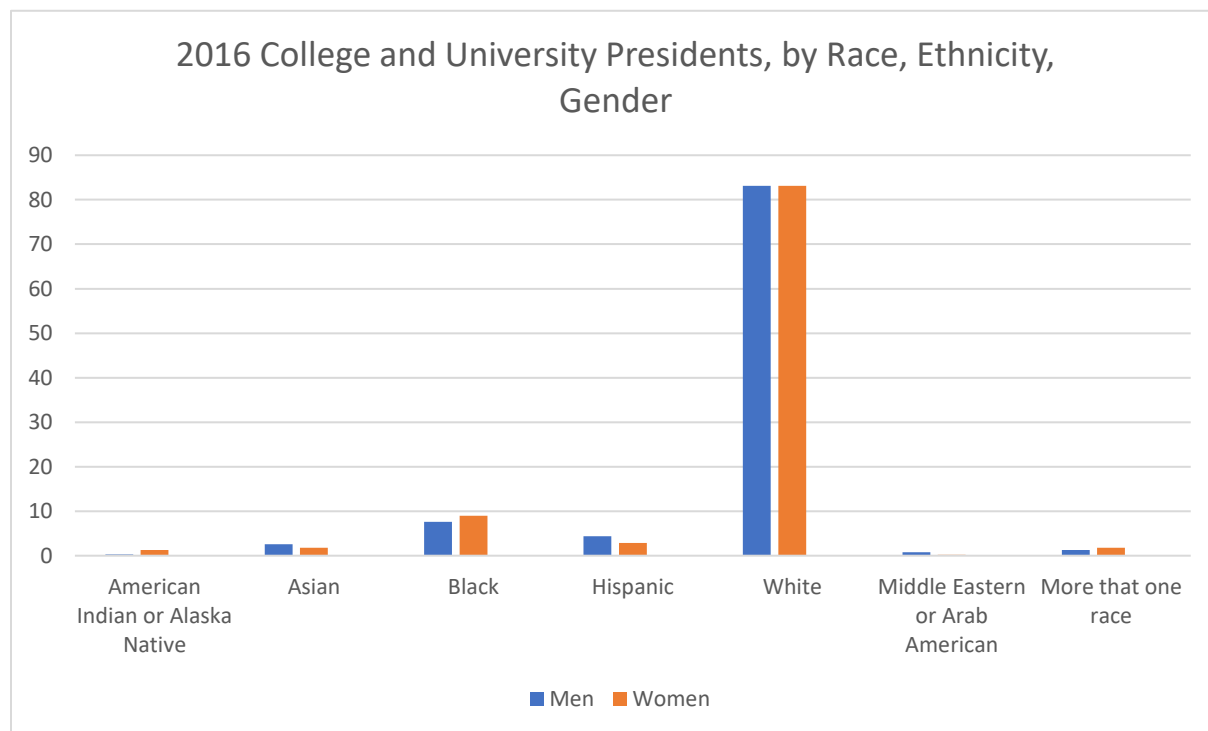
Note. Adapted from American College President Study, 2017.

(https://www.acenet.edu/Search/Pages/results.aspx?k=American%20College%20President%20St

udy%2C%202017)

The data represents a disproportionately low number of Hispanic male leaders in

presidencies in national colleges and universities. Important to note, the report further stated,

"Associate institutions and institutions classified as "other" were the most diverse, where about

one out of five presidents were non-White (19.9% and 20.8%, respectively)" (p. 269).

Researchers have argued that inequality in higher education systems, along with the presence of institutionalized racism and discrimination, impacts all racially and ethnically underrepresented populations (Aleman, 2009a; Bersh, 2009; Bonner et al., 2011; Bryan et al., 2012; Flores, 2011; Gonzalez, 2005). Furthermore, despite 44% of Latinx undergraduates enrolled in community colleges (Community College Research Center, 2020), Garcia (2020) argued "they are less likely to see people who come from similar backgrounds in all levels of leadership at community colleges" (p. 118).

According to National Center for Education Statistics (2020), using data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (classifying workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data), data showed the race, ethnicity, gender breakdown in the occupational category of management occupations that include executive/administrative/managerial roles in higher education. Figure 4 illustrates the race and ethnicity of the data.

Figure 4

Diversity in Higher Education Management Nationally
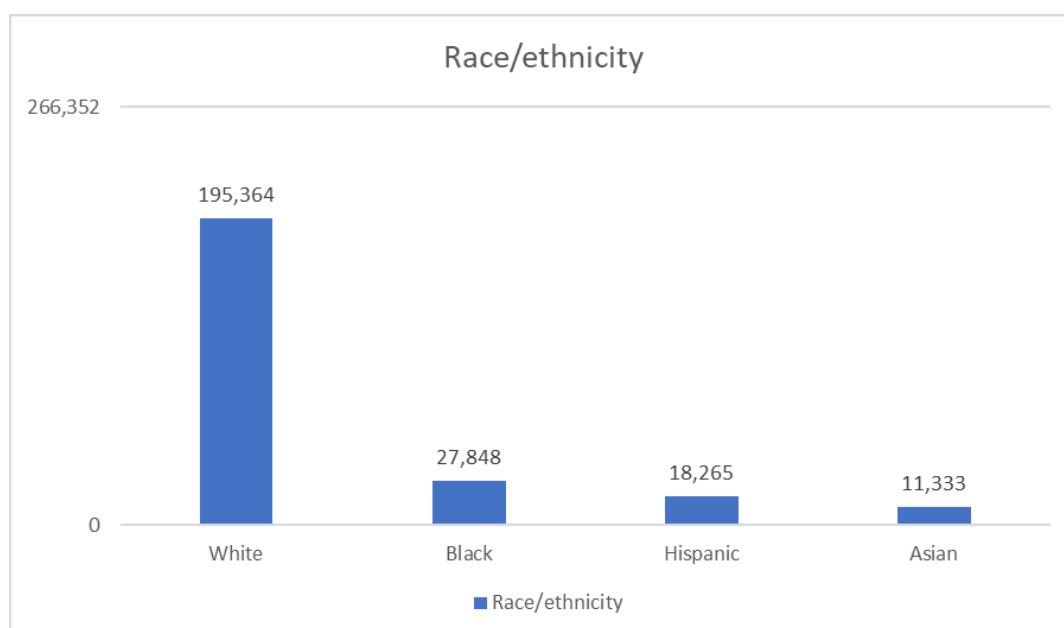
Note. Adapted from Digest of Education Statistics, by National Center for Education Statistics, n.d., 2020, (nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_314.40.asp).

These data show the inequality of representation of diversity in higher education management positions, with Whites (73%), Black (10%), Hispanics (6.9%), and Asians (4.2%). Data extracted further illustrates men in management positions in higher education, as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Men in Higher Education Management Positions Nationally
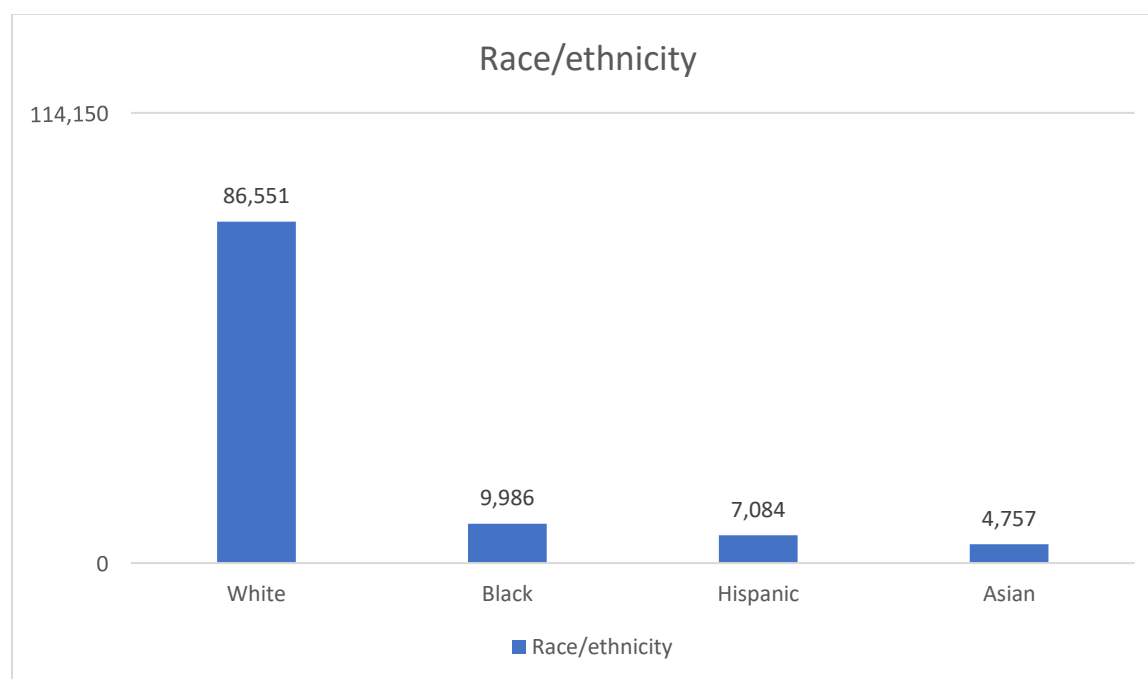
Note. Adapted from Digest of Education Statistics, by National Center for Education Statistics, n.d., 2020, (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_314.40.asp).

Disaggregating the data further and analyzing the men in higher education management positions in higher education, the facts are dire. The data shows Whites (75%), Blacks (8%), Hispanics (6.2%), and Asians (4.2%). Narrowing the data to community colleges further illustrates the diversity; however, it points to the lack of equity for men in management positions

in higher education. Although the data are not disaggregated to exact leadership positions, Figure 6 illustrates the men in management positions in public 2-year institutions.

Figure 6

Diversity in Public Two-Year Management Positions Nationally
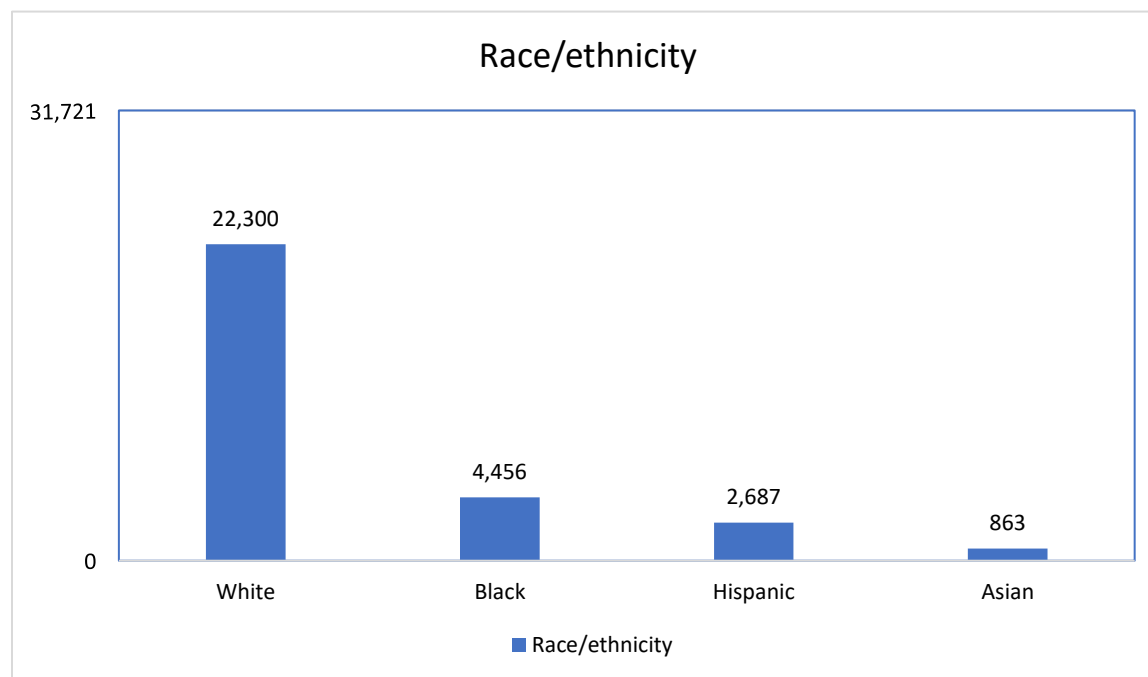
Note. Adapted from Digest of Education Statistics, by the National Center for Education Statistics, n.d., 2020. (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_314.40.asp)

The data presents a stark picture of inequities in leadership positions in higher education, with White men at 70%, significantly more significant when compared to Black (14%), Hispanic (8.5), and Asian (2.7%). This data supports Eddy (2018), who argued that "equal representation in leadership" (p. 1) in community colleges "remains elusive" (p. 1).

Garcia (2020) argued that mid-level leaders play a critical role in higher education. Furthermore, Rosser (2004) claimed they are the unsung heroes of higher education and asserted, "midlevel leaders in the United States are an essential group of individuals whose administrative roles and functions support the goals and mission of the academic enterprise" (p. 318). Mid-level

leadership positions in higher education are responsible for managing expectations from above and below (Branson et al., 2016). Researchers have identified mid-level positions in higher education to include: "heads of faculty, department heads, discipline area coordinators, student enrollment advisors, and award-level coordinators" (Branson et al., 2016, p. 129). Asera (2019) also argued in community colleges, mid-level leadership has been used to "designate positions below the executive level" (p. 1) with more formal titles like dean or department chair. Asera (2019) highlights that over the last 10 years, a more "inclusive definition has emerged in community colleges" (p. 2) to include faculty, administrators, and classified professionals. Moreover, in a study by Garza and Eddy (2008), they defined mid-level leaders as directors or deans of an academic unit, department chairs, and associate deans (Eddy, 2018). In a study by Bisbee (2007) on leader identification within land grant universities, the director level was also identified as a mid-level leader in higher education.

For the purposes of this study, mid-level leaders included leaders below the executive level, such as associate vice presidents/chancellors, deans, associate deans, and directors. Understanding the lived experiences of mid-level leaders gives the organization insight into the value and needs of leadership development (Bisbee, 2007; Branson et al., 2016; Eddy, 2018), which would include the Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in community colleges.

Diversity of Leadership in Texas Community Colleges

Community colleges in Texas also serve a vital part of the educational ecosystem. Leaders operate in a crucial role, "broadening pathways to postsecondary degrees and increasing Latinx/a/o student success" (Hernandez, 2017, p. 17). The landscape in Texas community colleges is not much different than the national representation of leadership in colleges and universities. Delgado and Ozuna Allen (2019) argued, despite the diversity of the student

demographic in Texas community colleges, "people who hold higher-ranking administrative positions (i.e., academic deans, vice presidents, and presidents) at community colleges do not reflect the diversity of the student body at these institutions" (p. 718), with the majority being White men.

Furthermore, THECB (2017) agreed that top administrative roles fail to reflect the diversity of Texas community college students. Rodriguez et al. (2016) joined the argument that "Latina/os today remain greatly underrepresented in positions of academic leadership within postsecondary institutions, whether as administrators or faculty" (p. 145). Jones and Saenz (2020) argued that "college administrators dedicated to Latino males must create a college culture that directly acknowledges the intersection of race and gender through purposeful programs and practices" (p. 849).

Literature highlights the importance of leadership within an institution of higher education. They set the culture that then influences policies and practices that ultimately may impact the success of Latino and/or Hispanic male students (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009, 2011). Jones and Saenz (2020) further argued if community college leaders are committed to serving Latino men, they must "evidence the ways that their practices differ from the dominant White norms present at Predominately White Institutions" (p. 839). As a final point, regarding the intersectionality of leadership and diversity, it is essential to apply a theoretical framework as the "lens" to better understand leadership (Rodriquez et al., 2016). Next, I provide the theoretical framework and developmental leadership model that guided this study.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) originated in critical legal studies dating back to the 1960s (Tate, 1997). CRT is grounded in the Civil Rights Movement, focusing on social justice, liberation, and economic empowerment (Tate, 1997) within a Black-White paradigm (Rodriguez et al., 2016; Yosso & Solorzano, 2005). CRT "examines the role of race, racism, and privilege in upholding the dominant narrative of exclusion in the U.S." (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 142).

Critics such as Yosso and Solorzano (2005) have argued that critical legal studies do not allow for oppressed people's histories and lived experiences. They asserted, "CRT goes beyond disciplinary boundaries to learn from scholarship in each of the areas of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, psychology, film, theater, and other fields" (Yosso & Solorzano, 2005, p. 123). According to Ledesma and Calderon (2015), "CRT is used to challenge claims of race-neutrality and objectivity in the application of higher education…representing some of the newest contributions to CRT research in higher education" (p. 213). Latino and Hispanic scholars use CRT to understand the experience of underrepresented populations in higher education (Gasman et al., 2015).

CRT in qualitative research allows for research to highlight how racism is systemic in American society (Creswell, 2007; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Parker & Villalpando, 2007) and "raises a matter of both social structures and cultural representation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 50). Additionally, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) argued:

> Critical race theory advances a strategy to foreground and account for the role of race and
> racism in education and works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of

opposing or eliminating other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexual

orientation, language, and national origin. (p. 25)

From a sociological point of view, Yosso and Solorzano (2005) further argued, "utilizing CRT as

an analytical lens helps us approach research with a critical eye to identify, analyze, and

challenge distorted notions of people of color as we build on the cultural wealth already present

in these communities" (p. 127).

Moreover, race and racism are rooted in higher education's structures, policies, and

practices (Taylor, 2000) and pervasive in all social institutions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001;

Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solorzano et al., 2005). Rocco et al.

(2014) also asserted that a lack of understanding of systemic racism results in the creation of

structures, policies, and practices that "create inequitable situations at work and in society" (p.

458).

Although CRT continues to expand as a theoretical framework. Its tenets are essential to

address, as espoused in the literature by the work of Yosso and Solorzano (2005). Tenets

include:

- intercentricity of race and racism,

- challenge of dominant ideology,

- commitment to social justice,

- centrality of experiential knowledge,

- utilization of interdisciplinary approaches.

These tenets have guided the work of Yosso and Solorzano (2005), and they argued CRT is

"grounded in the experiences and knowledge of communities of color" (p. 127). Thus, CRT not

only allows those of different races to find their voice but also serves to hear their stories (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

It is now essential to look at Latina and Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) as it provided further specificity to the lens for this study. With its origins in the critical legal context, CRT restricted analysis of racial injustice as it primarily provided a binary lens (Crenshaw, 2002; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1988; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Hence, scholars found the need to expand the theoretical framework beyond the Black/White paradigm, resulting in the LatCrit theory. LatCrit theory extends the scholarly work on race to understand the experiences of racism better as experienced by Chicana/o, Latina/o (Yosso & Solorzano, 2005).

Latina and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)

LatCrit is an offshoot of CRT; however, it addresses issues CRT does not. Those issues include language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Garcia, 1995; Johnson, 1997; Martinez, 1994; Valdes, 1996). Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) argued, "LatCrit is a theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos' multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression" (p. 312). In their scholarly work, Yosso et al. (2001) argued LatCrit theory "is a natural outgrowth of critical race theory" (p. 99). Furthermore, they see the work around the use of LatCrit as an "ongoing process of finding a framework that addresses racism and its accompanying oppressions" (Yosso et al., 2001, p. 99) and looking beyond the Black/White binary (Yosso et al., 2001). Scholars assert the value of CRT and LatCrit as it provides the lens to draw on the lived experiences captured through storytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, testimonies, *cuentos*, *consejos*, chronicles, and narratives (Bell, 1987; Carrasco, 1996; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000).

LatCrit has aided scholars in identifying and naming the structural inequities that exist within educational systems impacting Latino/a students (Davila & De Bradley, 2010; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016). Additionally, other scholars have used the theory LatCrit in studies on leadership in education. For example, Santamaria et al. (2014) used it in qualitative research with educational leaders from kindergarten to higher education to better understand the intersectionality of race, gender, culture, class, and perspectives on leadership practices. Other scholars have used LatCrit as a seminal framework when analyzing Latinx issues in higher education (Gonzalez & Catano, 2020; Mahmud et al., 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). Next, I provided a literature review on leadership development.

Leadership Studies

Leadership is essential to the success of any organization. For thousands of years, researchers have studied leadership (Dering, 1998; Kanji, 2001; Northouse, 2019) with a "multifaceted view of leadership" (Kanji, 2001, p. 702). Leadership is found in the arts, education, science, politics, and war, "touching and shaping our lives" (Burns, 1978, p. 2). Gandolfi and Stone (2018) argued that despite disagreement by scholars with "regard to what leadership actually is, the one commonality that can be found across virtually all of the existing leadership literature is that leadership is important" (p. 261).

Organizations need effective leadership in the changing global world, with social conflicts, shifting demographics, and ever-changing advances in technology and connectivity (Bohl, 2019). Northouse (2019) argued, "leadership is a highly sought after and highly valued commodity" (p. 1). Furthermore, Northouse (2019) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals" (p. 5), and Bisbee (2007) argued "leadership development is a process, not a single event" (p. 86), and takes place over extended periods (Day

& Sin, 2011; Lord & Brown, 2004). Leadership and the process of becoming a leader is a dynamic interaction between the leader and the "social and organizational environment" (Day, 2000, p. 583). Understanding how leaders become leaders in today's world is of the utmost importance if societies are going to thrive (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Next, the literature review discusses leadership development.

Leadership Development

Leader development is oriented toward an organization's human capital and needs to be distinct from leadership development, which is social capital (Day, 2000). Human capital is about developing individual capabilities such as "self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation…foundation of intrapersonal competence" (Day, 2000, p. 605). Social capital "facilitates individuals' mutual cooperation and coordination for shared interests and enables people to act collectively" (Salajegheh & Pirmoradi, 2013, p. 40), built on the foundation of mutual trust and respect (Day, 2000; Drath, 1998).

In the past 20 years, researchers have asserted leadership development can happen through on-the-job experiences, deliberate practice, leader development programs, and the developmental culture in organizations that aid leaders' development (Day, 2000; Day & Thornton, 2018; Mango et al., 2019). Murphy and Johnson (2011) added that most leaders' development has focused on adulthood. Other researchers have also studied leader development from the standpoint of the individual being ready to lead in an organization (Avolio, 2016; Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Although Avolio (2016) argued if research on leader development also looked at "how children and youth learn to influence each other in positive ways, we would provide leadership developers working with individuals assuming leadership roles later in life a

much more developmentally ready product to work with and to accelerate leadership development" (p. 13).

However, some researchers have argued leadership development "is a process across the lifespan…starting during early life years, even before an individual enters any formal schooling, and continuing even post-retirement" (Liu et al., 2021, p. 1). Additionally, Murphy and Johnson (2011) asserted there is a "greater ability for development to occur at a young age and the self-reinforcing nature of leader development" (p. 459). Murphy and Johnson (2011) developed a leadership development model across the lifespan. Their model was designed to account for the dynamic processes of leadership development. Development begins with "early development factors (genetic, parenting style, early learning experiences, early leadership experiences such as sports, school, practice) that shape leaders' development over time" (Murphy & Johnson, 2011, p. 460).

Leader Development Model

A newer leader development model across the life span was created by Liu et al. (2021). Their model is based on experiential "windows" that "present somewhat unique opportunities for leader development at each stage in the lifespan" (p. 3).

Liu et al.'s (2021) model comprise four elements (see Figure 7).

1. Foundational traits

2. Stages of development across the lifespan

3. Experience processing system and leader self-view system

4. Nonlinear and dynamic process

Figure 7 illustrates Liu et al.'s (2021) leader development model.

Figure 7

Leader Development Model
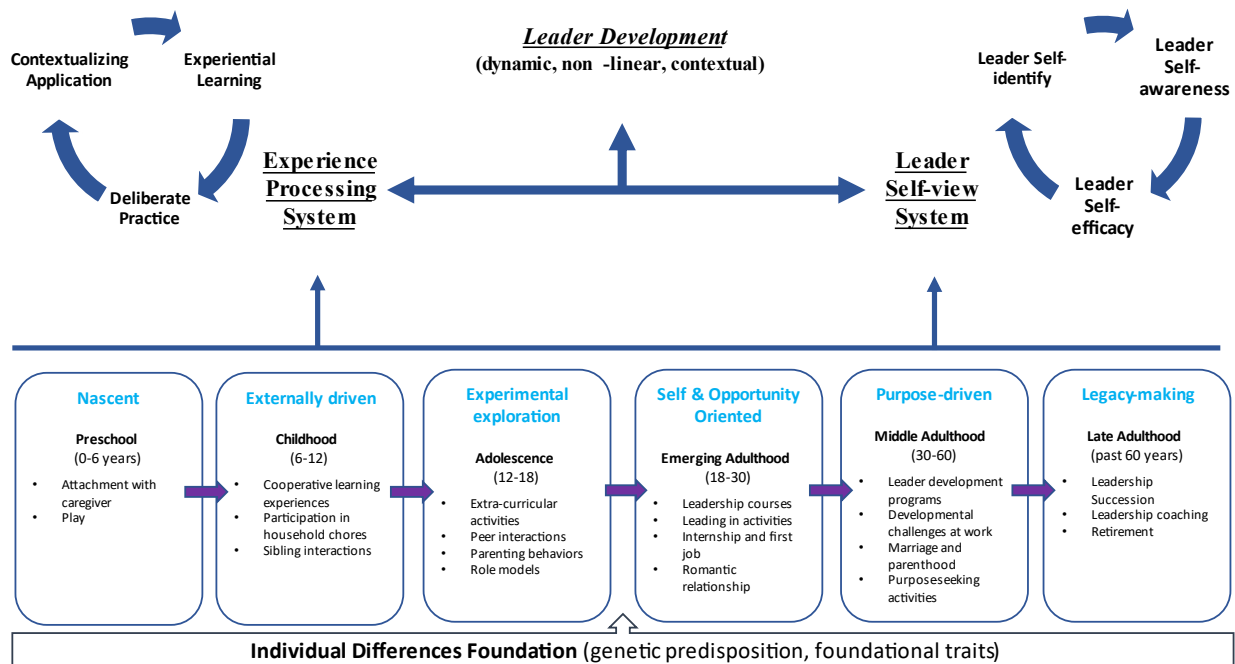
Note. Adapted from "Leader Development Across the Lifespan: A Dynamic Experiences-Grounded Approach," by Z. Liu, S. Venkatesh, S. E. Murphy, and R. E. Riggo, 2021, *The Leadership Quarterly*, *32*(5), p. 4 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101382).

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, this is a new model that builds on the body of work from other leading scholars who have studied lifespan leadership development for many years (Day, 2011; Kolb, 2014; Liu et al., 2019; Murphy, 2018; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Day et al. (2009) "proposed that leader development occurs at multiple levels in an ongoing, dynamic fashion across the lifespan" (p. xiii). Moreover, previous research has established leader development as an ongoing process across the entire lifespan (Liu et al., 2021, p. 1).

Liu et al. (2021) defined leader development as "the process by which one increased his or her ability to exercise influence in leadership situations that become increasingly more

complex and varied, during the lifespan process with multiple developmental stages and various contexts" (Liu et al., 2021, pp. 3-4). Their lifespan leader development model was used for this study.

Lifespan Approach

Murphy and Johnson's (2011) research on leadership also applied the lens of leader development, and they asserted "development occurs more readily in childhood and adolescence than in adulthood because one's behavior, personality, and skills are more malleable at a young age than in adulthood" (p. 460). Additionally, research done by Guerin et al. (2011) and Day (2011) also utilized the perspective of leader development across the lifespan. Day asserted, "one cannot be an effective leader without continuous, lifelong learning" (p. 561).

The use of this more holistic leader development model is necessary to capture the narratives (Castillo et al., 2020; Quatro et al., 2007) for the LHM leaders in community colleges. Castillo et al. (2020) argued environment and lifespan development are essential to understanding how an individual becomes a leader (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006). Therefore, Liu et al.'s (2021) leader developmental model will allow me to capture their stories across contexts and time, capturing the dynamic process of the leader's development (Acton et al., 2019). Understanding all the components of this theoretical model of leader development and the LatCrit theory will allow me to understand the story better as told by the LHM leaders, capturing the "whole" person being interviewed and thus analyzing a rich and authentic narrative.

Chapter Summary

The literature has captured the importance of minority representation in leadership roles in higher education and the necessity of a pipeline to fill those gaps (Eddy, 2018). A lack of diversity in leadership represents a loss of varying perspectives and voices to inform decision-

making (Karkouti, 2016) in higher education institutions. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the changing landscape of higher education, more specifically, community colleges.

Community colleges serve a vast majority of diverse students, with Hispanic and/or Latino being amongst the most elevated nationally and in Texas, so campuses count on leaders to understand their needs. Understanding the demographics and life stories of leaders leading community colleges is paramount. This study seeks to capture data from Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders and their leader-development stories as leaders in Texas community colleges.

I used CRT, specifically LatCrit, as the theoretical framework and a leadership model that looks at leaders' development across their lifespan. This literature review provides the lens to understand critical factors, if any, along the lifespan of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders' development to where they are today, leading in their respective Texas community colleges.

The next chapter provides the research method. Chapter 3 includes research design and methodology, population, study sample, materials and instruments, data collection and analysis procedures, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this life story narrative was to understand the critical factors, namely, their lived dynamic, nonlinear, and contextual experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood on the leadership development of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges. I hoped to understand the leadership development perspective of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in community colleges in Texas.

Josselson and Lieblich (2001) asserted that narrative research "may be short descriptive statements or narratives formed in the teller's personal language or style in response to researcher's open-ended questions" (p. 280). A narrative life story study can provide insight into how Latino and/or Hispanic leaders perceive or understand the impact of critical factors experienced from adolescence to middle adulthood. This qualitative study was designed to address the two broad research questions: (a) How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) perceive critical factors from adolescence to middle adulthood? And (b) How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) understand the impact, if any, of critical factors on their leadership development in community colleges in Texas? As the study progresses, sub-questions may be added.

This chapter provides an overview of the study's methodology, research tradition, and the procedures to collect and analyze the participants' life stories. Furthermore, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's ethical considerations, trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations.

Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative research allows a researcher to have "direct involvement, collaboration, and interaction with the research participants" (Terrell, 2016, p. 147). Furthermore, qualitative

research allows for the development of a "complex, detailed understanding of an issue," and it provides the context that enables the participants to "tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 104).

Bell (2002) further argued that this methodology allows a researcher the ability to present the participant's lived "experience holistically in all its complexity and richness" (p. 209). As well, Atkinson (1998) asserted a "life story makes implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed, and the confusing clear" (p. 7) and allows a researcher "to gain a subjective perspective on and understanding of whatever the scope of the topic or issue is under investigation" (p. 11).

A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study to examine the impact of critical factors from adolescence to middle adulthood on Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders. Atkinson (1998) asserted, "we need to hear the life stories of individuals from those underrepresented groups to help establish a balance in the literature (p. 19). A narrative life story method gave me the lens to gain a rich and personal perspective of the lived experiences of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in community colleges in Texas.

Paradigm

A paradigm is a worldview, "a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds" (Creswell, 2009, p. 6). An interpretive paradigm served as the lens for the life stories in this study. Narrative research requires an interpretive paradigm for a researcher to understand the perspective of the participants (Burell & Morgan, 1979); therefore, providing a "framework from which the analyst derives meaning in the text" (Josselson & Hammack, 2021, p. 11). Burell and Morgan (1979) further argued that the interpretive paradigm affords an "understanding of the everyday world" (p. 31) while showcasing the "participants'

views of the situation" (Creswell, 2013, p. 25), thus providing a richer perspective for this study. An inductive approach was used to identify themes from the life stories collected from the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Research Tradition: Narrative Life Story

Narratives allow a researcher to capture the context of individuals' stories (Moen, 2006), and the narrative is seen as "the primary scheme by which human existence is rendered meaningful" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). McAdams (2021) asserts a narrative is "stories people tell about their lives" (p. 243) and the impact on their lives. Additionally, the story told by an individual is one that the person chooses to speak about their life (Atkinson, 1998).

Furthermore, Atkinson (1998) explained that "stories help us to understand the universe of which we are a part and how we fit into it" (p. 122). Stories that are told depend "on the individual's past and present experiences, her or his values, the people the stories are being told to, the addresses, and when and where they are being told" (Moen, 2006, p. 5). Storytelling starts in childhood, and stories are narrated experiences across a person's life (Moen, 2006). Clandinin et al.'s (2007) scholarly work elucidate the value of life story narratives capturing lifespan experiences. Furthermore, Caine et al. (2013) asserted that a "story is how people make sense of their existence" (p. 576), and this study strived to capture the chronology of their experiences (Creswell, 2012). Likewise, Atkinson (1998) stated, "there is no stronger, clearer statement of how the person sees and understands his or her own life than his or her own narrative of it" (p. 65). This narrative study focused on personal experiences, and this approach often reveals "single lives in detail and how the individual plays various roles in society" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 3) and in different contexts (Atkinson, 1998). To capture the participants' authentic stories also means I established a rapport with the participants (Patton, 2015).

Rapport

In a narrative research study, a researcher establishes the "tone," creates the interview environment, and anticipates what may happen next (Atkinson, 1998). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "the way the interviewer acts, questions, and responds in an interview shapes the relationship and therefore the ways participants respond and give accounts of their experience" (p. 110). Atkinson (1998), Caine et al. (2013), and Clandinin and Connelly (2006) have argued that the relationship between a researcher and participant is crucial in qualitative narrative studies. Atkinson (1998) likened the relationship between a researcher and participant "to what transpires in the confessional relationship" (p. 65).

Therefore, the relationship constructed may influence what the participant shares. Hence, in narrative research, both the "interviewer and the person telling their own story, then, are involved in meaning-making work that is unavoidably collaborative" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 40). A researcher engages with the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006), helping them feel comfortable sharing their feelings and reflective thoughts (Atkinson, 1998) throughout the narrative interview. This means the interviewer should be "warm, friendly, sensitive, and flexible as possible in all situations encountered with the person" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 28). Similarly, establishing a rapport also means that a researcher is a good guide for the participants and knows when to ask the right question at the right time (Atkinson, 1998).

Rapport Phases. Establishing rapport is necessary, and the interviewer must "rapidly develop a positive relationship during in-depth interviews" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316). describe this process in three phases. The first is the exploration phase, which requires a researcher to listen and learn, creating a sense of bonding and sharing (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The next phase of building rapport with the participants was "co-operative," which is characterized by a "comfort level in which the participants are not afraid of offending one another and find satisfaction in the interview process" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This is where a researcher clarifies responses, and the participants can make corrections during this interview phase. During this phase, I asked questions that were "too sensitive to ask at the beginning" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 317). Finally, as the interview continues into the "participation phase" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), this is when I listened and asked questions, with the participant taking the "role of guiding and teaching the interviewer" (p. 317).

In addition to building rapport, field notes were used to capture critical phrases, lists of significant points made by the participant, and essential quotations that caught the participant's language. Moreover, note-taking provided nonverbal signals to the participants about anything especially significant (Patton, 2015).

Narrative Interviews

Narrative interviews are distinct; specifically, life stories tell our own experiences to others and "how we make sense of our lives and fill them with meaning" (Bochner & Herrmann, 2020, p. 2). Garvis (2015) further argued that "narratives are how individuals represent and make sense of past experience, evaluate experiences in the present, and plan and anticipate future experiences" (p. 2). Moreover, Reissman (2008) asserted that a researcher is generating "detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements" (p. 23). Atkinson (1998) further argued that the

> most effective interview, accordingly, will be the one in which the interviewer can step back, observe the process that is occurring as it is happening, see the direction it might best go in, and know what questions to ask next, all before it happens. (p. 40)

Narrative interviews capture life stories of the individual's journey from where they began to now in life (Atkinson, 1998). Using a narrative interview allowed me to capture the rich life stories of the participants in this study. Furthermore, Atkinson (1998) argued life story interviews provide the interviewer with the opportunity to help the "person create and convey his or her meaning in life through the story of what has happened" (p. 40) through an "informal approach, eliciting open-ended responses and in-depth comments" (p. 40). This narrative study captured the participants' voices about their leadership development across their lifespan from adolescence to middle adulthood.

According to Atkinson (1998), "what may be the greatest interest in the life story is how people see themselves and how they want others to see them" (p. 20). The participants shared their lived experiences through their "voices," and this study collected their stories. Furthermore, their shared life story from adolescence to middle adulthood provides "a clear and ordered record of personal truth that, of necessity, consist of both fact and fiction" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 20). In closing, through the narrative approach in this study, participants had an opportunity to tell their stories to others (Creswell, 2012).

Site and Participants and Sample Size

Homogenous purposeful sampling was used as it allowed me to "intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206), allowing me to document in-depth and detailed data from the selected individuals (Patton, 2015). The participants were chosen based on a set of preselected characteristics. First, the three participants selected identified as Hispanic and/or Latino men. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) argued for the use of "small samples in research where in-depth interviewing" (p. 484);

furthermore, small samples are considered standard when conducting life story narratives (Creswell et al., 2007; Reissman, 2008).

Second, they all had a minimum of 2 years of leadership experience and held a leadership position as either an associate vice-president/chancellor, dean, associate dean, or director. Finally, the position held was within a community college in Texas. The sampling selection helped to understand the most valuable perspectives discovered in this study (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

Recruitment

Once Internal Review Board approval was secured from Abilene Christian University (see Appendix A), three participants were specifically identified and selected by their position, a minimum of 2 years of experience, and/or identity markers. The participants were recruited through the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) and the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHS). See Appendix B for the Request for Participation recruiting email sent to participants identified through TACC. Once participants were selected, every participant had an opportunity to ask questions about the study via a phone or virtual call. If they accepted participation, each participant was provided informed consent via HelloSignature. Next, the participants signed informed consent was stored on a password-protected laptop. I then proceeded with setting up interview appointments. Again, this was only done after the participant signed the consent form and I verified it.

Data Collection

Interviews

This qualitative study used semistructured interviews (see Appendix C). Semistructured interviews are the most common technique in qualitative inquiries (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

They include a "set of pre-defined questions, but in which freedom is given to explore one of the questions in greater depth" (Queiros et al., 2017, p. 378). This method of collecting data supports life story interviewing (Atkinson, 1998) was used in the study.

Life story interviews should be recorded (Atkinson, 1998) and arranged at a "time and place that is convenient for the participant" (Josselson & Hammack, 2021, p. 21). For this study, I anticipated interviews would be conducted one-on-one and face-to-face; however, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted on Zoom. Interviews were recorded, password-protected, stored on a password-protected laptop, and ultimately stored securely using the ACU Dallas repository for three years.

Initial interviews were scheduled for two hours. Follow-up interviews did not happen due to scheduling challenges; however, an email (Appendix D) was sent to each participant to review their transcripts with opportunities to send any additional information they remembered and wanted to include in their life story. Open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to share their responses to each question thoroughly. This type of questioning allowed the "participant to voice their experiences unconstrained by any researcher's perspectives" (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). Moreover, the interviewer should enable the participant to "hold the floor without interruption" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 31) until they feel they have answered the question. I was mindful of emotions that may emerge; therefore, the established rapport was essential to allow the participant the "space" to skip any aspects of their story (Atkinson, 1998). The participants did not skip past any of their stories and responded to all the questions.

Interview Location. The location for the interviews was based on the availability and comfort of the participant. I was mindful and prepared for a virtual or face-to-face interview based on the participant's choice. Participants preferred virtual interviews, and they were

conducted via Zoom. Distractions were kept at a minimum to allow unimpeded communication throughout the interviews. For this study, I gathered personal experience stories focused on episodes (Creswell, 2012).

Transcription

Capturing someone's life narrative required transcribing "everything said on the tapes about their lives" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 55). The first step after the interviews was to upload interview recordings to TranscribeMe, an online transcription service that complies with privacy protections offered by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). This service maintains a secure network for inputting the data and extracting the completed verbatim transcript (TranscribeMe, n.d.). Once transcribed, transcripts were reviewed with the recordings to ensure the accuracy of the data. All transcripts were stored on a password-protected cloud-based storage system.

Analysis Procedures

The data analysis process in narrative research is more than just interpreting the interview and reporting the data (Atkinson, 1998). It is the interpretation of the shared experience from the participant (Josselson & Lieblich, 1995) and the process of extracting meaningful and significant themes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that gives validity to the life story (Atkinson, 1998). Atkinson (1998) further argued that a researcher must be mindful of the following factors that impact a researcher's ability to establish the meaning and accuracy of what has been recorded and transcribed. These include (a) the quality of the relationship, (b) the interactions during the interview, (c) the theoretical perspective used by a researcher, and (d) a researcher's experiential framework and subjective perspective. Moreover, Atkinson (1998) stated, "A balance between

subjectivity and objectivity is what usually works best in interpreting a life story" (p. 58). I was mindful of the subjectivity during the process of analysis.

Chronological Ordering

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that "experience grows out of other experiences" (p. 2). Furthermore, narratives are understood as stories that include a "temporal ordering of events and as an effort to make something out of those events: to render, or to signify, the experiences of persons-in-flux in a personally and culturally coherent, plausible manner" (Sandelowsk, 1991, p. 162). The data were recorded in this study, capturing the life stories of three Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders from adolescence to middle adulthood. Timeframes chronologically organized the data by cutting and pasting it into the lifespan categories. Once the stories were chronologically depicted, participants were provided and encouraged to confirm the narration to ensure accuracy. An email (Appendix E) was sent to each participant to review and approve the accuracy of their life story.

Coding Process

Coding condenses and captures the data coherently into a "richer and more compact form of meaning" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 121). A coding process was used to create a manageable data unit to expedite the analysis process (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). To accomplish this coding process, Delve, a cloud-based computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program designed to analyze data, was used (Delve, n.d.).

First-Cycle Coding

Coding aims to create manageable data units to detect patterns, categorization, proposition development, and building theories (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The first step was to become thoroughly familiar with the data by reading the transcript and jotting down ideas as they

came to mind (Creswell, 2012). This first cycle began with text segments using in vivo coding, which is the actual language of the participant (Creswell, 2012), "suggesting that the codes extracted from data originate organically and possess a living quality unto themselves" (Saldaña, 2016).

Using lean coding, which was done before the fieldwork, allowed for a few "provisional codes" (Saldaña, 2016) to be used. Provisional codes came from the study's conceptual framework and research questions. As the data was collected, coded, and analyzed, these codes were revised, modified, deleted, or expanded to include new codes (Saldaña, 2016).

Second-Cycle Coding

The second level of coding started by developing key themes (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) that began to emerge from the first coding cycle, which included relevant categories with one another or linking unrelated facts (Saldaña, 2016) logically. One or more methods were used during this cycle to continue the data analysis. Those six options include pattern coding, axial coding, theoretical coding, elaborative coding, focused coding, and longitudinal coding (Saldaña, 2016). First, pattern coding was used to develop the category labels that identify the organizing data into some meaning. Second, axial coding was used to explain the category's properties and dimensions and how they relate to each other. Third, theoretical coding was used in identifying the primary themes in the data. Fourth, elaborative coding builds on previous data codes related to the study. Fifth, focused coding allowed the coding of the most frequent data into themes. Finally, the sixth method is longitudinal coding, which compares data across time (Saldaña, 2016).

Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis was used as the next step. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) defined a theme as an "extended-phrase or sentence that identifies and functions as a way to categorize a set of data into a topic that emerges from a pattern of an idea" (p. 230). Creswell (2012) added that a thematic approach uses "extensive quotes and rich detail to support the themes" (p. 274). When coding narratives, a researcher may find that themes may be interrelated, adding depth to the understanding (Creswell, 2012) of the individual's experiences. Thematic analysis using an inductive approach (Thomas, 2006) is most appropriate for this study. It will help me better understand the lived experiences of three Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders employed in Texas community colleges. Thomas (2006) asserted that inductive analysis allows "research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies" (p. 238). In line with Thomas (2006), Patton (2015) stated, "induction allows meaningful dimension to emerge" (p. 64) from the narrative, "formulating answers as more information is compiled" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 9). Table 2 further outlines the thematic analysis process used in this study.

Table 2

Thematic Analysis Process

Phase	Description of steps taken
1. Familiarizing Yourself with the Data	▪ Transcription (Transcribe Me) ▪ Initial Reading and Rereading of Transcripts ▪ Noting Initial Ideas ▪ Organizing Stories into Chronological Order
2. Generating Initial Codes	▪ First-Cycle Coding: Initial Coding ▪ Coding Interesting Features of the Data in a Systematic Fashion Across the Entire Data Set ▪ Collating Data Relevant to Each Code
3. Searching for Themes	▪ Second-Cycle Coding: Focused Coding ▪ Collate Codes into Potential Themes ▪ Gather all Data Relevant to Each Potential Theme ▪ Examine Relationships Between Codes and Possible Themes
4. Reviewing Themes	▪ Check for Connection of Themes in Relation to Codes Extracted in First and Second Cycles ▪ Start Generating a Thematic Map of the Analysis
5. Defining and Naming Themes	▪ Continue Analysis to Refine the Specifics of Each Theme ▪ Create an Overall Story from the Analysis ▪ Generate Clear Definitions and Names for Each Theme ▪ Keep Refining Thematic Map
6. Producing the Report	▪ Select Compelling Excerpts to Illustrate ▪ Provide Evidence of Themes in Data ▪ Write a Scholarly Report

Note. Adapted from "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), pp. 77–101.

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Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is of utmost importance in a qualitative study, as in this narrative analysis. Trustworthiness describes the accuracy or credibility of qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). First, credibility "establishes whether or not the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views" (Anney, 2014, p. 278). This means I spent in-depth time in the field and engaged with participants to ensure the data collected was credible.

I established trustworthiness by member checking, per Creswell's (2012) guideline, to ask "one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account" (p. 259). Member checking occurred following the transcription of the interviews (Appendix D) and following the completion of the narratives (Appendix E). This allowed for feedback from the participants on whether their narratives were complete and if the themes were accurate and fair (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to include in the study's outcomes. Moreover, another means to establish authenticity or credibility in the study was to describe the setting and participants with rich, thick descriptions and details (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

A researcher should "[determine] how long to remain in the field, whether the data are saturated to establish good themes or categories, and how the data analysis evolves into a persuasive narrative" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). Additionally, using both methods to establish trustworthiness in the study may ensure that the data is authentic to the stories the participants told.

Researcher Role

In a narrative study, the role of a researcher is "as a guide for a journey the two of you are embarking on" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 33). A researcher sets the tone and the pace during the

interviews, "knowing what questions to ask, how to ask them, and when" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 33). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, "the way an interviewer acts, questions, and responds in an interview shapes the relationship and therefore the ways participants respond and give accounts" (p. 110). Therefore, throughout each interview and member-checking process, I was mindful of spoken words, pauses, laughs, and tone of voice. I allowed the participants to tell their stories without interruptions, only providing nods and smiles. When necessary, I used open-ended follow-up questions or provided clarification when requested by the participant.

This study's research was of personal interest, as I am a Latina who was raised in a border town in Texas with similar stories that were shared. Throughout the interviews and analysis, I was mindful to accurately portray the participant's experiences rather than letting my own experiences and stories shape or bias the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Seeking institutional review board approval is the first step to protecting human subjects; however, there are other ethical considerations a researcher must consider. Ethical principles need to be established to ensure proper protocols are in place for research. Three basic ethical principles include (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

Respect for others includes not only treating the participants as "autonomous agents" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) but also ensuring that the participants are given information about the study that helps them to decide whether to participate or not (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Beneficence means "do no harm," and in this study, "harm can take forms other than physical injury" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 192). I took steps such as explaining the study in detail, and at any point before or during the study, the participants were reminded, they could stop. In the

same degree of importance, the ethical principle of justice "considers who benefits from a research study and who is burdened by it, noting the need for a balance of these factors" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 192). There was no party funding the study, nor was there any financial transaction between participants and researcher in this study. The study only intended to expand on the body of literature on Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in community colleges in Texas.

Researchers doing qualitative studies must abide by these principles to protect humans who participate in studies (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Interviews were scheduled after the participants had signed the consent form. Josselson and Hammack (2021) asserted that it is also essential that at the close of the interview, a researcher "asks whether there is any material that the participant would not want to be shared in a written document, even if suitably disguised" (p. 78). Participants could withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

Additionally, participants were presented with the Solicitation Materials during the recruitment stage, and participants were not asked any questions nor asked if they agreed or consented to participate. They stated their interest in participating, at which point I emailed them the officially approved Institutional Review Board Consent Form. Interviews were scheduled after they signed the consent form. Additionally, Abilene Christian University's data storage policy was followed, with data securely kept on the campuses' repository for three years following the completion of the study and then destroyed.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the participants selected for this study responded to interview questions "openly and honestly" (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019, p. 111) and shared their leadership development experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood. It is also assumed that participants remembered their experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood. Moreover, it is assumed

that the interpretation of data accurately reflects participants' perceptions, as captured in interviews and transcribed into written text. As qualitative research is an iterative process, I worked with the participants for a collaborative outcome (Creswell, 2007).

Limitations and Delimitations

In a study using life story narratives, limitations included sample size. Bell (2002) asserted that "narratives allow researchers to present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness" (p. 209), requiring the use of a small sample (Creswell et al., 2007). Also, the study's time frame did not allow for a large number of participants. The study data is not generalized as it does not "follow the sampling procedures of quantitative research such as random selection of participants" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 99). This study was also limited to Texas community colleges.

Delimitations in qualitative research come from a researcher's specific choices (Simon & Goes, 2013), and researchers have control over those choices (Simon, 2011). Delimitations for this study are 1. The participants in the study—Latino and/or Hispanic men; 2. The location of the study—the State of Texas; 3. The leadership positions selected to analyze within this study—deans, associate deans, associate vice president/chancellors, and directors.

Chapter Summary

The narrative research tradition is the best qualitative approach to answer the questions fully and successfully and, therefore, meet this study's purpose. The purpose was to examine the impact of critical factors, namely, lived dynamic, nonlinear, and contextual experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood, of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges. This chapter has provided detailed descriptions of how a narrative life story narrative (Creswell, 2009) study allowed me to view "experience as the phenomena" (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2006, p. 477). Through this approach and through conducting open-ended, semistructured interviews, rich narratives from three Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges were collected.

Using an inductive approach with two-cycle coding processes and qualitative data analysis software, categories and themes were established to understand the lived experiences of the participants in this study. In closing, this chapter described the ethical principles and limitations of the study. Following all the Abilene Christian University's Institutional Review Board guidelines is also essential.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the life story narratives of three Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges. The purpose of this study was to understand the critical factors, namely, their lived dynamic, nonlinear, and contextual experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood, on the leadership development of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges. I sought to understand the leadership development perspective of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in community colleges in Texas. Two broad research questions guided this study: RQ1 How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) perceive critical factors from adolescence to adulthood? RQ2: How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) understand the impact, if any, of critical factors on their leadership development in community colleges in Texas?

First, the chapter begins with a description of the current context of community colleges in Texas. Following the context is a review of the methodology, and next, the participants' narratives are presented as third-person portraits. The portrait for each participant will include a synopsis of their background and current leader roles. Next, each participant's narrative is presented with a first-person life story written chronologically with associated episodes. Lastly, Chapter 4 concludes with the emergent themes and subthemes discovered through analyzing the participants' life span stories from adolescence to middle adulthood.

Study Context

Before presenting the participant's story, it is important to examine the cultural context during the development of this study. A magnitude of changes occurred worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, the events cannot be separated from the study. The effects of the pandemic impacted me, the participants, their institutions, families, and their communities.

In 2020, what would usually be bustling cities worldwide, a pandemic now had cities eerily quiet as people sheltered in their homes (United Nations, 2020). Gaudet (2020) stated, "Everything changed. All around the world. Nearly all at once. A deadly virus plunged us into grief, fear, and anxiety" (p. 7). In mid-December 2019, the first reports began to come out of China, with government officials reporting a cluster of patients in Wuhan presenting with a new form of pneumonia that was spreading at an alarming rate (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). By the end of December 2019, a new virus of unknown etymology was being reported, and at the time, the mode of transmission was not fully understood (Allam, 2020). In the early days of 2020, Chinese officials finally reported the identification of the virus to the WHO, and the WHO made the official announcement to the world (Allam, 2020). On January 12, 2020, the WHO issued guidelines for travel, especially in and out of Wuhan (Allam, 2020). Unfortunately, by this time, there was a case of coronavirus in Japan, and this person had not been in Wuhan, and then a second case was reported in Thailand on January 17, 2020, and cases were rising in China (Allam, 2020).

On January 20, 2020, the United States reported its first case of the virus in Washington State (Allam, 2020). On January 30, the WHO declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, demonstrating an increasing concern about the virus's worldwide spread (WHO, 2020). All world leaders had their eyes on China, and the number of COVID-19 cases kept increasing globally. Countries worldwide started closing their borders and imposing travel restrictions from China to mitigate the virus's spread (Allam, 2020). By the end of February, the Center for Disease Control [CDC] would state that the "disruption to everyday life may be severe" (Rodriguez, 2021).

The United States continued to have a rise in cases, and by March 2020, the United States had over 1,000 cases of COVID-19 (Allam, 2020). The WHO, at this point, declared the new virus a pandemic. On March 11, 2020, President Trump addressed the American people to inform them what they could expect in the coming months (Allam, 2020). Mid to late March 2020, the country took "unprecedented social distancing measures to protect the health and well-being of citizens" (Bailey & Schurz, 2020, p. 1), prompting school closures to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The profound effects of the pandemic have been far-reaching across the United States, impacting the health and well-being of every individual (Bailey & Schurz, 2020). Significant impact was being felt, from communities experiencing loss of life to local and state mandates resulting in increased unemployment, food insecurity, and hunger (Owens et al., 2020). As we moved into 2021, the pandemic was still ravaging many countries, including the United States, with more infections and more deaths occurring (United Nations, 2020).

From the perspective of the pandemic's impact on education, many elements have made it very stressful for students (Besser et al., 2022). Although most institutions have returned to face-to-face or hybrid environments, safety concerns remain due to the "potential risk to health and well-being for individual students but also for their family members, friends, and colleagues" (Besser et al., 2022, p. 85). Students across the country continue to cope with the sense of isolation, stress, and anxiety resulting from disrupting daily routines (Besser et al., 2022).

From the context of community colleges, just before 2020, these institutions were thriving (Floyd, 2021). Institutions that were once filled with students, faculty, staff, and administration were now empty, and most administrative work was performed via the use of technology. Faculty had no choice, and they had to switch classes from face-to-face to virtual formats, leaving students also "forced to adapt quickly" (Floyd, 2021, p. 1). Community colleges

across the country found themselves quickly shifting to how they operated and served students and the community (Floyd, 2021).

As community colleges are now finding their way back, and faculty, students, and staff are returning, Floyd (2021) stated, "as we are busy working in systems based on pre-COVID-19 paradigms, now is the time to pause, to reflect, to think deeply about our mission, vision, and values" (p. 3). It will take a concerted and collaborative effort to use what has been learned over the past two years to ensure community colleges and every other institution use this "opportunity to better align programs and services with our core purpose" (Floyd, 2021, p. 6). Lastly, as institutions continue to contend with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the voice and perspective of the students will be critical to discern best practices and how policies and practices should be implemented (Prokes & Housel, 2021).

Methodological Organization of the Findings

Before presenting the participant's narratives and emergent themes, it is necessary to recount the methodology outlined in Chapter 3. I conducted open-ended, semistructured interviews that captured the life stories of three Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges. I reviewed each transcript with the audio recording to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and organized each participant's transcript chronologically. The use of an inductive approach with two-cycle coding processes and qualitative data analysis software aided in establishing categories and themes to understand the participants' lived experiences. Three themes with six subthemes emerged. Following this process, I chose interview excerpts to support each and the subthemes. Appendix F provides a sample of the codes and interview snippets.

Participants

　　All participants serve in leadership roles in Texas community colleges. Each participant's specific title and role varied within institutions; however, one participant was a senior director, the second participant a vice president, and the third an associate vice-president. Table 3 aligns the participants' pseudonyms, years of experience in their role, and years of experience in higher education.

Table 3

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Years in leadership role	Years in higher education
Daniel	2 (senior director)	16
Alex	6 (dean, associate vice president, vice president)	24
Gilbert	6 (associate vice president)	16

Portraits

　　For this study, portraits in the third person introduce each participant, summarizing their background and current leadership role in a Texas community college. Each portrait is followed by their story.

Portrait of Daniel

　　Daniel has 16 years of experience in higher education and currently serves in a senior director-level position at a community college in the northern region of Texas. He has taken his lived experiences as a Latino male to drive his passion for serving those who are underrepresented and underserved in higher education. Over his years of experience in higher education, Daniel has seen the lack of Latino representation in higher leadership positions. This pushed him to pursue his master's and doctorate degrees to have the credentials to advance as

needed. He has made a concerted effort to position himself to help others advance educationally and professionally and to ensure a Latino voice is at the table when decisions are being made.

Daniel works closely with the teams he currently leads to ensure that barriers are removed and that underrepresented communities have equitable access to education that mobilizes their goals for a better life, as education has done for him. He recognizes the sacrifices his family and others before them have made that have allowed him to be in a position of influence, and he does not that lightly. He has the leadership skills needed to advance in his career and to have the Latino voice present in spaces where there is not that voice, and this perspective is a motivator that keeps him "looking" forward as a leader in a Texas community college.

Daniel's Story

Episode 1: Middle School

> My parents came from a family of migrant workers, so they moved across Texas and the surrounding states following the crops. They did not graduate from high school, and they ended up settling down in west Texas. My family was pretty consistent. I mean both parents worked. So, in my middle school years, they both worked labor intensive jobs. My mother worked in school cafeterias, and my father was a welder. In middle school they really didn't have the capacity to help me academically, but they were really supportive and really wanted me to continue in school. Although there were no talks of college. They just wanted me to graduate from high school and find a job.
>
> **Parents' Support**. As I said, my parents worked very hard to make sure we had what we needed and by that, I mean money for lunch. My parents were never involved in the PTA or school activities. Again, it's not that they didn't want to; it's just their experiences.

Their lack of education really didn't set them up to help me out. I have one older brother, and we helped each other out in terms of academics. I think there was a part in middle school where I wanted to grow a little bit more into music, sports, and stuff like that. If I wanted to do something, my family was behind me, but like I said, they just didn't have a lot of capacity to support me. They didn't have the financial means to support anything else other than some money for lunch and the bare necessities, really.

Education Impact. So, I think for me in middle school, I felt that I had missed out on opportunities because, as I said earlier, my parents did not have the means to support any extra activities. I did have a good experience and had some good teachers. I think I made the honor roll a couple of times, but for me to be like an honor roll student, no, that wasn't me. My mom didn't have a bumper sticker on her car "I love the honor roll." Academic-wise, I was just average. But I look back on it, and I was thriving. I think it was part of my mom and dad continually encouraging me and telling me to go forward. I was on this path where I just gotta finish high school. So, I think for middle school, it was just kinda going through the motions.

Socio-economic Impact. Middle school was just kind of more of a formality for me. I think it would have been different had we had higher socioeconomic status, then maybe I could've gotten involved in sports in school and been exposed to different things, but that wasn't the case. But I still felt encouraged and motivated because mom and dad were making sure I had what I needed to go to school.

Discrimination and Leadership Practices. Growing up in a city in west Texas, there wasn't a whole lot of Latinos out there, and there was a lot of discrimination. There was segregation, and there still is. It wasn't really diverse, and I think that really kinda help

shape a lot of the way I saw the world and things that I knew that if I ever was in a position of power and authority that, I would use that to make practices for all and not to be discriminatory because those are things I faced growing up. These microaggressions that I faced, that my family faced catapulted me to want to try harder and to find something to have influence, to have authority. Not to abuse this authority and not to use it to discriminate but to help everyone. I think being in this conservative area, a real true minority where there are very few of us, that really just helped "shape" me as well. Second-language Learner. There were a lot of individuals who spoke Spanish in my family, so language was a big cultural influence. It was around middle school where I started to try to speak Spanish. It was this awareness that, like to communicate with my grandmother and my grandfather. I could understand what people are telling me, I just really didn't speak it. So, the communication, the relationship I have with my grandparents during this time was just kind of a one-way communication. But it was around this time where, I really started to say, okay, well, maybe I need to learn Spanish to I can communicate with them. I started, and I found it fascinating but then also frustrating because as a second language learner its's difficult, and sometimes you have in your mind what you want to say just not the vocabulary. I had friends that spoke perfect Spanish. It really came to the language piece and the cultural influence it had on me. I always wondered why didn't my mom and dad teach me Spanish. Why was it primarily English? Well, my parents, specifically from my mom. She grew up in south Texas around the early part of the century when she as penalized, punished for speaking Spanish in the classroom. I mean, they would sit around the hallway, and this is her native language. This is the language she grew up with in her house and communicated

with her siblings. It turns out later in life that my mom did say that because she had those

experiences, she didn't want me to experience those as well. You know, the

discrimination about just because they were speaking Spanish. So, in her mind, was like,

"Okay, I'm gonna just speak English so that way he doesn't experience these," you

know, so I don't get punished or discriminated against like she did.

Travel to Border Town. As I mentioned earlier, I grew up in west Texas, so the closest

Mexico entry was El Paso. We spent a lot of time summer vacations, going to El Paso,

and this was around middle school. This is when I started to really kinda see for myself,

these disparities, and things I've never seen. I thought we had everything we needed, but

when we went to Mexico, and we go visit there, oh my gosh, we were well off. I mean,

we were well off. I saw a world where there were disparities, the haves and have-nots,

and that was really the first time that I started to see that in this world. Again, being

introduced and just having these experiences, visiting Mexico, and seeing these different

cultures really opened my eyes. I think a lot had to be like, okay, I definitely gotta keep

moving forward. So, I think that gave me a lot of encouragement.

Influences on Leader Development. I think because my parents were very hard

workers, that instilled a level of work ethic in terms of trying your best, working hard. If

you fail, you try again. That's the type of mentality I grew up with, and I think that's kind

of what shaped it for me. Have a strong work ethic, you know, staying the course. During

middle school, there were times where it was hard, and I may have wanted to quit, but I

stayed the course and was steadfast in my progression. I'd have to summarize my leader

development during this time as someone who really was independent and took initiative.

I think those are important leadership characteristics. Someone who can see the larger

picture, gauge the landscape of an operation or a program, or something of that nature, and can take initiatives where it needs to be. I think a lot of the experiences, I had to take initiative. I had to find my own way. Also, the experiences of discrimination during my middle school time bleeds into everything that I do as a leader. That's really helped me to just see that it shouldn't be, you know, everyone should be treated equally and there should be equity within practices.

Episode 2: High School

In terms of my family, again, my brother is a few years older, and he had already moved on. He went to college for about a year, and then he just started working. My mom and dad were still working. I think at this time, we started to do a little bit more. They had paid off their house by now, and they were starting to add a little *quartito* on the garage and started to add to the house. That right there, you know, that's kind of like that American Dream. You pay off a house, and you own a home. You're a homeowner. You're at a different status. I think for me, and it was really good to see them not to have to struggle so much. They were homeowners, and now they were building on this home. They did not have a lot of money, but they had money. So, for me, it was because of all of their years and years of hard work and sacrifice.

Education. I think I did start off my high school year strong because there was more motivation. I could see the finish line, right. All my parents wanted me to do is graduate, and I'm like a few years away.

So high school would've been like '93 to '96, I think, so, in the world of technology. There was a lot of integration of technology during that time, the early 90s. We had these computers that were put in, and we had typing classes. I was really engaged

in the technology. It really fascinated me. But again, having this humble lifestyle at home, we didn't have a computer. We didn't have any of those gadgets, but we did have them at school. So, I do remember this influx of technology. I was able to witness and do a webinar in my freshman year. I went to a classroom in another state, and that was over the internet. That was like crazy, and now we work this way.

Extracurricular Activities. In high school, I was able to get involved in ROTC, so I was part of the color guard. This represented my first extracurricular activity within academics. It was okay. I mean, like I mentioned earlier, the goal was just to graduate high school. Graduate high school, go work with an uncle, go work with somebody. I knew that I have the heart, strong work ethic in me and I was like whatever I do, I'm gonna knock it out. But, with joining ROTC, there was a different goal now. So, well, maybe I can get into the military if I do a couple of years of ROTC, and if I went into the army, I would get an immediate rank, just based on the activities I did. That was the goal after high school. So, I started off strong, but as I finished out my high school years, I had a part-time job that impacted my grades. In ROTC, there was a lot of active football games and all these different events. My academics really, really struggled. I have to be honest, I just barely graduated high school. It's funny to say that, you know, having earned a doctorate just a few years ago.

ROTC Critical Influence. I think I was in the ROTC about three years. Like I said, I was on my way to the military. ROTC helped my leadership development, build some habits, regimented habits, like things I do now on a regular basis. Because even today, right now, one of the first things I do when I get to work is pull up this little electronic sticky note. So, I build this list, it's these routines, this habit of routine building, that

make for efficiency and effectiveness in leadership. I think a lot of that came from this period in my life. ROTC really helped because, as a young person, I really was managing my time really well. I had the ROTC functions, working part-time, and going to school. So, I felt that from a young age, I knew how to manage my time, and that is a super important trait as a leader now because you're being pulled from so many directions at once. I use different resources and tools, and I think ROTC during this time really instilled this type of characteristic of a good time manager.

Leadership Practices. I think ROTC, also impacted my leadership practices. It really helped me develop habits and routines. For me it's just like team meetings, we have team meetings on a regular basis. I deliver timely reports to my vice-chancellors, and I expect timely reports. I think all of this goes back to having things on a scheduled basis. The military, they're very stringent and everything has some type of time allotted in it. I think for me that really had an impact then and it still does. I have a very good relationship with my teams, but I can be stern and straight forward when I need to and I think a lot of that comes from experiences with the ROTC.

High School Counselors. I remember getting high school counseling and seeing what direction I wanted to take, and they didn't even know. I don't remember them saying, "Oh yeah. Well, go to community college or go to college." That wasn't even an option. They were like, "Okay, well, military. You're already in ROTC; just go to the military." That was like the only thing they were pushing me just because I was in the ROTC. I mean, I don't ever recall them saying, "Hey instead of ROTC and going to the military, have you thought about going to a community college or something like that?" I didn't really do a lot of career counseling at my high school.

Discovering Own Culture Discoveries and Advocacy. I really started to find myself. This was a time period where I really, really tried harder to learn to speak Spanish and to acquire the knowledge. I was communicating more with family members. The Spanish-speaking aspect of it was there. It's still resonating. I still encountered the same frustrations of not being fluent cause I wasn't receiving any type of official training. I didn't take any classes in Spanish. This was all trial and error and trying it alone.

I started to really find myself and really connect with my culture, as being a Latino, being a Chicano and really trying to find out what it was. The city I lived in in west Texas, most folks are Mexican-American descent. But when I started high school, there was a friend and he wasn't Mexican American, his family lived in Puerto Rico. He spoke fast, and he spoke different. It was that time where I started to look at a broader interpretation. I thought everybody was Mexicano. It was like there was different sectors, and my mind just started to look at different cultures and what it meant to be like a Latino. I thought Latino was always just like another word for Mexican-American or a Mexicano. But during this time, during my high school times, I started to see that in a larger lens. There was a lot of different backgrounds, and people from different places were just being umbrellaed under this one label. It was during this time where I started to really parse that out, look at it differently. You got different dialects or from different areas. Our families are different. We eat different things. That was really "power" for me. As I look back, I think that's really helped me with experiences in the DFW metroplex and seeing a lot of different people. I think that really speaks to the way we operate in terms of, like, equity in our operations. Trying to provide Spanish materials or just provide services for different folks from different backgrounds. Being aware, just being

sensitive and aware of the different ethnicities, backgrounds, cultural differences, and commonalities that we share. I think high school was the awakening of that part of my life.

Leadership Impact and Advocacy. I felt that I started my leader development. I think there were some aspects that still resonate with me in terms of the rigidness that I faced during that time, in terms of time management and just developing regular cycles or cyclical events. I think that those pieces that I experienced and those characteristics I developed as a high schooler have really transpired into the leader that I am now. There's a lot of routines that I follow, and I think that could be attributed to those experiences. In terms of cultural, those experiences of having seen more of the inequities within the Latino community and the underserved communities because I went to an all-Black high school have really shaped me to be an equity-minded leader, a leader for all and that servant-leader who's really trying to make an impact. So, I think that's where it was. I saw the need was larger during that timeframe, and I just knew that I could somehow, some way, be able to make the change in these communities and help people grow and advance.

Episode 3: Emerging Adult - College/University

I wasn't a traditional, out of high school college student. I didn't transition straight from high school to college. As I mentioned, college wasn't even on the radar. I was heading on another career path, the military, but I did take a break after high school. I went to go live with family members out of state.

Family and Work Experience. I did a lot of work in roofing and construction. I was out of state working with family for about two years. I thought that was gonna be the

pathway, but I kept seeing a lot of people get hurt on the job, and they weren't able to continue. One of my uncles got hurt falling off a roof, and I was just like, oh man, I don't know if I'm gonna be able to keep this up for another 20, 30 years. So, I started thinking about the military. I can go to the military, or what else can I do?

Education. I started looking into trade schools, so I said, okay, start looking at that and some of the things. So, these were concepts that I started looking at. College and school were concepts after maybe about 20 years old cause I graduated when I was 18. So, it was probably around 20 that I started getting these concepts, ideas of going back to school. As I mentioned, there was no formal counseling or encouragement that said, "Hey, this is a path, or "This is community college." "You can do a certificate, or you can get transfer credits to go to university." All that, they saved it for someone else, I guess.

I think for my family life; they were okay with that. I was doing good when I was working in roofing and construction. I was making really good money for a person my age, and when I came back to Texas and lived with my parents, I was still doing that type of work. I was making good money, and everything was okay. I was single, and I was just working, and my parents were okay with that.

Culture and Language. At that point in time, I was more fluent than ever in terms of Spanish. I was really able to communicate with my grandparents a lot. I learned a lot from them as we started getting really interested in history and oral history. I remember recording some of these conversations I have with them about, like, my grandfather and his passage from Mexico to the U.S. and my grandmother's, and they would go on and on. They love to talk. So, I do remember having a couple of recordings cause I was like, oh, I need to know. I think this will be important to save and listen to. I started to dive

deeper into who I am, who I was. Where did my family come from and those types of things. I think it was important to me to understand that as a person. But I think as a leader as well, understanding who you are, where you come from, that's important. I continued this cycle of just working till about the age of maybe 24, where I started working with Texas Migrant Counsel.

Work Experience and Influence on Education. I was a teacher's aide, and I would help drive the bus. I'd clean and just do everything at this childcare center. It was pretty much a head start center for migrant workers. So, we would go pick up people from the different fields, different canning factories around the town I lived in, and we would bring them back to a center and have different types of academic programming for them, and then we would take them back. I don't really know how I landed that job. I really don't; it just happened. I applied for it, and right there, I was like, okay, to advance I need to get certified as a teachers' aide if I wanted to move up.

Continuing Education Courses and Impact. I started to take early childhood development classes. Those were the first college courses that I took, and I didn't know that they weren't credit-based courses. They were continuing education courses, but for me, I didn't know the difference. I was going to the college campus. I took a few child development and psychology classes, and so this is gonna get me a certificate, like a teacher's aide certificate or something like that. I was like, okay, this will be something I can use, and I can have as a job for a longer time. Well, I started getting burned out with these kids. I loved what I did. I loved the scene, you know, progress in these kids, but I was at the point in my life where if I ever wanna have kids of my own, I need to be getting away from this environment cause these kids are driving me crazy, because it was

tough. It was encouraging because I saw and did a lot. But it was discouraging working with this population. I just needed a break, but I did like the environment. I liked the learning environment and being introduced to that. So, I was like, what is it gonna take for me to go teach at a high school. This notion of history and government were things I was interested in at that point.

College Credit Courses and Support Services. So, I said, okay, well, I'll go teach high school or middle school social studies or government history. Oh, I need a bachelors, so I started exploring some career research. At that time, I had already been integrated into the CE part of the college, so I started to become aware that there's an academic center. Oh, there's a career center. There're people here to help me, and so I was taking advantage of all kinds of programs because, again, I didn't know what I didn't know.

I started getting individuals helping me build resumes and just different things to help me out. And so eventually, I enrolled into a junior college in west Texas, a feeder school to a Texas university. I was just looking for an associate degree. I really did it. I mean, for being out of school for so long, I did excel really quickly. I think it was because I had taken some time off and experienced the real world and the heartache and the suffering, seeing what my life was headed towards. I think those experiences, when I got into college at the age of 24, I was a little bit more mature. I don't have any time to waste. I'm gonna knock it out and I made the dean's list. I had a couple of accolades.

Engagement in Collegiate Activities and its Cultural Impact. This was the first time that I got involved in a collegiate organization. It was called the Hispanic Student Organization. I met some advisors, and it took off from there. I was really involved with this student organization at this junior college. The cultural experiences elevated again

cause I started to dive more into this history. I learned more history about the Mexican American history, Texas history. I got real involved with like the Cesar Chavez march. The cultural experiences really elevated when I was in college. I learned a lot that I had not been previously taught, and that was not readily available. It was things that they don't teach you in regular elementary, middle school, or high school. It's then into college, where you start to experience these or learn about historical events that really have shaped our lives.

First-Generation Student and Support Programs. So, I was really taking it in and was really looking forward to the two years at the college. Then I knew that the STAR program would help a first-generation college student like myself transfer to university. I was like, okay, I wanna go to a Texas university, and I need to get transferred, so I became a STAR Program student.

Transfer to Four Year University. So, when I transferred to university, I had about two years left. At that point in time, I didn't get involved with any fraternities or any organizations, cause I felt like I was a little bit older student than some of the other students there. The only thing I did get involved with was the chess club, and I've been playing chess my whole entire life. That has had an impact because here at the community college that I'm at now, I'm the chess club advisor, and have been for a few years. So, I got involved with the chess club, just attending meetings, not meeting any leaders but just active in that and steadfast on my academics. I did a work-study job.

Family Life. I was living with mom and dad for a little bit, but then I also lived independently on my own at a couple of apartments. But all that was really expensive, and I was like, I can go back to the electric company where I was working at and making

money. I was really torn because I wasn't seeing the fruits of my labor. I was struggling. I was really struggling. I was poor. I didn't have much.

I did meet my wife around this time, and so she helped me out a lot. My parents were still helping me out more than ever. They were really helping me out, they would encourage me, but I couldn't talk to them about financial aid. I couldn't talk to them about anything. Even when my mom passed away, she still really didn't understand what I was doing. I was struggling, but I was still making it.

Taking the Initiative. I struggled when I went to university, but I utilized the academic services. At that point in time, I felt like I had this secret sauce. I can go get academic services. You go to the tutoring. They have all these resources there. There's no need to do it independently on your own, and that was really when I started to excel. Excel academically, not necessarily. I still struggled with math. I had a lot of trouble with math and some of the writing, so I did a lot of tutoring. But I'm excelling as a person, to really empower yourself and to see that there's people out there willing to help you, and you just gotta meet them halfway. And then you gotta take that initiative. That was really a life-changer for me. And so, ultimately, I did join, I think it was during my last year and a half, I was a McNairs scholar. Uh, that was another TRIO program I was involved with, and that really opened up the doors to research in higher education and graduate work.

Which again, at this point in time, the feeling is really kind of like, I'm shooting for high school teacher. That's all I'm trying to do, you know, minimum, because I like the teaching environment. But, being introduced to graduate-level work and just these different options and what research was. Again, I was majoring in history, so I was really into history, and so I started doing some research, and I got connected with some faculty

and helped them out. I attended my first ever sponsored trip to south Texas. At that time,

it was Texas Pan Am. I did some research on a guy named Jesus Guerra. Jesus Guerra

back in the 60s, in south Texas, in a little town called Roma, it's a border town. He and

this little small group were really good basketball players and used basketball to advance

from regionals to the state levels that no other team form the whole valley in south Texas

had ever been.

They did a lot, and along the way, they faced a lot of discrimination. They still

knew that through sports, they were gonna be able to advance themselves, and then they

all ended up being, like, lawyers and superintendents all throughout south Texas. So, it

was really inspiring that I got to go down there. That really helped me, those experiences

as an undergraduate there at Tech, and they really influenced me to where I was like,

okay. Well, I guess I'm gonna go do a dissertation. I don't know what it's gonna be, but I

definitely want to go into graduate school. Cause I was like, I'm already here, I can

continue the walk, cause at this point, my confidence level was there. I knew I could do

it. And so I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in history. So, my goal was still to go into

teaching, but I was gonna go the teacher alternative certification route.

Life Happens. So, I didn't get my teacher certification, and so it was gonna be

afterwards. Well, life happens, uh, quickly. So, it was just like, okay, you're graduating,

and now you gotta go to work. So, I found a job. I got a job at the Fort Worth Boys and

Girls Club as an Upward Bound counselor. So now I was counseling the students, and I

was like, okay, let me get a year or two of work underneath me, and then I'll go get my

certification, then go into teaching. Well, it so happens that this counselor role, this

adviser for Upward Bound, there were teaching requirements in there. I was able to get

some experience with teaching, and I didn't really like it. I really didn't like being

pigeonholed in a classroom, you know, and weren't able to move.

I'm actually kind of glad I was able to get that experience. But I still like the

higher education environment cause we're helping these students, first-gen students,

apply and be one of the first in their family to go to college. I was inspired. I liked doing

that. I was like, okay, maybe I'll go into higher education, and that's kind of what led me

into the world of higher education. Uh, I spent a few years there, at the TRIO program at

the Boys & Girls Club. I left because I wanted to pursue my master's degree. So, I moved

and got a job with another Upward Bound program through Dallas College. I was the

TRIO advisor there for a few years. Again, I was enjoying it.

Graduate and Postgraduate School. I enrolled in my master's program. I was really

specific in my undergrad, in history, so for the master's program, I want it to be kinda

little broader, so I got into managerial science. I know I could use this for different areas,

uh, different industries if I needed to. I got my master's degree and I moved into a grant

manager position at another college within our system. Immediately after I got my

master's, I went into my doctoral program. I went back to Tech. I got my EdD from

Texas Tech, and that was a struggle. I finished in 2017, and my career had just

continuously progressed. I was about 30 when I earned my master's degree, and I was 40

when I earned my doctorate degree.

That's kind of the life span of my college years. I would have never imagined me

saying that I was gonna spend all these years in college. But I just saw the value in it as I

continued to get more into the industry, more into these academic spaces. I just knew if

this was gonna be the field I wanted to be in, then I wanted to get at least the highest

credential I could to maximize the opportunities around me.

Leader Development Critical Factor. I think one of the things I'd like to expand upon

is when I first got involved in a student organization, that was the first time that I had a

title of an official leader. I was like the president of the student organization. I remember

them doing some leadership training. I think from that initial piece and moving into the

professional world, I'd always sought and looked for opportunities to grow professionally

and as a leader. The McNair's Scholars program, as I was finishing up my bachelor's

degree, there were some leadership components in that as well that really helped me

develop the leader that I am now. I talked about time management and organizational

management. Those attributes and those characteristics they're fundamental to work in

higher education. I think along the way, I've been a part of different organizations and

different programs that helped me, like the MacNair's Scholars was one of them, and my

association with the TACHE program. I was in my master's program when I was

awarded the grad's fellowship, and there was a monetary piece, but there was also

mentorship with development as a leader.

Episode 4: Middle Adulthood - Workforce and Leadership Practices

During my doctoral program, there was a leadership institute here at the college that I

was selected for, and that continued to help me gain those skills as a supervisor, or as a

manager of multiple people from different areas of the college, in a very diverse

workforce. Those are skills that help me develop leadership components that focus on the

lenses of equity and inequality—and just, serving, leading with grace. I think so many

times we have stern leaders, and we just need folks who are compassionate, empathetic to the baggage, and the things seen and unseen things that a lot of our team members have.

Leadership Development. More recently, I'd say over the last five years, I was selected for the National Community College Hispanic Council, NCCHC. This is a leadership arm of the American Association of Community Colleges. They have yearly cohorts of leadership development, and that has been sort of helpful. Being part of that organization has been helpful. So, when I look back at the span of leadership development, I've purposely and strategically look for programs to help me along the way. To help develop these skills and these attributes, and I think that's been the most successful strategies. And I encourage that for those young students. I encourage them to get into leadership development programs. Colleagues of mine who have talked to me or want advice about their educational progression and whether they should go to a master's or doctoral program, or so forth, I tend to lean back on my experiences and really advocate for leadership and mentorship type programs cause for me, that has been one of the things that has helped me along the way. That not only helped me along the way but also helped me develop these leadership skills that I still use today.

Family. As I progressed thought my life, so has my family. I have a 16-year-old, a 10-year-old, and an 8-year-old. I'm a father to different stages of childhood. And so, they grow with me as I have grown as a leader, as I have progressed through my career, my family has grown. So, it's been a pleasure to have experienced these things. I don't take this time of my life for granted. I embrace all of the good times, the challenges, the issues we have. I try to remain grounded in where I'm at in my life and really try to absorb all these times while my children are young. But right now, they're still young, and being a

parent and trying to navigate graduate school and trying to navigate a career, it's difficult.

I think for me having a strong partner has really helped. Having her support really, really

helped me progress and helped me kind of along the way throughout this pathway.

Professional Experiences and Impact on Leadership Development. Some of the

experiences and the reasons why I wanted to get these, be part of programs and

affiliations is because I was able to see what a bad leader looks like. At every institution

that I've been at, every workplace that I've been at I've seen bad leadership in play. So, I

think that from those experiences, having seen what a bad manager, supervisor looks like

and some of the things that they do, I've been able to use that experience and just not

replicate those types of activities. Uh, because I know how the team felt. I know how my

colleagues felt when we were in spaces where we didn't have a good manager or

supervisor to talk to. I think having those experiences, not pleasant, but some experiences

like that throughout my career have really shaped the type of leader I am now. One that

leads with compassion, empathy.

Yes, we have a job to do, but I care about you as an individual as well.

Importantly because without you, the work doesn't get done, and someone else is doing

double tasks. So, I operate within that mindset, and within that philosophy with the teams

and colleagues that I'm around with now because of having bad experiences. I think I've

held on to those experiences so that way I can, you know, in my mind, not fall into any of

those trends or tendencies myself. Those types of experiences just reinforce my need to

get involved in associations and programs to help develop me as a leader and to help

build these fields. You have to be intentional about it, and sometimes leadership just

doesn't happen naturally for a lot of folks. You have to develop these skills and these traits and finesse your leadership style.

Cultural Influences. For the cultural experiences, again, I think for me having experienced kind of like this language barrier or language obstacles growing up. I was determined to for my children to speak Spanish. Uh, because I think that knowing Spanish is important and especially in the region that we live in. And for me, I know I felt at times where I would be in conversations, and they were, "Oh, you don't know Spanish?" It was a sort of dig on me. But again, I can't keep explaining the story of how mom was discriminated against, and that she didn't want me to experience that. So, a lot of the time, I just let it slide, or we overlook it.

So, I want different experiences for my children. So, we're definitely trying collectively to integrate Spanish. Culturally we celebrate Dia de los Muertos and have for a number of years. I think it's one thing for us, being family centric. Culturally to understand who we are, we have conversations about our families and other families and other folks from different backgrounds. Even just in our cul-de-sac, there's folks from all over the world, but we're the only Latinos.

So, I definitely have this focus of wanting to and continuing to raise culturally aware people. These little people that live in my house, I want them to be culturally aware and they are aware of our culture. Because in the real world, that's who they're going to interact with, unless they go into the rural country. I think from me, this family that I have, it does fuel a lot of like the drive and motivation I have as a leader.

Family Values on Leadership Development. I get up and I come to work. I have this good job, a good position at the college, and I do that because I wanna help others. I have

that servant leadership. I wanna make an impact in the world and help people break these chains of poverty, and help empower individuals. The family that I have are the reasons why I work so hard is because of them, it's for them. It's a drive. If I didn't have a family, I'm pretty sure I'd still be doing the same thing. It's just a little bit more sweeter that work I'm doing now really is for my family. To provide for them. For them to experience the things that I couldn't.

So earlier, I mentioned I wasn't able to go into sports. I wasn't able to be in the band because my family didn't have the funds. Well, all three of my kids play violin. They all play piano. We have guitars, and we have drums. We have all kinds of instruments. My wife comes from a family of musicians, so she has that knowledge base to teach them guitar, flute, and all that. So, there's just all kinds of music going on at the house. Those are the types of things when I look at why I'm doing what I'm doing, and it's to enhance the lives of my children. I think going back to the culture, mom, and dad wanted to do the same for me. They wanted to, but for them, I was already making it by going to high school. I was already experiencing a level of education they hadn't reached.

And so, I think for me, it's just like this cultural tie that we have that we have to help out our families and to provide them with experiences and things that we didn't have. It's something that's instilled within our families. I think that's something that's developed in your culture. I think that's important, and the experiences my grandchildren will have will be different as well.

So, I think for me all of that drives me to do what I do today and being the best leader I can because I know that through education, it can change lives. And so, I'm committed to that, that vision, and that mindset. I think in terms of how it shaped my

leadership development, I think I'm more empathetic now than ever because I understand what it means to care for someone on a whole different level. That transpires into my leadership. Maybe when I was younger, I was a little bit harder and sterner and, you know, crack the whip on teens to get stuff done. I've learned over the years, yeah, that tactic could work. Yeah, you could continue to do that, but there's a more graceful way to get things done.

Leadership Practices. There's a more subtle way to get individuals in their teens to get their work done and to inspire them. To encourage them to set that vision that I have myself, that the college has, and to understand that, and apply that work that you're doing to that vision, which is ultimately helping students, impacting communities, and so forth. And so, for me, I've being a parent over the last 16 years, and it's had an impact in my leadership.

I found that this type of leadership is effective, people respond to a leader who's genuine, who's trying to find commonalities. I think that for me developing genuine relationships with individuals helps. I try to find commonalities like, oh, we have kids, or we love the Dallas Cowboys, or something. I think when I do that, people recognize that I am genuinely trying to connect with them. And I try to get the directors that I oversee to do the same types of tactics because for me, it's a proven experience, but not everyone operates in that manner. But I've seen it work and so I try to operate with gentleness now more than ever. I attribute that to my fatherhood, and I think that's going into my leadership style. It's impacted, it definitely influenced my leadership development over the last decade or so.

Portrait of Alex

Alex has 24 years of experience in higher education, and he currently serves as a vice-president in a community college located in the west Texas region. His six years of leadership roles encompass positions as a dean, associate vice president, and vice president. He has taken his lived experiences as a Latino male who was raised in a border town of Texas, experiencing poverty and discrimination. Alex was raised by a young single mother who worked very hard, so he had to do many things for himself; hence, Alex is a big believer in *gannas* and grit, and he took advantage of every opportunity that came his way. His lived experiences have influenced his leader development and leadership practices in a Texas community college. Alex has taken his rich cultural experiences into his leadership roles in higher education because at a young age he learned higher education is the path to middle class.

Alex's Story

Episode 1: Adolescence Middle School

Middle school was a real challenging point in my life. So, I was raised by a single mother. I have an older sister and a younger brother, and we are around nine months apart from each other. So, you can imagine the challenge at that time. My mother wasn't making a lot of money. My father wasn't in my life. I would say we were poor, and it's not the same poor that people think of; we were poor. As I mentioned, I didn't have such a great experience in either one elementary or middle school. You always hear these stories, like "Yeah, you know, we were poor, and I never knew it. We just had a great family life and all this." My experience was very different. I feel we were poor; I knew it. I felt like people wanted to make us know it.

Never Fit In. I went to this middle school, and it was absolutely the most miserable time in my adolescence. I can say that, honestly, as I mentioned, we were poor. My mom was divorced in the '70s, and that wasn't normal either. I didn't have a dad in the house. That wasn't normal, either. Thankfully, we lived in a very good neighborhood. We had a very humble home but in a good neighborhood. I think that was one of the challenges, too; a lot of my neighbors weren't like me. They all had nuclear families, they had resources, and we didn't. That was a big challenge, I think, for school. But as I mentioned, I loved school in terms of; I'd spend all my time in the library and the public library too, which was right down the street from us.

All the things that you think that kids would do, I didn't necessarily have those resources. Like, I wanted to play sports, but we either didn't have the money, or my mom couldn't take me because she worked. For a while, she used to ride a bicycle to work.

I felt like I never fit in. It wasn't a good school. It wasn't a good experience. There was bullying and classism sort of stuff. So, you're the poor guy. I mean, I had one pair of jeans, a couple of shirts, holey shoes, that kind of stuff. Going through adolescence and you think that's when you start growing and wanting to be more like everybody else or wanting to have clothes or a certain hairstyle or all those kinds of things, I think add to the challenges. So obviously, I stood out, and a lot stood out in my head. I barely survived my middle school experience. A good part is I got to play in the orchestra during this time. My mother rented a violin for me, which was great. That was something that was very fun, and I had good friends.

Family and Pivotal Influences. During middle school, the household stuff life was a big challenge, too, because my brother and sister also going through adolescence, and they

gave my mom a ton of grief. I'm the middle child, whatever that means, and I wanted to be the one to help my mom out. My mom was always at work, plus she was also very young. So still very young and, I think, living a young lifestyle too, with kids.

One good part, a very good part about that, is when I was nine, my mom put me in this Big Brothers, Big Sisters program. I met my "big brother." He was an awesome young man who had just graduated from a prestigious private university and returned back home. We would meet, as they asked, once a month or something, and he became my brother and mentor. He went away to graduate school. What was really interesting is he had graduated from a Catholic boy's school here in my town that had a very great reputation. He offered to send me to that school and pay my tuition. So, I was looking forward to that the whole time I was in middle school.

All through school, not that I never messed up, but the whole time I was in school, I knew that school, even thought it might not be the place for me, the actual school, I knew that learning was really important. I loved learning. I loved reading. I loved certain classes or certain teachers. I knew that that was my ticket because I'd see my "big brother," and that was his ticket, too. I mean, he came from a relatively humble background, and I found him to be successful. He did a lot of great things, so I always thought, you know, that's my number one priority, education.

Cross Cultural Influences and Language. I'm from a border town. All my life was very much cross cultural. We'd walk across the border like you're gonna go to the grocery store. We'd go right across; we'd go get our hair cut. You might buy some groceries; you might fill up the car because gas prices back then, and we would do all that and then maybe eat a torta or some tacos or something. Then we come home; we're buying ice

cream on the bridge. We had all those experiences. To me, that was very normal, speaking Spanish and speaking English. All the, you know, culture.

I'll tell you one other thing. So, my mom is of Mexican origin. She's an immigrant, she's from Chihuahua, Chihuahua. My abuelita brought them over very young. So, my whole childhood and adolescence, every summer, school would get out, she would pack us up because she worked, she'd send us to Chihuahua with my tio, tia, and my primos. She would send us down there and I'd be there the whole summer. I was a tough thing too, because you miss home, you miss your mom. Cultural difference, language, everything. I speak Spanish but when you're raised over here, you're the pochito (the person having difficulty speaking fluent Spanish) when you go over there. So, it was a great experience because I got to be with my cousins over there, but it was still a big challenge. I never spent a summer in my hometown until I was probably 14 or 15.

So, I told you my dad wasn't in my life, but we had occasional contact with my grandparents on that side that I tried to avoid, especially because I was getting criticized. When I was a kid, I spoke very differently, like a cholio, saying "ese" and probably had a strong accent and all these kinds of things. They would constantly criticize me for it. "You can't talk like that." "You're never gonna get ahead." But, if you were to talk to my grandma on that side, she had one of the strongest accents you would ever hear because they, too, were immigrants. She was probably doing it for the good of me, she thought, for good.

I told you I spent a lot of time, my childhood, growing up in Mexico with my family. So those experiences were all very impactful, I can't even tell you. This is me

looking backwards. Because in that moment, I'm not thinking that. That's just my life. So, we were very much immersed in the Mexican-American culture. I will tell you one thing I did notice back then is that the Mexican-American culture, Chicano, or whatever we had here, was different than the culture that was in Mexico, and expectations and the lifestyle. So, what I thought was Mexican, and I would call Mexican over here, really wasn't. It was a blend of things, and Mexico's very different. Even my Abuelita, who lived here, was very different versus other areas, family, other family, other friends, and the experiences we had here, that's one thing I did recognize.

Influence on Leader Development and Advocacy. So, it definitely had a big impact. The whole idea that everybody needs a chance, and everybody needs an opportunity, and you can't look at somebody because they look poor or because they speak a certain way. I think it's just made me be very open, and I recognize I may be sensitive to that. So, I see students that remind me of me or might see that they need that additional help. I offer the help. I put myself out there and recognize that I could see the ones that are maybe on the fence or not knowing things. When I visit schools, because we do some school visits, I wanna make sure that I get to talk to the students. I see those students, and I'm able to talk to them. You know, part of what I think we're doing right here is, I also wanna tell my story.

For the longest time, I was embarrassed of my story. I didn't wanna tell people because I wasn't like everybody else, I felt. Then I learned when I got in front of the class when I was still faculty, the students see you, and they think you had a silver spoon in your mouth and that everything came easy, and "mira este," he had everything easy. Seeing you, they just think that, so I wanna be able to share my struggles and my

successes and my failures, especially. I always recognize it that all those things are things that we shouldn't take into account when you're looking at somebody and their ability. I wanna be as open as possible, and I think I try to do that as a leader. Just because you come from some place, because you have an accent, because your mastery of the language isn't quite there, I try to keep that in mind. Also recognize that people mess up and they need chances, so, I think that's a big thing too. Just because you messed up once doesn't put you in that bucket. You can always recover from that, and even if you mess up twice, there are certain things you just have to be able to grow and learn from, so I'm very much a believer in that. I will tell you, I'm a big believer, too, in gannas and grit. You have to do things for yourself. I had to do so many things for myself. And just because I did, I don't say, "Hey, I had to do them, so you shouldn't get the help." I don't believe in that either. Let's help people. But I do believe that you have to have some ownership. You have to want it. If you just keep getting everything given to you, or you keep getting the leg up or the hand, then maybe you're not gonna be as ready for adversity. So that's one of the things I try to teach my kids. You gotta do this. My middle son is just in driver's ed, and he's sixteen and a half. I wanted him to start when he turned 16, and he didn't. He kept like, "Are we gonna start driver's ed?" I said, "dude, as soon as you call the school and as soon as you get the paperwork and get that going, we'll get going. But until you want it, then we'll do it." It took him all that time, and he kept complaining, "Oh, I need to do this." "Aguantate," I said, you're the one that has to do this." So maybe, I think that's where I see that too because I had to be very self-sufficient. And I think it's a challenge for me seeing the student population and some of

the things they get. My own parenting style, my family relationships very much formed

my thoughts as a leader.

Episode 2: Adolescence High School

As I mentioned earlier, my "big brother" had offered to send me to Catholic school. He

followed up, and I got to go this high school, an all-boys Catholic school, that just

changed my life. I found a place to be, and it was powerful and just a great experience.

Even though there were some rich kids and whatever, and I had to take the bus every day

from my mom's house, the city bus, to get downtown, then from downtown, run to the

school because it was a long way away, but even with all that, that was a great thing.

I had a great experience. It was a Catholic school run by the Christian brothers,

and there was very much order and a great education. I felt like that was a very good

place for me. I did fine in school. I wasn't in the top 10 or anything like that, but I did

well. I found that a lot of my peers had much better preparations than I did, but I worked

hard when I was there. Going to Cathedral opened a lot of doors because also there; it's

really a college prep. I never thought that I wasn't gonna go to college, but they really

stress it a lot and that started setting me on the path to higher ed.

Peers and Friends. The challenge of that is not having friends from the neighborhood.

So, everybody lived someplace else. A lot of the kids came from wealth. I had friends,

but it wasn't always that we could hang out. I still had my neighborhood friends, though,

and that was a challenge, too, because my neighborhood friends would give me a hard

time for going to this other school. You can imagine what they would say because it was

all boys, but that was fine. I was okay with that. I was used to hearing that kind of

nonsense.

Socioeconomics. So, I had a good experience, better than good, in high school. I felt like my life was just doing much better because all around socioeconomic status, happy at school. In my family, things were getting better because my mom got a better job, and she started making better money, benefits, all those things. She bought a new car. Things were just better. I was able to stay home now instead of going to Chihuahua every summer, which was really good. I started doing little jobs to earn some money. So, I did things like neighborhood lawns. My "big brother" would have me do his family's home and make a little money. Delivering newspapers back in the old days. Then I think at the end of my sophomore year, I got a job. My first real job at Burger King. I would work there in the evenings and on the weekends and started earning some money. So, I've started working since I was 15 years old, and that was a big thing to be able to do it.

Impact on Leader Development and Practices. I had some great professors when I was there, and I think I took a lot of lessons from them. I looked up to a lot of them and still do. A couple of these faculty that I had there at Cathedral High School had high expectations and little tolerance for nonsense. Although it was a bunch of boys, and we did so many dumb things and crazy things, when it came down to it, it was no nonsense. They let you goof off at the appropriate times, so maybe that's something I learned, too; time and place was important to learn, too. I think it's impacted me in that knowing that it's good to have high expectations. So, I have high expectations for my students and for my staff, for the faculty that work for me. The other thing is, and I think I saw it a lot there too, is the answer there wasn't if you messed up, that you're going to be kicked out, or you're fired. It was, you mess up, there's consequences to it, and now we're gonna try to figure things out. It's how can we help you out. They were tough and could be mean,

but in the end, they worked to help out. I think that's really important. I could see that too. It's like our job; when I have people come in to see me, a lot of times, the first thing they say is, "Am I getting fired?" I'm like, "Boy, that's the last thing from my mind." I mean, it might be in my head, but it's the last thing from my mind that I can actually do because we're not in the job of firing people. We're in the job of helping you get better. Now let's figure out what the issue is, and let's fix it. I think there were lots of opportunities given or available. So, opportunities are available; whether you take them or not, that's up to you. I think there were lots of opportunities available when I was in high school, and I took as many as I could. I feel the same way here. I give the opportunity to people, whether they take it or not. I hope they do. I try to counsel them and talk to them and maybe hear something that's available to you. Oftentimes, I'm surprised when people don't take them. So, I think what it is, is I've learned way back then and didn't put it together until now, being an adult, is that I think I picked a lot of things that made me uncomfortable. But I think that's one thing that I learned, is being uncomfortable, being challenged, it's okay, and I did that a whole bunch. When I talk to my leadership, I think I stress that too. When people come to me and they talk to me about opportunities and I talk to a lot of people who come and say, "Hey, should I pursue a PhD, or should I do X?" I'm like, "Yeah, challenge yourself. Be uncomfortable. Go do this, and afterward, you can decide, "Am I better for it" Am I not?"

Cultural Influences from Catholic School. So obviously, I went to Catholic school. I was raised Catholic, but it a very different level of Catholic when you go to a Catholic school run by Christian brothers, where the majority of my peers, my classmates had all gone through all the years of Catholic school, then going there. You learn there was a big

culture of Catholicism. It wasn't just like, "Oh, they're Holy Rollers." Far from it. These are men, and you think of these religious guys as saintly or whatever, and they're men who are trying to do a job. They're primarily educators, but I think there was a culture of respect and tradition and history, and I think all of those things were very important. Where, you know, this respect for the faculty, respect for visitors, respect for each other. Disrespect for each other was not tolerated. I remember this was nearing the end of my high school career, we were all gathered, and we were going to sing for the National Honor Society induction. A bunch of them were already members of the NHS, and others were gonna be inducted. We had our choir teacher and then another teacher, and they're calling roll, who's in the choir and who's gonna be inducted. There used to be this thing that people would do, and so they'd call your name, and then people would like, under their breath, they would say some bad word about the person. Normally you do it when the teachers aren't there, but boys all did it. Well, all these boys got kicked out of NHS at the last minute, senior year. So, you're thinking, "Oh, they'll probably let them in after a scolding and after talking to their parents." They didn't, and it was a lesson right there, and everybody in the choir got in trouble, even though you said it or didn't say it. Nobody called anybody else out for saying it. We're all responsible for the actions, and I'm not saying I live my life right or that I treat people like that here because that's a very different style of justice that I'm not a believer of or in. But I think seeing those sorts of things was a big influence on me in recognizing that it's just the culture.

Reflection on Leader Development. I think I made a lot of mistakes during this time. I took chances. I feel like I took chances just even going to that school where I didn't know anybody or I wasn't part of a group that all went to school together. I had to travel far to

go to it. But I think putting myself in uncomfortable or challenging or scary positions, and I think failing at some things or maybe not being so successful when I wanted to be at certain things. Maybe just putting myself out there. I was thinking something, in elementary school and middle school, if you asked me, I wanted to disappear. I wanted to be the guy who you don't notice. Who, I can just put my head down, do my work, go home. You know, same thing, repeat, every day. I must say, I had a couple of great teachers in elementary school, but that's really what I wanted to do. In high school, I wanted to be something different.

It's something I tell my kids nowadays. When my daughter went from Catholic school to the early college community college campus where we live, I said, "Here's an opportunity; you get to reinvent yourself. Everybody who knew you then, they're not gonna be there" because she was going alone too. And I said, "It's very much like what I went through. So, you're going into some new territory. Challenge yourself. Nobody knows you. Be uncomfortable for a little bit if it's gonna make you feel better in the long run."

Episode 3: Emerging Adulthood College/University

So going, from high school, I went to the University of Texas at El Paso. Interesting, because I told you I went to this high school that was college prep. They're giving you this information, but I got no help in going to the actual university.

Applying to College. Everything was on my own, and I didn't know anything. Actually, I was really trying to go someplace else. So, I applied to four schools, UT, A&M, Notre Dame, because my "big brother" had gone there, and UTEP and I got into all the schools. I was so happy. Then when they start saying, "Hey, send this money for a dorm, and send

this money for this." During this time, everything is paper and filling it out. You might imagine my mom wasn't thrilled when I asked her for her tax information to fill out the FASFA. She didn't wanna do that. So, I'm trying to say, "Mom, you have to help me do this. I don't know how to do this. Let's do this." "Why do they want that information?" Long story short, I stayed here because I couldn't figure anything out about how to pay for school and how to do anything. Even going to UTEP, don't get me wrong, my mom paid for my entire undergraduate. She paid for school, books, tuition. I worked too, so I contributed. I worked the whole time I was an undergraduate.

Adjusting to College, Working, and a Mentor. In high school, I made good grades and then I go to UTEP and nobody tells you, you have to go to class. I had a girlfriend and there's all these things that our on your own about and I was working. I worked for a lawyer the whole time I was an undergraduate. I had lots of opportunities with him. I'll tell you, as I mentioned, I had great mentors and assistance. That guy just did so many good things for me. When I graduated from high school, I didn't have a suit or anything. He had his tailor make me a custom suit and gave me that. I mean, this is a white guy from El Paso. Taking a chance and letting me do all these things. Expose me to lots of things at his level of the social world, and it was a great experience.

I Found My Place. Eventually, I found my place. I figured I'm gonna study biology. I started volunteering and doing some research in some labs. I wasn't getting paid, but I found a good place. Eventually, it took me five years, but I finished my undergraduate, which to me was a big deal. During that time, I decided I didn't really know what I was good at, but I loved doing some research with those faculty. I loved the biology side. So, I remember seeing in those days, flyers on the bulletin board, and I saw the University of

Texas at Arlington program in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. I applied to the school

and got it. I remember them calling me up. I was working for that lawyer, and they called

me up and offered me a graduate teaching assistantship, too, so it would help survive, but

it was all very scary. I graduated from UTEP in middle December and left for graduate

school January 4th or something like that.

Leaving Home and Staying with Family. It was an interesting time in my family too,

because my brother, who's a year and a half younger than me, was about to have his first

child. He had just gotten married. So, he's a young guy, and I'm leaving away to school.

My mom was doing fine. My mom had just gotten remarried, so that was good for her. I

left home, and that was one of the scariest times of my life because I went away to grad

school. I went up to study at UT Arlington, but the good part is, I have a tia that lives up

in that area, so I landed with her. So, there's a good family connection. I landed with her,

and she had two kids and her husband, my uncle. I lived on their sofa for six months or

something until I found an apartment on campus.

Postgraduate Work and a Mentor. Another opportunity. I went to UTA, and I ended up

landing in a lab of a professor who was just amazing. He took me on as a grad student. A

kid that didn't know anything. I was there in a graduate program with students who had

already done research, who had publications, who did all these sorts of things, and I'm

this Chicano kid. I'm this lone guy there that wanted to study and figure things out. After

doubting myself for a year while I was there, I found a good rhythm, and I finished my

master's degree in two years. My professor asked if I wanted to stay on for the Ph.D., and

I did. I ended up staying there, and again, I had great support. I just think graduate school

for me was the hardest but most rewarding time in my life because of I made great

friends. My professor and his wife, who was finishing her Ph.D. there, invited me to North Carolina to go do work. That was the first time I'd ever gone east of the Mississippi. It was amazing, and I got to see different parts of the country and do work. After that, I felt just like the world opened up.

Cultural Shock and Cultural Awakening. The only one. I mean, there were no other Mexican Americans or any Hispanics in the program. There were no faculty that were Latino or Hispanic. There's nobody. So, I remember getting to UT Arlington and realizing that I came from this bubble and my upbringing was very different. All the guys I went to grad school with, they're from Chicago and from east Texas, Ohio, from Costa Rica, Guatemala, all these different places. They had these very traditional, not the foreign guys, but the U.S. guys had these very traditional college experiences. They all went away to school, and they lived in dorms. It was like the movies. They had that movie college experience, and I didn't. I felt ashamed about it, embarrassed that I was at a commuter school, that I lived at home the whole time, that I worked the whole time, that I didn't know what it meant to be in a frat or in a dorm. Even my research experience was much different than theirs. They had all been paid and had presented at conferences, and had different connections. So, I saw that right away. I also saw things like they would talk about Monty Python, and I didn't know Monty Python. They all knew how to play cards. They'd all wanna play cards, and I didn't know how to play cards. We never did that. There were all these different things. But they also didn't know El Chavo del Ocho, and they didn't know Cantinflas, and they didn't know a lot of the music that we listened to. Such different experiences from our lives. So, it was very different, a big cultural awakening.

Making Connections and Good Friends. I think what's great is that I think I migrated, hung out with all the international guys. There were exceptions, but the majority of them were from Costa Rica, Brazil, Guatemala, Venezuela, and India. All these guys that I hung out with and are still friends to this day. That was great because we all shared our cultures with each other. They'd come home with me, and my mom would put them up at Christmas or other times when they couldn't go home. So, they had a second home here.

Experience of Racism. I also learned that it's important to know these different cultures and even in the rest of the U.S. and that was eye opening, to see how other people live and the things they did. Experiencing racism in a real way was eye opening. So, I felt a lot of that the whole time I lived in the Dallas Fort Worth area, and that was really just mind-blowing because I wasn't used to that. I'm not saying we didn't have that in El Paso because that exists everywhere. But it was pretty obvious and outright oftentimes. I did a lot of my master's work in east Texas, Nacogdoches. A lot of times, people didn't know what to make of me or "Who is this guy or whatever?" I remember I worked very closely with another fellow graduate student. He and I would go out and do the research, and he had some old friends from out in east Texas. One night we spent the night at their place. We basically slept in a shack that they put us up in. But these guys were hardcore. They had us over for dinner the next night after we worked. They were talking about Mexicans and like, "Those damn Mexicans and Mexicans causing problems and being the blight on society and all this." I was like; I guess these guys don't know anything about me here. I would just look at my friend, and what do you do?

Leader Development. I think everything that you're asking right now was critical in developing me as a leader. I took all those lessons from the faculty because I had great

faculty, great professors there, that I learned a lot from. I took lessons on how to maybe be a good faculty member. I knew the good faculty members, the ones that taught, and the ones that just gave you material. So, it took a lot of lessons, and I think I still feel them to this day.

Again, I think it's been a common theme. It's like my professor just gave me those opportunities, and I don't think he ever saw that I was some brown kid. He just saw me as anybody else, like any one of his other students, and we became very close friends. He put these opportunities out there, and I would take them, as I mentioned before. Sometimes, reluctantly, but I felt it was important to take those opportunities, leadership opportunities as well.

I found myself doing more leadership when I was there. I lead our graduate student organization called Phi Sigma, which I was the president for many years while I was there. I was chosen and given the outstanding graduate research and teaching assistant award. I was also chosen by different deans and chair people to serve on committees. I learned a lot because I would be the sole graduate student representing the whole university, the provost hiring committee or the presidential hiring committee, those sorts of things. I was able to see what the other side of the world really looked like, and it was invaluable.

Workplace Impact. So, I don't know if that's so much culture, but it is. I think maybe you see this, and you feel it. That's why when we talk about going places or doing things, I encourage all my staff to get out and travel and experience these things and interact with people outside of here. Because it's really important to your development and you get to

see that not everybody understands and it's good for us to know. There's an old saying, the further away from the border you get, the scarier it is.

We live here in a very safe and happy place. I think it's also our cultural responsibility when we get away that we get to tell our story because as soon as you go someplace far and they say, "Oh, you're from El Paso. Man, how is it there? It's pretty scary, huh? Or pretty dangerous, and how's the whole situation?" I'm like, "We're listed as one of the safest cities in the U.S. We have a great bicultural, international community."

Reflection on Culture. I think it's just made me more open to learning, taking in other cultures, and sharing mine, which, that took me a little bit to get to. Because maybe I didn't value mine as much, or maybe I thought of mine as being the odd one or maybe the one that's not as valued as others. At first, I just used to fake it, like I knew Monty Python or I knew some of these things. But also, to challenge people and say, well, just because somebody speaks with a British accent doesn't make them more intelligent, and just because somebody speaks with a Spanish accent doesn't make them less so either. I had to work a lot because just because we come from someplace like this doesn't mean I don't have my own biases or my own thoughts. So, I had to work at that too to say, "Yeah, I need to be open to other people's culture the same way I expect them to be open to mine, and the same way I wanna be able to share and celebrate and be open to everybody. So, I think that's really important."

Episode 4: Middle Adulthood. Workforce and Leadership Practices

So, it's like 2000, when I think of the world, the US has really changed. Starting with the 2000 elections, you sort of seen we're so divided, in the US. I think I constantly feel that.

But I finished my PhD and luckily, I taught for a year at UT Arlington. That was sort of the idea, and I was gonna stick around. My chairman offered me a job, then he says, "Maybe you should look for a job and do something." So, I was really lucky, and I got a job right out of grad school at a small liberal arts college in upstate New York. I was married already, and my wife and I had just found out we were gonna have our first child, and we moved up to New York, a long way away. A lot of the family wasn't happy that we were moving away, so far away. As it is, in Texas, we were already 8–9-hour drive away, but that's nothing in Texas. But now we're moving halfway to the other side of the world.

Different Cultural Experience and Connections. I ended up in a great institution in upstate New York. I was a biology professor. One of the interesting things is that, again, I was the only Latino, Hispanic there in the whole college. My experience was one of these fairy tale places. Everybody goes there. It's a private liberal art, division one sports. But everybody who goes there, graduates in four years. They live on campus. It's a fairy tale land. It's beautiful brick buildings, a quad. It snows, it's very cold there. Just this place, but I felt like they took me in. I made some great friends. Lots of great students who are my friends to this day, who I just made great connections with.

It was very hard in terms of family because we had our first two children up there. My wife stayed home with my daughter, and then she started working, and then we got pregnant with my son right away, so she stayed home. It was a challenge being on a single income, it's expensive. New York in general is a pricey place.

But I had lots of opportunities again. Got to teach classes. I traveled to Cuba to teach a class. I started teaching classes in Costa Rica and classes in the Bahamas. I did

some research. I got a research lab funded with setup money and had research students. Got to travel to conferences and do presentations, but also there were other things there. **Critical Leadership Development**. So, if we talk about my leadership development there, it was important because one of the things they do there is that they have a rotating chair, chairs for the departments. Although, I was brand new tenure track, I was told, "Hey you need to be prepared because as soon as you get tenured, your turn will come up to be chair." I had a great dean, who then told me, "Well, after you become chair, they I'm gonna maybe yank you into this area." I'm thinking, I don't even wanna be chair. I wanna be faculty, but they sort of start to set you up to take on some leadership roles. They give you some pretty big committee work, early on with assistance, with guidance, which I appreciated.

They very much have their stuff together at that institution because it's built that way. They're built to follow that very traditional of what you think of is academia, and that's what you think of. These hierarchies and roles and mentoring, and it works. I had a great almost six years there and decided that we wanted to come home.

Moving Back Home and Opportunities. My wife and I decided to come back to our hometown in a border town in Texas. This is gonna sound crazy, but with neither of us having a job yet. But we said we're going to come back because I think we'll be fine. We had a little bit of savings. We'll figure things out. Luckily, we both landed on our feet. For the first year that we came back, I taught college classes for an early college high school here in our area, and then I got onto a tenure track position. I was a biology faculty, but again, took on opportunities. I also took on some leadership roles here in the department and I became a coordinator. They don't call them chairs. I worked very

closely with the dean. She would always say, "When you become dean, you could do X, Y, Z, you know," and I always laughed it off. I really wasn't thinking of myself doing that.

I remember getting the call by the university in my area for a faculty member, and I remember getting that job, like I can picture it exactly. I remember say to myself, "Man, you're set for life." Like, I'm gonna be a professor. I'm so happy. I'm gonna teach biology. I'm gonna do all teach these field classes, do all this kind of stuff, and I'll be good for the rest of my life."

Taking Leadership Opportunities. But things change. I had these leadership opportunities. I took on some big standing committee leadership roles here at the college because I always felt if I'm gonna be on a committee, it's easy to be a member and sit in the back. I'm like, "I'm gonna do things; I'm gonna help out. I'm gonna take either the chair or co-chair or do other things." So, my current dean then was moving into this new dean position, and then my division that was math and science and engineering opened up, and I told myself, "Throw your hat in the ring; you're not gonna get it. There are so many other people way more qualified and connected." Because I didn't feel connected at the college. I was a professor, but I got the job, and we're the biggest division here.

Building Relationships. I just felt like there were lots of opportunities that I just kept working with. I kept doing a lot of groundwork, building relationships with our four-year partners. So I think that was important in terms of leadership, that I've cultivated a lot of these relationships and with our partners. I also learned a lot of hard lessons that partnerships are not always easy, that you have to work really hard at them.

Great Mentor. When I became a dean, I am very lucky, and I give a lot of credit. I had a

great mentor, who holds a vice president position, who would have these bi-weekly

meetings with me. I remember when he first set them up, his assistant said, "Okay, you

get two hours every other week; the agenda is yours; you build it." I had that little minor

panic attack where I said, "How am I ever gonna build an agenda for that meeting? I

don't know what I'm gonna talk to him about." But it builds itself because I'm going

through the everyday sort of things, and he was always available. And he's a great friend

of mine and a mentor. He just did that, and he really helped bring me on board. I always

had that support.

Putting Myself in Uncomfortable Positions. I learned a lot, and it took other

opportunities, as I mentioned, same sort of thing, putting myself in uncomfortable

positions. If the president needed something or the vice president needed something, I

would volunteer for it, even if it was a challenge, because I wanted to see how that went.

And likewise, when I was faculty, I never imagined I was gonna be a dean. When I was a

dean, I imagined I'll be the dean in this division. I'll be happy for the rest of my life. But

then during the pandemic, I was asked to serve as acting VP while someone was

temporarily out. That was one of the scariest times, because the pandemic had just

started. Here I am running leadership for a whole division with people that were my

colleagues. I felt a lot of pressure, and it was scary, but I made it through. Shortly

thereafter an associate vice president was retired, and the president asked me to take on

the interim role of associate vice president. So, I started working that, and I was in there

from April to August and right before August of last year, the president again called me

and said the VP of a division was leaving and if I would be interested in taking on the

interim role. In those days, I was already doing two jobs. I was doing dean and AVP, and I said, "I can't do another job." He said, "No, just take on the interim VP role. We'll have other people take on the other ones." So very scary, and obviously, I'm gonna tell you at each one of these stages, I talked to my wife. I don't make these decisions alone. It's a lot of soul searching and talking and thinking things out because I have my kids, and I wanna be able to be available to them.

Support and Mentors. So, we said yes, and I started in the interim role and was successful this year to officially move into the permanent role as a VP at the college. I've talked a lot and told you a whole lot here, but that's sort of my journey. Each one of these stages I've gone through, I've had just amazing support, opportunities, but very important, great mentors.

Leadership Development. It's always been on the job training, mentors, and key people within the organization. So, I'm gonna try now that I'm in this position, there's a couple of leadership opportunities, one through the Aspen Institute and the other one is through, I think Excelencia. So, for some leadership, more formal leadership opportunities, I'm gonna be looking into those. I feel that's really needed; I really need that. I'm trying to keep up with current things, but I've also been trying to read some leadership books, leadership materials. I made it very clear when I was offered this position; I talked to the president and said, "You know, I have a lot to learn." You know, I'm learning on the fly. So, I'm glad that I have a leadership team that's patient with me.

Cultural Influences on Leadership and Workforce Practices. Here's where I think I have an advantage. I'm a native to this border town in Texas, born and raised, familiar with both sides of the border. Then I left this area for 13 years, so I'm able to bring my

experience from outside here, but I'm also very familiar with what the students are going through in our community. I think that's a big plus. I'm able to assist them with what they're going through here, plus the challenges of leaving. I'm familiar with our partner institutions. I'm familiar with how it is to leave this little bubble and go to other places. I try to be a good ambassador not just for the college but this whole region when I work with partners across the state. I think that's really important. To bring that regional voice and regional concerns and perspectives.

Also, I think cultural things in my leadership style; I think back to the way I was raised, our culture, I always make sure I'm gonna recognize people. I'm a big fan of being polite. If I'm gonna have a meeting, or I'm meeting people I don't know, I'm always gonna introduce myself to them. If I have someone with me, I'm gonna say, "This is so and so." Tell you a little bit about them, introduce everybody because I've been in so many meetings where I'm standing there and nobody introduced me. I can go through a whole meeting, and nobody will ever say "Who's this guy?" Who's that?" and then afterwards, I'm like, "Who's that person?" I wanna be polite. I'm gonna be considerate in terms of that culture. I also recognize the power of being a good host and rolling the red carpet for people, and being considerate, thankful, and grateful for people.

So, I'm grateful for people's time, for people's energy, for people's willingness to do things. You go to your abuelita's house, and what's the first thing they do? I mean, you're gonna have a drink and some snacks or dinner, and it doesn't matter if the kitchen's clean and everything's put up, it's coming out. You can say no 1,000 times, but it doesn't matter. "I'm fine. I don't need anything to drink," and as you're saying it, there's a drink in your hand. So, I think that all those things are really important and that

I'm gonna take care of you. I think that's part of my job too. That I'm gonna be appreciative, and I'm gonna take care of you, in all that sense. I'm gonna say, "There's the stuff right there." Those are things that sometimes don't always communicate very well across cultures, but it's part of who I am, and it's what I do. You come here, that's the way things are gonna be, and that's important. It's something that is expected maybe here and not everywhere. You talk about cultural things; I think that's a big one. I don't know it that's called service or being a good host, or being invited, grateful, thankful.

Lessons Learned. On the job training, great mentor, and mentorship. I take lessons from lots of people. I have great mentors, but they're much more. They're my hermanos. There is one; he was a professor, and what a great man who has given of himself to me and served as a mentor, and a brother, helping to guide me. Lots of people are very giving, and also, I make sure that I'm open to these lessons. I'm open to these ideas, because in no way do I think I have all the right answers or know the right thing. I'm sure I make mistakes. I try to model if I see something that I think is a good leadership trait. I'm all about it. Every year when you have to do those evaluations, I think that's the hardest thing to do, and I would have to do these because I would evaluate faculty. The self-evaluation. Boy is that hard if you're going to be honest with yourself. You can cheat. I always find myself putting it off, and I'm like do it. You gotta do it. I think it's because you put that mirror up, and you have to say, "Boy, I, wasn't the greatest here. I didn't do this so great, or maybe I did well." It's hard to toot your own horn. I'm not good at that, and I think we all have to maybe get better at that because I think sometimes it serves the institution.

Relationships and Personal Growth. I've definitely grown because as I mentioned, I became dean in my earliest leadership here at the college which was eye opening because the day before, I was a faculty member; the next day, I'm an administrator now supervising the staff that I was just in as faculty, that I was just colleagues with. It was kind of a rude awakening because I had faculty members that treated me differently the very next day, who I thought were friends, or I mean, at least good work friends. So, I had to learn about that and grow and learn also what not to take home, what not to take personally. That's the big thing I can tell you if you were talking to me in 2016, I was probably anxious or worried about maybe what people were thinking about me, anxious with dealing with students. I mean, I think part of my leadership journey has been that whole on the job, trial by fire. So, you have to do it right. That's why I think one of the most valuable experiences I mentioned was when I was asked to be acting VP for those few months right in the pandemic. It was from April to June. I mean, it just started. We were having daily meetings, daily conference calls for hours, getting things done. I just felt, "Wow, what an opportunity." Scary as can be. I can remember these crazy long days and working remote. So, I know what it's like to be a faculty member and the challenges they have and what the students might say and what your colleagues might say, and the pressures on them. I think I've tried to keep that in mind with every one of these stages that, I'm still a student, I'm still a faculty member. I'm still all these things inside, so when I'm gonna ask you to do something, or when I realized that we have to do something, or there's a challenge, a personal problem, I'm always gonna keep those in mind, through every step, and I'm always gonna be true to myself. So, I tell you, people with say, "Oh, now you're the big VP or ya que te crees mucho and this kind of stuff."

I'm like, "Not at all. I'm the same person." I'm not gonna behave differently. I'm not gonna do things differently because of any of these titles or anything. I think that's what I really work hard to do. I wanna be a leader because I have to lead these areas, but I'm always gonna be myself first and I don't wanna deviate from who I am because then I think that's when I get in trouble.

I think maybe it's saying, I remain grounded. I wanna remain who I am, and always keeping in mind that human aspect, from everybody I'm working with, or serving. We're all in it together. I'm always gonna work to keep that in mind. Not saying I've not failed, or I'd not struggled with certain things, but I work hard at it. Communicating properly, I work hard at that too. Whether it's an email, whether it's in person, whether it's a text, or a team's message. Whatever it is, I try to be thoughtful, careful when I communicate, how you communicate, et cetera. So, that all goes back to just being, mindful of the other people, respect of the other individuals on my team, or who I'm serving.

Portrait of Gilbert

Gilbert has 16 years of experience in higher education and currently serves as an associate vice-chancellor in a large urban community college in Texas. Gilbert's rich family Hispanic culture and his educational and family experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood have shaped his leadership development and influenced his leadership practices in higher education.

His parents were both migrant farm workers. His mother is one of thirteen, and his father is one of eleven children. Gilbert grew up with a large extended family. His grandparents did not have formal education; however, his parents did attend college. His father dropped out for

various reasons, mostly alcoholism. His mother earned a bachelor's degree and taught

elementary education for many years.

At a very young age, around middle school, Gilbert started working with his father during

the summers and learned the value of hard work and showing up and doing your best, even when

you did not want to be there. The focus of his family has been to make every generation better

through education. His siblings have also had economic mobility because of their education.

Gilbert earned a Ph.D., his younger brother is finishing medical school, one sister has a master's

in counseling and is a licensed counselor, and the other sister is about to earn an MBA. Gilbert's

love for family and education drives his work in higher education. He wants to make an impact

by improving the lives of the next generations of Latinos through higher education opportunities.

Gilbert's Story

Episode 1: Adolescence Middle School

> I think growing up on the border, and it's almost like you don't know any better. You
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> really don't realize cultural influences until you basically leave. There are definitely a lot
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> of cultural influences, but it's one culture. In the area I grew up in, it was 98% Hispanic.
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> It's changed slightly, but it's still 90 plus Hispanic, even today. The diversity, different
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> cultures is not really there.
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> **Socioeconomics**. I grew up in an 80-foot trailer. I grew up with cops showing up in the
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> house several times. I was the oldest, so I had to take care of my brother and sisters and
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> tell them everything was gonna be okay. You know, it's part of leadership. You're
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> expected to show up. I was expected to show up very early on. My mom was a teacher.
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> We were very fortunate there. My dad did construction. When he was working, we were
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> good. When he wasn't working, we weren't so good. I had mentioned he had bad vices,

and that meant that he made bad decisions, including bad financial decisions. So, there were times when we didn't have very much. The goal for many years was, I was gonna do good in college because I needed to buy my mom a house.

Building Leadership Skills. I think whether it's good or bad, you build on those experiences. Some of the negatives, you're having to grow up very early, those are leadership skills. Stepping up when, whether no one else will, or there is no one else to do it, whether you want to or whether you don't. Once you're in that situation, you got to very quickly figure out how you're gonna make quick decisions and how do you make a decision that's gonna influence, positively influence, somebody else's life? In my case, in the more negative aspect, it was for my mom, and it was for my sisters and my brother. I was the eldest, and I had to show up for them.

Academic Experience. A lot of experiences that I remember from seventh grade were we had teams. At that time, for seventh grade, the only honors class they had was math, and I was in that class, but everything else was basically regular courses. I was on a team that was tough. Our English that year, I think we had four or five English teachers. The class kept getting rid of them because they were very difficult. My science class teacher literally basically taught it to me and my friend, who were the only ones paying attention and answering questions. So, she would focus on us and really ignore a lot of the other people. Don't know if that was the best thing in the world, but it was a tough grade level.

Teacher Who Believed in Us. In math, it was much more positive, I guess for me, not necessarily for everybody. I've told this story several times. The teacher used to be an engineer and, in the army, and was a super smart man. He literally had a solar-powered AC that he created himself from scratch in the room. He also had a solar-powered gaming

system that he created and a few other little trinkets. He was very strict and very, very smart. We started with a class with over 40 students, and it was standing room only. We finished the year with 10. The majority of the class dropped out of it. He was very structured. He was military. He expected you to take notes, and every Friday, you took a test, and you had to turn in your notes. If you had notes, you would get five points. If you didn't have your notes, you would get minus five points. It was plus or minus five. You either did it, or you didn't. I learned a whole lot that year, though, because there were only 10 of us, and he really believed in us a lot. He actually paid out of his pocket for us to take the SATs cause he wanted us to experience what the SATs were. He expected all of us to go to college. He told us that what we learned at the end of that year in seventh grade in pre-algebra was enough to do well on the entrance exams and everything. So, he paid for us, and we took it. So, 10 of us showed up on a Saturday, took the SATs, and we did pretty well on it, at least on the math portion. I started getting really, really good at math.

Academic Activities. Also, I read a ton of books. In seventh grade, we had AR, Accelerated Reader, points. So, we had competitions. I'm very competitive, so I read hundreds of books. I don't even remember, but it was hundreds of points. I won that year. A couple of buddies were close, but by far, I had the most points out of everybody. We enjoyed reading.

In seventh grade year, I said yes to everything. I was in all the UIL academic events. I competed in all the math events. I competed in all the writing events, and sometimes, they would throw me in random other events. I enjoyed getting out there.

Once, we got to travel and go out to different towns and be part of different things. So, I said yes to everything. I was always at school.

Mother's Impact on Learning Experiences and Development. I think I'm so good at math because there are a lot of big moments that shaped my math career. I grew up in the library, in elementary school, or even before. So, my mom was a teacher. Before I could barely walk, I was going to the library because my mom would like to go to the library. So, in the summers, we would go several times, most weekends, we would go. I spent a whole lot of hours in the library reading. Before I could read, she put on us those big old headphones, and we would just sit down listening to different things. Then when we started reading, we got into different reading groups. When we got older, we would all scatter and pick a book, and if there was time, we'd read a whole book. I read thousands of books and a lot of that growing up. So, when I got to first grade, I was so ahead, and at one point, they talked about skipping me a couple of grades, but my mom said, "Nah, just go ahead and keep him there. He's little." So, they just kept giving me extra work. As I said, my mom was a teacher, and she was very competitive. I had her for third grade, and she had a bunch of successor things when they were very popular, and I loved them too. I had them all over my room when we had them. But she had them all over her room, and she had one that said, "The second place is the first loser." Well, it's kind of hardcore, especially for a teacher, but it made you push hard. Whenever there was a competition, she expected us all to compete because it gave us, the classroom, a better chance of winning if we all submitted. Which is true, strength in numbers. I think field day, she treated it like a competition, but she also included everybody. As I said, my mom was a teacher, so in middle school, she would drop us off early. I was the oldest. I was the first

one dropped off, so once a week out of every month, she had duty, which means you have to show up at 7:00. So, I was dropped off at the crack of dawn, with nobody there but the janitors, so I made friends with them. After a while, one of the teachers would let me go to his classroom, and he would teach me advanced math. So, there was a math competition we went to one time. I remember it was out of town, and there were three of us competing from our school and a bunch of other kids. I got a perfect score on it. I got first place. My other friends, they got second, and the other got third. It blew them away. But there was a lot of studying, a lot of practice. We tried hard.

Extracurricular Activities and Influence Leader Development. You know, some of the stuff, I think it definitely develops you. It pushes you. When I was in football, I played offense, and I played defense. It was another one where, on the first day, 100 kids all showing up, and then before you know it, it's way less than that, so then we didn't have enough to go both ways, to fill up the full team. So, there were a few of us that basically played the entire game, and we were exhausted, but it also meant we had to be in shape and practice harder.

You know, basketball, I was not super tall, so I wasn't the best one, but I was always trying very hard, so you learned how to try hard. Sports, to me, I think, shaped me for who I was. Again, I wasn't the tallest. I wasn't the fastest. I wasn't the strongest at the beginning, and that's something I could control. It was something I could control because if I worked harder than everybody else if I went to the gym harder than everybody else, and if I lifted more than everybody else, eventually, I was gonna be the strongest, and that was something that was within my control. So, I became the strongest. It all adds up. You think of different things, how much you want something, how much you have to

work for it, always giving it more that you have to. You develop a lot of things that you don't think about. Some people call it soft skills, some call them essential skills, but a lot of it is just showing up and whether you want to or not. Sometimes you're there and you're put in a situation where you have to try your hardest, you have to do your best, and I think that sets you up for the future, for a lot of different things. I mean, even now, sometimes we're told what we need to do, and even though we don't wanna do it, we make it happen, and we try to do it as best as possible.

Work and Father's Influence. I started working with my dad early on. As soon as I was big enough, he would take me as a helper. So, for sure, in middle school, we go to do a lot of different work. But in middle school, is probably one of the first years where one of the summers, he woke me up, and we'd leave at 6:00 in the morning. We'd go to work, and I would help him do whatever. I was a laborer. He did pay me, like a laborer. So, he said, "I'm gonna pay you like everybody else. That means I'm gonna treat you like everybody else," which means I get yelled at like everybody else, and I was expected to do it right. He always said, "If you're gonna do something, do it right." I would yell back, "But I don't even want to be here." "You know, it doesn't matter whether you wanna be here." It's like once you're there, you gotta show up, and you gotta do it right. I think it all adds up. You start thinking about stuff, and whether you liked it or not, it develops who you are, and you continue that. You continue that in how you show up to things and how you do things, and what you want to do, and volunteering for work. I mentioned that my dad always paid me to do things, but sometimes, you were still voluntold, and even though the payment was there, and it was nice, it wasn't because I wanted to do it. It was because you had to show up. He didn't have anybody else at that time. Sometimes, he

recruited my friends too, and they would show up, and we would pick them all up. So, it's definitely one of those things where you learn from your past. It definitely does not necessarily define you, but it does shape you, and it molds you, and hopefully, it molds you for the better. There's a lot of negative experiences I haven't really touched that also shape you and also mold you, and a lot of those things don't necessarily have to outweigh the positive. But, if you focused more so on the positive things, it makes you wanna shoot for more.

Influence on Leadership Practices. I think it comes full circle. I mentioned like even football, I did it in seventh, eighth, ninth grades. The biggest thing was, I always showed up, and I always tried no matter what. It's one of those things that I mentioned that you got to show up. I guess I'm also very competitive. That gene goes in the family. I always say, "I don't have to be number one, but I want to be one of the tops. I mean, I don't care if I'm the best, but I want to be one of the top three or five." I don't have to be in charge, but I want to be one of the ones helping make the decision. I don't have to lead the table, but I want to be at the table, and since pre-middle school, I've always been that way. That's why I did so well in UIL academic competitions. You keep working hard and keep showing up. It's what your expectations are, how you see others, and what you expect from others. Giving constructive criticism, giving good feedback, putting people in positions that they are gonna be successful, giving people resources. Having high expectations, but also being there and working through those expectations. Never asking somebody to do something you're not willing to do yourself. You know, that saying that my dad said, "If you're gonna do something, do it right." That has stuck with me.

Episode 2: Adolescence High School

Seventh, eighth, and ninth grades were middle school for us, and then we jumped over to the 10th grade for high school. A lot of the middle school things, I think, just carried over. I kept on volunteering for everything and doing a little bit of everything.

UIL and Sports. I was in all UIL events. I was in various sports, did various activities. I did theater as well and started enjoying that also. All those different things, I think, over time, kind of develop you. Because I did the UIL and I did so well, I was always competing, so I would always win awards, and the principle used to like coming out in the newspaper. So, he would call the newspaper, and he would either hug me and have my trophy. I remember one time, he said to me, "Thanks for making me look good." If you think about it from leadership development, a lot of time, that's what we're there for. That we literally are there to make people look good, and over time, I've accepted that fully for myself or others. But at the end of the day, that literally is what happens. If everyone's being successful, we're all looking good. If we're all looking good, that's how you start getting accolades. I learned that early through those UIL friends.

Relationships with Teachers that Inspired. You learn things about who people are and how they are. The math professors I had in junior year and senior year, they were the smartest men in the world and the most laidback people you'd ever meet. In senior class, the professor would show up, and he was super, super smart. He could have been anywhere in the world and could have made a ton of money as an engineer. He chose to be at my high school. The same thing with my other math professor in middle school. Those two are the smartest people that I have ever met in my entire life. They've done so many different things in their lives, and they could have made tons of money, and they

were teaching us. Most of the people there didn't even care. So, I always made it a point to sit there and have a conversation with them. Actually, listen, get excited, and geek out over different things. I think as a person, I've been growing because I've always enjoyed listening to people and learning from others. It's one of the things that, as a leader, you got to learn how to listen, and you got to learn to truly listen. The type of person you want to be as a leader is always gonna be shaped by how you've learned throughout your own experiences.

Drive to Do More and Development. I've had a lot of very positive experiences. I've had a lot of very negative experiences, that's high school. I think I've progressively gotten better, progressively learned how to manage my own expectations, be a little bit more humble, be more realistic. At the same time, never losing sight of being a dreamer, thinking outside the box, wanting more. That mindset has always been with me, since forever. I want to do what? I want to be homecoming king. How are we gonna get there? We're gonna do all these different things and we're gonna do this. I was gonna be valedictorian. I wanted to be valedictorian. I was on that path on my senior year, and then I got derailed. You learn from those things.

Whole Other World Out There and Cultural Shock. Going on the race side, I mentioned, 98% Hispanic. The more we started competing, I really started interacting more with races outside of Hispanic. I didn't know a lot of white people. I didn't know a lot of black people. I didn't know Asian people. So, you get out there, and you start having just even small interactions. I mean, throughout high school, I didn't have real interactions with anybody else outside of my hometown crew other than pleasantries and hello, goodbye. But you started seeing the same people at the same competitions, so you

got to know people a little bit better. That's when you start realizing, more so, that there's a whole other world out there.

I mentioned I love reading. One of the reasons why I love reading is because it took you somewhere else. It took you to a whole other country. It took you to a whole other world. It gave you a whole lot of experiences. All I knew in real life was what I knew around there, and everything else was very foreign. My junior year, I did TRIO, and they took us over to UTSA and UT Austin. It was a field trip to show us the schools and everything. It was the first time I had ever been to Austin. I'd never been out here, so it's like big old buildings and all that's a big old cultural shock. Not to mention the race of people but even just the buildings, the noises, the amount of traffic, the amount of people, that was nuts, it was something else.

Cultural Experiences and Friends. It goes back to; you don't know any better. You were gonna be successful because you didn't know you weren't supposed to be. There was not negative cultural influences. There's nothing about you being too poor, you being the wrong color, you being the wrong size. Anything negative that gets associated a lot of times with cultural upbringing and saying, you know, pulling up from the bootstrap and everything. Up through high school, we were all the same. While there are some people that have a little bit more money or have a nice house, as a whole, everybody was pretty much the same. The mall was the mall. We had Walmart, JC Penny, and Bealls was the fancy store. But everybody kind of looked the same. Everyone acted the same. Everybody was exactly the same, it was no difference, and so you didn't know better. Everybody was kind of moving along.

I lived in a trailer. Our other buddies live in small, little houses that were pieced together. We just knew we liked each other. We were all very competitive. We were smart enough to do good in school. All of us read a lot. It was maybe one of the common denominators. We might not have studied a whole lot, but if they assigned a book, we would read it quickly.

Academics and Life Defining Moment. I took a speed-reading class sometime in high school, and that has been really helpful, too, because we learned how to read really fast. A lot of external things started taking over, more so academics, I think was also kind of a growing curve for me. It was a growing moment, and it was definitely a life-defining moment. So, my junior year, I was doing really good in school. I literally had 100s on my whole report card. I had 100s all the time in every single class in my junior year. Heading into my senior year, I was ranked first in a class of about 850. I was signed up for the ACT and SAT.

I had mentioned I was lifting weights for a while, and I lost a lot of weight. So, my senior year, I started getting a lot of attention from girls and started going out with friends a little bit more, and it started taking over too much of my time. I had way too much fun. I won homecoming king in my senior year. I remember I went to take the SATs on a Saturday, the day after the football game, and I fell asleep during the SATs because I was too tired. I still scored all right on it. I scored like a 1280, something like that. Considering I fell asleep, it was really good.

Later on, I signed up again for the SATs, and I scored way better, and that's where I got a perfect score in math and did really high on that one. I started getting a whole lot of recruitment letters from all over the country. I had stuff from all the Ivy

League schools, Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Brown, and Stanford. You name it; I had recruitment letters stacked. But my head was in a different place. I wanted to have fun. I was enjoying life. I never applied for anything. If I would have applied, I probably would have gotten in. So, I just never applied. I barely made the deadline for the common application in January.

I knew I was going to college, but I just filled out the common application and just did a checkbox to all the San Antonio schools. I'm going to San Antonio, whoever gives me more money. St. Mary's gave me the most money, so I ended up going there. They got me into the honors program. Basically, they gave me a full ride for the first year.

Reflection on High School Experience and Leadership Development. I mostly remember screwing up. It's unfortunate that I didn't even apply to some of those big schools. I had a lot of opportunities. I was probably too much of an ass, to be honest, in my high school years. I was too cocky, obviously. I made too many bad decisions that changed my entire projection moving forward. I was fortunate, though, to correct some of those mistakes. I didn't focus on those mistakes but as learning opportunities to keep doing better and to take advantage of the situation at hand. As I got in better situations, I started progressing, making better decisions, and I think that put me in the path where I am today. I've been fortunate along the way; I've had people that believed in me. I've been fortunate to learn how to develop relationships. I think I learned how to develop relationships early on, and that's part of leadership.

Episode 3: Emerging Adulthood College/University

I still needed some money for living and things like that, so I got a loan, but I was still having a lot of fun in my freshman year in college, which meant I was skipping class a lot. I ended up getting in an argument with the honor's philosophy professor, who couldn't stand that. He didn't believe in giving anybody any As, so we all got 89s. I wasn't doing bad, it was just a disagreement on philosophy; it was ridiculous. So, I dropped the honors program. When I dropped the honors program, I lost a good chunk of my scholarship. I took on a job my freshman year. I was walking around campus when I saw a sign, 10 dollars an hour tutoring. I was like, "You're gonna pay me 10 bucks an hour to just tell people what to do." I didn't know that they didn't hire freshman, so I just literally walked in, and I was like, "I saw your hiring tutors. I can do math. I got a perfect score in the ACTs, SATs, and math." They said, "We typically don't hire freshmen, we first want to see what their grades are." I was like, "I'll take a test if you want me to." I took the test in front of her. I did so well on it, she hired me. I started working and that's how I made some money and I also started tutoring on the side. At that time, I was at St. Mary's, and found out there was a lot of people with money there, so I can make some good money charging twenty dollars an hour, tutoring people. I kept on it, so it means I was really making pretty good money at the time, at least for me.

Tutoring Experience and Personal Development. I hated teamwork for a long time because I just wanted to tell people what to do. So, in college, a lot of the times, they would put us in teams. I was like, "All right, I'm gonna do this. You're gonna give it to me. I'm gonna write it for you." Whether that was the right way or not, it's kind of the

way I handled it. But as I got older, you kind of realize that you can't take that very strong approach to everything. You learn those things throughout time.

One of the very first people that I tutored was this lady; she was getting her MBA. At the end of the thing, she said, "Can I talk to you and give you some advice?" "Sure." "You're extremely smart. You tutor very well, but you need to work on your empathy. You need to work on just your demeanor and the way you carry yourself. Not everyone is gonna think as fast as you do. Not everyone is gonna be a really good tutor." I was like, "Thank you," and I took it to heart, and I told her, "I'm sorry," it wasn't my intention. I'm not that person; it was unintentional if that's how I'm coming across.

That experience really shaped the way I started tutoring. By the end of the year, she bought me a cake because she passed the math class. She told me that she was proud of me in how much I had developed as a tutor. You know, being open to that and being open to criticism, whether you want it or not, those are growing times too. I think all those opportunities shape who you are.

Taking Care of Family. When my dad wasn't working, money was more scarce. So, when I first went to college, when I got my financial aid, I first went to Best Buy, and I bought a desktop computer and took it home, and I installed it for them, and it was the first time we had internet. We're probably one of the first people that had internet and the whole computer setup in our hometown at the time. I was paying for the internet at my parent's house, and I was paying for their phone. We didn't have a phone growing up. It was an extra expense that we didn't have, so I got them a phone because I wanted to be able to call them. Whenever they needed anything, I would help pay for that as well. Early on, you start doing what you have to do. I think you take a positive spin to it and

say, money management. You start doing that early on. Again, doing things for others and not just yourself.

Transfer to UTSA. My spring year and then the following fall, I took out a good amount of money to pay for St. Mary's because it's a private school. Then that's when I decided to transfer to UTSA. When I transferred over to UTSA, I was like, "Okay, I got to get my shit together, and stop screwing around." That's when I started looking up scholarships and all the things like that.

Academics. I decided to double major in math and statistics because I enjoyed stats so much more than math, but I was already so far along in math that I continued doing it. I did good in school. I've always liked school. I liked learning. I did well because I did a lot of reading. When I went to class, I paid attention; if not, I'd read the book or just had these conversations where I'd picked the brain of the professors.

Cultural Experiences and Differences. College was a time of difference, cultural boom, from food to the way people talked, their experiences growing up. I mean, millions of memories of different things. I quickly noticed a whole bunch of different things, even the food. I wasn't exposed to different type of foods other than Mexican food, really. I think the furthest you could get was maybe Italian food, and that was spaghetti. Even then, that was every now and then.

I didn't talk to a black person until my freshman year in college. Literally, the only exposure was TV, what you saw from Fresh Prince and Family Matters. That's what I knew about black people. It's because they weren't there. So, the real conversation didn't happen until college. My first girlfriend in college was Filipina, and that was different.

My freshmen year, one of the first days, people were talking about the different books they've read, and I was like, "Yo, just common knowledge that everybody read all these." I've read a lot. I lived in the library, but I hadn't read some of these things that were apparently common knowledge that were taught in those schools because they were not taught in our schools. I knew a few little things here and there. There's millions and millions of books, and I've read thousands and thousands of books, yet I hadn't read some of this common knowledge that apparently were common knowledge because they were taught in other places.

Going over to people's dorms, you know, "What are you eating? What is that?" I've never tried it. I've never even heard of it. You do all these different things, you kind of learn. People with money, young people loaded with money. Ridiculous money, like crazy, crazy money. That's a different cultural thing. As you start going to people's houses, you're like, "You live in a mansion?" It's like, "Whoa." You start talking to different people, and they start talking about, "When I was in this country, and then when I was in this country, and this country," then you're like, "He'd been all over the world. So, yeah, cultural explosion."

Leader Development and Practices. Everything gets built off of what you learned and what you had and what you didn't have, and who you want to be. Just understanding that everything comes from different places, and not everyone is coming from a super privileged background. You start realizing privilege when you get out. I learned how to show up when I needed to, how to ask when I needed to ask, directly to who needed to be asked, and not be afraid to have that conversation, you know, building of relationships. Showing up just to say hi, having that side conversation, just to become friendly. Looking

for the answer. I was a tutor since my freshman year, so I gave help, and I also sought

help. If I was stuck in something, I'd call everybody in the world that I could ask. A lot of

people are afraid to ask for help. A lot of people don't know where to ask for help. I went

around and asked for help right away. All those different areas, I implemented them

myself, and I've also encouraged others to kind of be the same way. We're here as a

team. We're here to be helpful to one another. Even now, one of the first things I told my

team when we started to expand an area was, "The expectation should be that a student if

they have a question, help should only be a few steps away." That doesn't mean that you

have to have the answer, but you're in a much better situation to help them find that

answer, so go ask somebody because you do know people here.

So, that mindset mentality, that customer service, that way of wanting to be helpful, and

looking to help find the answers. I've been that way my whole life, and I've had the

opportunity to lead different areas; I've been upfront of trying to lead that way.

Graduate and Postgraduate Journey. My senior year in undergrad, I was like, "I want

to go to grad school, but I don't know what I want to do." So just looked up stuff, and I

was like, "Top jobs," and it was actuary. "Oh, that's cool" and "Oh look, UT Austin has

one." They only accepted four. I applied and got in. There was literally only four. I was

the dumbest of the four. It was two people from Berkeley, a girl from Stanford, and me.

We all got perfect scores in the GREs and stuff like that, high grades. I mean, they were

so smart. They knew just random theory stuff. When they talked, they talked so

professionally. Totally different from me. That was a different culture. They were always

studying and being at the library. I was like, "Eh" but even then, I tried. The very first

test, I didn't do good. I also was, "You know what? This is a lot harder than it was at

UTSA." Then after that I was just fine after that first test. I did just fine through grad

school. But there are those little moments you screw up, and you're like, "Oh, I got to do

better. If you screw up, you got to do better." But I think all of that kind of shapes you.

I was 30 when I started my doctoral program, and in starting that doctoral

program, I mean, that opened up every single door in the world. Talk about connections,

oh my God, I met everyone. I got to see how the chancellor of the college interacted with

other leadership folks. I got introduced to a bunch of leaders across the country.

In my dissertation, it was basically DEI. I took Latin general studies, Mexican-

American studies, African-American studies. It was cultural competence, cultural

understanding, cultural awareness, however you want to say it. All of the above. It was

just so much appreciation for something different. That equity mindset of we're all

different and we celebrate people's differences instead of focusing and taking it from a

deficit perspective, is you celebrate all those differences. You celebrate those different

cultures. Once you get to that point, that's when you truly operationalize equity. That's

when you really believe in equity. That's when you can start closing equity gaps.

Impact on Leadership Practices. That comes full circle. Developing relationships,

making connections, having conversations, putting yourself out there. Putting yourself in

situations that are not comfortable. Agreeing to do things that you might have never done.

Maybe you'll just do it once. Maybe you'll do multiple times after that. Throughout

college, moving past college, I think I've learned how to incorporate that even more so.

Taking that perspective, that you can learn from different experiences and different folks,

and that literally started happening in college, and just continued. Being that type of

person that's open to anything, open to any conversation, truly appreciates having

different conversations and learning about different people. I think all of those, kind of wrap them up and you put them together, influence who I am today and how I want to be as a leader, as a person, really. I try to be the same person professionally and personally.

Episode 4: Middle Adulthood Workforce and Leadership Practices

Once you actually start working, and you do good work, a lot of people say you do good work, and you get more work. It does happen, but it also means you get put in a good light. When I was at TASB, I had strong influence there, and people believed in me there. Here, multiple people have been so supportive and helped along the way. I've been fortunate to have that mentorship, but I've also been fortunate to learn how to develop those relationships. You show up, and you do work, that's what you do. Then when I moved to my current position at the community college, I kept it up and got on the chancellor's radar early on.

I showed that I was willing to do whatever was needed whenever it was needed, whether I got a call at 4:30, I stayed until 6:30, and turn it around, and gave it back. I got in good graces with a lot of different people, and they put me in a very positive path. In gaining their trust, I was given more opportunities, and those opportunities opened different doors. So, I was fairly quickly able to move up over time. I've been in this AVP role basically six years. It just opened more doors. They keep opening, which is amazing. It is all through hard work, doing what you need to do. Again, all of those fold together from experiences growing up, both positive and negative.

Professional Organizations. I got to know all the people from TACC and then TACC was working with all community colleges across the state. The student success center was doing board training for all the community colleges across the country. So, I got to know

what the state of Ohio was doing, Oregon, Arizona, New Mexico, and Florida. You got to

work with all those different systems. Then as we got to go to conferences, I got

introduced to people, so I got to know people that were in all those places. The

opportunities ballooned. I started doing more conferences. The first time I ever traveled

was through the work here. Meeting more people, making more connections, growing,

and learning from others.

At all levels, whether they're higher or above, just again, different experiences. If

you're different from me, I want to learn more about you and what you are doing. We

literally learn from everybody. The last nine years, I've had all the opportunities in the

world. I think I've taken advantage of most of those. All those opportunities have put me

better situations to continue to grow professionally and as a leader.

Mentorship. You know, I haven't used that word, but there's a lot of that that's

happened throughout my whole life where I had those right people. Now, it's gotten to

that point where I try to be that person for as many people as I can.

Leader Development and Lifelong Learning. I was fortunate to do the leadership

program in the Ph.D. program, and that propelled me the fastest in getting me a lot of

opportunities. I've been able to do a bunch of different presentations. I've been able to

participate in national conversations. I've been asked by national orgs to be an expert in

different things. I think as long as you're open to continuous, life-long learning, and not

taking yourself too seriously, there's always gonna be different opportunities to keep

growing.

I think I've taken advantage of all that development over time to become who I

am and how I've developed. I've taken classes and do a lot of reading and stuff like that.

I like to get those fun little exams that tell you what your leadership style is and all that. So, today, I know my leadership style by definition, is literally symbolic leadership. Symbolic leadership basically means you practice what you preach. You like leading by creating a vision of what you want. You enjoy telling stories and getting what you want through stories and through, metaphors and quotes. All of the above were literally shaped by my culture, by my childhood, by how I grew up. I mean, in the Latino community, when you get together, you tell stories.

Cultural Influence and Leadership Practices. It was a whole different world. I mean, people with money, people with education, people that have been all over the world. I mean, you literally show up and people wearing suits. How you dress, how you talk, the conversation. I'll tell you the advantage of showing up, whether you're comfortable or not. I've been around some tables, which actually is one of the things that happen in the Hispanic family, some important decisions happen around the table.

I've been in situations where I'm around the table, and I'm the youngest, the only Hispanic, sometimes the only male, only one from the border, the only one whatever, one that's totally different. There was one time they were all white guys around the table. That's an interesting conversation too, and you learn from those too. I'm always respectful, but it's different. You got to learn how to handle yourself and be okay with those conversations because sometimes you take a chance, like how does this connect to something that's gonna be relatable to them. You want to be relatable to them, but you also want them to be open to you, and sometimes they're not. I'm always open and always nice and everything. Not everyone is like that. That's why I always think of the positive aspect that everybody brings different cultures, different ways of being, different

ways of how they grew up. I'm always interested in that, but it does mean that many times, you're gonna be in very weird uncomfortable situations. We tell stories like this, right? We'd get together, and you work hard. When you're working hard, you're working hard. When you're playing, you're playing hard. I've done that my whole life. I think that's why I've personally have been successful and professionally successful and how my leadership has developed over time. But some of it is just growing from who you are, and then as you learn more, you piece it together in how that fits more of a professional setting. Then you're like, "Oh yeah, doing that is just like doing this." Working with family, treating people like family. When you get to that level, the people you work with are like family, you've reached a wonderful point. That takes time to develop. That's all about cultural development, and that's all about do you trust the people you work with? Do you enjoy working together to help move that needle? We're all after student success, and we're all under that same mission, so we're mission-driven. I think, growing up, we're all mission driven, but the mission is basically family and making do. It's about doing better.

Leadership Practices and Advocacy. I think, through leadership, I see how positions that I was put in allowed me to be successful. You see quotes and writings that, "You're only as successful as how successful your team is." As I've been in this role and I started seeing other people progress, and other people grow, that's when they're successful. You get so excited because you know you had a small little part in that. That's when you're being a true leader when you've seen other people start being successful.

I'm very passionate, and that's one of the things that I always try to show, is that I'm gonna have passionate leadership. I'm gonna be collaborative and work with

everybody. Definitely purpose-driven, trying to figure out what is our purpose, data informed, being strategic. But ultimately, it comes back to what I mentioned earlier. By definition, I'm a symbolic leader, and again that means leading by example and telling your story. Which if you're gonna tell your stories, it's about relationship building. That means that you believe in team building, and that means that you believe in not just building yourself up but building others up. There's enough room in this world for all of us to be successful. I truly believe that.

I think as a leader, it's also what you expect of others and how you develop others also and truly believing. One of my favorite quotes is from El Senor Presidente, Miguel Angel Asturias, who was a Guatemalan diplomat and writer. The book by Miguel talks a lot about social justice and about, leadership, and about basically the pros and cons of socialists, dictatorships, and things like that. But from a leadership perspective, there's a quote that I use a lot in storytelling and presentations, and writings. It's "Intrinsic excellence is always to be found where there's lack of outer display," meaning there's potential in everybody. There is good in everyone. In the work we are doing today in the college and even before then, this idea of combining your strengths with your passions to find your purpose. Whenever I work with somebody, and especially when they are my direct reports, one of the very first conversations that I have with them is to get to know them. What are you passionate about? What do you like doing? What do you like doing for fun, or what do you like doing at work? What gets you excited? Secondly, what are you good at? What do you think you're good at? Are you good at math? Are you good at spreadsheets? Are you good at writing? Are you good at communicating? What's your skill that you say, "I'm good at this, and this makes me happy."

Because if we combine the two, that's when we're gonna get places. That's where we find your purpose. From a leadership perspective, it's about putting the right people in the right places to do their jobs. If you put the right people in the right places, you're gonna be successful. We might not always get you what you like to do, but if we put the right training around you, if we put the right support around you, we put the right resources around you, you're gonna be successful if those things are happening. If you as an individual are successful, we figure out how do we get those things and as a collective, become successful. That's how our teams are gonna be successful. Working together, making things happen, I think, all come from your background and culture.

Leadership Reflection. I've progressively grown and had different opportunities and have been exposed to different opportunities throughout time. Middle school, high school, college, professional. My time here at the college. These last six years in this AVP role kind of jumped. So that's why I said it was an exponential growth, but it's still fairly new. I'm nowhere forgetting where I come from and nowhere near forgetting how I got here. Seeing that in other people, like I mentioned earlier, there's room for all of us.

Hispanic/Latino Advocacy. Equity work, the work in trying to lead the Hispanic community. When I first started six years ago at the college, I joined TACHE right away. I participated in all the events. People there were trying to push equity work. I've also been fortunate to have more of a national perspective because being involved with Excelencia, and I'm on their short list of people to call whenever they need certain things. That's wonderful, and I'm glad I've gotten to that point where I'm seen as, one, dependable, and, two, knowledgeable enough so that that conversation is not just data. But from an equity lens, how we can be more intentional. How do we actually serve out

Latino community? How can we ensure that our Latino students are being successful? How do we ensure that our Latino staff is being successful?

A lot of that work with TACHE, I was involved at the local level, and I became involved at the state level in trying to see what we can do with the state. Having more, deeper, larger conversations over the last few years, I think I developed more of a need to try to help the Hispanic/Latino community as much as possible. There's still a ways to go because there's still these huge equity gaps for the haves and have-nots.

Generational Change through Education and Advocacy. I truly believe that education is that precursor to a better life, and if we provide that, we can change multiple generations for the better. My biggest goal is how can we do that for our Hispanic/Latino community. How can I be a leader in making that happen and how can I give back? To move that whole needle. We're the majority, Hispanic, in the State of Texas. The economy of Texas it's gonna depend on how well the Hispanic community does.

Part of the egotistical me, of the thinking highly of myself that, "Oh, I can help influence and change that." Part of leadership means you have to be a little bit like that. If you don't believe that you have the capability to have an influence, then you're never gonna get there. The smartest people aren't necessarily the people in leadership. They're the people that took advantage of certain opportunities. I've learned that about leadership along the way too.

A lot of it is relationships, though, for good or bad, for better or worse. Sometimes the right relationships, the right people, the right conversations put you in roles that make you a leader and put you in situations where you can strongly influence other people's lives in the future, and that's a scary thing if it's not the right people. I

honestly think I'm a good person, which is why I can put myself in a situation where I can help give back.

Family and Love of Learning. I don't know if I've given kudos to my mom, so I'll go there. Early, very early, she was always kind of the rock of everybody. Literally, we lovingly and jokingly call her big dog; she's the big dog. I still call her that today. She stuck through a lot of difficult things for better or worse and maybe sometimes from too much to worse, but she was always there for us. Like I said, growing up in the library because of her love of learning, and reading, and sitting down with workbooks, and even my dad. He wasn't all negative. He was smart. I mean, I remember sitting with them doing puzzles. He used to draw out mazes on pieces of paper, and then I would draw one and make it super hard and give it to him. He would draw one and give it to me, and I would do them. He also used to do those, like knowledge, like riddles and stuff like that. He used to find them, and we would do them together. So, what whole love of learning really came from both of them.

Both of them being super competitive, wanting to win and do better and be better, no matter what the situation. I think all that stemmed heavily from their influences. I think that's developed over time, and I've always remembered that, so I always got to give them, due. Always give credit to where credit is due, and it literally comes from there. But again, I can't emphasize enough I've been very fortunate. I think sometimes, the harder you work, the luckier you get, and I've been very lucky along the way. I don't take that for granted, either. I've continued to build relationships, continued to expand my network of people, and being open to being uncomfortable. I've done that forever, and I'll still continue to do that forever. I'm gona continue to develop and continue to learn.

I'm gonna listen to others. I'm gonna learn from others, and then work together to make

sure we meet our goals. That's gonna be student success and to change the world,

literally. It's cliché, but that's what we want to do.

Key Themes

Key themes emerged from the analysis of the participants' stories. Significant themes

centered on critical factors across life span that influenced leader development. Factors are

relationships, regional culture, and socioeconomics.

Critical Factors Across the Life Span on Leader Development

Figure 8 illustrates the three themes, relationships, regional culture, and socioeconomics,

with six associated subthemes.

Figure 8

Impact of Critical Factors Across the Life Span on Leadership Development
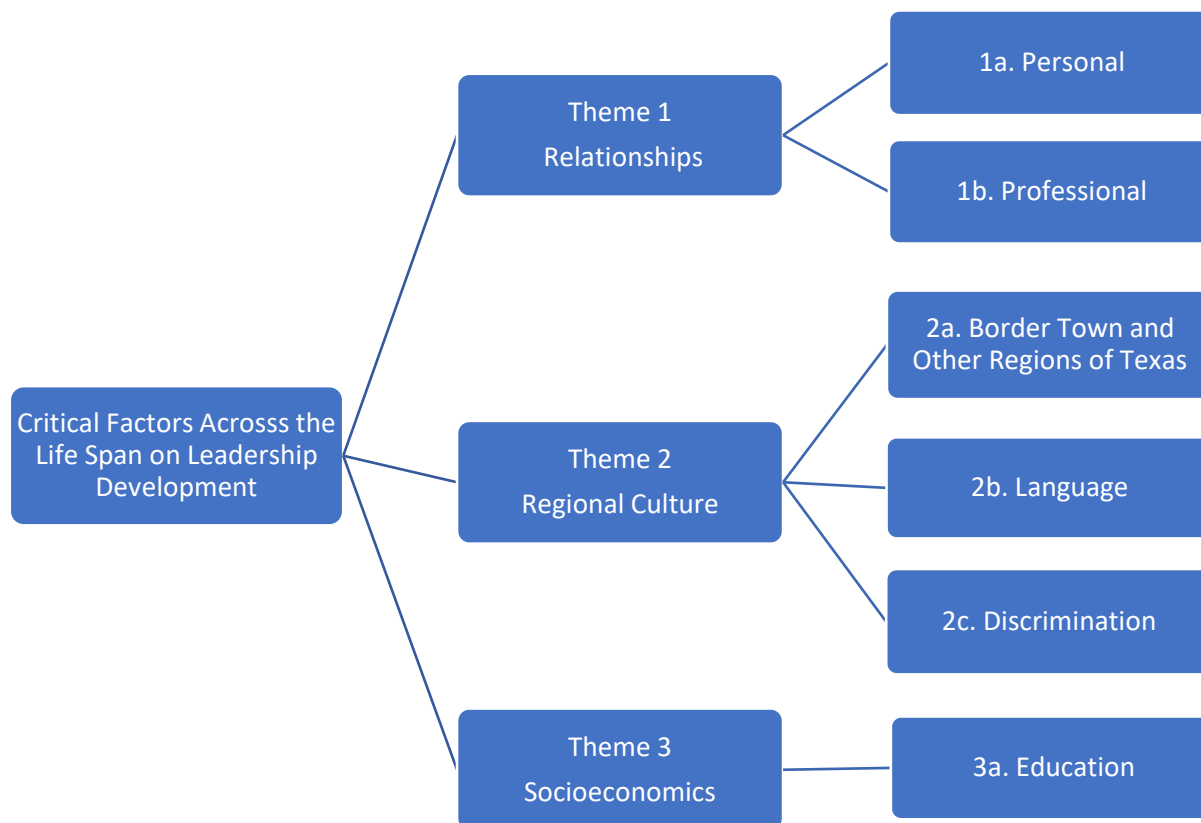
Theme 1: Relationships. Relationship refers to the connections with others that the participants recognized as significant and important to their development and success. Participants referenced examples of such relationships through family, teachers, and mentors, colleagues. During the interviews, participants expressed the value of relationships during their adolescence, emerging adulthood, and middle adulthood life span while attending middle school, high school, college/university, and in the workforce. The two subtopics are defined below as 1A: Personal, and 1B: Professional.

1A: Personal. Family members play a critical role in an individual's life. Those include mothers, fathers, siblings, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and mentors. Participants

reflected on their critical relationships during the time they attended middle school, high school, and college/university. They also shared critical relationships within the workforce as leaders, in addition to identifying those relationships across the lifespan, guiding questions centered around leadership practices in the workplace.

Daniel referred to his relationship with his parents. Although they had limited capacity to support him financially, they provided lots of encouragement. In middle school, Daniel remembers, "I was thriving. I think it was part of my mom and dad continually encouraging me, telling me to go forward." Daniel's parents had a strong influence on his work ethic because they were "very hard workers," and he remembered them saying, "always try my best" and "if you fail, you try again." Even during his college journey, his parents could not help financially, but they "were still helping me more than ever." It was the emotional support and encouragement that he remembers the most.

Daniel was awarded a fellowship in graduate school during his span as an emerging adult with a "monetary piece," but what was most valuable to him "was also mentorship for development as a leader." As Daniel moved into middle adulthood, he referenced his children as key in his professional growth as a leader.

> As I progressed, so has my family. As father to three children ages 16, 10, and 8, I'm
> father to different stages of childhood, and so they grow with me, as I have grown as a
> leader. I don't take this time of my life for granted.

Also critical to Daniel during his emerging adulthood and middle adulthood life span is having a "strong partner" that has "really helped me progress and helped me kinda of along the way throughout this pathway" of developing as a leader.

Alex, a young single mother raised, remembers his mother during his middle and high school years as "always at work" and "also very young." During the summers of his middle school years, his mother would send him and his siblings to Chihuahua, Mexico, to be with his "*abuelita*" and his "*tio, tia*, and my *primo*" because his mother had to work. Spending time with his family in Mexico was valuable to him.

At the age of nine, he remembers his mother putting him in a Big Brothers program. This was a pivotal relationship during a tough time in his life. During middle school, he remembers "it was the most miserable time in my adolescence" and "I felt like I never fit in." The relationship he developed with his "big brother" was transformative. He had someone who believed in him such that he offered to pay for him to attend a private Catholic high school. Alex remembers "looking forward to that the whole time I was in middle school." His "big brother" kept his word, and that opportunity and relationship "just changed my life."

Gilbert, raised by his parents and surrounded by a vast extended family, referenced having "100 first cousins." At a very young age, around middle school, he started working with his father during the summers and "learned the value of hard work and showing up and doing your best, even when you did not want to be there." Gilbert also referenced that he "was expected to show up very early" in his young life. He was the eldest, so "I had to take care of my brothers and sisters, telling them everything was gonna be okay" when the family was experiencing difficult times. His father was making bad decisions, "including bad financial decisions." The importance of family and being there to support his mother and siblings influenced how Gilbert shows up for his team as a leader in his work, "I learned how to show up when I needed to, how to ask when I needed to ask directly to who needed to be asked, and not be afraid to have that conversation, building relationships."

Table 4

Illustrative Quotes: Personal Relationships

Participant	Illustrative quote: personal relationships
Daniel	"I look back on it, I was thriving. I think it was part of my mom and dad continually encouraging me, telling me to go forward."
Alex	"He followed up, and I got to go this high school, an all-boys Catholic school, that just changed my life."
Gilbert	"I started working with my father during the summers and learned the value of hard work and showing up and doing your best, even when you did not want to be there."

A2: Professional. Professional relationships include mentors and colleagues. Interviews with the participants provided the context of the mentors and colleagues who impacted their leadership development and practices. Daniel reflected on his personal and professional development and referenced his involvement in professional organizations like TACHE and NCCHC, a "leadership arm of the American Association of Community Colleges." Engaging with colleagues and "being part of that organization has been helpful" with leadership development. Through these organizations, Daniel stated, "I found mentors that helped develop who I am and where I'm at today" in his leadership role at a community college.

Alex referenced several mentors across his middle school, high school, and college time span, and professional career. During each stage of development, "I've had just amazing support, opportunities, but very important, great mentors." His leadership development has "always been on the job training, mentors, and key people" who have supported him along the way, especially

in his current vice president role at a community college. Alex holds his mentors in such esteem that for him, his mentors are "much more; they're my *hermanos*."

Gilbert has also had mentors along the way in his career. He referenced, "in the work world, when I was at TASB, I had a strong influence there, and people believed in me there." In his current leadership role at a community college, "multiple people have been so supportive and helped along the way." Gilbert attributes his leadership development in part because "I've been fortunate" to have mentorship, "but I've also been fortunate to learn how to develop those relationships, and that's part of leadership."

Table 5

Illustrative Quotes: Professional Relationships

Participant	Illustrative quote: professional relationships
Daniel	"I found mentors that helped me develop who I am and where I'm at today."
Alex	"Each one of these stages I've gone through, I've had just amazing support, opportunities, but very important, great mentors."
Gilbert	"I've been fortunate to have mentorship, but I've also been fortunate to learn how to develop those relationships, and that's part of leadership."

Theme 2: Regional Cultures. Regional culture refers to the area of Texas where the participants were raised, attended middle school, high school, college/university, and the area where they are employed at a community college. During the interviews, participants expressed the cultural influences during their adolescence, emerging adulthood, and middle adulthood lifespan and how it influenced their leadership development and practices. The three subtopics are defined below as (2A) border town and other regions in Texas, (2B) language, (2C) discrimination.

2A: Border Town and Other Regions of Texas. Border towns have a unique culture within the State of Texas. Those towns have a bi-cultural influence on the lives of those who live in border towns or close to the border of Texas. Further away from the border of Texas, cultural aspects change, as experienced by the participants. Daniel spent a lot of summers during middle school visiting family in the border towns of El Paso and Brownsville and then crossing over into Mexico. "This is when I started to really kinda see for myself these disparities. I thought we had everything we needed, but when we went to Mexico, oh my gosh, we were well off." Daniel saw the disparities, and "seeing these different cultures really opened my eyes," and he thought, "I definitely gotta keep moving forward." Those experiences gave Daniel "a lot of encouragement."

Alex was born and raised in a west Texas border town next to Mexico and has lived "cross-cultural all his life." As an adolescent,

> We'd go right across; we'd get our hair cut. You might buy some groceries; you might fill up the car because back then, we could do all that and then maybe eat a *torta* or some tacos or something. Then coming home, we're buying ice cream on the bridge.

Alex's experiences growing up and even today are "very much cross-cultural." Spending a lot of his childhood and adolescence "growing up in Mexico with my family and those experiences were all very impactful, I can't even tell you."

> We were very much immersed in the Mexican-American culture, and I will tell you one thing I did notice back then that the Mexican-American culture, Chicano, or whatever we had there was different than the culture that was in Mexico, and expectations and the lifestyle. So, what I thought was Mexican, and I would call Mexican over here, really wasn't. It was a blend of things, and Mexico's very different.

Thinking back during this time of his life, "even my *abuelita* who lived here was very different, versus other areas, other family, other friends, and the experiences we had here, that's one thing I did recognize."

When Alex left his hometown for graduate school in the north Texas region, he experienced a "big cultural awakening." "I mean, there were no other Mexican Americans or any Hispanic in the program." He realized, "I came from this bubble, and my upbringing was very different." His peers in graduate school were from other parts of Texas, the country, and other countries. He recalled all "the U.S. guys had these very traditional college experiences" compared to his "commuter school" undergraduate experience. Alex recalled during this experience,

> I felt ashamed about it, embarrassed that I was at a commuter school, that I lived at home the whole time, that I worked the whole time, that I didn't know what it meant to be in a frat or in a dorm.

Alex had an opportunity after he completed his Ph.D. to go teach in upstate New York at a small liberal arts college and spent six years there. Once again, he remembers, "I was the only Latino, Hispanic there in the whole college" although his initial experience this time was positive, "I felt like they took me in." Leadership opportunities started to happen, and Alex recalls telling thinking, "I don't even wanna be chair." "I wanna be faculty," but at this college, "they sort of started to set you up to take on some leadership roles." He recalls the institution to be "very traditional." "They very much have their stuff together at that institution because it's built that way, these hierarchies and roles and mentoring, and it works."

Returning home after being away for 13 years, he brought all his lived experiences to work as a leader in a community college near the border of Texas. As a leader, "I'm able to bring

my experience from outside here, but I'm also very familiar with what the students are going through in our community." Alex stated, "I'm familiar with how it is to leave this little bubble and go to other places." Today as a leader in a community college, Alex is passionate about bringing "that regional voice and regional concern and perspective" to how they serve students in his community college. Today, Alex proudly stated, "We have a great bicultural, international community."

For Gilbert, "growing up on the border, it's almost like you don't know any better." "You really don't realize the cultural influences until you basically leave." "There are definitely a lot of cultural influences, but it's one culture." For him, growing up, "the diversity, different cultures are not really there" as it was "98% Hispanic." Even today, "it's still 90 plus Hispanic." Gilbert recalled, "I didn't know a lot of white people." "I didn't know a lot of black people." "I didn't know any Asian people." During his high school years, "I didn't have real interactions with anybody else outside of my hometown crew other than pleasantries, hello and goodbye." Gilbert was very involved in UIL events, and through some travels for competitive events, he recalled, "you started seeing the same people at the same competitions, so you got to know people a little bit better." It was during this that he started realizing "there's a whole other world out there."

Gilbert recalled during his junior year in high school participating in the "TRIO" program, and as part of a field trip, "they took us over to UTSA and UT Austin." He had never been to Austin, and he recalled, "It's like big old buildings and all that's a big old cultural shock." "Not to mention the race of people, but even just the buildings, the noises, the amount of traffic, the amount of people, that was nuts." His experiences attending university in the southwest region of Texas exposed him to many new things, "college time was different, cultural

boom, from food to the way people talked, their experiences growing up." During this time, Gilbert "quickly noticed a whole bunch of different things, even the food. Growing up, he "wasn't exposed to different types of foods other that Mexican food, really."

Another stark difference Gilbert remembered during his college time was, "I didn't talk to a black person until my freshman year in college." The only exposure he had had to black people was on TV, "what you saw from Fresh Prince and Family Matters." In his border town growing up, "they weren't there." Gilbert has taken these experiences and reflected on his leadership development and practices and stated,

> Everything gets built off of what you learned and what you had and what you didn't
> have, and who you want to be. Just understanding that everything is coming from
> different places and not everyone is coming from a super privileged background, and you
> start realizing privilege when you get out.

Table 6

Illustrative Quotes: Border Town and Other Regions of Texas

Participant	Illustrative quote: border town and other regions of Texas
Daniel	"Growing up in a city in west Texas, there wasn't a whole lot of Latinos out there and there was a lot of discrimination."
Alex	"All of my life was very much cross cultural. We'd go right across; we'd get our hair cut. You might buy some groceries; you might fill up the car because back then we could do all that and then maybe eat a *torta* or some tacos or something. Then coming home, we're buying ice cream on the bridge."
Gilbert	"I think growing up on the border, it's almost like you don't know any better. You really don't realize the cultural influences until you basically leave."

   2B: Language. Language refers to language's influence during their time growing up near or on Texas border towns. During the interviews, participants described how their experiences influenced their personal and professional experiences. Daniel always "wondered why didn't my mom and dad teach me Spanish." He would later find out his mom would be "penalized, punished for speaking Spanish in the classroom." "This is the language she grew up with in her house and communicated with her siblings." Daniel stated,

   It turns out later in life that mom did say that because of those experiences, she didn't want me to experience those as well, the discrimination about just because they were speaking Spanish. In her mind she thought "I'm gonna just speak English so that way he doesn't experience these," so I don't get punished or discriminated like she did.

   Daniel recalled that around middle school, "I started to try to speak Spanish; it was this awareness that to communicate with my grandmother and my grandfather," he would have to

speak some Spanish. Daniel could understand what people were saying in Spanish and what they were telling him, but "I just really didn't speak it, so the communication, the relationship I have with my grandparents during this time was just kind of a one-way communication." He started to learn and "found it fascinating, then also frustrating because learning a second language it's difficult, and sometimes you have in your mind what you want to say, just not the vocabulary."

It was during his high school years that Daniel "really tried hard to learn to speak Spanish and to acquire the knowledge." During this time in his life, Daniel stated,

> I started to really find myself and really connect with my culture, as being a Latino, being a Chicano, and really trying to find out what it was. The city I lived in most folks are of Mexican-American descent, but when I started high school, there was a friend and he wasn't Mexican-American; his family live in Puerto Rico. He spoke fast, and he spoke differently. It was the first time I started to look at a broader interpretation. I thought everybody was Mexicano.

It was during this time of his life that he began to really start looking at the "different sectors," and his "mind started to look at different cultures and what it meant to be a Latino." It was these and other experiences related to language and cultural influences that have impacted the work Daniel does at his community college. He stated, "I think that's really helped me with experience in the north Texas region and seeing a lot of different people." He has taken this mindset into his leadership practices, "I think it really speaks to the way we operate in terms of equity in our operations." Sensitive to all those in his community college and community, he "tries to provide Spanish materials or just provide services for different folks from different backgrounds" and "just being sensitive and aware of different ethnicities, backgrounds, cultural differences, and commonalities that we share."

Alex shared speaking both English and Spanish was "very normal" and was part of the culture where he was raised. He recalled that during his childhood and adolescence, every summer, his mother would pack up him and his siblings up and send them to Chihuahua, Mexico, with their "*tio*, *tia*, and *primos*." who live there because his mother had to work and could not watch them. Although he enjoyed his time with family, "it was a tough thing too, because you miss home, you miss your mom." He also remembered the "cultural difference, language, everything." Alex stated, "I speak Spanish, but when you're raised over here, you're the *pochito* when you go over there." "When I was a kid, I spoke very differently, like a *cholio*, saying "ese" and probably had a strong accent and all these kinds of things.

Alex recounted how these experiences with language and culture have influenced his current leadership practices in that "just because you come from someplace because you have an accent because your mastery of the language isn't quite there," he tries to keep that in mind during his interactions with people within his community, community college and around the state of Texas.

Gilbert's experience with language from the perspective of regional culture was more during his college years when he left home and attended university in a different part of Texas. He stated, "college time was different, cultural boom, from food to the way people talked, their experiences growing up." In graduate school, he recalled his peers "talked so professionally," which was "totally different from me." He remembered that it was a "different culture" of communication and interaction than he was used to in his hometown.

Table 7

Illustrative Quotes: Language

Participant	Illustrative quote: language
Daniel	"I always wondered why didn't my mom and dad teach me Spanish. She grew up in south Texas around the early part of the century when she was penalized, punished for speaking Spanish in the classroom. It turns out later in my life that mom did say that because of those experiences, she didn't want me to experience those as well, the discrimination about just because they were speaking Spanish. In her mind, she thought, "I'm gonna just speak English so that way he doesn't experience these," so I don't get punished or discriminated like she did. It was around middle school; I started to try to speak Spanish; it was this awareness that to communicate with my grandmother and my grandfather, I would have to speak some Spanish. I could understand what people are telling me; I just really didn't speak it, so the communication, the relationship I have with my grandparents during this time was just kind of a one-way communication."
Alex	"I speak Spanish, but when you're raised over here, you're the *pochito* when you go over there. When I was a kid, I spoke very differently, like a *cholio*, saying "ese" and probably had a strong accent and all these kinds of things."
Gilbert	"College time was different, cultural boom, from food to the way people talked, their experiences growing up. When they talked, they talked professionally. Totally different from me. That was a different culture."

2C. Discrimination. Discrimination refers to what the participants experienced growing up because of their ethnicity at different points in their lives. Participants shared their experiences related to discrimination and how that influenced their leadership practices. Daniel recalled growing up in a west Texas town with few Latinos, with "not much diversity" and facing "discrimination." He recounted the "experiences of discrimination" during his "middle school time bleeds into everything" that he does as a leader qt his institution. Lastly, Daniel recounted the "microaggressions" that he and his family faced and how those experiences "catapulted him to work harder" to end up in a "position of influence." Today in his influential leadership role at a north Texas community college, he advocates for equity within practices.

Alex recalled experiencing "racism" during his graduate studies in the north Texas region. Although he shared that it wasn't like he didn't experience racism where he grew up, but these experiences were "pretty obvious, outright oftentimes." While staying at the house of a friend of a friend in east Texas, Alex recalled hearing comments such as "these damn Mexicans causing problems" and thought perhaps these individuals did not know his ethnicity. On the other hand, Alex recalled a professor who gave him opportunities and never saw him as a "brown kid."

Alex summarized how these experiences have influenced his leadership practices and how he advocates for his staff to travel for professional development outside of their border town so they can interact with different people from different regions of Texas. He explained it was important for his staff to understand the value of cultural differences and perspectives. Alex referenced an old saying "the further away from the border you get, the scarier it is."

Lastly, Gilbert did not share any experiences related to discrimination. Overall, two of the participants described how their experiences with discrimination directly influenced their

leadership practices of equity within their institutions. All three participants advocate for the Latino community and are committed to serving their communities.

Table 8

Illustrative Quotes: Discrimination

Participant	Illustrative quote: discrimination
Daniel	"It wasn't really diverse, and I think that's really kinda help shape a lot of the way I saw the world and things that I knew that if I ever was in a position of power and authority that I would use that to make practices for all and not to be discriminatory because those are things I faced growing up. These microaggressions that I faced, that my family faced catapulted me to want to try harder and to find something to have influence, to have authority."
Alex	"They were talking about Mexicans and like, "Those damn Mexicans and Mexicans causing problems and being the blight on society."

Theme 3: Socioeconomics. Socioeconomics refers to the economic impact and realities the participants experienced growing up during adolescence through emerging adulthood while attending middle school, high school, and college. The one subtopic is defined below as (3A) education.

3A. Education. Education includes the experiences of the participants and how socioeconomics influenced their educational experiences in middle school, high school, and college. Daniel shared how his "parents came from a family of migrant workers, so they moved across Texas and the surrounding states following the crops." His parents "did not graduate from high school," and he remembered during his "middle school years, they both worked labor-intensive jobs." Daniel's mother "worked in school cafeterias," and his "father was a welder."

During his middle school years, his parents "didn't have the capacity to help me academically,"
but they were "supportive and really wanted me to continue in school." However, "there were no
talks of college." His parents just wanted him to "graduate from high school and find a job."

During this time of middle school, he wanted to participate in extracurricular activities.
He stated the following:

> I really wanted to grow a little bit more into music, into sports, and stuff like that. If I
> wanted to do something, my family was behind me, but like I said, they just didn't have a
> lot of capacity to support me. They didn't have the financial means to support anything
> else other than some money for lunch and the bare necessities, really.

For Daniel, he remembered, "I felt that I had missed out on opportunities because, as I
said earlier, my parents did not have the means to support any extra activities." He thought
perhaps "it would have been different had we had higher socioeconomic status" and he could
have "gotten involved in sports in school and been exposed to different things."

Thinking back on those experiences and how they have impacted his leader development,
Daniel credits his level of work ethic to his parents and how hard they worked to ensure his basic
needs were secured. He stated the following:

> I think because my parents were very hard workers, that instilled a level of work ethic, in
> terms of trying your best, working hard, and that's the type of mentality I grew up with,
> and I think that's kind of what shaped it for me, and I have a strong work ethic, you
> know, staying the course.

During his high school years, his parents were still working very hard but "started to do a
little bit more." His parents had "paid off their house" and started adding a "little *quartito*" to the
house. For Daniel and his family, this was "kind of like the American dream." As a homeowner,

"you're at a different status, and I think for me, it was really good to see them not to have to struggle so much."

During high school, Daniel recalled, "the counselor pushed him to go into the military," telling him since "you're already in ROTC, just go to the military," and he was not offered any guidance for college. After high school, Daniel decided to follow what some of his family members were doing, which was "roofing and construction," and he thought "that was gonna be the pathway" as college "wasn't even on the radar." He spent a couple of years doing labor work, but he "kept seeing a lot of people get hurt, and they weren't able to continue," so he started thinking, "I don't know if I'm gonna be able to keep this up for another 20, 30 years." It was at that point in his life Daniel started "thinking about the military" or what else he could do.

Around his emerging adulthood, at age 20, Daniel "started looking into trade schools" and recalled at that time, he "started getting these concepts, ideas of going back to school." However, he continued "this cycle of working till about the age of maybe 24" when he found a job with "Texas Migrant Counsel as a teacher's aide," and I would also "help drive the bus." As he thinks back, he states, "I don't really know how I landed that job, I really don't; it just happened." During his work there, he started to think that if he wanted to advance, he would "need to get certified as a teacher's aide." This was a turning point in that Daniel started to take continuing education classes. He stated the following:

> Those were the first college courses that I took, and I didn't know that they weren't credit-based courses. They were like continuing education courses, but for me, I didn't know the difference. I was going to the college campus. I took a few child development and psychology classes, so this is gonna get me a certificate, like a teacher's aide certificate or something I can use, and I can have it as a job for a longer time.

The experience of working as a teacher's aide sparked an interest in pursuing more education. Daniel recalled he liked the "learning environment and being introduced to that," so he thought, "what is it gonna take for me to go teach at a high school." Since Daniel was already connected to a community college where he was taking CE courses, he started exploring resources at the college. He remembered, "well, there's an academic center, oh, there's a career center, and there are people here to help me, and I was taking advantage of all kinds of programs" because all along his educational journey, "I didn't know what I didn't know."

Daniel then enrolled in a community college that was a feeder to a Texas university in the area where he lived. At this point in his life, he was "just looking for an associate degree." He recalled excelling "really quickly." Daniel attributed doing well because he had "taken some time off and experienced the real world and the heartache and the suffering, seeing what my life was headed toward." That motivated him, and he stated, "I don't have time to waste, I'm gonna knock it out, and I made the dean's list."

Daniel proceeded to community college and received support services through programs like STAR and TRIO as a first-generation college student. He transferred to a four-year institution in Texas and "had about two years left." He recalled struggling at university but "realized the academic services" that were available, and he took advantage of all of them. He still struggled with math and writing but was "excelling as a person." He realized "that there are people out there willing to help you, and you just gotta meet them halfway, and then you gotta take the initiative." "That was really a life-changer for me." Daniel would go on to get a master's degree and then his EdD in 2017.

Alex was raised by a young single mother who was raising three children. He recalled the impact of being poor growing up. "I would say we were poor, and it's not the same poor that

people think of, we were poor, and I didn't have such a great experience in either elementary or

middle school." Alex's experiences in middle school were not happy memories, "it was

absolutely the most miserable time in my adolescence." He remembered wanting to "play sports,

but we either didn't have the money, or my mom couldn't take me because she worked, and for a

while, she used to ride a bicycle to work." Alex felt like he "never fit in." He stated the

following:

> It wasn't a good school. It wasn't a good experience. There was bullying and classism
>
> sort of stuff. So, you're this poor guy. I mean I had one pair of jeans, a couple of shirts,
>
> holey shoes, that kind of stuff. Going through adolescence and you think that's when you
>
> start growing and wanting to be more like everybody else or wanting to have clothes or a
>
> certain hairstyle or all those kinds of things, I think add to the challenges.

> He did recall one good thing in middle school was that he "got to play in the orchestra

during this time." His mother was able to "rent a violin" for him, "which was great," and that

was something "that was very fun, and I had good friends."

> A pivotal point in his childhood was when his mom put him in the Big Brothers, Big

Sisters program, and he met "big brother." The young man had just graduated from a

"prestigious private university and returned back home." He developed a relationship with his

"big brother," who had graduated from a Catholic boy's school in the hometown where they both

lived, and it "had a very great reputation." His "big brother" offered to send Alex to that same

school and pay for the tuition. Alex recalled how he looked "forward to that the whole time" he

was in "middle school." Recalling this difficult time in middle school, Alex stated the following:

> All through school, not that I never messed up, but the whole time I was in school, I
>
> knew that school, even though it might not be the place for me, the actual school, I knew

that learning was really important. I loved learning. I loved reading. I knew that that was my ticket because I'd seen my "big brother," and that was his ticket, too. He did a lot of great things, so I always thought that was my number one priority, education.

A pivotal point in Alex's life was when his "big brother" "followed up," and he got to go to a private "all-boys Catholic school." He recalled how "that just changed my life." He had been raised Catholic, but going to a school that is run by Christian brothers was something totally different. They were "primarily educators," and Alex recalled, "there was a culture of respect and tradition and history, and I think all of those things were very important." His experience in what he called a "college prep" high school started to set him on the "path to higher ed."

By this time in high school, his "life was just doing much better all-around socioeconomic status," and he was "happy at school." His mother had a much better job and "started making better money, benefits, all those things," and "she bought a new car." Alex was now staying home during summers and beginning to earn some money of his own by doing "neighborhood lawns" and "delivering newspapers." He was about 15 years old when he got his "first real job at Burger King," working in the evenings and on weekends.

All his educational experiences up to this time influenced his personal and leader development. He had "some great professors" while in Catholic high school and "took a lot of lessons from them." "I looked up to them and still do." He learned there was a "time and place" for things, and he recalled although it was a "bunch of boys and we did so many dumb things and crazy things, when it came down to it, it was no nonsense." Alex stated, "I think it's impacted me in that knowing that it's good to have high expectations." So, in his current leadership role, he has "high expectations for my students and for my staff, for the faculty that works for me."

Additionally, Alex recalled another significant experience in high school and stated the following:

> The other thing is, and I think I saw it a lot there, too, the answer there wasn't if you messed up, that you're going to be kicked out or you're fired. It was, you messed up, there are consequences to it, and now we're gonna try to figure things out. It's how can we help you.

> In his current leadership role, Alex applies these same methods in that when he has an employee that comes to his office; their immediate response may be, "Am I getting fired?" His approach is similar to how the high school professors did, "let's figure out what the issue is and let's fix it."

> As Alex moved into the next phase of his life as an emerging adult, he was now in university. Although he was happy, he had been accepted into the four universities he had applied to, "UT, A&M, Notre Dame, and UTEP," he was not able to complete the FASFA application because his mother did not trust why they needed her tax information and did not provide it to Alex. So, Alex, because he "couldn't figure out how to pay for school and how to do anything," he ended up attending university in his hometown and living at home. He recounts how his mother paid for his "entire undergraduate." Alex continued to work during his undergraduate career, so he "also contributed."

> Another key mentor was a lawyer he was working for during this time, and he gave Alex "lots of opportunities" and exposed him to "lots of things at his level of the social world, and it was a great experience." College was a time Alex found his place and knew he wanted to study "biology." He started "volunteering and doing some research in some labs," It did not bother him

that he was not getting paid because he "found a good place" to learn and grow. Throughout his

college career, he found himself "doing more leadership" activities. Alex stated the following:

> It's like my professor just gave me those opportunities, and I don't think he ever saw that
>
> I was some brown kid. He just saw me as anybody else, like any one of his other
>
> students, and we became very close friends. He put these opportunities out there, and I
>
> would take them, as I mentioned before. Sometimes, reluctantly, but I felt it was
>
> important to take these opportunities, leadership opportunities, as well.

Another experience Alex shared during the interview was as a graduate student, and he

was asked to represent the "whole university on the provost hiring committee." He remembered

it was eye-opening as he could " see what the other side of the world looked like, and it was

invaluable." Alex graduated and proceeded with postgraduate work and ultimately earned his

Ph.D. in the early part of starting his middle adulthood span.

Gilbert's educational experience was different in that his mother was an elementary

school teacher, and he was immersed in academic activities at a very young age. He recalled that

before he could barely walk, his mother was taking him to the library. He stated the following:

> I spent a whole lot of hours in the library reading. Before I could read, she put on us those
>
> big old headphones, and we would just sit down listening to different things. Then when
>
> we started reading, we would go into different reading groups. When we got older, we
>
> would all scatter and pick a book, and if there was time, we'd read a whole book. I read
>
> thousands of books and a lot of that growing up.

By the time Gilbert started first grade, he was "so ahead," and they talked about skipping

him a few grades, but his mother said, "nah, just go ahead and keep him there; he's little." So,

they kept him in first grade and just gave him "extra work." As he went into middle school, he

continued to excel, especially in math. He recalled one of his teachers would let him go into his classroom early, and he would teach him "advanced math." He was very competitive, participated in math competitions, and remembered how hard he would study to get "first place."

Something Gilbert recalled about these competitive events and others that have helped him develop important skills that he continued to apply throughout his education and into his leadership roles was, as he stated in the following:

> You develop a lot of things you don't think about. Some people call it soft skills, some call them essential skills, but a lot of it is just showing up and whether you want to or not. Sometimes you're there, and you're put in a situation where you have to try your hardest, you have to do your best, and I think that sets you up for the future, for a lot of different things. I mean, even now, sometimes we're told what we need to do, and even though we don't wanna do it, we make it happen, and we try to do it as best as possible.

These experiences in middle school have shaped his leadership practices, and as he further reflected, "it's what your expectations are, how you see others, what you expect from others." This mindset started in his adolescent time in middle school and high school. Today, as a community college leader, he stated, "having high expectations, but also being there and working through those expectations and never asking somebody to do something you're not willing to do yourself."

Throughout his high school career, he continued to excel in math and had teachers who served as mentors. Gilbert "always made it a point to sit there and have a conversation with them, listen, get excited, and geek out over different things." Because of these experiences, he stated, "I think as a person, I've been growing because I've always enjoyed listening to people

and learning from others." Gilbert excelled in high school, did exceptionally well on his SAT

and ACT, and was highly recruited by Ivy League schools across the country.

Unfortunately, he recalled, "but my head was in a different place." He was having fun

and enjoying life, and he "never applied for anything," and he "barely made the deadline for the

common application in January." With regret, Gilbert recalled his time in high school taught him

some hard lessons, recognized he missed out on some opportunities, and self-reflected, stating, "I

was probably too much of an ass, to be honest, in my high school years." "I was cocky,

obviously, and I made too many bad decisions that changed my entire projection moving

forward." Although he also stated, "I was fortunate though to correct some of those mistakes."

Gilbert knew he was "going to college," and that was never a question for him.

Reflections about his high school experiences and how they impacted his leader

development are captured in the following statement:

> I didn't focus on those mistakes but as learning opportunities to keep doing better and to
>
> take advantage of the situation at hand. As I got in better situations, I started progressing,
>
> making better decisions, and I think that put me on the path where I am today. I've been
>
> fortunate along the way. I've had people that believed in me. I've been fortunate to learn
>
> how to develop relationships. I think I learned how to develop relationships early on, and
>
> that's part of leadership.

Gilbert had no doubt he would be attending college and went on to St. Mary's University

in San Antonio, partly because they gave him "the most money," receiving a "full ride for the

first year." He still needed more money for "living and things like that," so he had to take out a

student loan along with starting tutoring in math to earn extra money. Gilbert quickly discovered

"there was a lot of people with money" attending the university, so he started making some

"good money charging twenty dollars an hour, tutoring people." He recalled a memorable conversation with someone he was tutoring and recalled her saying the following:

Can I talk to you and give you some advice? You're extremely smart, and you tutor very well, but you need to work on your empathy. You need to work on just your demeanor and the way you carry yourself. Not everyone is gonna think as fast as you do.

Gilbert thanked her and took her feedback "to heart," and stated, "that experience really shaped the way I started tutoring." By the end of that academic year, the person he was tutoring told him how proud she was of him and how much he had "developed as a tutor." He once again saw that experience as an opportunity and stated that "being open to that and being open to criticism, whether you want it or not, those are growing times too, and I think all those opportunities shape who you are."

During his undergraduate, he was helping his parents financially because when his father was not working, "money was more scarce." He would use some of his financial aid along with his tutoring money to pay for his parents' internet service and their phone. He wanted them to have a phone so he could call them, and they could call him. Gilbert made sure his parents had what they needed and would send them money. He decided St. Mary's was just too expensive and transferred to UTSA his sophomore year and "decided to double major in math and statistics." He progressed with his studies, graduated, and immediately proceeded to graduate school.

By this time in his college career, Gilbert had discovered the value of scholarships and was taking advantage of those resources. At the age of 30, entering middle adulthood, he began his doctoral studies, and he recalled how that "opened up every single door in the world." He had opportunities to converse with higher education leaders across the country. Gilbert continued

"making connections, having conversations, and putting himself out there" even when situations were "not comfortable" and agreeing to do things that challenged him and helped him develop his leadership practices. He stated, "throughout college and moving past college, I think I've learned how to incorporate that even more so."

Table 9

Illustrative Quotes: Education

Participant	Illustrative quote: education
Daniel	"I think it would have been different had we had a higher socioeconomic status, then maybe I could've gotten involved is sports in school and been exposed to different things, but that wasn't the case."
Alex	"It wasn't a good school. It wasn't a good experience. There was bullying and classism sort of stuff. So, you're this poor guy. I mean I had one pair of jeans, a couple of shirts, holey shoes, that kind of stuff. Going through adolescence and you think that's when you start growing and wanting to be more like everybody else or wanting to have clothes or a certain hairstyle or all those kinds of thing, I think add to the challenges."
Gilbert	"When my dad wasn't working, money was more scarce. I was paying for the internet at my parent's house, and I was paying for their phone. We didn't have one growing up. It was an extra expense that we didn't have money for, so I got them a phone because I wanted to be able to call them. Whenever they needed anything, I would help pay for that as well."

Chapter Summary

This chapter represented the narratives accounts, and first-person stories of three Latino and/or Hispanic male participants. I presented each participant and the key themes that emerged across their experiences from middle school to college and the influence those experiences had on their leadership and practices in a community college. A thematic analysis of the stories led to the key themes of (1) relationships, (2) regional culture, and (3) socioeconomics and included six associated subthemes. Next, in Chapter 5, I present conclusions based on the emergent themes. I also discuss the findings related to existing literature and the theoretical framework of leader development across the lifespan and through the lens of Latino critical race theory. Finally, I propose recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Gaps in leadership's disproportionate ethnic and racial representation in higher education continue to be a concern (Freeman et al., 2019; Gasman et al., 2015; Gutierrez et al., 2002; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2011). With the expected ongoing growth of Latino student enrollment in community colleges, understanding the challenges Latinos face navigating their educational journey is critical if institutions hope to close the disproportionate representation of Latino leaders in higher education (Gutierrez et al., 2002). Although there are more Latinos in leadership roles in community colleges, it is still disproportionate compared to the number of Latino and/or Hispanic students in community colleges (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Lastly, diversity in leadership cultivates student success and, at the same time, may inspire Latino faculty and staff to seek a path to leadership roles.

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the critical factors, namely, their lived dynamic, nonlinear, and contextual experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood on the leadership development. The two research questions that guided this study were:

- How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) perceive critical factors from adolescence to adulthood?

- How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) understand the impact, if any, of critical factors on their leadership development in community colleges in Texas?

The findings of this study may serve to inform community colleges of the challenges Latino and/or Hispanic men face along their pathway to leadership positions in higher education. This next chapter begins with a summary of the research, including the methodology and process of analysis. Next, I present conclusions based on the emergent findings presented in Chapter 4

and the alignment of the emergent themes with the literature on leadership development. Finally, I propose recommendations for practice and future research.

Summary of Study

In this inductive narrative study, I utilized chronological organization, open coding, focused coding, and thematic analysis to understand how three Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges perceived factors that impacted their leadership development. Open-ended interviews in the summer of 2022 were conducted with guided conversations that allowed the participants to tell the stories important to them across their life.

Distinctive life stories were captured in this study. According to Atkinson (1998), "we need to hear the life stories of individuals from those underrepresented groups to help establish a balance in the literature" (p. 19). Further asserting, Atkinson stated a "life story makes implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed, and the confusing clear" (p. 7). It is the story the person chooses to tell about the life they lived (Atkinson, 1998). Hence, the participants shared life stories they felt were most impactful and revealing about their leadership development.

Engaging in a narrative study is capturing lifespan experiences (Clandinin et al., 2007) with "detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements" (Reissman, 2008, p. 23). In the inductive and thematic analysis process, a researcher begins to find "emerging, frequent, dominant, or significant themes" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238) in the data captured during the interview process. Importantly, it is the process of extracting meaningful and significant themes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that embodies the validity of the life stories (Atkinson, 1998). Therefore, this study followed these recommendations as it began the analysis of the life span stories, using a leadership developmental model and the lens of critical race theory, specifically LatCrit.

The analysis process began with becoming familiar with the data, which included confirming the accuracy of the transcripts by listening to audio recordings and comparing them to the physical transcription of the interviews. The initial coding identified in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016) as demonstrated by quotes and narrative blocks. The second coding cycle identified codes to start forming categories, and finally, the themes and subthemes were formulated. Through the thematic analysis, the findings addressed the significance of exploring the factors across the life span that impacted leadership development and practices of LHMLs

I found three themes and six subthemes demonstrating the LHMLs life span factors: (1) relationships, with subthemes (1a) personal and (2a) professional; (2) regional culture, with subthemes (2a) border town and other regions of Texas, (2b) language, and (2c) discrimination; and (3) socioeconomic, with subthemes (3a) education.

Conclusions

The findings presented in Chapter 4 are intrinsically linked through these themes to present the conclusions. Based on the data's findings, three conclusions were formulated to answer the research questions: How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) perceive critical factors from adolescence to adulthood? How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) understand the impact, if any, of critical factors on their leadership development in community colleges in Texas? Conclusions (1) and (2) correspond with the LHMLs perceived critical from adolescence to adulthood. Conclusion (3) corresponds with LHMLs understanding the impact of critical factors on their leadership.

1. Relationships and regional cultural experiences represent critical life span factors influencing leadership development.
2. Socioeconomics represents the influences on educational experiences.

3. Experiences of discrimination represent critical factors influencing leadership practices.

Conclusion 1: Relationships, Regional Culture Represent Life Span Factors Influencing

Leadership Development

Understanding the environment and lifespan development is essential to understanding how an individual becomes a leader (Castillo et al., 2020). It is also crucial to understand that leadership development is dynamic across contexts and time (Acton et al., 2019).

Relationships. All three participants reflected on their personal and professional relationships throughout adolescence during middle school and high school, emerging adulthood during their college years, and how those relationships impacted their leader development and leadership practices in the workforce into their middle adulthood. All three described their parental influence. For example, Daniel and Gilbert reflected on their fathers and how they taught them the value of hard work. Additionally, all three also described the influence of extended family, especially grandparents, on Alex and Daniel.

Daniel reflected on his family's influence and why he works so hard today. He explained he is ultimately driven by his value of family and his children, and Daniel wants to provide them with experiences he did not have. He described a cultural tie instilled within his family and for future generations to ensure they have better lives.

Gilbert reflected on the critical role of his relationship with his mother at a very young age and how she instilled a love for education and learning. He recalled spending a lot of time in the library with his mother, reading many books at an early age and throughout his middle school years. Gilbert also recalled the valuable relationship with one of his teachers in middle school, who he remembered always believed in him and went the extra mile to keep challenging his intellect, especially in math.

Alex reflected on a critical relationship that started at the age of nine with his "big brother" from the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. He saw him as a role model, as he did not have his father "present" in his life. He recounted the impact of this relationship and that his "big brother" allowed him to attend a private Catholic high school, which changed the trajectory of his life.

All three reflected on the value of mentors throughout their college and professional careers as those mentors believed in them, and they learned lessons that aided in their leadership and personal development. Collectively, all participants provided lucid memories of their personal and professional relationships that impacted their leadership development.

Regional Culture. The individual interviews elucidated their lived experiences providing vivid descriptions of the impact culture had on their development. Alex and Gilbert were raised in a border town in Texas. Alex's interview provided insights into living in a border town. He recalled how it was a regular occurrence for him and his family to walk across the bridge into Mexico for a haircut and groceries and stop and buy ice cream on their way back across the bridge. Alex described his experiences as bicultural in all aspects. It was not until he left his hometown for graduate school that he realized how isolated his life had been and described it as living in a bubble. Alex also described experiences of discrimination while attending graduate school in the northern part of Texas. However, he recounted discrimination in other areas but not as blatant as it was in north Texas.

Alex summarized that these experiences had an impact in that he appreciates the differences in people, and as a leader, that has influenced his practices. He explained how he is mindful of the students his institution serves as well as the staff who work for him. Alex also shared how he pushes for programs that allow students to travel outside of their bubble to see the

differences in cultures and hopefully be better prepared if they transfer to other Texas institutions across the state. Alex provided another example of his practices as a mindful leader**.** He encourages his staff to pursue professional development in various cities across the state so they will experience and understand different perspectives and cultures and become better suited in preparing the students they serve to transfer to other universities across the state.

In Gilbert's interview, he described the border town he was raised in as almost 98% Hispanic and not having an appreciation of any other culture. He recalled rarely speaking to a White or Black person, and he knew no Asian people until he left home for college in San Antonio. That was when he started to learn and engage with people of different cultures and races. He shared how much he enjoyed learning about different cultures and building relationships with people who were different than him.

Gilbert explained how the cultural experiences he has embraced have bled into how he leads at the community college where he works. He shared how important it is for him to get to know his team members to find out what they like and what they are passionate about and put them in roles where they can excel, which strengthens the team he leads. He reflected on the cultural influence of family values and how that influences how he perceives his team as family.

Daniel described how growing up in a west Texas town, as a Latino, he was the minority and experienced discrimination. He recalled the segregation in his hometown and shared that it still exists. He reflected on visiting family in south Texas border towns and going across into Mexico. During this time, he started to recognize the disparities in how people lived. He explained his high school years as an awakening. He began to learn and appreciate what a Latino was and that it was not just another word for Mexican-American or Mexicano.

Daniel shared that this awareness and sensitivity of different ethnicities, backgrounds, cultural differences, and commonalities that people share expanded over into middle adulthood. Today he recounts how he continues to embrace and help the Latino community, mainly because he is in a position of authority and influence and can directly impact how the Latino community accesses and experiences higher education.

Alex and Daniel both shared the cultural influence of language growing up. Alex recalled speaking both English and Spanish his whole life. Yet, when he visited his family in Mexico, he described how they would make fun of his Spanish as it was different because he learned to speak the language in a bicultural environment in a border town in Texas. In the interview, Daniel recalled his experience with language was different and explained that his parents only spoke English to him growing up, and he did not learn how to speak Spanish until around high school. He explained he found out his mother did this intentionally as she did not want him to be punished as she had been so in school for speaking Spanish. Daniel described the struggles of learning Spanish as a second language.

All three participants perceived their cultural experiences growing up as influencing their leadership development and practices. Daniel particularly explained his experiences of discrimination and, as a second language learner, heightened his purpose for serving the Latino community. Daniel strives to ensure equity practices at his community college support access to education for all and tries to ensure all materials with information are in Spanish.

Conclusion 2: Socioeconomics Represents the Influences on Educational Experiences

Lower socioeconomic backgrounds for minorities have been found to impact educational opportunities (Bailey et al., 2015; Denning, 2017; Ishitani & Kamer, 2020). Socioeconomics influenced the educational experiences of all three participants.

Daniel stated that his parents did not have much education and worked hard in labor-intensive jobs to ensure they had money for the essentials: lunch money for school. Daniel recalled how they could not help him academically but provided support and encouragement to go to school. He remembered all his parents expected of him was to graduate from high school, as that was more than they had, and get a job. He recalled middle school and high school was more of a formality for him, and there were never talks of going to college. He recalled being a first-generation college student and receiving support services that helped him through community college and transfer to a university.

Alex poignantly shared that being raised by a single mother of three created many financial challenges, and he stated, "We were poor." He recalled his middle school experience was terrible as there was bullying and classism, recounting he only had one pair of jeans, a couple of shirts, and holey shoes. His "big brother" paid for him to attend a private Catholic high school, which would "change his life," and he knew he was going to college. His financial struggles continued as he applied to college because his mother would not provide him with her tax information to complete the FAFSA application for financial aid. As a first-generation college student, he could not figure out how to get financial aid. He would have to forego leaving home for university, and he stayed in his hometown and attended university there.

Gilbert's experiences were different because his mother was a college graduate working as an elementary school teacher. His father worked in construction, and many times, Gilbert recounts, money was scarce. However, he had many opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities and excelled academically. He shared that when he was attending university and working as a math tutor, earning good money, he would have to send money to his parents to pay bills and for other financial needs.

All three participants shared that their experiences of growing up poor only fueled their drive to pursue an education as they saw that as the path to a better life for themselves and future generations. Alex shared that he works to stay mindful of those struggles, and as a leader at his institution, he looks out for students who may be having the same struggles he did and offers to help.

Conclusion 3: Experiences of Discrimination Represent Critical Factors Influencing Leadership Development

Two of the participants shared their experiences with discrimination. Daniel recalled growing up in west Texas, where he and his family faced discrimination because of their ethnicity. He shared that the city he lived in was segregated, and the disparities were present. Visiting family in border towns of Texas and Mexico heightened his awareness of the disparities. He recalled how this motivated him to get to a place in his career where he could influence and help the Latino community. In his current leadership role, he advocates for equity in all practices and tries to make sure all the materials available to students and the community are in Spanish.

Alex shared his experiences of being discriminated against for being poor, and a Mexican has informed how he leads his divisions and teams at his institution. He advocates for his staff to attend professional development activities outside of their border region and travel across the State of Texas so they are exposed to different perspectives and values. Alex also expects staff to support students in field trips outside the area. Hence, they are better prepared for what they may experience once they graduate or transfer to other parts of the state or country. Collectively, all participants shared their commitment to advocating for the Latino community and, through their influential leadership positions, ensuring equity is embedded in the culture of their institutions.

Implications for Research

This study provided insights into the contributing factors of LHMLs' leadership development and an understanding of how leadership practices evolved from their lived experiences. Literature concerning leadership development highlights events or activities from a developmental model perspective across the lifespan (Day et al., 2009; Kolb, 2014; Liu et al., 2021; Nica, 2013). The narratives were analyzed using this developmental model approach from adolescence to middle adulthood. The LatCrit theoretical lens has also been used in this study as literature supports its use for analyzing personal narratives and storytelling of minorities (Aleman, 2009b; Barnes, 2011; Chang & Fuller, 1999; Fernandez, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002).

Therefore, the following section explores the connections between this study's findings and existing literature on leadership development along with the lens of the LatCrit theory. Regarding the LHMLs' life span factors impacting their leadership development and their practices, three themes emerged: (1) relationships, (2) regional culture, and (3) socioeconomics. Hence, as presented in Appendix G of this study, the findings supported the existing literature on leadership development and LatCrit.

As noted, the leadership development process occurs across the lifespan (Day, 2011; Liu et al., 2021; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Experiential windows involving social and cultural context across the lifespan are building blocks for leader development (Liu et al., 2021). Furthermore, Murphy and Johnson (2011) argued "early experiences create the foundation for future leadership development to build" (p. 459). Building on Murphy and Johnson's work, Liu et al. (2021) focused their work on "context-driven developmental experience approach" (p. 5).

Additionally, the Latino critical theory [LatCrit] served as the lens for this study. LatCrit elucidates the influence of language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, phenotype, and sexuality (Garcia, 1995; Johnson, 1997; Valdes, 1996). Latcrit has also been used as a lens for the lived experiences captured through storytelling and narratives (Bell, 1987; Solorzano & Villalpano, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). This study's themes align with the developmental model noted above and with the lens of LatCrit.

Theme 1: Relationships

Various forms of relationships were revealed in the analysis. Those included personal [family, teachers, mentors] and professional [mentors, colleagues]. These relationships had an impact on all three participants. During adolescence and emerging adulthood [middle school, high school, college], family, teachers, and mentors provided the encouragement that kept them moving forward in their development. The mentors in their lives served as role models of what was possible for them through education and hard work. Professional relationships, especially mentors, also served as figures who believed in them and always supported their leadership development during their middle adulthood time of employment in their institutions.

Therefore, participants' references align with the leadership development model, specifically Liu et al.'s (2021) model that addresses adolescence as the experimental exploration stage. Their work discusses the impact role models have in guiding leadership growth during this critical time of development. Other researchers have also found that adolescent time "to be predictive of leadership potential over a decade later in adulthood" (Guerin et al., 2011). During the developmental span of emerging adulthood [a time of self and opportunity-oriented stage] and middle adulthood [purpose driven]; Liu et al., 2021), when participants were taking

advantage of leadership programs and acquire leadership knowledge (Lord & Hall, 2005), the

relationships with mentors and colleagues were critical.

Theme 2: Regional Culture

Regional culture represents an additional lifespan factor not reported in previous studies.

However, the work on LatCrit elucidates the influence of language, immigration, ethnicity,

culture, phenotype, and sexuality (Garcia, 1995; Johnson, 1997; Valdes, 1996). Latcrit has been

used as a lens for the lived experiences captured through storytelling and narratives (Bell, 1987;

Solorzano & Villalpano, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). The rich stories of the participants

and how their regional cultural experiences across Texas and Mexico impacted their leadership

development and practices can be couched in LatCrit theory. All participants described the

challenges and opportunities that arose from their cultural experiences from adolescence to

middle adulthood. The more poignant experiences for the participants centered around language

and discrimination. These experiences, although negative at times, provided the catalyst to work

hard to achieve influential leadership positions in their institutions to ensure a Latino voice at the

table where decisions are being made that impact the Latino community.

Theme 3: Socioeconomics

The significance of socioeconomics is that it represents the impact it had on the lives of

the participants' education during adolescence to emerging adulthood (i.e., middle school, high

school, college). The participants' stories are like many other racial or ethnic minorities with low

socioeconomic backgrounds who are first-generation students (Bailey et al., 2015; Denning,

2017). They faced many challenges navigating education and especially higher education. In the

end, despite all the challenges the participants faced, they worked hard to achieve the highest

educational credential possible to ensure they were ready to be the best leaders and advocates to serve the Latino community in their institutions.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on this study, recommendations for practice among leaders in Texas community colleges is to take the lived experiences of the three LHMLs in this study and reflect on the critical impact family, teachers, and mentors, have on Latino men. Furthermore, inquiry and consideration of culture and language and how it influences the educational experience warrant leaders' attention. Specifically, the attention from those responsible for institutional policies and practices may impact LHM students who are hoping to begin their educational journey that leads to a path to leadership positions in higher education.

Results of the study demonstrated that life factors, such as relationships and cultural experiences, influence leadership practices among LHMLs in Texas community colleges. Therefore, LHMLs should be mindful of how they lead, develop, and implement practices so that those practices not only support Latino students but all underrepresented students in their respective communities. Additionally, practice recommendations include how LHMLs should consider their faculty and staff's cultural background, language, and other life span factors. All institutional practices must also align and support the human capital in their institutions.

Future Research

Future research opportunities are provided from the findings of this narrative study. This study conducted interviews to gather the life stories of LHMLs, examining influences on their leadership development and practices. Future studies could consider how cultural wealth influences LHML's leadership practices, specifically the writing of institutional policies in Texas community colleges that directly impact admissions, curriculum, and support services.

This qualitative study generated findings based on a qualitative approach with a small sample of three participants. As such, it is impossible to quantifiably measure the critical factors across the lifespan and generalize them to other LHMLs in Texas community colleges or other regions of the country. Further research could include a quantitative approach to capture critical factors impacting the leader development and practices of LHML across all Texas community colleges and colleges across the country.

Chapter Summary

Liu et al. (2021) asserted that leadership development occurs across experiential windows across the lifespan. This study examined how life span factors of LHMLs influenced leadership practices and how these participants understood their leadership within their institutions. The three leaders in Texas community colleges believe their relationships and cultural experiences as the key contributing factor to their leadership development and practices today. In addition to the relationships and cultural experiences, educational journies also played a critical role in their development as leaders. The stories shared by the LHM participants collectively elucidated how their lifespan experiences of relationships, regional culture, and socioeconomics directly impacted their development and the leaders they are today.

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Appendix A: Internal Review Board Approval

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325-674-2885

June 10, 2022

Estrella Barrera
Department of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Estrella,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled

"Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders in Community Colleges in Texas: A Narrative Study",

(IRB#22-072   )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix B: Request for Participation

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Estrella Barrera, and I am a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University. I humbly request your participation in a doctoral research study titled: Latino and/or Hispanic Male Leaders in community colleges in Texas: A Narrative Study. This study aims to examine the impact of critical factors, namely, lived dynamic, non-linear, and contextual experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges.

The study will involve in-person interviews with participants who will be asked to share stories about their leadership development across their lifespan. Initial interviews will last approximately one hour, with possible follow-up interviews to clarify and expand the narrative from the first interview. Due to the ongoing pandemic, interviews may be conducted through a virtual conference. Participants will remain anonymous in the actual publication of the study. Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to participate or stop your participation at any time in the research and for any reason.

If you would like to participate in this study, please email me at xxxxx@acu.edu. I have attached the informed consent form.

I appreciate your consideration.
Respectfully,

Estrella Barrera
Doctoral Candidate
Abilene Christian University

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Introduction

I would like to thank you again for agreeing to work with me on this research project. I will first take a moment to reassure you that all personally identifiable information will be removed from the transcripts of this recording. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym in the transcripts and research documents. This is the opportunity to let me know if you would like to select your pseudonym/alias.

As a recap, this narrative study aims to examine the impact of critical factors, namely, lived dynamic, non-linear, and contextual experiences from adolescence to middle adulthood of Latino and/or Hispanic male leaders in Texas community colleges.

Two broad questions will guide this study: RQ1: How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) perceive critical factors from adolescence to middle adulthood? RQ2: How do Latinos and/or Hispanic Male Leaders (LHMLs) understand the impact, if any, of critical factors on their leadership development in community colleges in Texas?

At this time, I would like to turn on the recorder. "Do I have your permission to do so?"

This is Estrella Barrera, a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University. Today's date is _____, and I am speaking with participant _____.

The Semi-structured Interview

The following open-ended questions will be used to guide the interviewer.

The researcher will begin the interview by asking: "Do I have your permission to record this interview?"

Middle School Education Questions

Life span category: Adolescence (12-18) Middle School	Leadership Development Focus Probe	Critical Factors Focus Probe
Experiences: What was going on in your family, community, and the world during this time of your life.	How have these experiences impacted your leader development?	How do you think these experiences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Cultural Influences: What are some of your early memories of cultural influences during this time?	How may have these cultural influences impacted your leader development?	How do you think these cultural influences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Education: What do you most remember about elementary and middle school?	How may have these educational memories impacted your leader development?	How do you think these educational memories may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?

Adolescence Closing Question: Reflecting on your responses of your middle school

experiences, cultural influences, and education you just described, how would you summarize

your leader development?

High School Education Questions

Life span Category: Adolescence (12-18) - High School	Leader Development Focus Probe	Critical Factors Focus Probe
Experiences: What was going on in your family, community, and world when you attended high school?	How may these experiences have impacted your leader development?	How do you think these experiences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Culture Context: What are some of your memories of cultural influences during this time?	How may have these cultural influences impacted your leader development?	How do you think these cultural influences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Education: What do you most remember about high school?	How may have these educational memories impacted your leader development?	How do you think these educational memories may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?

Formal Education Closing Question: Reflecting on your responses of your high school experiences, cultural influences, and education you just described, how would you summarize your leader development?

Formal Education Questions

Life span Category: Emerging Adulthood (18-30) College/University	Leader Development Focus Probe	Critical Factors Focus Probe
Experiences: What was going on in your family, community, and world when you attended college or university?	How may these experiences have impacted your leader development?	How do you think these experiences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Cultural Influences: What are some of your memories of cultural influences during this time?	How may have these cultural influences impacted your leader development?	How do you think these cultural influences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Education: What do you most remember about college or university?	How may have these educational memories impacted your leader development?	How do you think these educational memories may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?

Formal Education Closing Question: Reflecting on your responses of your college or university experiences, cultural influences, and education you just described, how would you summarize your leader development?

Workforce Leader Development Education Questions

Life span category: Middle- Adulthood (30-60) Workforce	Leader Development Focus Probe	Critical Factors Focus Probe
Experiences: What was going on in your family, your community, and the world at the time in the workforce?	How may have these experiences impacted your leader development in the workplace?	How do you think these experiences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Cultural Influences: What are some of your memories of cultural influences during this time?	How may have these cultural influences impacted your leader development?	How do you think these cultural influences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Leader Development Programs/Education: What do you most remember about the workforce during this time?	How may have these educational programs impacted your leader development in the workplace?	How do you think these educational programs may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?

Workforce Closing Question: Reflecting on your responses of your workforce experiences, cultural influences, and leader development programs/education you just described, how would you summarize your leader development and leadership practices in a community college.

Leadership Questions

Life span Category: Leadership	Leader Development Focus Probe	Critical Factors Focus Probe
Experiences: What was going on in your family, community, and the world at the time of your initial leadership?	How may these experiences have impacted your leadership style in the workplace?	How do you think these experiences may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?
Cultural Influences: What are some of your memories of cultural influences during your early and later leadership?	How may cultural influences have impacted your leadership style in the workplace?	How do you think these relationships may impact your workplace leadership practices?
Leader Development Programs/Education: What are some of the earliest leadership memories in the workforce?	How may have these educational memories impacted your leadership style in the workplace?	How do you think these educational memories may have impacted your leadership practices in the workplace?

Leadership Closing Question: Reflecting on your responses of your leadership experiences, cultural influences, and programs/education you just described, how would you summarize your leadership practices in the workforce?

Is there anything else you would like to share that may have impacted your leader development and leadership practices in the workforce?

Thank you for being so willing to participate and be interviewed today for this research study. I assure you that your responses will remain completely anonymous. Thank you again for your time and generous sharing of your life story.

(Recording ended)

Note. Adapted from Atkinson, R. (1998). *The life story interview*. SAGE.

Appendix D: Transcript Verification Email

Hello. Thank you again for taking time from your very busy schedules to participate in my study through Abilene Christian University. To ensure the accuracy of your transcript I have attached it here for your review. Please read and if you notice any inconsistencies or if there is anything else you remember or would like to add, please note the time stamp and indicate the additional remarks. I look forward to your response within one week.

Appendix E: Narrative Verification Email

Hello. Thank you again for taking time from your very busy schedules to participate in my study through Abilene Christian University. To ensure the accuracy of your narrative, I have attached it here for your review. Please read and if you notice any inconsistencies or if there is anything else you remember or would like to add and please indicate the additional remarks. I look forward to your response within one week.

Appendix F: From Codes to Themes (Sample)

Participant	First Cycle: Initial Codes	Second Cycle: Focused Codes	Subthemes	Themes
Daniel	My parents came from a family of migrant workers so they moved across Texas and the surrounding states following the crops. They did not graduate from high school, and they ended up settling down in west Texas.	Parent	Personal	Relationships
Daniel	So, the communication, the relationship I have with my grandparents during this time was just kind of a one-way communication.	Grandparents	Personal	Relationships
Daniel	I met some advisors, and it took off from there.	Advisors	Personal	Relationships
Daniel	I think along the way, I've been a part of different organizations and different programs that helped me, like the MacNair's Scholars was	Professional Organization	Professional	Relationships

	one of them, and my association with the TACHE program.			
Alex	So, I was raised by a single mother. I have an older sister and a younger brother, and we are around nine months apart from each other.	Parent	Personal	Relationships
Alex	One good part, a very good part about that is when I was nine, my mom put me in this Big Brothers, Big Sisters program. I met my "big brother."	Mentor	Personal	Relationships
Alex	I'll tell you, as I mentioned, I had great mentors and assistance. That guy just did so many good things for me.	Mentor	Professional	Relationships
Gilbert	So, my mom was a teacher. Before I could barely walk, I was going to the library because my mom would like to go to the library. So, in the	Mother	Personal	Relationships

	summers, we would go several times, most weekend, we would go. I spent a whole lot of hours in the library reading.			
Gilbert	I grew up around a whole lot of people. I mentioned my mom had 13. My dad had 11. I literally have about 100 first cousins.	Cousins	Personal	Relationships
Gilbert	In senior class, the professor would show up and he was super, super smart. He could have been anywhere in the world and could have made a ton of money as an engineer. He chose to be at my high school. The same thing with my other math professor in middle school. Those two are the smartest people that I have ever met in my entire life. They've done so many	Teacher	Personal	Relationship

	different things in their lives, and they could have made tons of money, and they were teaching us.			
Gilbert	I learned that early through those UIL friends.	Friends	Personal	Relationships
Daniel	Growing up in city in west Texas, there wasn't a whole lot of Latinos out there and there was a lot of discrimination. These microaggressions that I faced, that my family faced, catapulted me to want to try harder and to find something to have influence, to have authority. Not to abuse this authority and not to use it to discriminate but to help everyone.	Discrimination	Border Town and Other Regions of Texas	Regional Culture

Daniel	Visiting Mexico and seeing these different cultures really opened my eyes. And I think a lot of it had an impact.	Culture	Border Town or Other Regional Areas	Regional Culture
Daniel	I definitely have this focus of wanting to and continuing to raise culturally aware people. These little people that live in my house, I want them to be culturally aware and they are aware of our culture. Because in the real world, that's who they're going to interact with, unless they go into the rural country.	Culture	Border Town or Other Regional Areas	Regional Culture
Daniel	Being aware, just being sensitive and aware of the different ethnicities, backgrounds, cultural differences, and commonalities that we share. I think, high school was the	Cultural Awareness	Border Town or Other Regional Areas	Regional Culture

	awakening of that part of my life.			
Alex	We have a great bicultural, international community.	Bi-cultural	Border Town or Other Regional Areas	Regional Culture
Alex	I'm from a border town. All my life was very much cross cultural. We'd walk across the border like you're gonna go to the grocery store. We'd go right across; we'd go get our hair cut. You might buy some groceries; you might fill up the car because gas prices back then and we would do all that and then maybe eat a *torta* or some tacos or something.	Culture	Border Town or Other Regional Areas	Regional Culture
Alex	Experiencing racism in a real way was eye opening. So, I felt a lot of that the whole time I lived in the Dallas Fort	Racism	Border Town and Other Regions of Texas	Regional Culture

	Worth area and that was really just mind blowing because I wasn't used to that. I'm not saying we didn't have that in the border town I grew up in because that exists everywhere.			
Gilbert	I think growing up on the border, it's almost like you don't know any better. You really don't realize cultural influences until you basically leave.	Culture	Border Town or Other Regional Areas	Regional Culture
Gilbert	The diversity, different cultures is not really there.	No diversity	Border Town or Other Regional Areas	Regional Culture
Gilbert	The more we started competing, I really started interacting more with races outside of Hispanic. I didn't know a lot of white people. I didn't know a lot of black	Cultures and Race	Border Town or Other Regional Areas	Regional Culture

	people. I didn't know Asian people.			
Daniel	There were a lot of individuals who spoke Spanish in my family, so language was a big cultural influence. It was around middle school where I started to try to speak Spanish, it was this awareness that, like to communicate with my grandmother and my grandfather. I could understand what people are telling me, I just really didn't speak it. So, the communication, the relationship I have with my grandparents during this time was just kind of a one-way communication.	Spanish	Language	Regional Culture
Daniel	I always wondered why didn't my mom and dad	Spanish	Language	Regional Culture

	teach my Spanish. Why was it primarily English?			
Alex	To me, that was very normal, speaking Spanish and speaking English.	Spanish and English	Language	Regional Culture
Alex	I speak Spanish but when you're raised over here, you're the *pochito* (the person having difficulty speaking fluent Spanish) when you go over there.	Spanish	Language	Regional Culture
Gilbert	When they talked, they talked so professionally. Totally different from me. That was a different culture.	Talked differently	Language	Regional Culture
Daniel	Middle school was just kind of more of a formality for me. I think it would have been different had we had higher socioeconomic status, then maybe I could've gotten involved in sports in school	Limited financial resources	Education	Socioeconomics

	and been exposed to different things.			
Alex	I felt like I never fit in. I wasn't a good school. It wasn't a good experience. There was bullying and classism sort of stuff. So, you're the poor guy. I mean, I had on pair of jeans, a couple of shirts, holey shoes, that kind of stuff.	Poor	Education	Socioeconomics
Alex	So obviously, I stood out and a lot stood out in my head. I barely survived my middle school experience.	Barely survived	Education	Socioeconomics
Gilbert	When my dad wasn't working, money was more scarce.	Money	Education	Socioeconomics
Gilbert	My spring year and then the following fall, I took out a good amount of money to pay for St. Mary's because it's a private school. Then	Money	Education	Socioeconomics

	that's when I decided to transfer to UTSA.			
Daniel	Those are skills that help me develop leadership components that focus on the lenses of equity and inequality	Leadership Development	Leadership Practices	Workforce
Daniel	As I progressed as a leader, I saw a larger need. I was like there was a larger space for larger needs, larger impacts, you know. The same things I'm doing for the Latino communities, I can do for the African American communities.	Seeing the Larger Need	Leadership Practices	Workforce
Alex	That's why when we talk about going places or doing things, I encourage all my staff to get out and travel and experience these things and interact with people outside of here. Because it's really	Encouraging Staff	Leadership Practices	Workplace

	important to your development and you get to see that not everybody understands and it's good for us to know.			
Gilbert	Developing relationships, making connections, having conversations, putting yourself out there. Putting yourself in situation that are not comfortable.	Developing Relationships	Leadership Practices	Workforce
Gilbert	From a leadership perspective, it's about putting the right people in the right places to do their jobs. That's how our teams are gonna be successful. Working together, making things happen, I think all come from your background and culture.	Building Teams	Leadership Practices	Workforce

Appendix G: Leadership Development

Source	Theory	Design	Scope of the Study	Leadership Influences	Context	Participants
This Study (2022)	Leadership Development	Qualitative	Empirical	(a) Relationships (b) Regional Culture (c) Socioeconomics	Texas Community Colleges	Director, Associate Vice President, Vice President
Liu et al. (2021)	Leader Development	Literature Review	Theoretical	(a) Life span Experiences (b) Dynamic (c) Contextual	Life Span Development	Adolescence Through Middle Adulthood
Day (2011)	Leadership Development	Longitudinal Study	Empirical	(a) Leadership Ability (b) Trajectory	Leadership	Childhood Through Adulthood
Villalpando (2004)	Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Race Theory	Literature Review	Theoretical	(a) Cultural (b) Language (c) Ethnicity	Higher Education	College Students
Solorzano & Yosso (2002)	Critical Race Theory LatCrit	Literature Review	Framework	(a) Storytelling	Education Research	

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