# CLEARvoz Journal

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The CLEARvoz Journal is published by the Center for Leadership, Equity, and Research, CLEAR.

CLEAR aims to publish peer-reviewed manuscripts that add to the body of knowledge and focus on research and practical applications to practitioners of K-20 education and affiliated institutions. To achieve this goal, the journal seeks to promote research in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions through articles on advocacy, equity, mentoring, cultural proficiency, diversity, community engagement, and the academic, personal, and social experiences of students; professional issues focused on equity for faculty and staff; and the regulatory policies impacting such institutions.

The CLEARvoz Journal, a publication of the Center for Leadership, Equity, and Research (CLEAR), is focused on providing a multidisciplinary forum to provide a broad range of education professionals an avenue to share scholarly knowledge in the area of Equity and Leadership in K-20 education. The CLEARvoz Journal is the research branch of the Center for Leadership, Equity, and Research, a non-profit organization focused on eliminating the equity gap in educational settings.

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# CLEARvoz Journal

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# Foreword

## Providing a Voice for the Voiceless

Like all previous issues, we continue to address issues impacting social justice leadership, equity, and underrepresented group advocacy. The CLEARvoz Journal, a publication of the Center for Leadership, Equity, and Research (CLEAR), is focused on providing a multidisciplinary forum to provide a broad range of educators an avenue to share scholarly knowledge in TK-20 education. There are several underlying assumptions that drive our motives. Some of these include:

- Defying the status quo is a civic duty for every social justice leader who seeks to empower the disadvantaged and powerless.
- Combating the pathologies of silence requires clear and loud voices to give voice for the voiceless and power to powerless.
- Having a place at the table in any educational or social settings, albeit equal, is by no means sufficient let alone equitable.
- Color blindness and muteness are counterproductive deficit approaches that continue to widen cross-cultural gaps and conflicts.

Having this in mind, we send calls for papers twice a year to provide a forum beyond academic discourse on equity and social justice issues. Rather, we seek to engage the education community in ongoing actionable processes that ultimately transform schools. This combined issue of the current volume of the CLEARvoz Journal has evolved in response to a call for contributions by researchers, practitioners, advocates, and experts who are committed to equity and social justice in educational institutions. The collection of articles in this volume reflects a rich account for a wide range of audiences who are committed to engage in actionable reflections that would lead to a positive change in schools. Unless we continue to provide authentic equity voices and make genuine efforts to combat inequities and in justices, we will continue to see the gaps widen.

The contributors of this volume have spoken on behalf of those who continue to cope with the burden of their race, ethnicity, culture, language and socioeconomic status in institutions that have largely been designed to exclude them in the first place. At the same time, they call for action to attack problems affecting students who continue to fall between the cracks in the American educational institutions.

As the journal continues to provide a formidable forum for sharing voices and experiences about equity and social justice, we are grateful for every author and their contributions on various pressing issues in the field. The implications of their work have unlimited promising possibilities for everyone seriously committed to empowering all students in America's diverse schools.

Finally, we would like to encourage advocates for equity and social justice to consider the journal as a forum to share their work, voices, and insight so that we all can join forces to defy the status quo and combat the contemporary state of bigoty plaguing many educational and social institutions.

We would like to thank contributing authors as well as the Editorial Board and Editorial Review Board members for their time and support.

Ken Magdaleno
Executive Editor

Mahmoud Suleiman
Managing Editor and Editorial Director

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**CLEARvoz Journal**

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# Evaluating The Efficacy of Short-Cycle Mathematic Interventions in a High-Minority/High-Poverty Urban Public Middle School

**R. Aaron Wisman,** *California State University, Bakersfield*
**Marco A. Muñoz,** *Jefferson County Public Schools*
**P. Tyler Stevens**, *Jefferson County Public Schools*

**Abstract:** There is a national interest among educators about how to properly design, implement, and evaluate academic interventions, particularly as related to students placed at risk. This study provides school-based intervention teams with a rigorous methodological approach for monitoring and evaluating procedural fidelity as well as the effectiveness of short-cycle academic interventions; at the same time, the study describes some of the challenges faced when implementing a tiered academic intervention system. The study adds to the literature by offering empirical evidence for the efficacy of specific instructional strategies aligned to specific elementary and middle-school Common Core Mathematics Standards. A quasi-experimental research design with control groups and pre- and post-tests was used to draw causal inferences about the efficacy of intervention treatments. Two short-cycle mathematics interventions for distinct Common Core Mathematics Standards were found to positively impact student learning. Further implications for practice and future research are discussed.

**Keywords**: *At risk students, Common Core Mathematics Standards, middle school, quasi-experimental design, Response to Intervention (RtI)*

In the current high-stakes testing accountability environment, education practitioners, in particular those serving schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty and of minority status, are under tremendous pressure to close the achievement gap, especially in reading and mathematics (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] of 2015). The purpose of our study is to (a) investigate the efficacy of a short-cycle tiered mathematics intervention program implemented in a high-minority/high-poverty all-boys urban public middle school in a large Southeastern school district and (b) provide practitioners with a model for monitoring the efficacy and fidelity of any targeted academic intervention. The Response to Intervention (RtI), or Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) model has increased in prevalence across schools and school districts since its inception (Bramlett, Cates, Savina, & Laudinger, 2010; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Hill, King, Lemons, & Partanen, 2012; Klinger & Edwards, 2006; Zirkel & Thomas, 2010).

Riccomini and Witzel (2010) frame their first principle of RtI models as a belief that all students can learn when effective instruction and monitoring are present, providing an axiological stance to guide practitioners in the closure of the achievement gap. Yet many researchers have

critiqued the lack of a sufficient number of studies to guide practitioners in the implementation of interventions, even though practitioners and researchers agree on the paramount importance of intervention research (Strein, Cramer, & Lawser, 2003). For example, Bliss, Skinner, Hautau, and Carroll (2008) demonstrated a decrease in studies of experimental interventions with general education students between 2000 and 2005. Furthermore, Lembke, Hampton, & Beyers (2012) noted the prevalence of reading interventions over those in mathematics. In spite of these and other limitations in the research literature on academic interventions, Dennis (2015) explicitly asserted the promise of RtI as a systematic approach to promote mathematical competence for all students.

Despite the growing interest in intervention studies, many authors note a research-to-practice gap (Bliss, Skinner, Hautau, & Carroll, 2008; Bramlett et al., 2010; Burns, Klingbeil, Ysseldyke, & Petersen-Brown, 2012; Forman, Smallwood, & Nagle, 2005; Landrum & Tankersley, 2004). One reason for this gap, as Bliss et al. (2008) note, may be due to a lack of peer-reviewed "journal articles that directly evaluate, provide evidence for, or empirically validate interventions" (p. 483) and, furthermore, that "researchers often disagree on the appropriate and/or most appropriate process, procedures, and criterion for empirically validating interventions" (p. 484). Other studies note an increase in the prevalence of intervention research, yet make explicit the lack of an increase in the level of rigor of intervention studies (Burns et al., 2012). Another reason for the research-to-practice gap, according to Bramlett et al. (2010), may be due to time constraints preventing practitioners from finding peer-reviewed journal articles every time a problem arises or basic lack of access to peer-reviewed journal articles. As a result, many interventions in practice may not be grounded in research, but rely more heavily on personal experience (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford, & Hall, 2002; Burns & Ysseldyke, 2009).

The importance of rigorous intervention evaluation among education practitioners is of paramount importance when allocating precious resources to high-stakes interventions. The present researchers seek to provide a methodological framework for practitioners to ensure an appropriate level of methodological rigor in evaluating the interventions they choose to implement, whether they are research-based or not. We conceptualize methodological rigor using the criteria established by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC, 2008) with particular attention given to equating intervention and control groups, attrition in the sample, teacher-intervention confound and intervention contamination. The present study also adds to the literature by providing a set of intervention strategies targeting two specific Common Core Mathematics Standards across two grade levels and data upon which to base arguments of generalizability for future study contexts. The following research question is examined: What is the efficacy of a tiered mathematics intervention program implemented in a high-minority/high-poverty, all-boys, urban public middle school in the Southeastern U.S.? The following provides a review of some salient literature to frame the context and need for the present study, an articulation of the methods used to address the research question and results. Implications for practice and future research are discussed.

**Conceptualizing a Tiered Mathematics Program**

There is evidence that the literature on interventions is growing, especially in light of policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), ESSA, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004 (IDEA), and the establishment of the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) in 2002. However, it seems that researchers have not necessarily increased the level of rigor in research methodologies required by these policies (Burns et al., 2012). The body of literature on interventions is vast and includes many distinct lines of inquiry

with fundamental distinctions such as those between academic and behavioral interventions (Fletcher &Vaughn, 2009), the various tiers of intervention and their interactions (Dennis, 2015; Fuchs, Fuchs, Craddock, Hollenbeck, & Hamlett, 2008; Hill et al., 2012), differences in the ways students are identified for inclusion in higher tiers (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009), and the methods for evaluating interventions (Barnett et al., 2014; Bliss et al., 2008; Bramlett et al., 2010; Burns et al., 2012) in addition to the myriad intervention practices designed to target specific academic or behavioral outcomes. These hierarchically larger distinctions often contain their own distinct lines of inquiry. For example, among academic interventions, there seems to be more attention given to reading interventions over mathematics interventions. This disparity in the research is not surprising given that the study of academic interventions is rooted in reading (Lembke et al., 2012). There are also differences in the methodological approaches to evaluating interventions or the conceptualization of various intervention practices. For example, Burns et al. (2012) describe different research designs: randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental designs, and single-case designs. Bramlett et al. (2010) distinguish between specific intervention strategies, such as peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS), pre-teaching, computer assisted instruction, modeling with error correction, intervention intensity, etc.

**A Conceptual Framework for Response to Intervention**

Credit for the origin of RtI is often given to Deno's (1985) data-based program modification model, or to Bergan's (1977) and Bergan and Kratochwill's (1990) behavioral consultation model. While many variations in the RtI framework have been described (Hoover & Love, 2011), there are some commonalities across RtI models utilized in research and practice. Riccomini and Witzel (2010) describe six principles of RtI emerging from the literature on reading interventions, which are transferable to mathematics intervention models (Lembke, 2012): The belief that all students can learn through the implementation of effective instruction and monitoring of student progress, ensuring all students are periodically screened for increasingly-intensive and individualized tiered supports, using a system of evaluation to monitor the effects of interventions, selecting research-based instructional best practices, differentiating tiers of support structured and staffed by trained educators, and that ongoing program evaluation is implemented across a school or school district. A standard model for an RtI framework elucidates a common structure for targeting individual student needs systematically through a triage approach (Vaughn, Wanzek, Woodruff, & Linan-Thompson, 2006). All students are provided high-quality, research-based tier 1 instruction in the general education setting. Prior to and throughout tier 1 instruction, student progress is monitored and certain individuals are identified for more intensive supports based on evaluation data gleaned from universal screeners. Students identified for more intense and individualized supports are then provided tier 2 instruction, which is again monitored for efficacy; and on into higher tiers of increasing intensity (time, or dosage) and individualization (smaller groups).

**Advantages and Challenges to Implementing RtI in Practice and Research**

Children encounter many barriers to learning as they progress through their education, including student-input variables, such as socioeconomic background (Sirin, 2005) and process variables, such as the quality of instruction they receive in educational settings (Gersten et al., 2009). Other authors, such as Davis, Herzog, and Legters (2013) describe some typical practices and related challenges to implementing student interventions. Many policies have been enacted that explicitly support school districts in utilizing service delivery models that focus on a student's

response to intervention (e.g., American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, ESSA, IDEA, etc.) allowing for Title I funds or other funding pools, such as School Improvement Grants (SIG) to support interventions. The school in which the present study is conducted receives both Title I and SIG funding to support the present tiered intervention program with allocations for materials, interventionists, and state-funded school support staff to assist in implementing interventions.

The issue of funding undoubtedly weighs heavily on the minds of policy makers and practitioners, yet other barriers to implementing and monitoring RtI programs exist. Policies aimed at supporting RtI implementation also require the use of research-based practices to be implemented at all tiers of intervention (e.g., NCLB, ESSA, IDEA). Yet, research on interventions remains limited. According to Strein et al. (2003) an examination of several leading school psychology journals demonstrated that only 3.3% of articles pertained to primary and secondary interventions, while also reporting practitioners and researchers alike ranked intervention articles as highest in priority. Gresham, MacMillan, Beebe-Frankenberger, and Bocian (2000) found only 14% of articles published in leading journals on learning disabilities were intervention studies. In assessing the volume of research on reading and math interventions, Seethaler and Fuchs (2005) found less than 6% of studies in school psychology and special education journals evaluated reading and math interventions. Furthermore, Burns et al. (2012) point to the fact that many of these articles fail to meet the *meets evidence standards*, or even *meets standards with reservation* designations established by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC).

To compound the issue of a lack of sufficient methodological rigor in studies to guide specific intervention procedures, education practitioners report a lack of time or insufficient access to peer-reviewed studies and note the overwhelming task of evaluating such research (Bramlett et al., 2010). The issue of time to implement interventions is another challenge. This can be especially challenging in schools serving high concentrations of students in poverty and minority status where relatively large proportions of students are more likely to be at risk (Orfield, Ee, & Coughlan, 2017). While Gersten et al. (2009) suggest interventions should span 6 to 12 weeks, Codding et al. (2016) found that a dosage of 196 minutes of tiered instruction across four weeks produced significant and positive results. These barriers, and others not elucidated here, comprise the research-to-practice gap identified by many scholars and practitioners. One result of this gap is the need for practitioners to be able to evaluate a broad array of intervention protocols and procedures and to monitor systems of interventions across schools and school districts. The present study seeks to provide guidance for researchers and practitioners operating within the confines of educational contexts with limited fiscal resources, time, and access to peer-reviewed literature. Balancing the availability of resources, namely time (Castro-Villareal, Rodriguez, & Moore, 2014), with the need to maximize the impact of interventions (VanDerHeyden & Harvey, 2012) is of paramount concern in schools serving high concentrations of students at risk.

**Framework for Systems Implementation.** The AdvancED Standards *for* Quality Schools (2011) offer a lens for the application and integration of similar tiered intervention models in schools. AdvancED is a non-profit educational accreditation organization partnered with nearly 34,000 schools and school systems. AdvancED assesses schools and school districts with Standards *for* Quality for the purposes of accreditation and as part of diagnostic reviews – a school review system that uncovers root causes for underperformance and provides feedback to guide school improvement processes. Because AdvancED's Standards *for* Quality are known throughout a diverse range of schooling contexts, they provide a framework for understanding the implications of rigorously assessed tiered interventions and their relationship to equitable student learning opportunities as well as effective institutional improvement planning.

**Conceptualizing Procedural Fidelity.** We utilized methods to document procedural fidelity described by Barnett et al. (2014). The specific methods we utilized were: *self-report* (from the interventionist to one of the present researchers), *permanent product* (by gathering samples of student work) and *informal observations* (by visiting the intervention groups to observe that planned intervention activities were indeed being implemented with fidelity). Other methods described by Barnett et al. (2014) used to sample and monitor procedural fidelity include: direct observation, direct observation with a checklist, and the use of multiple methods. While direct observation is arguably the gold standard (Barnett et al., 2014), we selected multiple procedural fidelity sampling methods to monitor interventions as the present context show indications of high risk, as recommended by Barnett, Hawkins, and Lentz (2011) and Gresham (2009).

**Conceptualizing Methodological Rigor.** Ross et al. (2004) recommend two alternative methodological approaches with sufficient rigor when true experimental designs are not possible: multiple linear regression modeling and quasi-experimental designs. As recommended by Burns et al. (2012), we ensure methodological rigor for evaluating the efficacy of interventions through addressing the standards established by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC, 2008) for quasi-experimental designs (QEDs). These standards include: (a) equating intervention and control groups, or matching participants on pre-tests; (b) overall and (c) differential attrition in the sample, as extreme attrition may bias any inferences drawn; (d) teacher-intervention confound; and (e) intervention contamination.

## Critical Elements for Mathematics Interventions

Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, and McKnight (2006) identify two fundamentally distinct forms of intervention in an RtI framework. The first is the standard treatment protocol approach, or a set of predetermined procedures that are evidence-based and have been found to be effective. A second approach is referred to as the problem-solving method, previously elaborated by Tilly (2002). Tilly (2002) describes the problem-solving method as an approach that focuses on finding supports to meet the identified needs of students through assessment, implementing evidence-based practices with fidelity, and continually monitoring the progress of students throughout the intervention as a means to inform potential instructional changes. Lembke et al. (2012) provide suggestions for instructional approaches to be utilized in mathematics interventions; notably the National Center on RtI (rti4success.org), practice guides from the What Works Clearinghouse (wwc.ed.gov), among others. Instructional and assessment strategies selected for use in our study were taken from a variety of sources, including resources cited by Lembke et al. (2012) as well as from mathematics educators working outside of the school that frames the context of our study. The design of each intervention was inductive and based upon identified student academic needs.

## Methods

Our study is bound to a single high-minority/high-poverty urban public middle school in the Southeastern U.S., serving approximately 600 students in grades 6-8 during the 2015-2016 school year, all of which were male. Table 1 provides a summary of student demographics and other input variables as well as select school process variables. This school had never met adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals established by current state statutes, enacted in 2009, until the 2015-2016 school year which were largely attributed to increases in state-mandated mathematics test scores. The school was identified by the state education agency as a Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) school, or a school In Need of Improvement (INI). Under this designation, the school is eligible for and receives SIG funds to provide supplemental resources.

Table 1
*Student Demographic Information and Other School and District Process Variables, 2015-2016*

| | Intervention (5.NBT.3) | Control (5.NBT.3) | Intervention (7.RP.1) | Control (7.RP.1) | School | District Middle School |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of Students | 12 | 10 | 26 | 25 | 584 | 20,709 |
| *Student Demographics* | | | | | | |
| % Black | 58.3 | 60.0 | 46.1 | 56.0 | 41.8 | 37.4 |
| % White | 25.0 | 20.0 | 26.9 | 28.0 | 34.2 | 47.2 |
| % Hispanic | - | 20.0 | 19.2 | 8.0 | 15.9 | 8.7 |
| % Other | 10.0 | - | 7.7 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 6.7 |
| % Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Participants | 100.0 | 100.0 | 96.0 | 92.0 | 86.0 | 65.4 |
| % English Language Learners | - | 10.0 | 11.5 | 4.0 | 13.7 | 5.3 |
| *School Process* | | | | | | |
| % Teacher Attendance | | | | | 95.5 | 95.1 |
| % New Teachers | | | | | 14.3 | 8.3 |
| % Agree: Managing Student Conduct[a] | | | | | 57.6 | 77.8 |
| % Agree: Community Support[a] | | | | | 61.9 | 79.5 |

*Note*. All students in the sample were male, as the school in which the study was conducted serves only male students. Categorizations of Race/Ethnicity are reported as the percent of students whose parents/guardians identify the students as one of the following: Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or 2 or More Races. % Other = the percentage of students self-identifying as a race/ethnicity excluding Black, Hispanic, or White. School process variables are included to provide some context for the school in which the study occurred. % Teacher Attendance = the average percent of active teachers counted as present or on professional leave across the school year. % New Teachers = the percent of teachers who are new to the school or intern teachers. % Agree: Managing Student Conduct and Community Engagement and Support are taken from the most recent Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) survey results and are reported as measures of working conditions in the school. These process variables were selected because of their strong correlations to student achievement in the state in which the study occurred.

[a]Values reported are from the most recent school year for which data were available at the time of the study (2014-2015).

Through working with math teachers at this school, the need for implementing and monitoring multiple tiers of interventions to target identified student academic needs became apparent. Funds were available in the school's budget to hire a part-time academic interventionist. A retired middle school math teacher was identified and trained to conduct short-cycle tiered (pull-out) interventions in a resource room with students two days per week in the spring of 2016. An intervention design team consisting of the math interventionist and other school instructional staff worked cooperatively with grade-level math teams to identify essential standards for intervention, design pre- and post-tests, establish inclusion criteria based upon student pre-test scores, design bundled intervention lessons and formative assessment strategies, and evaluate data to gauge the

impact of the interventions based on a comparison of pre- and post-test scores between the students who received the intervention to a control group.

**The Sample**

Sampling procedures varied slightly from sixth to seventh grade because the sixth grade team elected to provide tiered interventions based on a fifth grade standard; a standard not explicitly taught in the sixth grade curriculum. Therefore, a single pre-test (universal screener) was given to all sixth grade students. The seventh grade team administered two pre-tests: a true pre-test and a second "pre-test" following the implementation of tier 1 instruction but prior to the implementation of the short-cycle interventions. The use of two pre-tests in the seventh grade allowed for the intervention efforts to focus on students for whom tier 1 instruction did not have a positive impact or had less of a positive impact, based on student test scores from the first pre-test to the second. Since the school in which the study was conducted served only male students, all of the students included in the sample were male.

**Grade 6 Sample and Assignment.** Since the sixth grade team elected to focus on a fifth grade standard (5.NBT.3) a single pre-test was given approximately two weeks prior to the start of the intervention. Students were identified for participation in the intervention program based on the level of need and the finite resources allotted to provide the interventions, selecting students at greatest risk (the lowest scores on the pre-test). Based on these criteria, N = 22 students were identified as needing intervention supports for all three learning objectives derived from the standard: n = 12 students were randomly assigned to the intervention group using an online random number generator (psychicscience.org/random.aspx) from an alphabetized list of students; the remainder (n = 10) were assigned to the control group. Students were placed into small (n = 4 to 6) intervention implementation groups based on their class schedules. Random assignment to small intervention implementation groups was not possible within the confines of the school day due to the insistence of school administrators and teachers that students not be pulled from their core content courses (English, math, science, or social studies). However, pre-test scores of students in the intervention treatment group and control group were compared to ensure baseline equivalence between the two groups. Descriptive statistics of student test scores are provided in Table 2 to demonstrate the level of matching that was achieved through the confines of student course schedules.

**Grade 7 Sample and Assignment.** Inclusion criteria to participate in the 7.RP.1 intervention were as follows:

1. Students who did not show growth from the tier 1 pre-test to the second pre-test, administered following tier 1 instruction.
2. Students who showed some growth toward meeting proficiency expectations, but had not yet met those expectations on the second pre-test, administered following tier 1 instruction.

A total of N = 51 students were identified who met the inclusion criteria for the seventh grade interventions. Students were first stratified based on the distinction identified in the inclusion criteria. Twenty-three students met the first inclusion criterion and 28 students met the second. The same online random number generator (psychicscience.org/random.aspx) was used to randomly select 13 students from an alphabetized list of students meeting the first criterion and another 13 students were selected who met the second criterion for placement in the intervention group (n = 26). The remaining n = 25 students were assigned to the control group and were not pulled for interventions but did take the post-test following the intervention with their peers assigned to the intervention group. The 26 students assigned to the intervention treatment were

placed into smaller intervention implementation groups, comprised of n = 4 to 6 students. As in the sixth grade sample, random assignment of students into smaller intervention implementation groups was not possible due to the confines of students' schedules. Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 2 for a comparison of pre-test scores for the intervention treatment and control groups.

**Instrumentation**

To measure the effect of interventions on student learning with respect to the identified standards, we created instruments using items released from prior state assessments. Intervention treatments and measures of mathematical competency are described below.

**Dependent Variable: Measures of Mathematical Competency**

Tests constructed by the intervention design team were used to measure students' competency with the identified mathematics standard. All tests consisted of ten selected response items pulled from state-released assessment items from prior state mathematics tests (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013). Test scores were reported as raw scores (i.e., the number of correct items). Proficiency expectations were made explicit prior to delivery of all assessments. Students failing to meet proficiency expectations on the pre-test were identified as possible participants for the tiered interventions. The pre-tests (which, in the case of the seventh grade group, was truly a post-tests of tier 1 instruction) served as universal screeners for identifying students needing interventions, as all students served in the general education math classroom of each grade level took the respective pre-test. The validity and reliability of the dependent variable is well-established since this study used state-released assessment items from prior state mathematics tests (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013).

**Independent Variable: Intervention Treatments**

Each intervention focused on a single standard and was conducted over the course of two weeks (implemented as four, one-hour intervention periods). Each grade-level math team identified an essential standard. The intervention team designed a series of four lessons using a bundle of instructional strategies in which models, manipulatives, and formative assessment practices were integrated in each intervention. Lessons were constructed based upon guidelines from Common Core (corestandards.org/Math) and WWC practice guides (wwc.ed.gov). These lesson plans were presented to the teachers on each grade-level math team such that critical feedback could be used to fine-tune the intervention plans prior to their implementation. The timing of these presentations was purposeful to avoid teacher-intervention confound and intervention contamination. What follows is a brief description of the standards and practices used in each intervention. While the intervention lessons were not entirely scripted, some parts of each lesson were. A sample lesson plan is provided in Figure 1.

| 7th grade – 7.RP.1 | Day 3 of 4 |
|---|---|
| Learning Target | → I can use equivalent ratios to solve problems. |
| Establishing Engagement/Connection to Prior Knowledge | (7 – 10 minutes)<br>Show a scale model of the Statue of Liberty.<br><br>Teacher says: "This is a scale model of the Statue of Liberty… its scale is 1:129." Probing questions: "What do you think that means?" "What does the mean about the size of the REAL Statue of Liberty?" "How might we determine the height of the REAL Statue of Liberty, given this model?"<br>(Materials: rulers, *Statue of Liberty* replica, calculators) |
| Deepening Understanding | (15 – 20 minutes)<br>Discussion of Models: Similarity of shapes… when shapes are similar, you can infer the measurements of another if you know one. Provide scaffolding through gradual release of examples.<br>(Guided notes: EquivalentRatiosofGeometricShapes.ppt, slides 1-5) |
| Applying Knowledge | (20 minutes)<br>Scale model stations activity.<br>(Materials: Scale models with prompts, 1 map with legend, rulers, calculators) |
| Assessment | (5 minutes)<br>EquivalentRatiosofGeometricShapes.ppt (slide 10) |

Figure 1. Sample daily lesson plan. Includes student-friendly learning target (objective). Systematic framing of the lesson can be seen in the progression by moving from the top toward the bottom beginning with Establishing Engagement through the culminating assessment of the lesson. Note the use of models and manipulatives throughout the lesson. Applying Knowledge provided the primary means through which error correction occurred through peer and teacher feedback.

**Sixth Grade: Numbers and Operations in Base 10.** The Common Core Mathematics Standard selected by the sixth grade math team for a targeted intervention was 5.NBT.3, "Read, write, and compare decimals to the thousandths" (Common Core, n.d., p. 35). While this standard is a fifth grade standard, the teachers of the sixth grade math team felt strongly about the need to structure tiered supports for this standard as they believed this standard inhibited many students from progressing toward meeting other standards in the sixth grade. A set of four, one-hour lessons were planned around three learning objectives: (a) students can translate numerical expressions between base-ten numerals, number names, and expanded form; (b) students can compare decimals to the thousandths based on meanings of the digits in each place; and (c) students can round numbers to the nearest place value. The intervention lasted four days spread out over two weeks (with students in each intervention group receiving two hours of instruction over two days each week). The post-test was administered the day immediately following the last day of the intervention. Each lesson was framed in a systematic fashion, used visual representations and other models of mathematical concepts, included purposeful and meaningful practice opportunities, and frequent progress monitoring and formative feedback (Bryant et al., 2011).

**Seventh Grade: Ratios and Proportions.** The Common Core Mathematics Standard selected by the seventh grade math team for a targeted intervention plan was 7.RP.1, "Compute unit rates associated with ratios of fractions, including ratios of lengths, areas and other quantities measured in like or different units" (Common Core, n.d., p. 48). The standard was collaboratively deconstructed by the intervention design team to ensure essential elements of this standard were represented in a learning progression. From this learning target progression, two learning objectives were selected to form the basis of the intervention: (a) the student can create equivalent

ratios and (b) the student can use equivalent ratios to solve problems. Two one-hour sessions were planned to provide intensive instruction around each of these learning objectives. Similar to the sixth grade intervention, the intervention lasted four days, spread out over two weeks with students in each intervention group receiving a total of four hours of instruction. The post-test was administered the day immediately following the last day of the intervention. Each lesson was framed in a systematic fashion, used visual representations and other models of mathematical concepts, included purposeful and meaningful practice opportunities, and frequent progress monitoring.

**Research Design and Procedures**

Each intervention was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design (QED) with control groups and pre-tests (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In one case, the case of the seventh grade students, two pre-tests were administered for purposes of identifying students. The two pre-tests were, in reality, a true pre-test (before) and a post-test for all students (after) tier 1 instruction in the general education classroom. These data help to isolate the impact of tier 1 and intervention treatments, reducing intervention confound (Koutsoftas, Harmon, & Gray, 2009) and allowed the intervention design team to use multiple baseline measures to identify students for possible inclusion in the intervention treatment or control groups through stratified random assignment. In our study, a post-test always refers to the test administered following the short-cycle targeted intervention, as the purpose of this study is to explicitly evaluate the efficacy of these interventions. In all cases, pre-tests were administered to all sixth and seventh grade students in attendance during the scheduled administration time. Students comprising the intervention treatment and control groups in attendance during the scheduled administration time were pulled out of class to take the post-test. Together, pre- and post-test scores for intervention treatment and control groups were used to test the hypothesis that the intervention treatment had a statistically significant and positive effect on student outcomes of a given mathematics standard.

**Procedural Fidelity in Implementation.** Several methods were used to document and ensure procedural fidelity of interventions, as suggested by Barnett et al. (2014) and Muñoz (2005). First, the interventionist participated in the intervention design process to ensure that she understood the instructional strategies and their purpose for their inclusion in each lesson. Second, the interventionist would self-report on the adherence to each day's lesson at the end of the day to the lead author. Noting Tilly's (2002) problem-solving intervention approach, some subtle changes were made in response to progress monitoring data and were documented by the interventionist on the lesson plan. These modifications were added to the lesson plan following a brief discussion on the justification of making each modification. Another method to monitor procedural fidelity was the collection of samples of student work completed in each of the small, intervention implementation groups. These products served a dual purpose, as they were also scored by the interventionist to monitor individual student progress and provide feedback to students about their learning. Finally, during each day that interventions occurred, the lead author would stop by for a brief informal observation (typically lasting about 5 minutes) to ensure the lesson activities planned were being implemented to fidelity. A plan of corrective action was in place to address any potential threat to procedural fidelity through verbal communication about the importance of adhering to the intervention plan as designed whenever necessary. No corrective action was needed throughout the duration of the interventions. However, some minor modifications were made to the lessons as, Tilly (2002) argues interventions must be responsive to student needs.

**Statistical Analysis.** GradeCam web-based software (gradecam.com) was used to gather student responses on all pre- and post-tests (which many teachers in the school commonly used to capture formative assessment data) and were later transferred to an electronic file using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (Version 22). Two members of the intervention design team independently checked the accuracy of this transfer of assessment data from GradeCam to the SPSS file. Data were always kept on a password protected computer and individual data files were encrypted with a password, providing an additional layer of data security. Individual student test scores were shared only with members of the intervention design teams. Following an analysis of descriptive statistics, a simple repeated measures design was employed for both interventions to compare differences between intervention treatment and control groups from the pre-test to the post-test. The *F* statistic was used to calculate the level of statistical significance. We assumed the nominal alpha criterion level, $\alpha = 0.05$. The partial eta-squared value was used to evaluate practical significance and the observed power was given attention in drawing causal inferences. The results for each intervention are reported below.

## Results

This section reports the results of each intervention included in the study. Descriptive statistics of student outcomes on pre- and post-tests are reported in addition to inferential statistics computed from the repeated measures procedure in SPSS. Attention is given to both statistical and practical significance and the observed power is reported as well.

### Grade 6: Number and Operations in Base 10

**Descriptive Statistics.** None of the students included in the intervention treatment group were absent from any of the intervention sessions. However, two students (both from the intervention treatment group) were unavailable to take the post-test following the intervention. These two students were removed from the data set. A total of N = 20 students were included in the analysis: n = 10 from the intervention treatment group and n = 10 from the control group. Descriptive statistics of student pre- and post-test scores are provided in Table 2.

Table 2
*Descriptive Statistics of Student Pre- and Post-Test Scores 5.NBT.3 (N = 20)*

| | Mean Raw Score (Standard Deviation) | |
|---|---|---|
| | Pre-Test | Post-Test |
| Intervention Treatment (n = 10) | 2.30 (1.06) | 4.90 (2.23) |
| Control (n = 10) | 2.50 (1.08) | 3.30 (1.89) |
| Total (N = 20) | 2.40 (1.05) | 4.10 (2.17) |

*Note.* The mean raw score is the average number of test items answered correctly on each test. Each test consisted of ten selected response items. Students not available for the post-test were excluded from the analysis.

**Inferential Statistics.** Box's test of equality of covariance matrices indicated that the assumption had been met ($p = 0.96$). A simple repeated measures analysis (Wilks' lambda) demonstrated a statistically significant difference between intervention and control groups from the pre-test to the post-test ($F[1, 18] = 18.58$, $p < 0.001$). The observed power was 0.58, indicating

that the sample size was sufficient to draw valid inferences (Stevens, 1996). Practical significance is also supported (partial eta-squared = 0.22). Figure 2 visualizes the estimated marginal means of student raw test scores on the pre- and post-tests between intervention treatment and control groups.

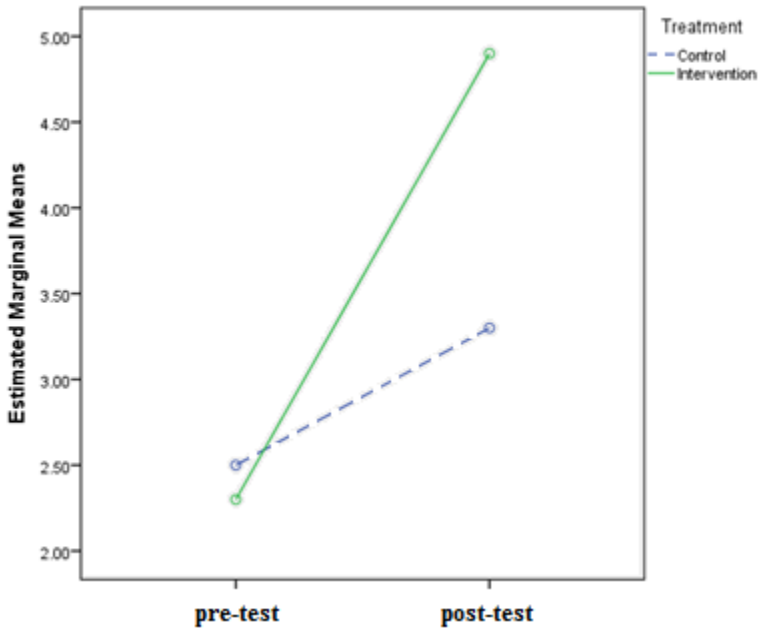


Figure 2. Estimated marginal means of student raw test scores for 5.NBT.3 intervention treatment and control groups on the pre-test and post-test.

**Grade 7: Ratios and Proportions**

**Descriptive Statistics.** Due to student absences and a limited time in which to capture post-test data, only N = 38 students (of the original 51) are included in the analysis of the seventh grade intervention, n = 17 students from the intervention treatment group and n = 21 students from the control group. Table 3 displays some descriptive statistics of pre- and post-test data. While both groups show growth from pre-test 1 to the post-test, the average growth of the intervention treatment group is larger than the average growth of the control group.

**Inferential Statistics.** An outlier ($z > 2.0$) was identified in the control group through preliminary exploration of the data. At the advice of Stevens (1996), the outlier was removed from the analysis leaving a sample size of n = 37. Box's test of equality of covariance matrices indicated that the assumption had been met ($p = 0.20$). A simple repeated measures analysis (Wilks' lambda) demonstrated a statistically significant difference between intervention and control groups from the pre-test to the post-test ($F[1, 35] = 5.67$, $p = 0.02$). The observed power was 0.64, indicating that the sample size was sufficient to draw valid inferences (Stevens, 1996). Practical significance was also supported (partial eta-squared = 0.14). Figure 3 visualizes the estimated marginal means of student raw test scores on the pre- and post-tests between intervention treatment and control groups.

Table 3
*Descriptive Statistics of Student Pre- and Post-Test Scores 7.RP.1 (N = 38)*

| | Mean Raw Score (Standard Deviation) | |
|---|---|---|
| | Pre-test | Post-test |
| Intervention Treatment (n = 17) | 3.18 (1.29) | 5.47 (2.45) |
| Control (n = 21) | 2.86 (1.79) | 3.62 (2.18) |
| Total (n = 38) | 3.00 (1.58) | 4.45 (2.45) |

*Note*. The mean raw score is the average number of test items answered correctly on each test. Each test consisted of ten selected response items. Students not available for the post-test or who were absent from intervention sessions were excluded from the analysis.

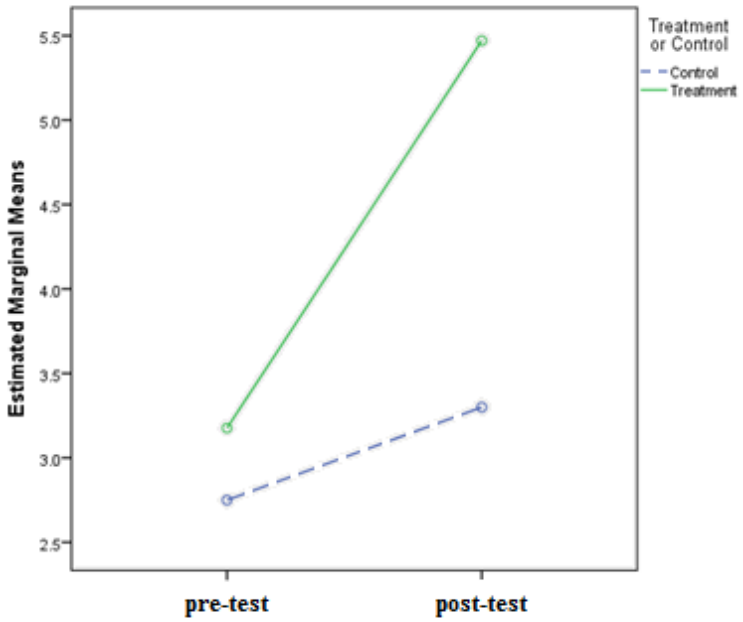


Figure 3. Estimated marginal means of student raw test scores for 7.RP.1 intervention treatment and control groups from pre-test to post-test.

**Discussion**

Our analysis of the efficacy of the short-cycle tiered mathematics interventions implemented in the present study indicated a significant (both statistically and practically) and positive impact on student learning as measured by pre- and post-tests, indicating the instructional and formative assessment techniques utilized herein may provide guidance to practitioners seeking to implement short-cycle, targeted interventions for the identified Common Core Mathematics Standards (5.NBT.3, 7.RP.1). These results support the inclusion of mathematical models and manipulatives with error correction (Lembke et al., 2012) and frequent formative assessment strategies to support student learning during small group interventions (Bryant et al., 2011; Wiliam, 2011). While some researchers have investigated the effect of dosage, frequency, or total

treatment duration on learning outcomes from tiered interventions (Codding et al., 2016; Denton et al., 2011; Yoder & Woynaroski, 2015), there is a paucity of research evaluating the efficacy of short-cycle mathematics interventions. The results of the present study support the findings of Codding et al. (2016) that short-cycle interventions can have a meaningful result on student learning. We hope that future research will explore the potential for short-cycle tiered interventions to meaningfully improve specific mathematical skillsets for students placed at risk.

It is important to consider the context of our study; practitioners and researchers are strongly encouraged to monitor the effectiveness of such interventions in other contexts. Indeed, we join Burns et al. (2012) in advocating for rigorous methodological approaches allowing for inferences of causality to be drawn in evaluating the efficacy of all interventions, behavioral and academic. We hope readers will use the results of rigorous methodological evaluation to inform the instructional approach of educators in all levels of tiered instruction and ensure all students receive the appropriate supports they need. We acknowledge the constraints of resources in many high-minority/high-poverty schools that can severely limit the amount of individualized tiered supports available to students (Orfield et al., 2017). Moreover, we acknowledge the limitations of educators to access peer-reviewed literature evaluating specific, tiered instructions when identifying opportunities to maximize the impact of limited resources (Bramlett et al., 2010). Nevertheless, when practitioners are forced to implement interventions rooted in tacit knowledge and personal experiences alone (Bramlett et al., 2002; Burns & Tsseldyke, 2009), we hope the present study provides a model to ensure rigorous evaluation.

**Study Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

Several limitations surface when considering the validity and reliability of the study. The ways students were identified for tiered supports varied across grade levels, as barriers to inclusion arose from forces both within and external to the school. These differences highlight the reality that practitioners must be dynamic in the design and implementation of numerous problem-based academic interventions. As we describe some of these nuanced limitations in the execution of the interventions, it is important to note two key components of the research design which cannot be removed from the design if arguments of causality are to be inferred: (a) the inclusion of at least one pre-test and (b) baseline equivalence of treatment and control groups (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell, 2002). These components are echoed as evidence standards for rigorous intervention evaluation established by the What Works Clearinghouse (2008).

One potential limitation was the lack of ability to randomly assign students in the intervention treatment group to small, intervention implementation groups. While we acknowledge the importance of random assignment of students into intervention implementation groups (Duhon, House, Hastings, Poncy, & Solomon, 2015; Yoder & Woynaroski, 2015), we also acknowledge temporal limitations on opportunities to provide tiered instructional services to students. The structure of the school's master schedule inhibited the ability to control for several potential covariates, such as time-of-day the treatment was administered, demographic variables such as race/ethnicity, and the possibility of exploring peer-effects between intervention implementation groups. Nonetheless, the research design does allow for a simple repeated measures analysis, thereby allowing for causal inferences to be drawn about the independent variable but does not allow for the inclusion of the identified covariates.

Lesson plans of seventh grade math teachers were reviewed to ensure intervention instruction was distinct from tier 1 instruction on the standards identified in the intervention program in an effort to minimize intervention confound (Koutsoftas, Harmon, & Gray, 2009). In

nearly all cases, direct and explicit instruction was given in tier 1 contexts and typically included a brief lecture followed by guided practice and then independent practice. While there are instances of direct and explicit instruction in the interventions, there was a focus on the use of mathematical visualizations of concepts and models; a characteristic absent from the lesson plans documenting tier 1 instruction of the associated standards.

As all students in the sample attend the same school and many have classes with one another in opposite groups (intervention and control), the diffusion of treatment remains a possibility (Creswell, 2014). Controlling for this threat to internal validity was not entirely possible in the context of our study, however the identities of members of the control group were never shared with the intervention group and the members of the control group were not notified of their participation until the day the post-test was administered. Compensatory threats (resentful demoralization and rivalry) were addressed by not informing students assigned to the control group about the intervention until after the experiment ended. A delayed treatment was administered to all members of each control group following the conclusion of the experiment, following the establishment of intervention efficacy through an analysis of the pre- and post-test scores. In addition, all students from both groups were given a reward for their participation in the post-tests (as recommended by Creswell, 2014).

Testing bias and instrumentation bias may have influenced student performance on the tests, which is why test items were modified and the answers for each item changed accordingly. In addition, several weeks typically passed between administering each test in a series. These measures were included in an attempt to strike a balance between testing and instrumentation bias (Creswell, 2014). Finally, while some may argue that the sample size of each intervention evaluated is small, special attention is given to the observed power. An explicit purpose of this study is to provide a methodological framework for evaluating short-cycle intervention programs within a single school, where sample size may be construed as a potential limitation in any school in which researchers and practitioners evaluate tiered interventions. We argue that a simple repeated measures analysis is robust with the sample size in our study, based upon our attention to the observed power in the statistical analysis. Practitioners and researchers alike should take caution in generalizing these results beyond contexts similar to those in our study.

**Implications for Practice in Schools**

AdvancED's Standards *for* Quality are adopted across a range of educational institutions and agencies. Standards *for* Quality exist for the assessment of schools, school systems, corporations, digital learning institutions, education service agencies, special purpose schools, and early learning schools (AdvancED, 2011). The school-based nature of the intervention under discussion in the current study dictates an analysis of the Standards *for* Quality for schools. There are five Standards *for* Quality for schools: Standard 1: Purpose and Direction; Standard 2: Governance and Leadership; Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning; Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems; Standard 5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement. Each standard contains a subset of indicators specifying each standard's conceptual aspects. Of particular importance to the current study are Standards *for* Quality three, Teaching and Assessing for Learning, and five, Using Results for Continuous Improvement. For the sake of concision in the current discussion, this analysis will not address individual indicators; rather, the focus of this discussion is directed at unifying concepts general to Standards *for* Quality three and five.

Standard *for* Quality three is paramount among the standards because of its focus on teaching, and more importantly, student learning. Key educational concepts present in Standard

*for* Quality three include: equitable student learning opportunities that ensure achievement of learning expectations, and instructional monitoring and the systematic adjustment of instructional practices (AdvancED, 2011). Ensuring that each student has equitable access to the achievement of rigorous learning expectations and that instructional systems and practices are adapted to better serve student learning needs requires a model for verifying the relationship between practice and learning. The research design and statistical procedures utilized herein to determine the efficacy of the math intervention provides a methodological framework (Shaddish et al., 2002; WWC, 2008) for adapting instructional practices to meet student learning needs embedded in evidence of learning (Tilly, 2002). Rigorously evaluating the impact of instruction on student learning throughout RtI's various tiers is necessary if educators are to fully monitor the learning environment and make informed systematic changes to the learning environment responsive to all student learning needs.

Standard *for* Quality five, Using Results for Continuous Improvement, includes concepts such as: comprehensive student assessment system, collecting and analyzing data from a range of sources, verifying improvement in student learning, and communicating comprehensive information about student learning and the conditions that support student learning (AdvancED, 2011). Similar to Standard *for* Quality three, the conceptual framework of standard five demands that quality schools and districts deploy a rigorous system to measure the impact of institutional decision making on student learning. Understanding the interrelationship between school improvement planning and student learning is essential to understanding the efficacy of educative practices, especially tiered intervention systems. Utilizing a rigorous methodological approach such as the one described in our study demonstrates implications for institutions to systematically inform the school improvement planning process with verifiable measures of the impact of decisions on student learning. Moreover, we acknowledge the importance of communicating comprehensive information not only about student learning impacted by tiered instructional supports, but about the conditions that support student learning. We join the calls from Barnett et al. (2014) and Barnett et al. (2011) to monitor the procedural fidelity of intervention implementation. We also echo the calls from Tilly (2002) to use measures of implementation fidelity to inform decisions about program adaptation to meet the needs of learners as well.

## Conclusion

This study provides an empirical test of two, short-cycle tiered mathematic interventions implemented in a high-minority/high-poverty all-boys urban public middle school in the Southeastern U.S. and makes explicit the need for continued research on specific academic intervention strategies designed to meet the needs of all students, including short-cycle interventions. At the time of this study, we could not find any peer-reviewed journal articles explicitly tied to these Common Core Mathematics Standards. If the research-to-practice gap is to be mitigated, then researchers must heed the call for empirical validation of specific academic intervention practices and must ensure the adherence of the WWC standards for a rigorous methodological approach. In addition, practitioners must evaluate the fidelity of implementation and the efficacy of tiered academic supports to ensure limited resources are efficiently managed and justified.

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# The Chicana/o/x Promise: *Testimonios* of Educational Empowerment through the Enactment of *La Facultad* among First-Generation College Students

**Gilberto Q. Conchas**, *School of Education, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA*
**Jess Lee**, *Department of Sociology, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA*
**Socorro Cambero**, *School of Education, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA*
**Nancy Acevedo-Gil**, *College of Education, California State University San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA*

**Abstract**
This article explores how Chicana/o/x[1] first-generation college students navigate through the educational realm that is built upon coloniality. Drawing on four *testimonios*, we show how multiplicative forms of marginalization to which Chicana/o/x college students are subject inform their academic trajectory and empowerment. The article focuses on four main sources of oppression—class (capitalism), familial immigrant documentation status (racist nativism), disability (ableism), and sexuality (heteronormativity)—and how Chicana/o/x students turn them into sources of self- and community- empowerment. Employing Chicana feminist perspectives and intersectional approaches further allows us to reveal sociopolitical and cultural processes that limits Chicana/o/x students' access to resources and opportunities and how these processes inform the ways in which these individuals proactively achieve and represent the *Chicana/o/x Promise* of hope, resistance, and success.

**Keywords**: *Chicana/o/x education, first-generation college students, testimonios, Chicana feminism*

> *Testimonio* – a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future (Pérez Huber, 2009, p. 644).

> Narrative of the 'dispossessed'—the criminal, the queer, a child, a woman who has experienced sexual violence, a community that has organized and talked back to a history of substandard educational opportunities, an African American, the indigenous, a migrant, or a narrator who is illiterate. It is a story of a subject who has experienced or witnessed great trauma, oppression, forced migration, or violence, or of a subject who has participated in a political movement for social justice (Cruz, 2012, p. 461).

Educational institutions are presumed to employ seemingly race-, gender-, and class- neutral socio-political discourses in their curricula in cultivating knowledge in today's youth (Conchas, 2006; Rios, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999). However, studies have shown that the contemporary American educational system is built upon coloniality (Acevedo-Gil, 2019; Garcia, 2018; Patel, 2015), and do not adequately capture or even accommodate histories and lived experiences of minoritized groups. Especially, Chicana/o/x students' histories, cultures, and language have been neglected and erased from the U.S. public educational system since the late 18th century (Alemán, 2013; González, 1999). Yet, coloniality and marginality do not affect members of the Chicana/o/x community in the same manner. Intersectionality scholars have previously argued for the multiplicative nature of social marginalization (Crenshaw, 1991; McCall 2005). More specifically, an intersectional analysis acknowledges the manner multiple forms of inequality, along various axis of the social world, affect individuals' experiences and perceptions of the world around them (Crenshaw, 1991).

Employing an intersectional approach, this article presents an overview of Chicana/o/x educational experiences and how their experiences vary due to different forms of marginality. Utilizing four *testimonios*—a first-person narrative of the sociopolitical inequality, oppression, and marginalities one experiences (Zimmerman, 2011)—we center the voices of Chicana/o/x first-generation college students in our analysis. An intersectional analysis allows us to examine the manner in which Chicana/o/x discuss their experiences with their various unique identities interacting simultaneously and manifest in their material realities (i.e., family dynamics, education, peers) as scholars navigating higher education. While Crenshaw (1991) presented intersectionality in relation to the intersection of race and gender for Black women, she noted that the "concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color" (p, 1244-1245). As such, we examine the way Chicana/o/x students describe the interactions of systems of marginalization in regards to their race, gender, disability, citizenship status and sexuality in shaping their educational opportunities and journeys. In doing so, we aim to reveal the ways in which these individuals enact *la facultad*, the ability to see beyond surface phenomena into the meaning of deeper realities (Anzaldúa, 1999), to persist when faced with adversities and proactively assert their belongingness in the educational system.

## Intersectional Overview of Chicana/o/x Educational Experience

Chicana/o/x youth make up the largest share of young U.S. Latinx population: about two-thirds of Latinx Millennials are of Mexican origin, and nearly 70% of U.S. Latinx younger than

18 years in age are Mexicans (Patten, 2016). With the median age of 26 among Mexican Americans (compared to 37 years of the U.S. population and 28 of all U.S. Latinx), many Chicana/o/x students are currently enrolled in primary, secondary, and post-secondary educational institutions. Despite their overrepresentation among U.S. Latinx, only about 10% of Chicanas/os/x ages 25 and older have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 14% among all U.S. Latinx and 30% of the entire U.S. population (Lopéz, 2015). Even though studies have found similar levels of educational aspirations among Chicana/o/x students as other ethnoracial minorities (Kao & Thompson, 2003), their unequal educational experiences compared to Asian and white students are well documented in the scholarship (Conchas, 2006; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera. 2005; Flores, 2011). This body of scholarship highlights the complexity of seemingly neutral social political discourses of education and reveals that various structural factors, as impacted by a myriad of identities and sites of oppressions, impact the social outcomes of Chicana/o/x students. Even though we acknowledge a multitude of factors, such as racism and capitalism, we will focus on sexism, nativism, heteronormativity, and ableism for the purpose of this article.

**Gendered Experiences.** Chicana feminists have written extensively on Latina students and posit they are holders and creators of knowledge because they engage in formal (academic) and informal knowledge (home/community) (Delgado Bernal, 2002, 2006). Delgado Bernal (2006) proposes, "pedagogies of the home" places cultural knowledge at the forefront to understand lessons from local communities and homes spaces. Chicana college students use pedagogical formations such as the communication practices and learning that occur in the home as a tool for survival and resistance to multiple axis of domination (Villenas, et al., 2006). Due to their ethnoracial minoritized status and gender, girls of color are often put in vocational tracks and/or directed towards feminized professions such as clerical positions, nursing, and teaching (Flores & Hondangeu-Sotelo, 2014). However, the teaching and learning that occurs in the home and communities allows Latinas to draw upon their cultures to resist sites of oppression based on gender, race, class and sexual orientation (Delgado Bernal, 2006). Indeed, we view Chicanas' *testimonios* as a source of knowledge in refining current understandings of how various identities intersect with gender and how they manifest in the material realities of Chicana first-generation college students.

In alignment with Chicana feminist agenda, which posits that strides toward social justice requires the inclusion of everyone, we believe that the inclusion of male Chicano students will provide a more comprehensive representation that informs the ways in which Chicano students achieve and represent the Chicana/o/x promise of hope, resistance, and school success. Historically, urban youth, specifically Black and Chicanx/Latinx male students have been depicted as deviant students prone to criminal behavior (Conchas and Vigil, 2012). Katz (1997), for instance, argues that schools contribute to the criminalization of Latinos. Men of color attending public schools are subject to policing by school personnel (Rios, 2011). Some scholars attribute behavioral problems as rooted in cultural gender socialization of Chicano/Latino boys through *machismo* (Baca Zinn, 1980), characterized by exaggerated male characteristics and rejection of any potentially feminine behaviors. Hurtado and Sinha (2016) unravel how Latino college students come to acquire a framework that exceeds *machismo* and how their intersectional identities – race, sexuality, ethnicity, and gender—impact the manner they formulate their views on inequality and feminism. That is, through the exposure of college (i.e. ethic study courses, women's studies courses,) and seeing women in their lives experience inequality, college men shift their conceptualizations of feminism that transcends toxic *machismo*. However, *machismo* is part of the

larger umbrella of patriarchy that the U.S. has used to marginalize women; thus, Chicano/Latino students have overlapping expectations of *machismo* and patriarchy.

**Family and Student Citizenship Status.** Numerous studies have found that undocumented status among Chicana/o/x parents can lead to their children's discursive ostracization in American society as "anchor babies." Chavez (2017) argues that the labeling of "anchor babies" entail that US-born children of undocumented parents, who are still birthright citizens, are not "real" citizens, but part of an alleged conspiracy to take advantage of the United States. This framing not only leads U.S.-born citizens to become targets of anti-immigrant discourses and policies, but also constructs a binary of deserving and undeserving citizens (Chavez, 2017). Additionally, it has adverse psychological effects on U.S.-born Chicana/o/x youth (Chavez, 2017) and affects how mixed-status families (families with both documented and undocumented members) perceive inequalities and opportunities for their children and navigate through the larger society (Mangual Figeuroa, 2012).

Furthermore, students' own documentation status influences their educational and career trajectories due to blocked opportunities for social mobility (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011; Enriquez, 2011). There are governmental programs and policies that address document status-related socio-legal barriers, adversities, and stress for undocumented youth who immigrated to the U.S. as young children. For example, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is an immigration policy that allows undocumented individuals who are brought to the United States as children to obtain a work permit and two-year period of deferred action from deportation, as long as they do not have any felonies or serious misdemeanors on their records (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). The California DREAM Act allows undocumented children brought into the United States under the age of 16 to be eligible for in-state tuition and student financial aid benefits (California Student Aid Commission) However, these programs do not provide paths to citizenship, causing eventual blocked mobility for many undocumented individuals (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011).

**Sexual Identity Status.** Sexual minority status similarly leads Chicana/o/x students to experience social and educational marginalization. In general, heterosexual gender norms are policed and reinforced in school settings (Blackburn, 2007; Pascoe, 2007), and queer students often encounter hostile school and social environments (Khayatt, 1995). At home, the enactment of non-heterosexual identity or behaviors is often policed (Acosta, 2008) and ethnoracially specific cultural norms and socialization regarding gender, sexuality, and family often hinders Latinx sexual minorities from disclosing their sexual identity and/or orientation (Pastrana, 2015). Even though ethnoracial minority student organization provide queer-friendly environments (Revilla 2010) and the need to acknowledge of queer students of color's cultural capital has been identified as important (Pennell, 2016), such support and resources are not available to all queer students of color. Queer students face specific experiences that are impacted by their sexuality, which can impact their experiences in educational spaces and social outcomes.

**(Dis)ability Status Identity.** Likewise, disabled students of color have unequal access to quality education that facilitates their academic success. Historically, African American and Latinx children were often "dumped" into special education classrooms, referred to as mental retardation programs, due to issues related to Spanish language dominance and lower IQ scores, both of which were due to racist exams manipulating familial socioeconomic and immigrant status (Mercer, 1973; Prasse & Reschly, 1986). Artiles and colleagues (2002) identify several social forces driving the placement of Students of Color in special education courses such as poverty, structural factors, instructional and assessment issues, and the cultural discontinuity between teachers. More

recently, Dávila (2015) found that disabled Latinx students experience disability-specific microaggressions of low expectations, disregard, and bullying that leaves students disengaged and/or resistant to academic services. In this sense, disability has been another way in which coloniality was reproduced and reinforced in the educational domain.

Although Chicana/o/x students face socioeconomic, political, and discursive obstacles in their educational experiences, some still successfully obtain a Bachelor's degree and achieve upward social mobility. Scholars have identified immigrant optimism, trustful mentors and role models, and familial, institutional, and community support and engagement as the driving factors behind Chicanx/Latinx students' eventual success (Conchas, 2001; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Flores, 2011). We build on the work of scholars who examine the experiences of Chicana/o/x-Latina/o/x students by using an Anzaldúan lens (Acevedo-Gil, 2017; Chang, 2013; Muñoz, 2018) to bring clarity about how Chicana/o/x students themselves make sense of their experiences. We contribute to the literature by centering our analyses on the *testimonios* of Chicana/o/x students to examine how they respond to and subvert systems of coloniality and oppression in the U.S. educational system to achieve success.

## Chicana/o/x Empowerment through the Enactment of *La Facultad*

Chicana/o/x youth occupy a uniquely and multiplicatively marginalized position in the larger society. Building on the work of Anzaldúa, Chang (2014) explained that:

> *atravesados/as*, in its Spanish meaning, refers to people who are irreverently bold, crossing the lines of social normativity, making others feel uncomfortable, even slighted. However, this term also possesses an element of unapologetic courageousness, referring to a person who dares to live outside normative parameters and to be different (p. 27).

Informed by Chang (2014) and Acevedo-Gil (2019), we conceptualize Chicana/o/x students as *atravesados*—people who embody identities (i.e., language, race, disability, sexuality, documentation status) that are meant to be silent but dare to be bold, resist, and occupy space as they confront and navigate colonial U.S. institutions. We, further, agree that American educational systems, in particular, label *atravesados* as deviant transgressors who do not deserve nor belong in such spaces of privilege and knowledge production (Acevedo-Gil, 2019; Chang, 2014). As *atravesados*, Chicana/o/x students have the possibility of enacting *la facultad* to subvert cultural discourses of the existing colonial systems and persist. *La facultad* refers to the ability for individuals to see structures below the surface, with their sixth sense of awareness, to confront "anything that tears the fabric of our everyday mode of consciousness" and develop increased awareness (Anzaldúa 1999, p. 39). Chicana feminist Anzaldúa (1999) further argues that *la facultad* is most likely to be activated and used by individuals marginalized in the society as a survival tactic, because marginalized individuals are "forced to develop this faculty so that we'll know when the next person is going to slap us or lock us away" (p. 39). Thus, the enactment of *la facultad* is a response to larger societal inequalities labeling Chicana/o/x individuals as *atravesados*.

More importantly, Chicanas/os/x' enactment of *la facultad* shows that marginality does not necessarily undermine or erase individual agency. Rather, agency becomes even more important for multiply marginalized subjects as it allow individuals to reject (colonial) subjugation and assert one's personhood as legitimate and belonging in the larger society. Especially in the educational realm, the enactment of *la facultad* becomes even more critical as Chicana/o/x students anticipate post-secondary obstacles related to their multiplicative marginalities (Acevedo-Gil, 2017; Muñoz, 2018). *La facultad* allows Chicana/o/x students to navigate coloniality by turning adversities into

"positive aspects, into skills, into learning how to cope with stress and oppression" (Keating, 2009, p. 80) and produce knowledge that is rooted in their lived experiences (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

The (overused) term of success is used to represent the abilities of *nepantleras* to use *la facultad* as they navigate conflicting spaces in pursuit of higher education with the end-goal of building bridges that the next generation can use. The interdisciplinary frameworks serve to provide a road map toward fostering institutional opportunities and academic success for Chicana/o/x college students. Chicana/o/x students find empowerment through their lived experience, which is represented by the concept of *nepantleras* (Anzaldúa, 2002). *Nepantleras* straddle and navigate through various social worlds and marginalization, thus they have the ability to assists others with similar experiences of marginalization to also see beyond immediate surface realities. Hence, it is through the enactment of *la facultad* that knowledge and sources of empowerment emerge from students' lived experiences and become *nepantleras.*

In this article, we highlight the ways in which four Chicana/o/x first-generation college students enact *la facultad* to reject the colonial *atravesado* designation and become *nepantleros* who not only propel their own success, but also become leaders who represent and instill the Chicana/o/x promise of hope, resistance, and success in the educational borderlands. In so doing, we focus on four main sources of oppression—socioeconomic disadvantages (capitalism), familial immigrant documentations status (racist nativism), disability (ableism), and sexuality (heteronormativity)—and how Chicana/o/x individuals turn them into sources of self- and community- empowerment by enacting *la facultad*.

## *Testimonio* as Method

*Testimonios* have accumulated attention in education research, as it can be a powerful tool to reveal how oppression operates in the lives of Chicanx/Latinx students (Delgado Bernal, Alemán, & Garavito, 2009; Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). T*estimonio* is a unique form of knowledge "[with] voice[s] and perspective[s] [that] has been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalize[d]" (Delgado, 1989, pg. 2412), and have often been neglected in order to align with dominant tropes of what counts as knowledge. *Testimonios* have been employed as a methodological tool for disrupting "apartheid of knowledge," challenging distinctions between what is or what is not considered legitimate knowledge (Pérez Huber, 2009). Further, this approach responds to the call for methodologies that emerge from the lives of Latinx people because *testimonios* consider how various identities shape identity (Pérez Huber, 2009). Because these four Chicana/o/x students have first-hand experience with oppression, as influenced by their multiple identities, *testimonio* is an appropriate methodology to address questions that might otherwise overlook how various identities manifest in the experiences of first-generation Chicana/o/x college students. *Testimonios* are also appropriate for looking at complex intersectional issues that provide examples of the intersections of racism of multiple oppressions that go beyond class (Pérez Huber, 2010). Lastly, *testimonios* are a distinct qualitative method with intentions of a call for action through social justice (Reyes & Rodríguez, 2012). The four Chicana/o/x students in this article provide compelling statements geared towards social justice, describing their *sueños* [dreams] of utilizing their experiential knowledge to give back to younger scholars of color that hail from low-income neighborhoods. This article embraces this research methodology and engenders new conceptualizations of people and communities coming together to plan and enact acts of resistance to forces that perpetuate inequality.

This study is derived from a larger comparative case study that ascertains the factors that 226 White (43), Chinese (40), Korean (41), Vietnamese (48), and Mexican American (54) first-generation college students identify as contributing to inequality and opportunity in the U.S.—during 2014-2016 at a selective public research-intensive university in southern California. Based on these findings, the research team contacted a sub-sample of the 226 students to conduct more in-depth life *testimonios* to uncover the how and why of their perceptions and experiences. This was especially important to capture for many research reasons, but most importantly because the first set of interviews were conducted before the election of Donald J. Trump.

A total of 68 *testimonios* were completed among the five original groups under study during 2016-2018 and 18 *testimonios* were specifically conducted with Chicana/o/x young adults, 8 Chicanos and 10 Chicanas. For purposes of this article, the voices of four Chicana/o/x first-generation college students, based on the four dominant patterns among the larger sample of 18, are presented in this article. The *testimonio* interview process was exploratory and asked broad enough questions to allow the freedom for student's unique perspectives growing up and how their experiences in and out-of-school relate to their sense of social mobility in their lives—the findings, therefore, emerged organically between the researchers and the college students.

We utilize *testimonios* as a methodological approach to unravel how the unique identities of four scholars shape their lived experiences as first-generation college students navigating higher education. The *testimonios* in this article, therefore, reflect verbal journals of young adults who speak about oppression (capitalism, racism, patriarchy, nativism, heteronormativity, and ableism) and opportunity (healing, empowerment, educational engagement, and agency for social justice) in communities, schools, and society. As such, we are able to understand how Chicana/o/x students respond to, heal, and draw upon their oppressive experience to mobilize academic and personal achievement. In alignment with feminist methodology agenda, their voices are the key sources of knowledge guiding this article. Their *testimonios* rebuke deficit narratives of Chicanx/Latinx students as *atrevisados* in the face of myriad obstacles, all the while becoming *nepantleros* that assert their belongingness in the unequal and colonial educational realm.

## Findings as the Knowledge Emerging from *Testimonios*

### *Rosa's [2] DACA Experiences: A Proud, Unafraid, and Undocumented Immigrant Combating Racist Nativism*

Rosa is a 20-year-old first-generation college student who migrated from Mexico with her family at a young age. Rosa's father decided to cross the border without proper documentation in 1997, when Rosa was only a few months old. Rosa was able to obtain DACA—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival program that offers temporary relief from deportation to undocumented immigrant youth—status in 2012 and this eased her apprehensions. Further, her DACA status allowed her to pursue higher education without worrying about deportation or paying out-of-state tuition. The additional bureaucratic steps required for DACA students like Rosa made her feel as if the higher education system was not designed for immigrants like herself; that *atravesadas* like Rosa were not welcome:

> When I was filling out my college applications I was also shocked because I would have to pay a much higher tuition compared to an American citizen. I would almost have to pay double if it weren't for an extra form called AB 540 that I had to fill out, which would grant me California in state tuition.

Rosa's high school did not provide the needed institutional support and college guidance to navigate through the complicated college application processes as a DACA and AB 540 student,

but persisted to overcome these obstacles. After enrolling in a prestigious public four-year university, Rosa was pleasantly surprised by the diverse and welcoming environment of college. Rosa's parents put tremendous emphasis on the value of education and Rosa herself was aware of the opportunities she could obtain through education. Rosa persisted in college, driven by her parents' love, support, and sacrifices that led her to college:

> Something that my dad says to me every chance he gets is to work hard, so I don't end up like them, working in the blazing 120-degree heat in the dessert sun doing something that I am not passionate about… In a way, I value education much more because my parents help me feel like it's not just a step in my life that I need to put all of my efforts into.

Parental sacrifices, support, and love led to Rosa's enactment of *la facultad*. Experiences of illegality led Rosa to see how the systems of coloniality across various institutional domains—from immigration policies to educational opportunity structures—make Mexican immigrants like herself feel like criminals, who do not belong in the United States or deserve equal access to resources and opportunities. The same experiences of marginality also allow her to see clearly that, despite everything, she is still more privileged than her parents who did not have access to a college degree. This realization further drives Rosa to succeed in the United States, against all odds, to benefit not only her parents, but others, too.

Rosa saw it as her responsibility to help her parents and other undocumented immigrants who were going through similar experiences as her family did:

> I experienced a lot of hardships when applying to scholarships with DACA; I want to help those who are covered by it by finding a scholarship which would help them pay for school, books, food, and a place to live because it is hard to obtain the money to cover all of these costs. This has always been one of my major goals because I did not get any help or scholarships; I know how discouraging it can be to see those who didn't take advantage of their education receive financial aid and those who do left to fend for themselves.

In this sense, her enactment of *la facultad* not only allowed Rosa to achieve academic success that would further assist her and her family's upward social mobility, but also led Rosa to become a *nepantlera*, who navigates through unequal systems of coloniality and fosters bridges for others. More specifically, Rosa's *atravesada* experiences propel not only her own enactment of *la facultad*, but also allow her to see beyond each individual fragmented realities of multiple marginalities and coloniality. She understands that economic precariousness, immigrant documentation status, and the unequal opportunity structure interact simultaneously and hinder chances at success. As a *nepantlera*, she is inspired to help others see how various sites of oppression interact and become a bridge that connects undocumented and marginalized individuals to resources and opportunities in the larger society.

***Esteban's Fourth Generation Chicano Story: Lessons Learned from (Dis)ability in Combating Ableism***

Esteban is a fourth generation Chicano, whose great-grandparents immigrated from Mexico to California over a hundred years ago. Even though such latter generational status makes him an American indubitably, his journey to higher education still largely mirrors that of other poor, first- and second-generation Chicanos, who have to persist against all odds. More specifically, Esteban experienced extreme hardships and uncertainty due to poverty and (dis)ability. Right after Esteban was born, he was diagnosed with a rare neurological disease called Lyme Disease that attacks his nervous system. With Lyme came many involuntary jerking of muscles, pain, learning disabilities, and other complications.

He was an exceptionally gifted student, testing at twelfth grade level when he was only in sixth grade, and was able to take advantage of programs like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Individualized Education Program (IEP). Despite such academic success, Esteban's transition into adulthood was not as easy as he had anticipated. On the contrary, this period of his life is marked by various *atravesado* experiences. First, his Social Security Income/Disability (SSI) support from the government checks stopped coming without warning when he turned 18, because of the bureaucratic loophole in the system assumes that children's disabilities suddenly "disappear" upon turning 18:

> We had to fight my case which took a long time as they wanted doctors' notes, visit reports, scans, images, and much more from the time "I became disabled," which was right after birth. I was required to fax every single page to multiple different departments. I was expected to pay for every paper faxed while I had no source of income even though it was over 10,000 pages. It took a total of two years to reach the final decision.

Then came economic instability, followed by more health problems. Esteban experiences how his socio-economic status and (dis)ability interact and created multiple forms of oppression. With the additional income unavailable, Esteban got a part-time as a sales associate at Walmart, but his medical conditions soon began to worsen due to the physically demanding nature of work. Between his job and additional visits to the doctor's office, Esteban's identity as a student was also impacted because his academic performance at the community college suffered, too. Fortunately, he had a network of social support and capital available through his mother and a few understanding and helpful institutional gatekeepers, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and community college deans. Central to his determination was his mother's unwavering faith in his potential as a student and in education as a way of achieving upward mobility. Esteban's single mother was engaged in and supportive of her children's educational development and pursuits from when her children were very young:

> She ensured we were on track for a good academic career. My mother is an amazing person for successfully raising five children while being a low-income, uneducated, divorced parent who did not want us to struggle like she did…My mother wanted us to get out of the low-income apartments and live in our own home without being bound by strict rules or having to 'watch our backs' 24/7 due to the bad neighborhood.

The personal and institutional support Esteban was able to access through his mother, his participation in the IDEA and IEP, and various medical and educational agents he encountered throughout his life eventually led to his enactment of *la facultad*. Despite continuously worsening health conditions, Esteban decided to put medical procedures aside to focus on academic career and prospered with his mother's and institutional gatekeeper's support.

When he doubted himself, he utilized various forms of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) such as his social capital to learn how to maneuver various institutions, and aspirational capital from those around him who exhibited exceptional work ethnics, preparation and determination for a better future. He did not see his (dis)ability as limiting, but as his identity—the one that is not necessarily restricting and oppressed, but characterized by resilience, resistance, and persistence. These experiences further fueled his aspiration to become a social worker who could support and guide the next generation of marginalized youth:

> I want to be a youth social worker who positively influences children who are placed at risk. I know what opportunity looks like and I want to make sure every child can see it too. I want to show the next generation there is a chance to grow no matter where you come

> from. The opportunity to grow from a low-class environment is always there, students just need the scaffold along the way.

This ability to see the overlapping, but unequal worlds of the larger society and marginalized communities show Esteban's projected transformation into a *nepantlero.* Esteban understands that resources that marginalized people are entitled to do not necessarily become easily available from first hand experiences. As a *nepantlero*, he would be the bridge these disadvantaged students need to see beyond limitations and enact their own *la facultad* to resist oppression and eventually, achieve positive educational experiences and outcomes to succeed in larger society.

***Christina's Queer Chicana Identity: Community As A Form of Resistance in Combating Heteronormativity***

Christina is a third generation Chicana and first-generation college student whose parents are of Mexican heritage, but born in the United States. She self-identifies as a "beautiful, fat, queer, Mexican woman." Even though her parents, children of Mexican immigrants, experienced relative success that is typical for middle-class families in the United States, Christina grew up under less privileged circumstances. As Christina explained, her parents were young adults in the U.S.—her father was a high school graduate and her mother a high school dropout. While Christina's family enjoyed a comfortable life for a while with her paternal grandparents' financial assistance, this all changed when the 2009 recession began; Christina's dad lost his job and her mother's health started deteriorating quickly:

> I was only seven, but suddenly I was responsible for even more. I had to make sure I got myself and my brother to school on time. I had to make him feel better about what was going on. I had to be an adult. When you have a sick mom, you're usually prepared for these types of things. You tell your teachers in advance, you make sure you'll be able to get extra time for the homework, but with everything going on at once, it all felt impossible.

Despite their native-born status, Christina's family was effectively ostracized from any institutional support regarding her family members' health and wellbeing due to their low socioeconomic status.

In such environment, school was an outlet, a solace of some sort for Christina that allowed her to ignore and forget about her unstable home life. Concerns about her family's financial stability and economic livelihood kept worrying young Christina, even though she was passionate about learning. Cristina poignantly notes that she was subject to bullying because her various identities, including her sexuality, deviated from social norms. Consequently, Christina's only outlet, school, became a place of suffering instead of an escape:

> As a fat queer Chicana, I was subjected to a lot of bullying as a kid, but going to high school made it worse. Even the thought of walking to school made me anxious. Every night before I went to bed, I made a very specific plan about my route to school. I took the longer path, trying to avoid intersections so that I was visible to less people. The thought of going to school exacerbated my anxiety, gave me panic attacks and made me sick all the time. This wasn't even about the demand I faced for work; this was solely based on the action of going to school.

Despite feeling out-of-place for being different, Christina was able to persist with the help of her parents and other adult figures. Especially, Christina's mother was determined to push her daughter's educational pursuit further. Additionally, understanding teachers who were aware of Christina's hectic home situation not only made sure she performs well academically, but also provided her with food and emotional support as needed. With the support and encouragement from her parents and teachers, Christina was able to access valuable social and cultural capital.

One of the most crucial moments of accruing such capital to assist her academic success came just in time, right before she began applying for colleges. Christina recalls:

> I was also given the opportunity to participate in UC's Early Academic Outreach Program. This program was designed for first-generation, low-income students who wanted to go to college. When they contacted me and told me to apply, I was so excited. I came home from school and immediately told my mom. They took us to visit colleges, let us stay on the UC campus, gave us advice, and helped us with our applications. I was able to meet UC's admissions officers to go over my personal statements and get feedback. This was so valuable to me, and their willingness to help made me feel like college was actually attainable.

Even in college, despite the continuing financial struggles and feeling isolated, Christina was able to persist and be successful due to the support she had from her parents and the communities in which she grew up. These experiences led to her enactment of *la facultad:* rather than passively accepting her fate as a minoritized student with limited resources, Christina actively sought out role models.

She explained that her parental sacrifices, the social and cultural capital she accessed with the help of her teachers, and community members gave her hope and the drive to build a better future for herself as well as others:

> I know that there are very real barriers in place to prevent the students in my community from making these changes, but I want to help bring an understanding so they can fight too. I am constantly in limbo between these choices. They're all interconnected, but they all are very different paths. While I know that hope alone will not fix anything, it is something that is driving me work to make things better. I believe that eventually I can do for someone what so many of my teachers and other caring adults did for me…Despite poverty, I came from a strong and loving family and community. The emergence of the community as a form of resistance reminded me of my community's work to ensure that despite my high school's lack of funding, we still had opportunities. Parents and teachers came together to make sure that students had food before AP testing, that they didn't need to buy calculators, and that students weren't taken out of class for insignificant interruptions—importance of the community in making sure a school district was responsible for implementing a model of restorative justice in schools.

As Christina accurately and succinctly put it, her existence and the existence of her community was a form of resistance for *astravasadas* like her. Social and cultural capital and community resources led her to such conclusion and fueled her enactment of *la facultad*, to subvert her marginality to empower not only herself, but other similarly marginalized people. Christina's "pay-it-forward" mentality, where she is prepared and willing to extend the help and support she has benefited from to other members of her community, represents her personal growth as a *nepantlera,* ultimately contributing to the emergence of the community as a form of resistance. As an educator and a *nepantlera,* Christina will be the agent of change, resistance, and hope, who is aware of and sees beyond the overlapping forms of oppression and coloniality and bring resources and opportunities to others.

***Miguel's Faith Story: Not Defined by Mistakes of the Past in Combating Capitalism***

Miguel is a first-generation college student at the University of California, majoring in history and sociology. As he explained, he dresses well, has good posture, and has a decent vocabulary, because that is what is expected of a successful college student,. Miguel hails from a low-income community and is the son of undocumented immigrant parents from Mexico. His

educational journey has been marked by his status as an *atravesado*, where important institutional actors, such as teachers, expressed disinterest, low expectations, and assumed deviance in their students. In his testimonio, he reflected on his middle school experiences:

> Although there where instructors that where helpful and had high hopes for students; the majority did not see to go beyond their comfort zones to inspire and express that one can be more than they are told. They would simply teach class, tell students that they needed to ask one another if they were confused, which no one ever did, and left campus as soon as the end of the day bell rung.

Despite such school environment characterized by uninspiring school curricula and disengaged teachers, Miguel found a few teachers who cared for his academic success and volunteered to tutor him outside of school hours. Miguel's parents, despite not being formally educated, instilled the values of hard work and education in him from a very young age:

> If it was not for my mother I can honestly say that I would not be in the spot that I am today. She is the one who inspired me to obtain more than the basic high school diploma, the one who always tried to help me with any school assignment even if she had no background knowledge of the topic, and the one who consistently reminded me that my education was going to be the only way out of the low socioeconomic status that we had to consistently face.

In addition to Miguel's biological parents' continuous sacrifices and support, Miguel benefited from a local gang leader's protection. Seeing Miguel's potential early on, this gang leader, whom Miguel refers to as his second father, barred his gang from initiating him and repeatedly told Miguel that he had a bright future ahead:

> I was raised by [a local gang leader] since my parents were always at work and my grandmother had to take care of my grandfather and I would always be outside and hanging out with his girlfriend and himself. Despite obtaining a firsthand look at how he managed the gang, he told me that I had a bright future ahead of me and forbid that I be initiated…Despite going down the wrong path early on, it was my instructors' motivation to keep pushing and their willingness to listen to my struggles, my parents constant work ethic, and my second father's value toward me that made me come back with a better view towards education.

As Miguel's account shows, the social and emotional capital he accessed via his teacher, parents, and his second father allowed him to enact *la facultad* and pursue academic success beyond high school. Whenever he encountered institutional gatekeepers who doubted his potential and treated him as an *atravesado* who was on his way to either the prison or death, Miguel saw beyond this surface reality and kept strong faith in his chances at success. Moreover, having experienced the violence and lack of expectations that other Chicana/o/x *atravesados* encounter, Miguel was able to understand that his parents were victims of cultural and structural forces that oppress and limit minoritized individuals' pursuit of opportunities. Miguel learned that asking for help was not a sign of weakness, but something that could assist and propel his achievement. This realization was especially profound for Miguel, who had struggled with the Mexican cultural notion and norms of *machismo*—coupled with the western hegemonic notion of patriarchy and masculinity—which influenced his father and grandfather to become absent, hard-to-approach breadwinners of the family.

> Understanding my grandfather's way of being with his children allows me to ease my views as to why my father decided to plant a seed within my head that constantly put the notion that working and earning money was more important than obtaining education, the

> thought that men do not need to cry or seek help when facing issues on a daily basis, and the notion that we are no better than what others say we are… I will not accept the fact that my father is the way he is with my family and I for the simple reason that his father was like that with him.

This represented another example of Miguel's enactment of *la facultad*—he was able to see beyond the stoic, emotionless day-to-day expressions of his father and grandfather and understand that capitalism, patriarchy, coloniality, and the lack of economic opportunities have shaped their worldviews and the ways in which they interact with others.

With his understanding of the struggles of his poor, undocumented parents contextualized by his own experiences and *la facultad*, Miguel joined his UC campus's chapter of Moviminiento Estudiantil Chicana/o/x de Aztlan (MEChA), a historic organization created around the Civil Rights Movement to bring awareness of social and political issues that the Chicana/o/x and Latinx community face in this society, once he enrolled in a University of California school. His participation in MEChA, coupled with his previous experiences, his parental sacrifices, and the social, cultural resources that he obtained through college curricula, drove Miguel's aspirations to help the next generation of Chicanx/Latinx youth as a *nepantlero*:

> Understanding the struggles and witnessing firsthand the hardships that can present themselves at any time I have made it my goal to give back to the younger generations with MEChA… For this reason I have made it my mission to reach out to the younger Latinx generations with the goal of exposing them to the vast opportunities that are out there willing to be discovered by them… I will pass along my knowledge to others that follow.

Miguel's dedication to the next generation of disadvantaged Latinx youth is exemplary of the role *nepantleros* play in marginalized communities. As a Chicano who has struggled with the cultural gender socialization norms of *machismo* and patriarchy —which led him to question his father and grandfather's relationship with the family and nearly become another troubled Boy of Color with delinquency problems—allowed him to make sense of the overlapping worlds of Mexican culture and American institutions. This unique *nepantlero* perspective allowed Miguel to understand how Chicana/o/x youth could be caught between these two worlds, doubting their own abilities. In addition, seeing that undocumented status could further impede not only an immigrant's economic chances, but also those of their children, Miguel was now determined to pass along the knowledge he has obtained through his enactment of *la facultad* to the next generation of youth.

## Discussion, Limitations, and Implications

Rosa, Esteban, Christina, and Miguel's *testimonios* provide valuable insights into how coloniality shapes marginalized persons' experiences in the mainstream educational realm and beyond. More importantly, the four Chicana/o/x students found ways to make sense of their marginalized positions while simultaneously empowering themselves by turning adversities into opportunities in their pursuits of academic achievement and success. Thus, their accounts provide powerful vernacular forms of how individuals subjected to coloniality move beyond realities surrounding them to perceive positivity, potential, and success in their present and future selves, despite institutional and cultural barriers and precariousness.

Miguel, Esteban's and Christina's experiences shows the gendered process through which Chicana/o/x individuals make sense of their *atravesado* status, enact *la facultad*, and become *nepantleros*. For instance, the uniquely Chicano cultural gender socialization through *machismo*/patriarchy led Miguel to understand social worlds around him (and that of his fathers

and grandfathers by extension), while simultaneously enabling him to reject *machismo* as a transgressive socio-cultural discourse. This realization has been especially important for Miguel and Esteban, as they were able to see beyond the restrictive definitions of masculinity. Similar to recent research (Ballysingh, 2019), Miguel and Esteban's mothers were salient sources of aspirational capital from which these students draw from as a source of empowerment. The *testimonios* contribute to the field by highlighting that seeing their mothers, who were not formally educated, propelled them into a critical consciousness that transcended dominant ideologies of *machismo/*patriarchy and enter a space where their dreams are attainable. In other words, their mothers' rendering of love propels Chicano/Latinos to enact *la facultad* as a resistance strategy to dream beyond what is deemed possible and attain the Chicana/o/x promise. Similarly, one of the most important driving forces of Christina's success was her mother's determination. Thus, Christina, Esteban and Miguel's enactments of *la facultad* grounded in critical understandings of gendered realities provide evidence in support of how ethnic cultures—both its negative and positive aspects—provide unique tools to Chicana/o/x students to interpret the social worlds around them and modify existing ethnic cultural discourses to further empower themselves (Delgado Bernal 2001, 2002, 2006).

Similarly, Rosa, Esteban, Christina, and Miguel benefited from resources and assistance in their communities, often via a few helpful adult figures and institutional actors. For instance, all four students report at least one helpful and engaged teacher inspiring them; in Miguel's case, the protection and guidance a local gang leader provided him the aspiration to pursue higher education. Communities and resources also led Chicana/o/x students to access extracurricular involvements, whether it is in a student organization or external internship program, which widened their social networks and helped them accessing social and cultural capitals—such as work and networking opportunities, direct involvement in social movements, etc.—they could not have accessed otherwise. Such deepened awareness and consciousness allowed Rosa, Esteban, Christina, and Miguel to not only anticipate difficulties in their post-secondary educational pursuits, but to proactively respond to and resist such difficulties.

This study illuminates the experiences of a small group of Chicana/o/x first-generation students navigating college, thus it presents limitations that prevent us to generalize the findings. This study cannot necessarily be generalized to the entire population of Chicana/o/x students who are navigating higher education or aspire to attain higher education. In addition, the four *testimonios* were derived from a larger group set of 18 *testimonios* from 10 Chicanas and 8 Chicanos, which limits our understanding of how other Chicana/o/x students who share or do not share identities with the students in this article experience education and society. Further, not all identities were discussed in this article, which is a pivotal concern in order to unpack how students' identities impact the manner they experience the world. For example, all students in this study identified as either as women or men, which does not include other gender identities (ie. gender fluid, non-binary). Despite these shortcomings, we believe that the site and time of this study presents the complex experiences of Chicana/o/x students in education structures and broader society. The Chicana/o/x students reside in California, where the largest growing ethnic group is Latinx individuals. Additionally, the time of this study had a historical impact on the students, particularly because the discussion of Latinx migration proliferated during Trump's pre-election. Thus, the importance here is not in generalizability but for the participants to reflect on their lived experiences and for the researchers to expand up exiting theoretical propositions about Latinx education rooted in structural inequality.

Given the findings of this study and the manner Chicana/o/x students conceptualized their lived realities as *atrevesados* and enact la *facultad* to become *nepantleros*, it is pivotal that educators and school personnel view the voices of young Scholars of Color as a source of knowledge. These *testimonios* evince the cultural wealth that communities of color hold, which are often rendered invisible in classroom spaces. For example, Miguel's second father challenges dominant stereotypes of what a mentor relationship looks like. Similarly, Christina's and Esteban's *testimonios* are deeply telling of how mothers, despite not being formally educated, are powerful sources of aspiration and knowledge. Moreover, community members are actively looking for ways to protect and provide in order for students to excel in society—they dream alongside the students.

## Conclusion

What is apparent in these four Chicana/o/x life histories of overcoming adversities is that their enactment of *la facultad* leads them to become agents of change for others. In so doing, they are contributing to the emergence of communities as a form of resistance. Such a phenomenon represents more than these four individuals' personal growth; it captures that the enactment of *la facultad*, along with institutional and community resources, can lead individuals to become *nepantleros*, who understand overlapping social worlds of minoritized groups and (white dominant) mainstream institutions that shape the larger, societal systems of inequality and coloniality. Thus, the enactment of *la facultad* allows them to become agents of change and resistance who could bridge the mainstream and minoritized social realms to inspire others and help provide social and cultural capital one may need in their own pursuits of success. This transformation from *atravesados* to *nepantleros* shown in the four *testimonios* represent *The Chicana/o/x Promise*—persisting in the American educational landscapes that is characterized by its coloniality and achieving hope, resistance, and school success.

## Notes

[1]Throughout this article, the authors intentionally employ the term Chicana/o/x in an effort to support inclusivity of all Mexican ethnic-identified peoples regardless of gender identity or expression.

[2] Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

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# Give Back to Impact: (Re)considering the Motivation for Latinx College Student Organization Involvement and Leadership

**Ricardo Montelongo**, *Sam Houston State University*

**Abstract:** A follow-up study to the author's original 2017 study on the impact of Latinx student involvement was performed to understand reasons for Latinx community, civic, and artistic involvement. In the original investigation, Latinx college student organization members were interviewed to reflect on the impact of their college involvement 20 years after college graduation. Latinx college student organizations were described as providing skills for personal, career and educational advancement, as well as motivation for community advocacy. This follow up study provides findings using participants from the original to explain reasons for community involvement and how Latinx college student organizations instilled motivation for such activity. Recommendations are provided for further investigations on these groups and their long-term effects.

**Keywords**: *Latinx college students, Latinx college student organizations, ethnic student organizations, student involvement, college experiences, extracurricular outcomes*

## Introduction

Since the early 1900's, defining leadership has been a challenging task influenced by shifting societal norms, shared values, and cultural attitudes (Northouse, 2018). While attempts to define leadership has no universal consensus (Northouse, 2018), the large body of literature examining leadership behaviors and processes provides scholars and practitioners knowledge on the many facets that comprise the concept. Juana Bordas (2012), for example, offers a multicultural lens to view leadership using "the influences, practices, and values of diverse cultures in a respectful and productive manner" (p. 8). Her multicultural definition of leadership emphasizes the "vibrant flavors and gifts" African American, American Indian, and Latinx communities provide to organizations reflecting "the vitality, values, and voices of our diversity" within the nation and globally (p. 9). Such ideas espoused in multicultural leadership are found in the goals and activities of ethnic college student organizations.

Research on ethnic college student organizations has increased over the past thirty years (Montelongo et al., 2015; Bowman, Park, & Denson, 2014; Delgado-Romero, Hernandez, & Montero, 2004; Hernandez, 2002) and these groups continue to diversify in their presence on college campuses. Outcomes provided to members of these groups are of interest to education practitioners and scholars seeking to enhance student success and leadership development. Community advocacy and civic engagement are also considered key features of ethnic college

student organizations (Montelongo, 2003; Bowman, Park, & Denson, 2014; Davis, 1997). Despite this awareness, studies are needed to understand how advocacy and engagement impact leadership and identity development, especially once students enter society as college graduates. Latinx college student organizations have provided leadership opportunities for college students since their earliest presence on U.S. colleges and universities (Fajardo, 2015). Understanding how these college organizations promote multicultural leadership for former members provides a primary focus for this research study.

This study is a follow up to the author's first investigation on Latinx college student organization (LCSO) involvement effects on members 20 years after college graduation (Montelongo, 2017). In the original study, the author interviewed former members of a large umbrella-type LCSO who were involved between the years 1988-1992 at a 4-year public flagship university in Texas. Interviews described how the LCSO impacted career and education success. Formers members shared various reflections on their college involvement and what they gained from being involved in a college organization specific to their cultural and ethnicity. From these reflections and narratives, four impact themes emerged – Responsibility; Confidence; *La Familia*; and Cultural Advocacy. The four impact themes described how LCSO's "planted seeds for future community activism, career and educational advancement, supportive networks, and cultural pride" (Montelongo, 2017, Discussion section, para.1). These impact themes were described as the long-term impacts of involvement of Latinx college student organizations. From the collected interviews, the author noticed additional pursuits made by these former LCSO members beyond their career and educational achievements. These activities were a noteworthy for their involvement and advocacy within the communities where members resided after graduation. A majority of LCSO former members in the original study chose to reside in their hometown communities after college graduation. This led the author to investigate the possible additional impacts of LCSO involvement on former members' preference to largely return back to where they started to expand these LCSO impact themes in their hometown communities.

Using similar qualitative phenomenological methods, a sample of LCSO members from the original study were re-interviewed to understand motivations for community and civic engagement, artistic activities, and community advocacy. To learn more about LCSO involvement impacts, Bordas' (2012) Multicultural Leadership Model is utilized to understand descriptions of leadership activities and community involvement by LCSO former members after college attendance. Phenomenological methods are appropriate for this additional study in that it continues to examine involvement and leadership from the accounts first gathered in the original study. In learning more from past experiences, this study provides additional contextual information to LCSO involvement impacts, focusing on culturally relevant factors found in the community engagement and activism of LCSO former members in the original study. The research questions for this study are:

1. How do LSCO former members describe reasons for involvement with community-based activities (e.g. churches, schools, non-profit organizations, national advocacy groups, and other activities) 20 years after college graduation?
2. How do LSCO former members define one key impact of LCSO involvement that is described in the original study – "give back to impact"?

## Review of Literature

This section summarizes findings from the original study upon which this current study expands. The impact themes described by LCSO members 20 years after college attendance are provided to give an understanding of how LCSOs influenced career and educational goals. Studies investigating characteristics associated with participation in ethnic college student organizations are also summarized to provide an idea of how much membership affected the overall college experience. Research on the effects of Latina/o college student organizations is provided to give specific context to the current study.

## Effects Associated with College Student Organizations

For over 30 years, studies on college student organization involvement have supported mostly positive outcomes of such activity (Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert, & Wolniak, 2016). College student organization involvement has influenced affective outcomes such as sense of satisfaction with the college experience (Abrahamowicz, 1988; Branand, Mashek, Wray-Lake, 2015; Mayhew, et al., 2016; Webber, Krylow, & Zhang, 2013; Williams & Winston, Jr., 1985) and additional involvement with campus and community groups (Bowman, Park, & Denson, 2014; Davis, 1997; Williams & Winston, Jr., 1985). The intellectual development of college student organization members has been enhanced through increased interaction with their educational environment (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Reyes, 2015; Webber, Krylow & Zhang, 2013) and using academic support services to achieve educational goals (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Smith & Griffin, 1993; Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, & Ruder, 2006).

Despite these positive research findings, earlier studies using college student organizations as a focus were often generalized and did not include the experiences found in cultural and ethnic student organizations (Mayhew, et al., 2016; Stage & Anaya, 1996). These gaps provided challenges in understanding how LCSO involvement influenced later participation in community advocacy and involvement (Mitchell et al., 2015; Bowman et al., 2014; Reyes, 2015). When studies on these organizations were emerging in the 1990's, the avoidance of recognizing the effects of these specific groups was "particularly problematic" since "predominantly and traditionally white student organizations such as fraternities, sororities, student government, religious groups, choir groups, and intramural groups" were primarily used to describe the involvement outcomes for all college students (Trevino, 1992, p.24). When this occurred, the unique contributions of ethnic college student organizations were not identified (Mayhew, et al., 2016; Montelongo, 2003; Stage & Anaya, 1996). Currently, improvement has been made in learning more about the specific experiences and outcomes associated with cultural and ethnic student organizations (Mitchell, Soria, Daniele, & Gipson, 2015). Mitchell and his associates state that student involvement research needs to be reframed to "acknowledge the importance of examining a greater range of involvement activities, programs, and opportunities" (p.5) diverse student populations tend participate in during college.

## Long Term Impact of Latinx College Student Involvement

The literature on Latinx college student involvement impact beyond graduation is an area that continues to grow. In an examination of studies looking at outcomes associated with Latinx student organization, Montelongo et al. (2015) found that involvement in LSCOs promoted political activism to motivate social change and to further enhance ethnic and cultural identity development. Torres, Hernandez, & Martinez' (2019) Lifespan Model of Latinx Identity Development recognized the role LCSOs have on creating social change and developing identity.

In their model, involvement with cultural clubs and organizations impacted Latinx student identity by providing dissonance and meaning-making experiences. These experiences were part of a life-long process of identity development which could be returned in order to reevaluate how identity is socially constructed and adapted in different environments (Torres et al., 2019).

LCSOs and community involvement played a particularly crucial role in Latinx leadership development (Davis, 1997). Bowman, Park, and Denson (2015) investigated the effects of ethnic college student organization involvement on civic outcomes six years after graduation. While their study offered long-term effects of ethnic college student organization involvement, the selection of six years after graduation provided a partial window into long-term outcomes of college student involvement. An argument could be made that career, educational, and personal decisions were still in process, suggesting that outcomes have yet reached full fruition. Involvement in LCSOs maintained connections to communities familiar to Latinx college students (Montelongo et al., 2015; Fajardo, 2015; Hernandez, 2002). These connections were characterized by community service, political activism, and advocacy for a variety of social concerns (Davis, 1997; Delgado-Romero, Hernandez, & Montero, 2004; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Davis (1997) provided an early account of Latinx college student leadership. Latinx student leaders were described as participating in "campaigns, protests, and service efforts" to improve community conditions. Involvement in "community-based organizations" (e.g., churches, schools, non-profit organizations, national advocacy groups) was usually characteristic of these student leaders, which LCSOs frequently supported in their efforts (Davis, 1997, p. 230).

In the original study previous to this current one, the author was able to describe four central themes associated with the long-term effects of Latina/o student organization involvement: Responsibility, Confidence, *La Familia*/Reconnection, and Cultural Advocacy (Montelongo, 2017). The themes reflected long-term effects associated with Latinx student organizations. The former members described how their LCSO involvement instilled within them a responsibility to continue promoting cultural awareness and educational support to family members and friends. The author stated that LCSO former members being responsible for "promoting these goals within the larger community suggested that the Latina/o student organization shaped citizens who were keen in the importance of giving back to the community" (Montelongo, 2017, Findings section, para. 2). Confidence was also described by former members as a long-term impact of LCSO involvement. Skills to face workplace challenges, to deal with being the only Latinx in higher level administration, and to deal with microaggressions and overt discrimination were said to be gained from LCSO involvement. LCSOs were also pivotal in creating strong social bonds for members. These bonds formed by LCSO members during college developed into familial-type relationships that were still in place well after graduation. Lastly, cultural advocacy reflected how the cultural identity of former LCSO members carried over into their careers, family, and other responsibilities. Key to this theme was the continued support, promotion, and recruitment of LCSOs within the community and educational settings.

## Conceptual Framework

LCSOs in this study were defined as any student or administratively sponsored groups established for representing Latinx interests and culture in a particular area (Montelongo, 2003). Bordas' (2012) Multicultural Leadership Model was used as a conceptual framework towards understanding the the long-term effects of involvement in college student organizations and the motivations for community involvement and advocacy practiced by former student organizational members. The model was developed as a counter-response to viewing leadership as an individual

process that uses a cultural orientation largely centered from a White male perspective. Bordas' model recognized a "multicultural leadership orientation" that "incorporates many cultural perspectives, appreciates differences, values unique contributions of diverse groups, and promotes learning from many orientations" (p. 8). Multicultural leadership reflected nine principles that use cultural values apparent within Native American, African American, and Latinx communities: Learning from the past; collective identity; a spirit of generosity; community-conferred leadership; tradition of activism; working for a common good; intergenerational leadership; la familia; and gratitude. These nine principles were grouped under three areas that help multicultural leadership thrive and endure, provide roles and functions, and support community growth and development (Bordas, 2012). The model assisted in the development of themes describing the motivation and involvement of former LCSO members within their communities after their college attendance.

**Researcher Positionality**

My own personal involvement in LCSOs as an undergraduate and graduate student is important to disclose for this study. My involvement in LCSOs impacted my identity development to the point where I became a "born again Chicano" (Trevino, 1992, p. 131). Opportunities to express my cultural heritage at the predominantly-White institutions (PWIs) allowed me to understand my place within these college environments. Through these organizations, I felt a responsibility to advocate and study Latinx college student experiences. My experiences with LCSOs as a college student shaped how I approach my role as a higher education administrator, faculty member, researcher and activist for marginalized populations within our society. Providing this positionality statement clarifies the potential bias that I may bring into the study (Creswell, 2014). While my own experiences in LCSOs have been my important part of my identity development, I used reflexivity journaling to document my interpretation of statements made by the study's participation are shaped by my interactions with these groups and my transitions within my own Latinx identity development (Torres et al., 2019). Completing a reflexivity journal was part of the data collection procedures to keep in check these potential biases to make sure that the study uses only the experiences of participants.

**Methods**

This follow-up study utilized a qualitative research design. Qualitative methods allowed the construction of critical narratives by participants on their college experiences (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Qualitative methods are appropriate when the researcher wants to inquire about the meaning individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). A social constructivist lens was also implemented to allow former LCSO members to develop their own meanings of LCSO experiences (Padilla-Diaz, 2015; Tillman, 2006). Phenomenological methods allowed the researcher to describe "the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants" (p. 14). Narratives from the study's participants were analyzed for significant statements to create "the generation of meaning units" that described the long-term impact of LCSO involvement. The research study's goal was to use these accounts of LSCO involvement to understand how "historical and cultural norms that operate[d] in individuals' lives" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8) impacted how they eventually interacted with their community.

**Participant Selection**

For this follow up study, participants from the original study were used for interviews on LCSO involvement impacts. In the original study, these participants were purposefully selected

for their wide range of collegiate involvement and their capacity to provide in-depth reflections needed for the research questions (Creswell, 2014). For the current study, convenience sampling procedures was used to select participants. Convenience sampling procedures provided the most preferred selection method due to using the sample at hand from the original study. Original study participants used in this current study's selection were members of a large umbrella-type LCSO between the years 1988-1992 at a 4-year public flagship university located in Texas.

Ten individuals were interviewed in the original study. All participants were contacted again for follow-up interviews for this current study. Original study participants were invited to expand further their reflections of their LCSO involvement. These former members were involved in a LCSO that was established at the university in the mid-1970's. The organization still is present on campus providing Latinx programming for students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community. Student enrollment at the time participants attended the university was between 39,000 to 41,000 students with a Latinx representing approximately 6% of the total student body.

This invitation for continued study participation yielded six participants for interviews in the follow-up study. The extent of organization involvement varied for each of these former members in the current study, ranging from general membership to serving as executive officers in the group as undergraduates. Three female and three males participated in the follow-up interviews. Five participants identified their ethnicity as "Hispanic". Participants were asked to mark their preferred identifier for their cultural background. Out of the four choices provided – "Mexican-American", "Puerto Rican", "Cuban", "Other Hispanic or Latino (specify)" – all marked "Mexican-American.". The age range of participants was between 46 and 50 years old, with an average age of 46.7 years. Three current participants identified as being a first-generation undergraduate student. A summary of this information can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Participant Gender, Cultural Background, Age and First-Generation College Student Status*

| Participant Pseudonym | Gender Identity | Ethnic/Racial Identity | Latina/o Background | Age | College Generational Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consuelo | Female | Hispanic | Mex-Am | 46 | Second |
| David | Male | Latino | Mex-Am | 46 | First |
| Johnny | Male | Hispanic | Mex-Am | 50 | First |
| Lobo | Male | Hispanic | Mex-Am | 46 | Second |
| Rae | Female | Hispanic | Mex-Am | 46 | Second |
| Sofia | Female | Hispanic | Mex-Am | 46 | First |

Participants all received their bachelor's degrees. One received a master's degree and one earned a professional degree. Notably, 3 participants established careers in public service. All participants worked in the state of Texas. A summary of the education levels and careers of the participants can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

*Participant Highest Level of Education & Current Professional Position*

| Name | Education Level | Current Professional Position |
|---|---|---|
| Consuelo | Professional | Chief Academic Officer, Large Urban School District in South Texas |
| David | Masters | Director, Title V Grants, Community College in South Texas (HSI) |
| Johnny | Bachelors | Administrative, Law Office |
| Lobo | Bachelors | I.T. Database Analyst |
| Rae | Bachelors | Operations Manager |
| Sofia | Bachelors | Health Care, Physician Practice Administrator |

**Data Collection**

Data was collected through individual phone interviews lasting 45-60 minutes in length. Interviews used an IRB-approved structured interview protocol consisting of 6 open-ended questions that were connected to the LCSO impact themes developed from the original study. Interviews also included additional inquiry asking participants to describe their definition of "giving back to impact" in relation to any community involvement and advocacy activities. Culturally sensitive methods explained by Tillman (2002) were used in data collection. The researcher employed an approach which allowed participants "to articulate their own theories based on their particular circumstances and experiences" (Tillman, 2002, p. 281). The researcher captured a culturally sensitive "holistic contextualized picture" of an experience (Tillman, 2002, p. 269). Knowledge collected from participants was constructed based on how they experienced and interacted with the LSCO. Participants were also invited to add any additional comments on the concept of reconsidering what it means to be involved in an LCSO.

**Data Analysis**

All interviews were recorded and transcribed for the study. All participants for the study had an opportunity to review transcripts. The researcher completed a general analysis of data by creating initial coding categories. The initial coding was then analyzed to create emergent themes resulting from relationships found within all text contained within the specific codes (Creswell, 2014). The emergent themes were formed from an additional review of transcripts. Open coding further categorized the interviews into several prominent themes describing motivation and reasons for community involvement resulting from involvement in the LCSO. These final categories used *in vivo* terminology involvement in the words of the participants (Creswell, 2014). In addition, the researcher used a reflexivity journal to document thoughts and possible biases to improve the validity of data. These reflections provided reference in future data interpretation. Performing such a task helped in understanding how interpretation of data could possibly be influenced by the background and culture of the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

**Limitations**

The study is limited in its generalizability to the experiences of other former members of LCSO's from other institutions. This study used a sample whose collegiate experiences occurred at a large, public 4-year PWI and current experiences within their hometowns and regions nearby. Descriptions of long-term effects of other former LCSO members residing in locations other than their home region and other parts of the country may provide different contexts in which their involvement occurred. Findings may not generalize also to Latinx students who had little or no involvement with LCSO's or student life. Thus, careful consideration is advised in stating the findings as reflective of all Latinx college students.

**Findings**

**Beyond Career and Educational Goals**

The original study focused on the effects LCSO involvement had on former members' career, educational, and personal aspirations. Upon completion of interviews with these former members, data revealed that many of the original study's participants were involved in pursuits outside of their chosen careers. The former members of the LCSO used in the initial study were notably active in community service, civic responsibilities, and cultural arts. A summary of these interests is provided in Table 3.

Table 3:

*Participant Leadership & Impact*

| Name | Organization Leadership | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| Consuelo | Principal | Community education leader |
| David | Founding executive board member, national Latino education organization; Vice-President, education foundation | School board member advocating for at-risk students; Alternative music aficionado (stated that this broke Latino stereotypes) |
| Johnny | Immigration legal aide | Playwright; Supporter of fine arts; Latinx community activist |
| Lobo | Webmaster | Author of Latinx-focused young adult novels; Bilingual/ESL school volunteer |
| Rae | Board member, Alzheimer's Association | Caretaker - parent w/Alzheimer's; Church youth group director; Cub Scout pack leader |
| Sofia | Board of Directors, Dress for Success | Career mentor for unemployed women; Church youth group volunteer |

While formers members of the LCSO achieved, for the most part, their desired career goals, they supplemented their success with a variety of involvement in their communities. LCSO former members participating in this study found a variety of ways to "give back to impact" in their communities. Community involvement and engagement took the form of serving as an educational advocate (Consuelo and David), career mentor and role model for Latinas (Sofia),

community health supporter (Rae), and creative writers (Johnny and Lobo). These LCSO former members also used their careers to provide multicultural leadership within their work organizations, by serving on professional association boards, reaching executive administration levels, or volunteering for community agencies. At least for these former LCSO members, not only did they find success in their educational and career pursuits, but they also included an element of giving back to their communities in a variety of impactful and creative ways.

**Motivation for Community Advocacy and Involvement**

Using the conceptual framework of multicultural leadership (Bordas, 2012), this study revealed possible motivation and impact of LCSO former member involvement approximately 20 years after their college attendance. Interviews provided reflections on what it means to "give back to impact" once they settled into their careers and life as parents or family caretakers. The idea of "give back to impact" was stated by Lobo in the original study (Montelongo, 2017). Lobo believed that one of the primary purposes of LCSOs is to give back to Latinx communities in whatever way possible to help improve educational success:

> I think that what I did back in college really helped me understand what it means to give back to the community. Give back to make an impact. I write on the side, I've had a book published, so I've done a lot of things like volunteer to speak in classrooms and donate books and just talk about writing to encourage kids in the area. They are primarily Hispanic. There is actually a Latino [community] organization that I've been involved with the last 2 years. I've been mentoring at local schools. So, that to me is the number one thing. Staying involved with the community, giving back and doing it to impact others to do the same.

In doing so, he believed that this would cause a ripple effect for additional Latinx community involvement. From the LCSO former members in this study, 3 major themes regarding reasons why they got involved with community, civic, and artistic activities emerged after analyses: Generosity; Legacy; and Passion. Participants also provided a structural definition of what it means for LCSOs to "give back to impact." The components of this definition will be outlined in this section.

**Generosity.** Former LCSO members reflected on the driving motivation for their outside activities which involved their community. In describing their community involvement, LCSO former members often mentioned offering mentoring to community members, especially to the next generation of Latinx learners. Former members also described how they made efforts to provide support for Latinx community members by sharing their own stories of successes and struggles in their educational and career journeys. By sharing their own stories, they gave messages to others that they too could find the same levels of success. In doing all of these efforts, LCSO former members felt they were creating a stronger Latinx community capable of reaching high aspiration levels. An element of generosity, where former members shared the effects of their past LCSO involvement to community members, was apparent in their community activities.

This idea of reaching the highest levels of success was expressed by Lobo, who intentionally visited predominantly-Latinx elementary schools in his area to provide book readings of his young adult novels, which notably included Latinx main characters. Lobo felt a sense of pride when he did these readings at schools because when he did, "the kids light up." When he reads to the children, Lobo believed their excitement came about by seeing him as a Latino role model:

> They're thinking 'I never thought someone that looks like me could ever be a book author!' I try to inspire the students when I visit schools. I do my best to inspire. It's my passion when I promote my books in the community.

At book readings and book fairs, Lobo makes sure to tell young children that "[book authors] are just like you", using his writing involvement as a way to encourage young Latino children to think creatively and to write for fun.

Being generous in supporting adult career aspirations were described by Sophia, who served as a role model for Latina women who were reentering the workforce. In her volunteer work for Dress for Success, Sophia found an outlet to share skills she directly attributed to her LCSO involvement, in particular how to carry yourself with confidence and the value of mentorship. Sophia stated by working with Dress for Success:

> I am able to mentor women in order to catapult them to new adventures in careers. I find great strength in helping women reenter the workforce, in South Texas we had very high female employment rates. I was very active in helping those women get back to work.

She uses her community involvement to make sure the women know "they are not alone and they too can find success and learn from how I carried myself in my career." Sophia believed that by being involved with this group to empower women in their careers, "I can share hope."

**Legacy.** Former LCSO members also stated that their community involvement was, in some way, their legacy in creating the next generation of Latinx community leaders. This idea was largely expressed by supporting and encouraging Latinx youth activism and cultivating Latinx college student leadership by promoting involvement in current LCSOs on campus. This promotion of college student leadership was largely expressed to immediate and extended family members, as well to general community members through their roles in civic and volunteer agencies. By continuing to be involved in these agencies, former members felt that they were continuing an important purpose of their LCSO, which was community advocacy. These characteristics reflected the idea that LCSO involvement was not just something that was just limited to the college years, it was a legacy of impactful leadership, which actually started for some well before their college attendance.

David mentioned that his Latino leadership actually started prior to college. Involvmenet in a LCSO was "a natural progression" for him and his friends from his hometown, which had a history of Latinx community activism:

> For me, community outreach actually started with my childhood friends in high school and that it only grew stronger in college thanks to being involved in [the LCSO]. Despite being in what some would consider a small town, we all were interested in current events and such.

Once David and his friends graduated from college, they continued the legacy of being Latinx community activists by working in schools or becoming elected officials near their hometown.

> Our high school has a legacy of advocacy. I try to tell others to be more impactful in what you do and to try to create change in [name of hometown]. If you do, it's just the beginning.

For David, his service in a national Latinx education association and on the local school board reflected his community leadership background prior to college. David continues to support youth activism by encouraging at-risk students to voice their demands to the local school board, supported by his role on the board.

Consuelo in her role as a principal and community education leader strived to give her students the tools needed to be effective student leaders:

> I honestly can state that I learned the value of leadership from [the LCSO] and was able to share the skills sets needed for leadership to the students I currently advise and teach. It's all connected to my work, you know being a high school principal has great responsibility to students.

Her comments reflect both the legacy of her LCSO involvement and how her students will benefit from her guidance through her mentorship. In her K-12 school setting, the next generation of college student leaders and community activists were advised through her interest in using her career role beyond teaching and administration.

Lastly, legacy quite literally meant that the LCSO former members had college-going children who themselves were finding their leadership niche thanks to the encouragement of their parents, who once were student leaders in LCSOs. Lobo believed that today's Latinx students "have come a long way where there are more choices of organizations for them to join and become leaders." He encouraged his son to get involved in groups that would help him advance in his professional career. Lobo expressed pride when describing this son's college leadership:

> My son just jumped right in and did it! Can I tell you how proud I am to let you know my son is the first president of [institution name] mock trial team? He's working to make a difference. I told my son to do something that will give back to the community.

By being on the mock trial team, Lobo hoped his son will attend law school to eventually work to represent the Latinx community.

**Passion.** All LCSO former members in this study described a driving motivation for their community involvement. Despite all participants working full-time in extremely busy careers and caring for family members, they felt community and artistic involvement helped them focused on self-care and balanced their professional work life. Johnny found his outlet by writing plays depicting the lives of the Latinx populace. When asked why he writes plays, Johnny stated:

> Because theatre is very involved in the local community, very involved in activism so, that is the context. Nothing is more satisfying than engaging in playwriting. I am reigniting my writing because my focus, my passion, obviously is to address social issues on the stage.

Although working in the area of immigration law, Johnny believed his voice could be better heard on the stage. Johnny's recent work is a short play depicting the lives of immigrants from Central America that will be presented on a college campus. Johnny said that putting the play on a campus is important because "I want to change the behavior of students and how they and others view Latinos. It is my deep passion. It's why I write."

The passion of changing perceptions of Latinx in the community is engrained in all activities carried out by the LCSO former members. In some ways, this is done through music preferences. David described how his music passion makes him unique within the Latinx community:

> I frequently listen to music that is labeled "post-punk, Gothic New Wave." I am a what you would call New Wave aficionado and I attend live concerts (in the genre) whenever I can. [Laughs] I definitely stick out in the crowd. I get teased often for not favoring Mexican music. I don't care. It's my music of choice.

In a similar characteristic, Lobo plays for an Eighties cover band and mentioned in his interview that they recently started touring. David and Lobo both expressed their passion for music as a way

to break down Latinx stereotypes and to face fear and intimidation head on. For Lobo, the fear factor was represented in knowledge that his band will soon be playing in larger venues. For David, the fear is being chastised members in his own community Interestingly, both described these passions as being aided by the confidence gained from their LCSO involvement. Despite doing activities that may provide negative responses or rejection from the community, they use what they learned from the LCSO to move onward and to continue doing what they love.

**"Give Back to Impact" Defined**

Using the information provided by interviews from LCSO former members in this study, a structural definition of community involvement was created to give context to an important characteristic of LCSOs – "give back to impact." The definition outlines four key areas describing the motivations for LCSO involvement, based on former members: creating positive change; making sure that the work keeps going; working to make a difference; and community improvement.

**Positive change.** One main quality that came from community involvement described by LCSO former members was being a conduit for positive change in the community. Giving back entailed sharing skill sets and education for the good of others. Counselo used her position in education to improve learning not only for her school, but for her overall community by becoming education activist. Her work inspired others and directly connected this outcome to "the value of leadership in the [LCSO]" which she participated as an undergraduate. LCSO former members used their community, civic, and artistic activities to motivate and uplift other Latinx individuals, especially among youth and young adults who are the future leaders. Lobo provided an excellent example of how his artistic pursuits as an author are used to make Latinx children consider the arts as an outlet for cultural expression. For the most part, LCSO formers in this study gave back to the community with the goal to do good for others.

**"It's not what you do, it's how you do it."** The current study interviewed LCSO former members 20 years after college graduation to reflect on how their college involvement impacted their achievements and activities currently. Former members continued to advance one purpose of the LCSO, which was to connect to the community. Even after 20 years, LCSO former members found themselves advancing this characteristic in their current activities. However, these members pointed out that this continued community involvement was part of their goals to make meaningful impact in their work. David mentioned that once you became involved, "it's not what you do, it's how you do it." When asked to explain what this meant, he stated "changes that occur [from community involvement] are just the beginning. You have to keep following through." David expanded the idea of giving back to the community by adding the element that once you are connected, "you need to stay committed to your service." This is especially true for those who received the service work of these LCSO former members. Rae believed that giving back and staying committed provided opportunities "to influence someone so that they, too, could do something they thought they couldn't." In order to maximize this influence, LCSO former members appeared to hold high levels of follow through and commitment in their community involvement.

**Work that makes a difference.** LCSO former members believed their community, civic, and artistic involvement made a difference in the community and for Latinx youth and current college students. This involvement largely was done to further inspire these individuals to do more and to reach higher in their aspirations. Consuelo, Lobo, and Sophia all highlighted how their community involvement was used to uplift others who may found it hard to locate Latinx advocates

for their specific needs and issues. By becoming leaders in their careers and using the leadership skills gained from their LCSO involvement, former members found themselves becoming examples of achievement that is possible when staying committed to personal and educational goals.

One interesting characteristic noted by LCSO former members to make sure community work made a difference was that it needed to be interactive. David, Lobo, Rae, and Sophia all described the interactive nature of community involvement: it is hands-on and involves engaging with others. David found himself becoming a leader within a Latinx education professional organization, which he felt "made me more impactful in what I do for Latino education." Lobo felt that he was "always learning and teaching" in his role as a young adult novel author. Despite his full-time career as an I.T. administrator, Lobo enjoyed "inspiring students and interacting with kids to promote artistic involvement" so that kids "say 'hey, he looks just like me. I can also do what he does.'"

**Community improvement.** The last characteristic of giving back to impact was overall community improvement. Based on the responses of LCSO former members, improvement was reflected in activities that promoted economic advancement, social justice advocacy, education improvements, and cultural arts expression. Sophia's work with Dress for Success, a non-profit agency aimed at empowering women in their careers, provided support for Latinas to gain economic independence. Johnny's work as an aspiring playwright used the arts as a mechanism to further educate the broader community on issues specific for the Latinx community. Consuelo and David both used their roles in K-12 and higher education to advance policies and initiatives aimed to improve student success at their respective campuses. All LCSO former members in this current study used community involvement as means towards working for social justice in the community. All mentioned that their community service was not for primarily self-serving gains, but for the overall improvement of Latinx communities in the workforce, education, and the arts. These LCSO members found themselves in roles that they felt could allow them to make an impact. Similar to how they viewed their LCSO involvement making an impact on their educational and career aspirations 20 years after graduation (Montelongo, 2017), this study found the same involvement making an impact on community improvement.

## Discussion

This continuation of an original study examining the impact of LCSO involvement on former members focused on their engagement in community 20 years after graduation. Former LCSO members found opportunities to provide advocacy and support for their Latinx communities outside their career and educational roles. For this study, former members were involved in a variety of activities which continued to support community efforts, instill student success, and promoted cultural arts. In their community involvement, former members still relied on the leadership skills and values they gained from being involved in the LCSO while they were in college. Giving back to the community was largely a reflection of the impact the LCSO had on the former members' views of service, activism, and success.

Bordas' (1993) Multicultural Leadership Model provides a helpful lens to see how former members describe their community involvement. The themes describing motivation for community advocacy and involvement align with principles found in multicultural leadership. Characteristics of the community involvement of LCSO former members align with the principles described by Bordas. Generosity, collectivism, activism, supporting community growth, and intergenerational leadership were highlighted in this current study. Further investigations are

needed to fully understand the lasting impacts of college involvement. In addition, this current study also allows a reconsideration on why students become involved in LCSOs. Using Bordas' multicultural leadership model, involvement might not for self-serving purposes for Latinx, but mainly for a common good.

Several recommendations for leadership providers, community agencies, and educational administrators are provided from this continuation of a study on LCSO impacts on former members 20 years after college attendance. More studies are needed to look beyond immediate student outcomes from college student involvement in order to understand how former members reflected on their past involvement. The current study could provide a glimpse into growing area of college student involvement research looking at culturally responsive involvement opportunities in higher education (Mitchell et al., 2015). The study could initiate further questions that could be investigated looking at the distinct college involvement characteristics found among diverse student populations. Educators could benefit from talking to alumni who participated in LCSOs to see if this involvement influenced engagement outside of their career roles. Interviewing LCSO former members who resided in areas outside their hometowns or other states is also needed for further analysis on their community engagement and advocacy. Investigations to see if the level of engagement and advocacy carried over to other areas would be beneficial.

## Conclusion

This current study echoed Davis' (1997) earlier writings on Latinx leadership development found in LCSOs. In that article, Davis believed that LCSOs provided "a rich legacy of activism, community service, advocacy, and naturally, leadership development" (p. 231). A community connection has been a key characteristic of LCSOs from the 1990s as stated by Davis, going back into the late 1800s with the first fraternal organizations (Fajardo, 2015), to current times where LCSO former members in this study encouraged participation by Latinx youth and college students in community, civic, and artistic activities. Investigations on Latinx college student organizations and their impact needs to be understood. Immediate outcomes soon after college do not provide a complete picture of the importance of LCSOs. Involvement outcomes need to be re-evaluated for diverse student populations. Educational leaders and researchers need to understand culturally relevant factors stemming from student involvement patterns of diverse students. Outcome measures need to reflect the collectivist nature of multicultural leadership described by Bordas (1993) that is apparent among LCSO former members in this follow-up study. Educational leaders and researchers would also benefit in learning from the experiences of Latinx college alumni. Their experiences are key resources in building constructs to understand and reframe involvement and leadership measures. Former LCSO members attested that even 20 years after college attendance, community involvement is a key aspect of the leadership gained from the organization and "giving back to impact" continues to be a long-lasting legacy of LCSOs.

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# Uncharted Territory:
# The Nexus Between Doctoral Education and Community-based Learning

**Elizabeth C. Reilly**, *Loyola Marymount University*
**Bryan P. Sanders**, *Loyola Marymount University*

**Abstract:** One of the continual challenges facing professors who prepare TK-12 school leaders through the professional educational doctorate (Ed.D. degree), is ensuring a theory-to-practice framework, curriculum, and pedagogy. Furthermore, professors of doctoral programs whose orientation is social justice, often face the dilemma of how to infuse it as a cross-cutting issue with the theory-practice paradigm. Community-based learning (CBL), when embedded with social justice claims, can serve as a bridge between theory and practice, providing doctoral students with opportunities to achieve both goals. This qualitative case study engaged with this dilemma by investigating the efficacy of a community-based learning component that had been infused into a core doctoral leadership course. Through interviews with doctoral students, we sought to understand their perception of its connection to the program's social justice orientation, as well as the benefits, challenges, and recommendations for the efficacy of community-based learning. Students' input guided future course revisions that establish a clearer relationship among social justice themes, the program's learning outcomes, and the theory-praxis paradigm.

**Keywords**: *community-based learning, doctoral education, educational leadership, professional doctorate, service-learning, social justice*

Professors who prepare TK-12 school leaders through the professional educational doctorate (Ed.D. degree) face the ongoing challenge of ensuring a coherent and cohesive theory-to-practice framework, curriculum, and pedagogy (Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, 2019; Perry, 2012). When courses principally focus on theory, educational leaders may not see the relevance to their daily work. Likewise, applications-oriented curriculum without sound theoretical bases results in leadership practices that lack fundamental empirical grounding and theory that arise from that scholarship. Scholars have documented this dilemma extensively, as the Ed.D. has undergone extensive re-envisioning nationally through the scholarly endeavors, praxis-oriented work, and collaborative efforts of over 100 Ed.D.-granting universities who are members of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) (Buss, Zambo, Zambo, Perry, & Williams, 2017; Perry, 2016).

Furthermore, professors of doctoral programs whose orientation is social justice are often left with the dilemma of how to infuse issues of class, equity, gender, race, and other related topics as cross-cutting issues within the theory-practice paradigm (Carnegie Project on the Education

Doctorate, 2019; McNae & Reilly, 2018; Noguera, 2001; Reilly, 2016; Reilly & Bauer, 2015; Santamaría & Gaëtane, 2014; Strom, Porfilio, & Lupinacci, 2016). First, the Ed.D. programs must seek to explicate a theory of social justice leadership (Theoharis, 2007). Second, the doctoral program's mission should both clearly state social justice claims and provide the means of operationalizing and evaluating them (Peterson, Bright, & Mukhopadhyay, 2016).

Community-based learning (CBL), when founded on social justice claims of personal and social consciousness of the conditions that affect society's cultural, political, social, and economic circumstances, invites a moral imperative to address them with tactics, strategies, and interventions (Freire, 1970). It is what makes the difference between volunteering one's time and seeking to transform civil society (Mitchell, 2008). CBL can likewise serve as a bridge between theory and practice, providing doctoral students with opportunities to achieve both goals. If the intent of the theory-to-praxis nexus is to make authentic change, and the foundation of that thinking is a recognition of the deep injustices woven into the fabric of society and the necessity of transforming power, then the struggle of how to enact those changes should become part of the CBL project (Freire, 1970).

The following research question guided this institutional review board-approved qualitative case study: How can community-based learning support the goals of a doctoral program focused on educational leadership for social justice? We sought to address how graduate students can engage in genuine change while acknowledging historical injustice. We investigated the efficacy of a community-based learning component that had been infused into a core doctoral leadership course. Through interviews with doctoral students and a review of relevant documents such as notes of class meetings focused on CBL and the students' post-CBL evaluations from their community partners, we sought to understand their perceptions of the relationship to the program's social justice orientation.

In the conversations, students explored the efficacy of CBL in the context of their course by discussing its benefits and challenges. They concluded by providing recommendations for improving the CBL model. Students' input guided future revisions to establish a clearer relationship among social justice themes, the program's learning outcomes, and the theory-praxis paradigm.

A year in advance, we planned the changes for a doctoral course titled, *Transformational Leadership for Student Achievement*—a part of the Ed.D. for Educational Leadership for Social Justice in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University (LMU). The course redesign incorporated an evaluation tool to assess the use of community-based learning through an exploratory qualitative case study. We designed this study to examine students' perceptions and experiences of community-based learning as support for the goals of the doctoral program and the course. The study further examined student perceptions of the access and barriers to including community-based learning in doctoral education. Through interviews with the students engaged in community-based learning projects and data from the community partners, we sought to uncover what promoted and inhibited their work. Finally, we sought student and community partner recommendations for improving the use of CBL in doctoral education.

Through this investigation, we provide a model that faculty and administration can use to consider, examine, and evaluate their use of CBL in doctoral courses. We also reflect on the benefits and challenges we faced in implementing CBL. We conclude with recommendations for the use of community-based learning with the goal of supporting social justice in graduate level education and suggestions for future research.

## Positionality of the Principal Investigators

The "we" in this article primarily refers to two individuals. Chair and Professor of Educational Leadership and Administration, Elizabeth C. Reilly, initiated this course revision over a year in advance of its implementation by writing and receiving a competitive University grant that permitted her to work with University CBL staff. Bryan P. Sanders, who has since earned his doctoral degree, served as co-principal investigator and was a first-year doctoral student enrolled in the class that we investigated. Together, with input from LMU's Director of Community-based Learning, Lezlee P. Matthews, Ph.D., we co-constructed and executed the investigation.

We offer here some additional background about ourselves that provides context for our commitment to doctoral education, to social justice, and to community-based learning.

**Elizabeth C. Reilly.**

Education gives individuals possibilities. From the time I was a young child, this was the message that my mother, a Mexican immigrant, and my father, a second-generation Italian-American, relentlessly repeated. It is therefore no surprise that I view them as my first teachers—the ones who instilled in me the fervent and passionate drive to become educated and to become an educator. Somewhere in the foggy mist of my early years of teaching and my first administrative position in the K-12 educational system, I came to recognize with growing clarity that being a teacher meant being above all a learner, and that being a school leader meant being a teacher of teachers. John Dewey said that it is not enough for a man [or woman] to be good, but that he or she must be good for something. I saw that it was my work to see the gifts in others—both children and colleagues—and to help them discover these gifts and to use them wisely. I experienced novelist George Eliot's words in very real ways: "What do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?" This, then, is the fundamental purpose of education, the goal of teaching, and my work as a teacher, scholar, and educational leader.

**Bryan P. Sanders.**

Raised in a family of tinkerers and teachers, every day contained learning with books and learning by breaks. New ideas were revisions of reality and broken objects were opportunities to see what was inside. This approach to living had a deeper significance that emerged as I gained consciousness and began to understand my grandparents' stories. My mother's family escaped Hitler's Poland and my father's father fled, as a child, from Lenin's Russia. These were big ideas for a small me, and they heavily shaped how I view ingenuity, bravery, risk-taking, and the impact that society has on the individual. The world appeared beautiful and broken to my young mind. I could see that I had plenty to read about and just as much to repair. My concerns for social justice and constructivism developed far earlier than I was aware of those words. I became a young activist in my neighborhood and then began my K-12 teaching career at age 23. To this day, in my work with students, we tinker, we read, we collaborate, and we develop ways to improve and heal the world.

## Structure of the Article

We begin with a brief review of relevant literature to this investigation—namely literature regarding Ed.D. degrees focused on social justice and CBL and its application in higher education. Following the literature review, we present background into the doctoral course that we redesigned to include CBL. We then discuss the methodology, the findings, and conclude with benefits, challenges, and recommendations. In the appendices, we include the CBL unit that we implemented prior to the study and the revised CBL unit that sought to apply what we learned from this investigation.

**Literature on the Ed.D, Social Justice, and Community-based Learning**

Understanding the intersections of the Ed.D. degree, social justice, and community-based learning, as well as their impact on the coursework of doctoral students, is nothing short of complex. In this investigation, we sought to instantiate how community-based learning can propel forward the outcomes and the aims of educational leadership for social justice. The Ed.D. degree is uniquely poised to address this challenge and goal in doctoral education (Buskey & Karvonen, 2012; Robey, P. V. & Bauer, S. C., 2013; Sinclair, Barnacle, & Cuthbert, 2013).

Doctoral education programs for the Ed.D. have a built-in purpose to serve the community: "The intention of the redesigned Ed.D. has been to distinguish it from the Ph.D. that is preparation for scholarship while the Ed.D. program is preparation for practice" (Everson, 2006, p. 5). This intent encountered the challenge of professors and administration creating appropriate time for doctoral students to engage in community-based learning. The oft-heard phrase "community service" is nothing like community-based learning: "Participation is a necessary but hardly sufficient condition for learning" (Buskey & Karvonen, 2012, p. 19). Any dissonance between the mission statement and the coursework can greatly affect the credibility of CBL.

The Ed.D. program, by virtue of its creation, set its own path for change: "Faculty cannot teach about creating and leading socially just schools with credibility if they are not modeling these principles in their own departments, which includes working with practitioners on the front lines to reform schools" (Cambron & McCarthy, 2005, pp. 216-217). This was a radical suggestion—that as a doctoral program sets out to reform other schools, it too ought to reform itself. However, it was paramount that they do just that. A culture shift was an essential next step: "Community-university partnerships that move beyond the rhetoric of collaboration require universities to shift the university culture to (a) value community knowledge and share power with community stakeholders and (b) value and support faculty and student time, labor, and the outputs of community-engaged scholarship." (Curwood, 2011, p. 24). The potential for real change became possible when thinking and ideation became larger in scope and impact. The university degree came to life and had life-changing effects for students and their communities.

Important to the principles of social justice is that "community development starts with what is present in the community and the capacities of its residents and workers, rather than what is absent or problematic" (Jacoby, 2015, p. 8). Additionally, when this work was done well and with meaning, it asked also that local residents participate. The Ed.D. program had to rethink and rebuild its existing structures to accommodate its own purpose for existence and "reconstruct roles and relationships at the school level around a vibrant core purpose focused on social justice and directed at improving student learning" (Cambron & McCarthy, 2005, p. 215). Further, it was suggested in the literature that professors who teach in the doctoral program become active participants in national, state, and local politics to serve as models of engagement as well as mentor their students with recent experience: "Mentoring from a distance does not prepare educational leaders for this difficult work" (Cambron & McCarthy, 2005, p. 217). This served as yet another pivot point where graduate professors could demonstrate the credibility of their programs.

With the intentions clear and the goals written, nationwide Ed.D. programs still demonstrated ongoing efforts to put a community-based learning component into action: "Most institutions have traditionally only paid minimal attention to the development of their students as leaders in terms of offering specific leadership programs or curricula" (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001, p. 15). The disconnect was in part due to a growing importance and discussion of quantifiable data to measure the specific effectiveness of schools adequately preparing school leaders while downplaying harder-to-measure knowledge built from experience

(Cambron & McCarthy, 2005). The shift in focus to quantifiable data-gathering did not directly account for the anecdotal evidence which "indicated that student leadership participants cited increased confidence in their abilities, leadership skills, and willingness to serve in a leadership role" (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001, p. 16). These scholars agreed, though, that doctoral programs must focus on social justice in order to deliver a transformative learning experience for its up-and-coming school and community leaders.

Similarly, scholars also affirm that embedding the community-based learning experiences for doctoral students inside their coursework and studies would provide the best conditions for success: "In the case of educational leadership preparation, the curriculum must include a variety of opportunities for doctoral students to work in partnerships" (Everson, 2006, p.6). This approach honored the integrity of both the student and the community served by the partnership; however, the well-intentioned but unsustainable model of dipping in and out of communities to perform community service or to serve as a volunteer was not seen to match social justice goals. Further, "reciprocity implies that the community is not a learning laboratory and that service-learning should be designed *with* the community to meet needs identified *by* the community" (Jacoby, 2015, p. 4). The role of volunteering was not completely dismissed, however, though it was no longer promoted as a base level expectation:

> Interestingly, one of the independent variables that predicted each of the five developmental outcomes was hours per week in volunteering. The more hours students spent performing volunteer work, the more likely they were to show growth in the developmental areas of Leadership Skills and Knowledge, Civic Responsibility, their understanding of Personal and Social Values, and their awareness of Multicultural and Community Issues. (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001, p. 23)

The literature overwhelmingly agreed that a partnership in this critical social justice work must honor the identity and direction of the community served, and that this type of partnership led to the transformative work promised by the university to its students and to its partners (hooks, 2003; Lambert, Zimmerman, & Gardner, 2016; Santamaria & Gaëtane, 2014).

It was in the distinction from traditional service learning, community service, and volunteerism that community-based learning and critical service-learning programs defined themselves as better aligned with the Ed.D. program. This representative model for transforming education was most powerful when engaged in social justice work informed by critical theory and enacted through community-based service-learning experiences (Mitchell, 2008).

Additionally, the explicit engagement with Freirean (1970) principles allowed for doctoral students to gain necessary leadership experience: "How power relationships are produced and reproduced should be ongoingly observed and critiqued, with a consciousness geared toward reconfiguring power relationships to reverse current (and expected) hierarchies in traditional service practice" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 58). The "one and done" volunteerism did not empower doctoral students to see themselves as agents of social change, which has understandably been found as far more difficult a task.

The Ed.D. program holds great potential and power in providing a nurturing and challenging faculty-student engagement with community-based learning, but many barriers have been documented, including a "lack of imagination about how to connect disciplinary scholarship to public purposes; how to integrate teaching, research, and outreach toward meeting community needs; and how to fashion long-term careers as engaged scholars" (O'Meara, 2008, p. 28). When faculty leaders held central the purpose and vision of the Ed.D. program and advocated for its

manifestation through an authentic community-based learning experience, they modeled the transformative leadership capable of positive change for generations of underserved communities looking to transform themselves (Mitchell, 2008).

**Community-based Learning, Transformational Leadership, and Social Justice Today**

Much of the more recent literature on community-based learning (CBL) and social justice is framed through the phrase, "service-learning and social justice." A number of scholars continue a commitment to investigating service-learning, as it is viewed as a key means of developing citizens with a social justice orientation in university settings (Mitchell & Soria, 2018). The work focuses principally on undergraduate approaches to service-learning, with over 600 published studies in the past 30 years (Furco, Jones-White, Huesman Jr., & Segrue Gorny, 2016). Numerous scholars examined civic identity though the lens of human development (Kinloch, 2015; Mitchell, 2015). For the purposes of this investigation, human development themes were beyond our scope. Some smaller data sets, however, provide some insight on service-learning in graduate education and provided some related thinking on transformational leadership and social justice-oriented themes (Suess, 2018).

In 2016, Suess, for example, examined the findings from 186 University of Pennsylvania post-semester surveys of undergraduate and graduate students from these four perspectives: service orientation and social engagement; complex problem-solving; transformative leadership; and evaluation. The students were enrolled in a variety of classes for their service-learning experiences; the study therefore provided some general data that the investigator used to make a case for the overall efficacy of service-learning. For the purposes of our investigation, we focused on the findings related to transformative leadership, since this was the theme of our course. Suess found that leadership skills such as the ability to connect to others, understand the issues of social inequalities and reflection on these circumstances "were positively correlated with a capacity for collaborative engagement and problem-solving/adaptability" (2018, p. 284). Negative correlations occurred if students viewed the social problems as intractable and if they were unable to adapt to challenges they did not anticipate. Again, because of the limitations of the study, it is unclear whether or not disaggregated data would suggest more resilient leadership skills for graduate students versus the undergraduates who were also part of this sample.

Furco, Jones-White, Huesman Jr., & Segrue Gorny (2016) stated that "the most positive and consistent findings of service-learning participation across different types of educational settings, student populations, and community settings are found primarily in the personal and social development domains" (p. 145). The investigators did, though, make a call for expanding and deepening the examination of the impact of service-learning on a variety of settings, for many purposes, and with varying populations of university students. Furco and his colleagues' work, however, suggested that examining service-learning within the context of work designed to promote leadership development may garner insight to support its efficacy.

Finally, some scholars are addressing service-learning from feminist standpoints (Seethaller, 2016), and others from critical theoretical perspectives (Warren-Gordon & Santamaría, 2018). Still others are seeking to instantiate service-learning by providing a philosophical lens, invoking, for example, John Dewey's work (Kezar & Rhoads, 2001). Each of these provided more nuanced perspectives on service-learning and did tie to our social justice projects and philosophical dispositions. As we move past our initial investigation, these scholars' approaches may inform future lines of inquiry.

**Redesigning the Course**

The goal of the redesign of this core course was to include CBL in a doctoral course titled, *Transformational Leadership for Student Achievement*. The course included 16 doctoral students who would participate in community-based learning (CBL) projects. So as to incorporate CBL into the leadership class, we restructured the student learning outcomes, developed a protocol for conducting CBL in the field, and designed the study by which we would assess it. This redesign began a year in advance of teaching the course.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

There were six student learning outcomes (SLO) for the course based on literature reflecting transformational educational leadership for social justice-oriented themes (Dugan, 2006; Coleman, 2012). In particular, SLO 6 provided a more nuanced attainment of the course's outcomes as it related to CBL.

The course's SLOs were as follows:

1. Articulate effective and relevant theories and models of leadership.
2. Apply transformational leadership in different situations including change, continuous improvement, cultural and organizational development, and reform.
3. Identify systems that support instruction and student achievement.
4. Analyze issues of social justice as related to school success for diverse learning communities.
5. Identify and apply methodologies that increase school-wide democracy and leader and teacher effectiveness with students from diverse learning communities.
6. Demonstrate a deeper insight into strengths and growth areas as a leader through community engagement.

For the purposes of this investigation, SLO 6, which was related to CBL, was most relevant and included these additional sub-SLOs:

1. Demonstrate a deeper insight into your strengths and growth areas as a leader through community engagement and fieldwork notes.
2. Identify leading theories and models of leadership and explain how those are evident in local leaders with whom we work in community-based settings.
3. Compare and contrast the relationship among leadership theories, organizational theories, and community-based practices.
4. Evaluate the relationship between leadership and social justice and its impact on you.

**Planned Changes to the Curriculum and Teaching Methods**

The students' CBL projects would focus on application of the leadership content in the course based on the four sub-SLOs that are detailed under SLO 6, Community Engagement. Students would engage in a series of activities with their selected community partners over a 16-week period for a minimum of 15 hours—the timeframe that LMU specified as suggested for CBL projects.

The CBL project had two components: the 15 hours of community-based fieldwork and a field notebook that consisted of at least 8 reflections. Students received points for each hour of documented service to the community partner. The students also received points for completing each reflection. One of those activities, although voluntary, would include the opportunity to participate in a semi-structured interview with us. Students who chose to be interviewed could elect to complete 14 hours of fieldwork in lieu of 15 hours, but none elected this option. The second

part of the project—the field notebook—had some structure. The students' 8 reflections had suggested topics for reflection, but were self-selected, based on prompts that were tied to the course's SLOs. The full CBL project is described in detail in Appendix A.

**Doctoral student CBL placement.**

We invited the sixteen students to select their sites. Seven students chose public, charter, or Catholic schools in the greater Los Angeles area. Nine of the students chose non-profit organizations as their community partners. The non-profit organizations ranged in type. Some examples of these community partners our students selected are as follows:

- Support for people with disabilities;
- Scholarship-granting organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students of merit;
- White people against racism;
- Youth leadership;
- Equitable communities and agents for social change; and ,
- Religious and charitable activities, grounded in the Islamic faith, and focused on integrating Muslim Americans into American society.

**Community-based learning process.**

There are three components to the CBL process at our University. The first is the service agreement between the student and community partner, the second the supervisor's evaluation at the end of the agreed service period, and the third is an anonymous student survey that students can complete at the end of the project.

***Service Agreement.***

The Service Agreement is a contract that includes the following components:

- Contact information for the student;
- Contact information for the community organization;
- Specific tasks the student is expected to perform;
- Pre-service requirements (e.g., orientation, training, live scan, background check, etc.);
- The total number of hours the student plans to complete at the placement;
- The student and site supervisor signatures; and
- Student submission to LMU's Center for Service and Action (CSA)

The student and community partner agree on the goals of the project and the tasks and responsibilities that will meet the goals. The site supervisor is expected to provide the student with any training necessary to complete the work and feedback about performance and if necessary, any areas that need improvement.

***Supervisor Evaluation.***

At the end of the service period, the supervisor or designee completes an evaluation of the student's performance. It includes these components:

- The student fills out relevant course information before giving it to the site supervisor;
- The site supervisor evaluates the student on 6 criteria, confirms the total number of service hours completed, and suggests ways to make the experience better for the agency in the future; and
- The site supervisor signs the document and either gives it back to the student to turn in directly to CSA or submits it to CSA personally via email or fax.

***Student Evaluation.***

Following completion of the project, the student provides an evaluation of their experience at

the service site. The survey is voluntary and anonymous and is administered using Qualtrics software. The data is aggregated and used for LMU's CSA internal evaluation purposes.

**Methodology**

Both of us participated in all aspects of the study, from the design, to the interviews, to the analysis and production of this manuscript. Verbally, by email, and on the class learning management system, we informed the students of the purpose, the significance, and the research question for the investigation, and that their involvement was voluntary and confidential. We provided the interview questions, the Letter of Informed Consent, and the Experimental Subjects Bill of Rights in advance, along with their invitations to be interviewed. The students had the option of using their actual names or pseudonyms. Most elected to use their actual names, but out of an abundance of caution for protection of human subjects, we use pseudonyms for all participants.

The interview questions that we asked the students were as follows:

1. Context
    a. What is your name, your current professional position, and your relationship to the CBL project you undertook for your doctoral class?
2. Benefits of CBL
    a. What do you see are the benefits of community-based learning?
    b. Are there benefits you experienced in conducting CBL with marginalized individuals in underserved and cross-cultural contexts?
    c. Are there benefits that the organization or those with whom you worked experienced during your period of service?
    d. How does CBL promote an agenda of educational leadership for social justice? Why or why not?
3. Challenges
    a. What are the challenges that you faced in engaging in CBL work?
    b. How did you work through those challenges?
4. Mission and Goals
    a. What is the connection of the mission of the University to the work you did?
    b. What is the connection of the work to the goal of leadership for social justice?
5. Recommendations
    a. What recommendations would you offer to the professor and the LMU Center for Service and Action regarding doctoral students' engagement with CBL as a part of their course?
    b. Is there anything we have not asked that you think is important for us to know?

In addition to the interviews, we held periodic feedback sessions with the entire class. Dr. Matthews facilitated some of these sessions. These sessions represented our conscious effort to model a transformational approach to organizational leadership. Borne out of the dialogues, we considered modifications to future iterations of the course. The doctoral students had multiple opportunities to share the benefits and challenges of CBL, as well as to make recommendations for improvement. Through this meta-loop of the program improving itself through a transformational model, we invited the students to carry it forward into their own CBL work. We consciously attempted to dovetail our efforts with the spirit and impetus for change found in the literature (Cambron & McCarthy, 2005; Mitchell, 2008; Santamaria & Gaëtane, 2014).

## Assessing Trustworthiness of the Data

Following the interviews, we transcribed the audio recordings and provided a transcript for member checking to the students who participated and offered to send them a copy of significant findings from the study. We also assembled other documents that provided insight into the research question, such as notes from the class feedback sessions, the students' fieldwork notebooks, and the students' summative assessments from their community partners. We used a thematic, six-step analytical approach described by Braun and Clarke (2006) as the method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within data.

The concept of validity has historically been linked to quantitative research, so because this study used a qualitative approach, we applied the principle of trustworthiness (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011). Guba (1981) named four strategies for assessing trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

We established credibility by selecting research methods that are considered well-established in our field (Shenton, 2004). We further sought to establish credibility through our use of purposive sampling and the development of "thick" descriptions of students' responses. From the interview data, we wrote detailed narratives of each student's story. The stories of each student highlighted a dominant theme and a series of subordinate themes.

Transferability is more challenging with small-scale qualitative studies. While we are able to make suggestions for consideration as other professors consider the efficacy of doctoral education that includes CBL as a means to promote social justice, this was a study that included a limited number of individuals—seventeen in total. Furthermore, we recognize that the type of university (independent, faith-based), the demographics of the type of students we select for our doctorate, and other factors, may lead to different results in other settings. Even so, we believe the method we designed warrants use in other university settings and with greater numbers of doctoral students across the nation so as to expand the literature on this subject.

A study's dependability comes about by presenting findings and discussion to others with similar expertise who can affirm the veracity of the analysis and its meaning. This was manifested by each of us conducting individual analyses, comparing them to each other, and seeking to gain agreement on what we learned. We further sought dependability by continually reflecting on the processes we were using to gather data and making changes as necessary. For example, we discovered in the earliest interviews that if students' responses were vague, we needed to seek examples from them so as to provide a more detailed portrait of their opinions or experiences.

One of the techniques for establishing confirmability is to create an audit trail. Our audit trail included transparent procedures that were known to our institutional review board, the participants, and to ourselves. We have preserved letters of informed consent, an electronic paper trail of how we executed the study, and the data for a fixed period of time so that it is available for our future re-analysis and to future investigators.

## Findings

Our interviews with the students and our examination of related documents such as supervisors' evaluations, revealed benefits, challenges, and recommendations. First, we present the background context for the interviews and the community partner survey data. Then, we present the three broad topics within the themes of CBL's relationship to the social justice mission and focus of the degree, transformational leadership, which was the course focus, and the students' overall experiences of their Ed.D. education. We conclude with the data from the community partners' surveys.

## Background Context

The Ed.D. students enter our School of Education as a cohort of no more than 18 students each summer. This cohort had 17 students, 16 of whom participated in the study and one who served as co-principal investigator. Their first two doctoral courses occur in a summer session of six weeks, where we establish a pattern of one theory-oriented course and one methodology-oriented course each term. Following that summer, the students enter their first, 16-week fall term, which is when they enroll in the course, *Transformational Leadership for Student Achievement*. Although nearly all cohort members are full-time educators in roles varying from teacher leader to superintendent, the fall serves as "reality therapy" for students as they look towards continually balancing professional responsibilities, full-time student workloads, and personal demands for the next three years. The course met for 2.5 hours most Monday evenings from late August through mid-December.

We informed the students in advance of the fall term that there would be a fieldwork component of at least 15 hours in their theory-based course. Along with the professor, our University's Director of CBL provided the overview for CBL and their project, why CBL was a beneficial course component, and how they would select their community partner. Students had approximately four weeks to make their selection and begin their work. We assumed that permitting students to select their community partner provided greater agency in their control over both time commitment and personal or professional interests. The University had hundreds of community partners that it had vetted previously that would take student volunteers. If after reviewing that list and contacting prospective partners, no pre-approved community partner met their interests, students were free to put forth one of their own choosing. Dr. Matthews then worked with the organization to place them on the approved list.

## Student Interviews

While we derived many benefits, challenges, and recommendations from the data, we highlight here a few key findings by sharing some of the doctoral students' stories. Kevin's story presents some of the benefits of CBL, Lilly's offers some of the challenges, and Rhonda's invites recommendations. Woven throughout their stories are the threads of leadership for social justice.

### CBL benefits.

Students repeatedly reported that the singular opportunity to spend time in an organization that was not their own permitted them to consider transformational leadership in new contexts. Kevin described the challenge of grappling with making the connection between the theoretical discussions in class and what he saw happening in the after-school program where he volunteered. Much of the time, he felt the after-school program administrator was simply surviving. She seemed to view him as something of a breath of fresh air simply because there was another adult in the room with her 30 charges. She came to appreciate there was someone to take on the role of supporting the students with their homework or lead a game in the yard.

While at first, he did as he was instructed, over time Kevin took initiative in circumstances that he felt warranted his leadership engagement. He noted early on, for example, that some of the children were very disrespectful to the Director. Rather than punishing the children, he used the occasions to enter into dialogue with them about respect—what it is, how we demonstrate it, and how we should treat each other.

Kevin did believe that he was able to make the bridge between social justice and the CBL project. He noted, "Absolutely I think there's an ability to promote the agenda [of social justice]. One, because you're analyzing leadership and structure, but then two, specifically working in a

different context than what I'm specifically used to has its advantages as well" (Kevin, personal communication, n.d.). He felt that working in a different type of school and supporting children from a different socio-economic setting from his own school helped him to see how the principles of social justice took on even greater relevance.

**CBL challenges.**

As a single mother with younger children, Lilly's priority in selecting her community partner was that the work might be done remotely on evenings or weekends. She found the perfect partner to meet her need, but discovered that what they needed was a bit of a stretch, given her professional expertise. As a former high school teacher, she felt ill-equipped to write arts education curriculum for this national non-profit. Even so, she was an educator by training and as a current director of teacher education, understood how to access arts education resources to support her in the project development.

What Lilly had not accounted for in selecting her community partner was the project's relevance to a course in transformational leadership, and she found herself struggling to make the bridge between what she was studying in class and what she was doing for the organization. She mused,

> I'm feeling successful in terms of [the project]; I know how appreciated the work is. I know how happy they all are…and how excited they seem about it. I don't feel that there's a success in terms of leadership or in terms of it connecting. I see it as a good deed, that I'm contributing to something that's good, the service part. But in terms of it connecting to me learning something in this class, in this content…There's kind of a disconnect there. (Lilly, personal communication, n.d.)

Lilly suggested that were she to select a partner again, she would add the leadership criterion.

Lilly's story does not end with a lamentation, though. Some months after the class ended, the non-profit bestowed on her its highest honor at a national awards luncheon.

**CBL recommendation.**

If families face problems with child or spousal abuse, or drug use in the home, and they are referred to the Department of Children and Family Services, they are provided with a variety of wrap-around services and support. One of the support systems is a parent group that meets weekly, along with their children, who range in ages from birth through 17. The parents meet separately from the children, where they engage in an array of activities. Rhonda, who is by training a licensed counselor, volunteered with this agency for years, but gave it up when she began her doctoral studies. With the CBL assignment, she elected to return to work with the Wednesday night group.

Unquestionably, her counseling expertise was of benefit to the group, as she noted that in her school, where she then served as an assistant principal, she would have perhaps two or three children with severe behavioral and emotional issues. With this group, however, closer to 60% of the children suffered from severe issues, likely due to the family trauma. Besides the counseling support, she found her leadership experience was of benefit to the group. She led the design of more age-appropriate activities for the array of children and she was able to establish more structures that once in place, led to replicable practices in an organization that faced high turnover of its staff and volunteers.

While the work was satisfying, Rhonda reflected, though, on how to improve the CBL experience, given that doctoral students such as herself have "fed every community, helped every school, and painted every church." She asked if there was another level to CBL—a deeper way to

tie it to transformational leadership. She invited us to consider ways to enhance the experience:

> I would have loved to tap into people who do social justice work and pick their brains. I want to know how do you do [this work] without getting burnt out? How did you get here? How do you stay here? Is this sustainable? We're all trying to be those individuals. Are we now going to reinvent the wheel, and are we going to make the same mistakes? Are we creating a level of mentorship or a pipeline that we can guarantee that they would want us to see above and beyond themselves? Is that conversation happening that can happen outside of our professors? I think that part of it would, to me, be great. (Rhonda, personal communication, n.d.)

Rhonda emphasized that for doctoral students who subscribe to social justice precepts not only in theory, but in practice, that the "something more" of the experience must be beyond just community service. Opportunities to hear social justice leaders, to shadow them, and to receive mentorship would, in her mind, engender true transformational leadership.

**Community partner reflections.**

Towards the end of the semester and at the conclusion of the projects, the community partners completed an evaluation that consisted of a brief survey and an opportunity to provide narrative thoughts on their work with the students. Presented here are first the survey results and then a summary of their reflections.

***Survey results.***

Community partners completed a survey on each student that addressed six issues: attendance and punctuality, performance of responsibilities, maintaining a positive attitude, demonstrating respect for staff and respect for the clients, and understanding the issues the organization faced.

Table 1.
*Student Scoring on Likert Scale of Quality*

| ***Evaluation Criteria*** | ***1*** | ***2*** | ***3*** | ***4*** | ***5*** | ***Don't Know*** | ***Total*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attendance & punctuality | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Performed responsibilities well | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Maintained a positive attitude | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 12 |
| Demonstrated respect for staff | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Demonstrated respect for clients | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Demonstrated understanding of issue | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 12 |
| **Total** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **1** | **70** | **1** | **72** |

*Source:* Community Based Learning, Supervisor Final Evaluations

A rating of one (1) indicated no attainment of the item and a five (5) indicated the top attainment of the item. Of the twelve surveys available, nearly 100% of the students attained top ratings with each item. The results suggest a strong attainment of the six standards expected of the students in their work. These ratings were not confidential, so it is unknown the degree to which the community partner-supervisor felt free to be completely honest in the assessment, but based on the narrative data, there is no reason to suggest the partners did not reflect their actual perceptions of the students' performance.

***Narrative comments.***

The community partners provided comments on their students' work with their

organizations that were congruent with the survey data. Some comments follow:

- "The student was outstanding. [They] will be missed."
- "The student was a positive addition to our community and fully displayed an understanding of Restorative Justice."
- "The student has been very respectful of our community."
- "What [they] created for our organization is priceless. We are so grateful."
- "The student is an amazing critical thinker and is able to navigate through different environments in order to find resources and solutions. [Their] experience and feedback has also helped the staff get through recent rough times of transitions at our program. [Their] support came at a perfect time."
- "[Their] dedication to ensuring our youth enjoy and learn from a welcoming environment is commendable."
- "The student has been a tremendous source of support to our organization. [They have] helped us advance our goals in numerous ways."

Overall, the minimum 15 hours was not a great deal of time for the project. Even so, the students' ability to integrate easily into the new organizations was seamless, their empathy and respect for the partners and clients was highly evident, and the skills and leadership they exhibited were consistently strong.

## Discussion and Recommendations

Several insights emerged from this investigation. We present below some of the benefits, challenges, and recommendations.

### Benefits

Our investigation suggests there are numerous benefits to including community-based learning (CBL) in doctoral education. It provides a means by which professors and doctoral students can achieve multiple programmatic goals simultaneously.

#### Service to the community.

Student response to providing service to a community partner was overwhelmingly positive. Their supervisors' feedback was likewise enthusiastic and encouraging to and supportive of the students, our Director of CBL, and to us. One student, whose project helped a non-profit launch a national arts education initiative, received recognition as the non-profit's national hero, complete with a luncheon, awards ceremony, and national publicity (Lilly, personal communication, April 25, 2017; Koehl, 2017). Opportunities to embrace the missions of other organizations helped the students to experience entirely different leadership styles and organizational structures and to make connections to their own work settings.

#### Opportunity for Realizing Theory and Praxis.

The common themes that doctoral students cited as positive aspects of CBL centered around an increase of space and time to practice the principles of transformative leadership, to engage with communities, and to enact change. While a few doctoral students registered concern that the project did not make a direct connection to the leadership theories they were studying, the community partners' feedback emphasized many aspects of the praxis of leadership for social justice. The doctoral students broadly exhibited a critical thinking orientation toward solutions for problems that vex the organizations, coupled with a commitment to and appreciation of the actual needs of the community partners' clients.

Thus, while in real time, the focus of the course and the doctoral students' efforts may have seemed at odds, over time the significance of their work in terms of its social justice implications

may become more evident and the contributions substantial. The pebble in the pond metaphor is applicable: in attempting to assess the nexus between doctoral education and CBL, revisiting the impact over time may be of great benefit.

## Challenges

### Service to the community?

One of the benefits of CBL was also something of a liability. CBL in student coursework attempts to build a habit of service to one's community specifically and to society at large. It is frequently part of the undergraduate university experience, but less so with graduate education. In the case of the population of doctoral students whom we vetted and admitted, they already came hard-wired with strong commitments to social justice, to community service, and to fostering strong alliances and initiatives within their communities. This fact, coupled with their ardent, social justice orientation, led to ongoing debates within the cohort about whether the 15-hour experience was perpetuating the savior mentality often associated with volunteerism. In other words, there was little that could be done in so short a time frame, so we needed to consider whether there were real benefits to the community partner.

While the doctoral students debated the value of only 15 hours of work with their community partners, 100% of the partners reported the strong benefits of the partnership. Specific feedback in both their surveys and narrative comments suggested that the leadership the students brought—characterized by humility, compassion, and expertise for the organizations and for the clients they were serving—were of critical benefit to the community partners, regardless of the time limitation. In this way, power-sharing was evidenced in the doctoral students' attitudes and aptitudes, as well as in the partner's willingness to invite them into the organization that evinced the hallmarks of authentic, trusting partnerships. Future investigations could examine the power-sharing goal of the course in greater depth.

Another point of discussion among the doctoral students was their suggestion that the embedded CBL of this one course be expanded into a cross-cutting CBL project that ran through multiple courses throughout the three-year program. In this manner, the CBL project could serve as a tool for sustained engagement with organizations beyond the few months of the original design. The larger social justice goal of sharing power with organizations and assisting in their own organic growth would become more evident simply as a factor of time spent longitudinally. The debates in class were fueled by a deep passion and interest in Freirean concepts that the doctoral program values and teaches, so it came as no surprise that the doctoral students in this study were compelled to press their professors for greater engagement at the nexus of theory and practice.

### Self-selected CBL.

Our initial intent was to match students with community partners that the University had previously vetted and had a working relationship with. The community partners ranged from schools to soup kitchens. Given that doctoral students are mature, working professionals, it seemed reasonable to assume that selecting one's partner would provide buy-in and permit the students to exercise agency in selecting a setting most beneficial to themselves.

Unfortunately, the lack of structure became more of a challenge than an asset in many instances. Because it was up to the site supervisor to work with the student on what their work would consist of—and the range of needs varied greatly—there was no consistency between and among sites as to what the student's CBL work would be. One student might be tutoring students while another was designing a database. Referring back to the SLOs for the course, there were not

consistent leadership experiences offered that directly related to the outcomes.

Another structural challenge related to the time students took to select their community partners. Our parameter was generous—a month—but losing 4 weeks of a 16-week semester served as a liability for those who took longer. Some had no data early on and therefore no contributions to make to our ongoing debriefing sessions in class. Some of the students who took longer to find their placements also then experienced some anxiety in feeling rushed to complete their projects.

**Time commitment.**

One of the challenges arose with the roll-out of the project and the concern of the majority of students that 15 hours of fieldwork was a burden in addition to their professional responsibilities, two courses, and other assignments for the leadership class. Although we made accommodations by reframing some class sessions as "working sessions," there was a loss of class time to process their experiences and to engage more deeply in other aspects of the curriculum. We suspect that notification of the CBL project, its time commitment, and the project requirements prior to start of the semester may alleviate the concerns to some degree. We remain unclear about the impact of the schedule changes, though, without further investigation.

## Recommendations

We offer several lessons learned and recommendations for professors who are considering including CBL as a component of their doctoral courses.

**Clear relationship between the SLOs and CBL activities.**

If the goal of CBL in a doctoral course is more than just conducting community service, then we recommend professors reflect on their Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and what activities the students will conduct in the field that will align with them. Readings for any course can serve as a basis for developing activities that will reinforce the course's SLOs.

We also invite professors to align the choice of community partners with the SLOs and CBL activities. Arguably, any non-profit organization would provide leadership opportunities with a social justice focus, but the students did not seem to make as clear a connection if the organizational mission was not directly connected to education. Further research may provide insight into why this was the case. Our students who chose to conduct activities in organizations that were education-oriented—schools, non-profits that support education—saw the greatest relevance to social justice, leadership, and their doctoral studies.

While in version 1.0 of the course we invited students to use our University's Center for Service and Action to support their selection of a community partner, the results were too mixed in terms of achieving a close alignment with the SLOs. In version 2.0, we redesigned the CBL activities to align more directly with the SLOs. We also recommended that students, who all worked in public, charter, or independent schools—and on occasion in higher education or other non-profit organizations—conduct their work with their organization's colleagues.

Working with Linda Lambert (2016) and her colleagues over the following year, we developed specific leadership activities that aligned with the course SLOs and the six themes of their book that address the development of leadership capacity in educational settings. There were two, principal components to the revised CBL unit: conducting the field-based fieldwork with individuals at the site and memorializing the project through reflections and activities with those same individuals. Appendix B provides details of the revised CBL project in its entirety. While we have anecdotal evidence to suggest that this iteration provided a stronger relationship of SLOs to the activities, such as a more flattened power structure with leadership in the organization, we must

continue the data-gathering and examine this further. In future investigations we will assess the impact of the changes we made that resulted from this first study.

**University and other community-based learning resources.**

Professors need not go it alone. Many universities provide departments or units that focus on CBL and their staff are accustomed to supporting professors' inclusion of CBL in their courses and programs. Any community's many non-profit organizations will also provide abundant support and resources for supporting CBL.

In our case, a university-based competitive grant supported our work in the course redesign that allowed thoughtful consideration over time about how to integrate CBL. In addition, the ongoing partnership and support of our university's CBL department helped with implementation and with modifications over time.

**A model for assessing CBL.**

This investigation and our transformation of the course sought to integrate this emphasis on theory to practice in its methodological approaches with the University's mission. We found that the three "buckets" of questions about benefits, challenges, and recommendations regarding CBL's relationship to social justice, transformational leadership, and to doctoral education provided robust insights into our students' experiences. Each interview took less than an hour and might be conducted as a focus group to great benefit. The interview tool, then, provides an effective means for faculty to assess CBL.

In addition, although our University, which is a faith-based, independent institution, has a mission that is based on Jesuit-oriented values, all universities have missions that may serve as foundational support for including CBL in coursework. Other agencies such as those who accredit our programs that include state, regional, and/or national such as Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), or with whom we affiliate, such as American Educational Research Association, Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, or University Council for Educational Administration, generally include a social justice orientation in their missions, guiding principles, and standards. These can serve as guidance to support Ed.D. programs with a social justice focus.

**Opportunities for future research.**

While greater numbers of university faculty nationally are working to include CBL components in their courses, until this study, no empirical investigation had been conducted that could serve to inform faculty decisions regarding the efficacy of including CBL in their doctoral courses to forward the university's mission, program learning outcomes, and faculty's student learning outcomes. Two of the limitations of this study were the sample size and the context of the university—faith-based and mid-sized, independent. We recommend future studies include larger samples of doctoral students at a variety of institutional types. We also suggest a longitudinal study where doctoral alumni are invited to consider the impact of CBL after some time has passed.

Other participants in future studies might also include doctoral professors who teach the courses, and administrators who oversee CBL at the universities. While we did have some data from our community partners, a more-robust protocol that includes in-depth interviews may provide more insight from those who receive and support the students conducting CBL. Finally, a quantitative approach might provide a means to reach a larger sample of students in a shorter timeframe.

## Summary

The choice made at every university to house, staff, and fund a graduate school of education represents a set of values that focuses on the good that people can create in the world. Courses that

consciously help bridge students' experiences from theory to practice serve as examples of meaningful work—this is work that fosters new work, and is never complete, particularly when entered into with the spirit and intent found in the literature and in the findings of this study. We agree that graduate-level education must itself transform so as to address the authentic needs of the students and the communities with whom they wish to partner. A disruption, a renewal—this mindset will attract a new type of student and professor interested in aligning community-based learning, social justice, and doctoral-level coursework (O'Meara, 2008).

Engaging in social justice work through community-based learning at the doctoral level assumes we have an interest in developing tools and practices to transform communities. And further, it suggests we wish to develop tools and practices with the community itself so that they can nurture and sustain their own multigenerational trajectory change. We wish for the readers and proponents of this work to engage deeply and with awareness so as to promote a sustainable and effective collaborative relationship with the community and the university.

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Appendix A
Community-based Learning Project 1.0

**Community Based Learning Project**

Fieldwork hours due throughout Term
Final Fieldwork Notebook Due [date] at 11:59 PM posted on BB/Journal

**150 for fieldwork; 80 for field notebook points**

The community-based learning assignment is intended to provide a semi-structured opportunity to:

1. Demonstrate a deeper insight into your strengths and growth areas as a leader through community engagement and fieldwork notes;
2. Identify leading theories and models of leadership and explain how those are evident in local leaders with whom we work in community-based settings;
3. Compare and contrast the relationship among leadership theories, organizational theories, and community-based practices; and
4. Evaluate the relationship among personal, organizational, and spiritual leadership through the lens of faith and justice.

**Community-Based Field Experiences (150 points)**

This assignment includes a minimum of 15 hours of community-based work at a community-based, youth-oriented setting or other pre-approved community partner. You will receive 10 points for each hour of documented work.

1. Students register for a community-based field placement through the LMU's Center for Service & Action. http://studentaffairs.lmu.edu/activitiesservice/centerforserviceaction/aboutcsa/
2. Students contact their placements.
3. Students will document and receive a sign-off on the hours served from community partners.
4. Community partners will complete evaluations on students at the conclusion of the hours served. This evaluation is due at the same time as the field notebook, scanned and posted on MyLMU in a PDF.
5. Additional, detailed information about the semester schedule for the CBL project is on MyLMU.

**Field Notebook (80 points)**

In addition to at least 15 hours of community-based work, you will keep a field notebook in which you record your work and reflections following each site visit. A template for each entry will be posted on MyLMU. The field notebook will be checked on an ongoing basis and receive credit at the end of the semester. You will receive up to 10 points for each reflection.

**CBL Field Notebook**

Over the course of the term, you will keep a "field notebook" in which you record your impressions of your CBL work.

1. By the due date, your field notebook should contain a minimum of **eight** entries.
2. The final (eighth) entry should be a summary of what you have learned, the connection between CBL and transformational leadership for student achievement, the relationship to your own values and beliefs, and any other themes you wish to reflect on.
3. Each notebook entry should be between 1 and 2 double-spaced pages. Each one should be dated. Each should occur at different points in the term.
4. The entries should be submitted as ONE document.

You can select your prompts from those listed below or devise your own:

1. What is your role at the community site?
2. What were your initial expectations? Have these expectations changed? How? Why?
3. What do you observe about the leadership of the organization?
4. To what degree does the organization embody principles of transformational leadership?
5. To what degree does the organization embody principles of constructivist leadership?
6. To what degree is the leadership of the organization congruent with your values and beliefs about leadership?
7. Do you note any organizational problems for which improvement science might be applicable? If so describe the problem.
8. What about your community involvement has been an eye-opening experience?
9. What specific skills have you used at your community site?
10. Describe a person you've encountered in the community who made a strong impression on you, positive or negative.
11. Do you see benefits of doing community work? Why or why not?
12. Has your view of the population with whom you have been working changed? How?
13. How has the environment and social conditions affected the people at your site?
14. What institutional structures are in place at your site or in the community? How do they affect the people you work with?
15. Has the experience affected your world view? How?
16. Why does the organization you are working for exist?
17. Did anything about your community involvement surprise you? If so, what?
18. What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective in the community?
19. How does your understanding of the community change as a result of your participation in this project?
20. How can you continue your involvement with this group or social issue?
21. How can you educate others or raise awareness about this group or social issue?
22. What are the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?
23. Talk about any disappointments or successes of your project. What did you learn from it?
24. During your community work experience, have you dealt with being an "outsider" at your site? How does being an "outsider" differ from being an "insider"?
25. How are your values expressed through your community work?
26. What sorts of things make you feel uncomfortable when you are working in the community? Why?
27. Complete this sentence: Because of my service-learning, I am....

Appendix B
Community Engagement Through Leadership Project 2.0
Reflections and Field Experiences Due Throughout Term
Final Fieldwork Report and Community Partner Evaluation Due [date] at 11:59 PM
Post on Brightspace
300 points total: 150 for field experiences and 150 for field notebook

The community engagement through leadership project is intended to provide a semi-structured opportunity to:

- Demonstrate a deeper insight into your strengths and growth areas as a leader through community engagement and fieldwork activities;
- Identify leading theories and models of leadership and explain how those are evident in local leader with whom we work in community-based settings;
- Compare and contrast the relationship among leadership theories, organizational theories, and community-based practices; and
- Evaluate the relationship among personal, organizational, and spiritual leadership through the lens of faith and justice.

1. Community-Based Field Experiences (150 points)

This assignment includes community-based work at a "community, youth-oriented setting or other professor- approved community partner." *The work may take place at your present work site (school or non-profit) or one that you wish to investigate and support.* You will receive up to 150 points for the work at the site, which includes any document analyses, interviews, meetings, and conversations related to addressing the leadership activities.

- Students contact their organization and gain permission to engage with the chosen site.
- Students register for their community-based field placement through the LMU's Center for Service & Action. See Brightspace for the PDF form. Once the form is completed, send it to [Director of CBL].
- Students will document and receive a sign-off on the activities completed with community partners at the conclusion of the term.
- Community partners will complete evaluations on students at the conclusion of the activities completed and the report delivered. This evaluation is due at the same time as the field notebook, scanned and posted on Brightspace in a PDF.
- Additional, detailed information about the semester schedule for the community engagement project is on Brightspace.

2. Field Notebook (150 points total)

During the fieldwork, you will keep a field notebook in which you record your reflections on leadership capacity and work with your chosen organization. The field notebook entries will be due on an ongoing basis and receive credit at the end of the semester. Note that there

are two parts for each activity: a reflection on the content from *Liberating Leadership Capacity* and an activity applying the content. You will receive up to 20 points for the first five activities and 50 points for the final report.

Chapter 1 Activities: Leadership Redesigned

a. Write a reflection on *Liberating Leadership Capacity*, Chapter 1. Page 18, Figure 1.3: All theories have assumptions. Do your present beliefs agree or disagree with these assumptions? Why, why not? Provide examples. No more than 2 pages double-spaced. Due [date], 11:59 PM under Module 1, Assignment 2.
b. Plan and execute Activity 1 with community-based partner: Using Figure 1.1 on p. 7, assess the organization's traditional versus constructivist leadership approaches and actions. Provide evidence. You need to receive feedback from at least one other individual in the organization. Due [date], Module 1, Assignment 3.

Chapter 2 Activities: Fostering Leadership Capacity

a. Write a reflection on *Liberating Leadership Capacity*, Chapter 2. Page 33, Figure 2.3: Analyze your own behaviors as a leader. Copy the chart, highlight it, and upload it to Brightspace. Provide a brief narrative with your reflection regarding the assessment. No more than 2 pages double-spaced. Due [date], 11:59 PM under Module 2, Assignment 1.
b. Plan and execute Activity 2 with community-based partners: Using Figure 2.1 on p. 24, assess the organization's leadership capacity with these two elements: breadth of participation and depth of skillfulness. Provide evidence. You need to receive feedback from at least 3 other individuals in the organization. Due [date], at 11:59 PM under Module 2, Assignment 2.

Chapter 3 Activities: Designing Professional Learning Cultures

a. Write a reflection on *Liberating Leadership Capacity*, Chapter 3. Page 33, Figure 2.3: Analyze your own learning curve. Using Kegan's constructive development theory, he describes different levels. Which of the four level(s) resonate with you? More than one may be relevant. Also, design two steps you can take as a part of your professional learning path to move your development forward. Provide a brief narrative with your reflection. No more than 2 pages double-spaced. Due [date], 11:59 PM under Module 2, Assignment 1.
b. Plan and execute Activity 3 with community-based partners: Using Figure 3.2 on p. 55 and based on your analysis in Chapter 2, assess with individuals in the organization the applicable learning path. What are three "next steps" the organization could engage in? Provide their feedback. You need to receive feedback from at least 3 other individuals in the organization. Due [date], at 11:59 PM under Module 2, Assignment 2.

Chapter 4 Activities: Collaborative Dimensions of Leadership

a. Write a reflection on *Liberating Leadership Capacity*, Chapter 4. Page 66, Figure 4.1: Assess your understandings of each core areas. Select one skill area and describe two learning goals for yourself and how you will achieve them. Provide a brief narrative with your reflection. No more than 2 pages double- spaced. Due [date], 11:59 PM under Module 3, Assignment 1.
b. Plan and execute Activity 4 with community-based partners: Using Figure 4.2 on p. 67 diagnose with individuals in the organization the starting place for collaborative dimensions of leadership. What are four strengths and four issues for the four identified areas? If growth areas, what are "next steps" the organization could engage in? Provide their feedback. You need to receive feedback from at least 3 other individuals in the organization. Due [date], at 11:59 PM under Module 3, Assignment 2.

Chapter 5 Activities: Democratization of Knowledge

a. Write a reflection on *Liberating Leadership Capacity*, Chapter 5, pp. 88-92. Consider these three domains: *knowledge for, knowledge in, and knowledge of*. Reflect on one of the most pivotal learning experiences in your career. Describe the experience. Identify which type of knowledge was developed and write about the experience in the appropriate column. More than one may apply. How does this process inform your future work in leadership communities? Provide a brief narrative with your reflection. No more than 2 pages double-spaced. Due [date], at 11:59 PM under Module 3, Assignment 3.
b. Plan and execute Activity 5 with community-based partners: Using Chapter 5, pp. 88-92, share with them the three domains of knowledge. Ask them for ways in which the organization can broaden the construction of knowledge for, in, and of. You need to receive feedback from at least 3 other individuals in the organization. Due [date], at 11:59 PM under Module 3, Assignment 4.

Chapter 6 and Epilogue Activities: Creating Capacity for Systems Change & Pathways to Educational Wisdom

a. Write a reflection on *Liberating Leadership Capacity*, Chapter 6 & Epilogue. What are your take-aways from our work and the work with your community partner? What wisdom did Linda Lambert, our guest speaker, share that is memorable? She emphasized three dimensions: Figure 6.1 (p. 104); Shared Elements of Success (pp. 113-114); and Epilogue & Wise Schools (pp. 124-126). Provide a brief narrative with your reflection. No more than 2 pages double-spaced. Due Monday, [date], 11:59 PM under Module 4, Assignment 1.
b. Plan and execute Activity 6 with community-based partners: This is your final report to your organization with whom you worked this term. Write up a brief analysis of the five assessments you conducted with the organization. Conclude with recommendations for their consideration. Present your report and findings to them. Have your supervisor sign off on your evaluation. Post both on Brightspace. Due [date], at 11:59 PM under Module 4, Assignment 2.

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# A Case Study on Instructional Coaching for Teachers of English Language Learners

**Lauren Odell,** *Modesto City Schools Modesto, CA*
**Lilia Ruvalcaba,** *Oxnard College Oxnard, CA (statistical analysis)*

**Abstract:** One of the fastest rising student populations in California schools and other states are English Language Learners. Yet, teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare teachers to support the needs of language learning in the context of their own classrooms. This creates a chasm of equity and access for our most needy students. However, despite this dangerous trend of unpreparedness, there are promising practices that have begun to emerge for supporting classroom teachers. Instructional coaching is one of them. The objective for this case study on The English Learner Group (TELG) was: (1) to analyze the effect of job-embedded professional development, if any, on English Learner students' academic achievement as measured by California State Assessments Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) results from the 2017-2018 Academic Year, and (2) to provide Dr. Sam Nofziger, the owner of TELG, with specific insights into the perceptions of his employees and the school districts TELG has served. There were four noteworthy findings which included an increase of ELL growth as measured by the SBAC and a decrease in the achievement gap between ELLs and English Only students as measured by the SBAC.

It is important to note that this case study was submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements in class EDL 561 with the Collaborative Online Doctorate in Educational Leadership (CODEL) program. CODEL is a joint Ed.D. program with California State University, Fresno and CSU Channel Islands. This project was initially conducted by doctoral students: Phyllis Grillo, Jazzie Murphy, Lauren Odell, and Lilia Ruvalcaba. Statistical analysis was performed by Ms. Ruvalcaba. The project was significantly edited and submitted for the purposes of CLEAR by Lauren Odell.

**Keywords**: *English Learners, Instructional Coaching, Induction Program, teacher preparedness, job-embedded professional development.*

## Introduction

One of the fastest-growing student populations in the classroom is English Language Learners (ELLs) and it is projected that by 2025 nearly 25 percent of public-school students will be ELLs (NEA Policy Brief, June 2005). As demand rises, so does the need for training educational professionals, including district and site administrators, along with site teachers and support staff. It is critical that those within the educational community understand and address the

significant struggles ELL face in our public schools, as well as the supports and training needed by their classroom teachers.

The state of California, along with other states across the nation, requires annual testing of students. One such test is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The SBAC is part of California's testing program and is used not only to track whether students are ready and able to pursue higher educational opportunities, but also to hold districts, schools and teachers accountable for success or failure of students.

The purpose of this case study was to examine the services being provided at the site and what, if any, impact the services have on the performance of English learners. The CEO is interested in learning more about correlations between consultants, clients, services rendered, and academic performance of English learners as measured by California State Assessments Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and English Learner Performance Assessment of California (ELPAC). This evaluation will specifically look at services provided during the 2017-2018 academic school year.

**Company and Project Background**

The English Learner Group (TELG), located in Fresno, California was founded in 2013 by Dr. Sam Nofziger. TELG self-describes as a "professional group of educators dedicated to the academic achievement of English learners" ("The English Learner Group," 2018) as well as "serving the community of students whose first language is not English" ("The English Learner Group," 2018). The English Learner Group, led by Dr. Sam Nofziger and a team of approximately 14 consultants (also referred to as TELG employees hereafter), offers a variety of services including administrative coaching (AC), instructional coaching (IC), professional development (PD), and systems coaching (SC) to a variety of school sites and school districts within the state of California ("The English Learner Group," 2018).

Dr. Nofziger has an extensive background in education, including serving as an elementary school teacher (in both bilingual and English classrooms), an instructional coach as wells as a school site and county administrator ("The English Learner Group," 2018). Dr. Nofziger earned a BA in Liberal Studies and a credential from Fresno State University in 1987, a MA in Bilingual Cross-Cultural Education from Fresno Pacific University in 1996, and an Ed.D. from Northcentral University in 2016. He also holds a Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential, a Bilingual Cross-Cultural Special Credential, and an Administrative Services Credential from the State of California ("The English Learner Group," 2018). Each of the consultants working in concert with Dr. Nofziger also have extensive backgrounds in education. Consultant backgrounds include, but are not limited to, teachers, administrators, literacy specialists, veteran support coaches, intervention teachers, and testing coaches. All consultants have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, most have master's degree and/or various educational credentials, and a couple have doctorate degrees.

As outlined in the both the original and revised Scope of Work, Dr. Nofziger was asked and provided the researchers with access to information on his clients, the schools and districts with which he worked. In return, the researchers agreed to provide complete confidentiality of all participants.

The finalized evaluation questions are listed below:

1. What was the impact, if any, on English Learner student achievement (as measured by SBAC) for clients who received TELG services?
2. Is there a difference between perceived TELG employee satisfaction and support received from the administration or district?

3. Is there a difference between TELG employee background and student achievement data, and overall TELG employee satisfaction?

**Literature Review**

Research in the field of English Language Learners (ELLs) is not new. However, as federal, state, and local laws evolve in regard to societal pressures and opinions of language instruction, immigrants, and politics, so does the interest in the overall subject. Nevertheless, the achievement gap between ELLs and English Only students (EOs) persists. Moreover, teachers continue to work with ELLs as best they can, yet without adequate training. Thus, the question remains: what difference, if any, does targeted professional development for teachers of ELLs make on student achievement?

**Theoretical Framework.** The theoretical framework used in this study is based on the work from Coady, Harper and de Jong (2011). They found that those teachers who have been specifically trained to instruct ELLs experience a greater sense of self-efficacy of reaching their ELL student population. They also assess the cultural and societal needs of ELLs in a more accurate manner. Teachers who have been given direct support in learning how to teach ELLs in both language and content areas have higher student achievement than those who do not. It is likely that providing these experiences to teachers is the key to closing the achievement gap.

**Federal and State Context**. In 1981, the courts mandated that ELLs are required to have designated English Language Development (ELD) time within the instructional minutes of their day by both state and federal law (Castaneda v. Pickard, 1981). Beginning in 2018, California utilizes two types of ELD: Designated ELD and Integrated ELD (ELA-ELD California State Framework, 2015). Designated ELD is time intentionally focused on language development, needed for ELLs with significantly limited English. Integrated ELD is language development integrated into content learning, used for ELLs with some limited English, but enough to be successful without a targeted class.

It is a critical note that ELD is not English Language Arts (ELA). This was established in 1974 with the watershed court case wherein the courts ruled that students with primary languages other than English still had the right to content learning regardless of the languages they spoke. (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). The common term used for this is "content access".

In practice, this means is that secondary students (those in grades 6 - 12) must take an ELA course and ELD course when their English is significantly limited. This leads to students not taking other elective courses and compacts their schedules. For example, an English Language Learner must take an ELD course rather than an art elective or choir class. They must take the English intervention (the ELD course) instead.

To add to the complexity, nearly all ELD courses are not a-g approved (a-g, 2018). In the state of California, the University of California (UC) system has created prerequisites for all incoming freshman. These prerequisites are called "a-g". "The intent of the 'a-g' subject requirements are to ensure that students have attained a body of general knowledge that will provide breadth and perspective to new, more advanced study" (University of California, Office of the President UCOP, 2018). However, nearly all ELD courses are not a-g eligible. Ultimately, ELLs who are not a-g eligible cannot attend the California State University (CSU) or UC system. Thus, ELLs seem to be at a greater disadvantage than EOs from the start in the very academic structures created to support them. It is important to note here that the researchers do not consider ELLs culturally, or in any other way, disadvantaged in any manner from non-ELLs, and come from a foundational mindset that all students have an abundance of cultural and social capital.

**Trending Themes of Teaching for English Learners.** In the field of educating ELLs, there have been two main schools of thought: grammar-based language learning and a communicative language school. In 1999, Pica researched the grammar-based approach and found that children do not respond positively to this approach overall. According to Pica, Canale, and Swain, the communicative based approach is more successful as it allows students to begin to communicate immediately, without the worry of incorrect grammar, form, and functions (Pica 1999, Canale & Swain 1980). Once a student has mastered basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) then they can begin to tackle cognitive academic language proficiency (CALPs).

In contrast, there are programs that provide effective ELL instruction include pedagogy regarding providing ELLs meaningful context (Coady, Harper & de Jong 2011). For example, a structure that has proved to be effective is Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). SIOP includes content objectives, language objectives, sentence frames for non-linguistic representations, visual cues, verbal participation and practice, scaffolding, advanced graphic organizers and more. Research has been conducted in classrooms that utilize the SIOP model (Echevarria, J., Short, D., & Powers, K., 2006; Kareva, V., & Echevarria, J. 2013) and McIntyre, et al. (2010) found those with access to the SIOP model outperformed those without access in both content learning and language learning.

Another popular framework utilized is called Sheltered Instruction. Specifically, in California, it is termed Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) (SDAIE, 2017). This framework provides strategies for students to learn content at the same time as building their knowledge of language and the structures required of the English language in which to communicate effectively. "SDAIE is a teaching approach intended for teaching various academic content (such as social studies, science or literature) using the English language to students who are still learning English" (SDAIE, 2017).

As discussed, platforms exist that are research-based and proven to be best practices in the efforts to support ELLs in both the learning of language as well as the learning of content, such as history, science, and mathematics. However, these platforms are not widely known or taught in teacher preparation programs or "induction" programs. Induction programs are post-bachelor degree programs that provide the necessary training required by law for a teacher to enter their first classroom. Since these platforms are not taught in induction programs, if ELLs are taught these research-based strategies, does it make a difference in student achievement?

With the above in mind, we look to the specific needs of the average ELLs and EO. Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) researched strategies that had the greatest impact within the classroom. Their meta-analysis found nine strategies that were most effective for student success. Additionally, in 2006, Hill and Flynn followed this data with an additional analysis. However, this time, the analysis was focused on the needs of ELLs. While the data revealed that the nine strategies remained the same, the priority, or statistical significance, of the strategies changed (see Table 1).

Table 1: Effective Strategies for Student Success

| For ALL students | For EL Students |
|---|---|
| 1. Identifying similarities and differences | 1. Setting objectives and providing feedback |
| 2. Summarizing and note taking | 2. Nonlinguistic representations |
| 3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition | 3. Cues, questions, and advance organizers |
| 4. Homework and Practice | 4. Learning groups |
| 5. Nonlinguistic representations | 5. Summarizing and note taking |
| 6. Learning groups | 6. Homework and Practice |
| 7. Setting objectives and providing feedback | 7. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition |
| 8. Generating and testing hypotheses | 8. Generating and testing hypotheses |
| 9. Cues, questions, and advanced organizers | 9. Identifying similarities and differences |

In 2013, Hill and Miller updated Hill and Flynn's work to include specific application for Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the new English Language Descriptors of California, which included Emerging, Expanding, and Bridging (2013). Again, the effect size of the nine strategies had not altered from the original data analysis of the ELL priorities.

**Current Teacher Preparation.** Students who choose the field of PK-12 education must complete teacher preparation studies. In the state of California, these programs are offered at private institutions, four-year colleges, as well as universities. Once the initial teacher preparation program--typically one year in length--is completed, a person is preliminarily qualified to teach. They receive a "preliminary credential". However, even though the state of California and California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) deems these individuals to be preliminarily prepared to begin their teaching career, not all of them receive quality training, or in some cases no training at all, regarding ELLs. Darling Hammond et al. (2009) reports, "Teachers are not getting adequate training in teaching special education or limited English proficiency (LEP) students. More than two-thirds of teachers nationally had not had even one day of training in supporting the learning of special education or LEP students during the previous three years" (2009).

The CTC adopted new standards for the teaching profession (CSTPs) in 2009. The changes included specific language to include all students with all needs. Other adjustments included adding additional sub-standards such as 3.6, which states: "Addressing the needs of ELLs and students with special needs to provide equitable access to the content" (CSTPs, 2009).

In 2005, a survey was conducted by Gandara, Maxwell, Jolly & Driscoll that studied over 5,000 Californian teachers. In the study teachers revealed their biggest challenges as teachers. These challenges included struggles with instruction of ELLs. This leads the researcher to wonder why there is a significant struggle as compared to other types of ELLs or EOs. It is perhaps that teachers are not adequately trained in language development.

Another study completed in 2004 by Harper and de Jong noted that many programs refer to best practices for all and "good teaching". This good teaching is supposed to be sufficient for all learners with all needs. Professional development is essential as we have evidence that not all programs even provide specific training. Diego (2013) provides another option to pre-classroom experience, which includes internships or extended field service. This alternative could be included as part of a teacher induction program. Others have suggested that induction programs

also require teachers to take a content course in a foreign language to understand the enormity of difficulty ELLs face in not only the language, but as well as the content learning. For example, Washburn (2008) teaches a class only in Chinese as a type of shock experience for those who have not experienced learning content in an entirely foreign language. All of these studies note that what is currently provided in our institutions of higher learning is not adequate for the daily needs of a PK-12 public school teacher with ELLs.

**Professional Development.** The author of this study has noted that there are research-based strategies known to support the achievement of ELLs in classes, such as SDAIE and SIOP. However, little Professional Development (PD) is provided in a meaningful way for those teachers to explore these strategies and apply them in a meaningful way within the context of their classroom. Research shows the amount and type, or structure of the PD, also matters.

According to an extensive report published in 2009 by Darling-Hammond et al., while American teachers participate in PD, it is of little comparison to that of their international peers. The amounts of PD teachers are receiving is not having a positive effect on student achievement results. Darling-Hammond et al. found that "Research suggests that professional development of 14 hours or less has no effect on student learning, while longer-duration programs show positive and significant effects on student achievement" (p. 20).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher summarized the most common types of PD found in PK-12 institutions, which includes learning seminars that take place outside the classroom and peer-coaching within the classroom. By far, most PD is located outside the context of the teacher's own classroom and far from the actual students they work with day-to-day. The researcher chose to focus on peer-coaching, coupled with PD providing the theory behind the coaching. Peer-coaching allows teachers to work together planning lessons, watching each other teach in demonstration-style learning, and reviewing practices to differentiate for the needs of the students. Darling Hammond et al. summarizes their research with the finding that teachers who receive coaching are more likely to practice and integrate their new learning than those who do not have access to coaches and receive a more traditional PD platform (2009).

Many policies and practices of ELLs vary with the current politicians in office. However, watershed court cases keep foundational practices in place: ELLs must receive language development along with grade level content learning. Most teacher induction programs do not adequately prepare teachers for the daunting task to teach this population both language development and content. Those that receive PD typically receive seminars where they are required to leave their own classroom and students to learn theory. However, research shows a fresh take on PD, peer-coaching, can make a significant difference in student achievement. It is this peer-coaching style of PD that was provided by TELG and studied by the researchers.

**Evaluation Plan.** The purpose of this case study was to examine the services being provided at the site and what, if any, impact the services have on the performance of English learners. The CEO was interested in learning more about correlations between consultants, clients, services rendered, and academic performance of English learners as measured by California State Assessments Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and English Learner Performance Assessment of California (ELPAC).

Table 2: Evaluation Project Plan

| Evaluation Questions | What Information is needed? | How will you obtain the information? | How will you analyze the information you obtained? |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. What was the impact, if any, on English Learner student achievement (as measured by SBAC) for clients who received TELG services? | ELPAC, SBAC scores; Districts who received services, which services rendered; timeframe for services rendered | TELG | Comparative analysis of ELPAC/SBAC scores by District, disaggregated by individual school sites who received TELG services |
| 2. Is there a difference between perceived TELG employee satisfaction and support received from the administration or district? | Client list/contact information; ELPAC, SBAC scores; Districts who received services, which services rendered; timeframe for services rendered | TELG will provide contact list for clients; | Qualtrics to measure satisfaction; Comparative analysis of ELPAC/SBAC scores by District, disaggregated by service(s) rendered |
| 3. Is there a difference between TELG employee background and student achievement data, and overall TELG employee satisfaction? | Employee contact list; ELPAC, SBAC scores; Districts who received services, which services rendered; timeframe for services rendered | TELG will provide contact list for employees; | Qualtrics to measure , employee satisfaction; Comparative analysis of ELPAC/SBAC scores by District, disaggregated by service(s) rendered |

The goal for this program evaluation was not provide the CEO with an overview of the services provided and a summation of time spent at each school site/district, but to provide him with some insight on the best ways to market TELG services; to also market services in ways that are both impactful and grounded in research. Lastly, the researcher hoped to give the CEO some insight on how best to cultivate effective employees who are satisfied with their work and their results.

**Methodology**

This evaluation utilizes a mixed methods approach, employing both a comparative analysis of the quantitative data and a content analysis of the qualitative data to highlight/support any comments around district/administration support. To prepare this evaluation, ELA SBAC scores for California's EOs and ELLs were collected from the California Assessment of Student

Performance and Progress (CAASPP) website. The data was used to identify ELL achievement as compared to EO achievement, and to also further compare the achievement of ELLs enrolled in schools that received TELG services to the achievement of ELLs enrolled in schools that did not receive TELG services. To evaluate TELG employee satisfaction and their backgrounds, a Qualtrics survey was administered to 14 employees who worked for TELG in the 2017-18 academic year and provided coaching services. Comments were collected to analyze TELG employees' satisfaction of support received from the school site's administration or district.

**Participants.** The participants for this evaluation were TELG consultants who provided services during the 2017-18 academic year. A contact list was provided to the researcher by the CEO. There were 14 consultants in the population and as such that it was critical to garner as many participants as possible. After an IRB was approved, each consultant was invited to participate and all 14 consultants agreed. The researcher prepared an informed consent form and emailed it as part of the Qualtrics survey.

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected from respondents and housed in Qualtrics on a server maintained by California State University, Channel Islands. Any personal identifying information was removed to protect respondent privacy, maintain confidentiality and remove any potential researcher bias.

**Instruments.** Once the researcher was able to confirm the evaluation questions and purpose of the study with the appropriate data released, a survey was created to gather the desired information. Considerations were given to Survey Monkey, Google Forms, and Qualtrics. Qualtrics was chosen for its overall dependability and statistical analytics. The survey instrument included 10 questions related to consultant background, 17 questions about administrative coaching services, 11 questions about instructional coaching services, and 3 transitional/informational questions to support the flow of the survey. Dependent on the number of school sites served, the survey questions repeated allowing respondents to provide unique responses for each school site. The next step in the evaluation process was to create and distribute a multiple question survey using the software Qualtrics, a simple to use web-based survey tool to conduct survey research, evaluations and other data collection activities. The survey focused on the following key areas: (1) employee background (including but not limited to age, employment status, highest position held.); (2) TELG services provided; (3) employee satisfaction with school site; (4) data used to measure satisfaction; and (5) willingness to continue providing services to the school site.

In addition to the consultant background data collection, the name of the school site(s) served was also captured. The survey included multiple choice and Likert scale questions.

Lastly, one question allowed for each respondent to provide comments on each site/district. Fourteen consultants from TELG were surveyed and participation totaled 100 percent.

## Data Collection

**Quantitative.** The responses collected in the Qualtrics survey analyzed TELG employee satisfaction and their satisfaction with school sites served. English Language Arts SBAC scores for California's EOs and ELLs were collected from the CAASPP website to measure the comprehensive performance of California's students and to further compare their performance with that of ELLs who received TELG services. The quantitative survey data was exported from the Qualtrics platform into Google Sheets to be coded and then imported into IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The test scores were exported from the CAASPP website into Microsoft Excel to be coded and then imported into SPSS to be analyzed to identify,

if any, growth or decline in ELL achievement, and to highlight the impact of TELG services. For the purposes of comparison, the researchers collected and analyzed archival test scores from the CAASPP website. These data were also exported into Microsoft Excel and further analyzed along the most recent academic year test scores. In evaluating survey data, the researchers found that the errors in skip logic required some aspects of the data to be aligned manually after being exported.

**Qualitative.** At the end of the Qualtrics administrative/instructional survey question blocks, respondents were provided the opportunity to share comments about each school site. Of the fourteen respondents, eleven provided twenty-three comments and generated 41 phrases/words about the individual school site or district they worked with. Taking a content analysis approach, the researchers coded the qualitative responses into three themes: Supportive, Neutral, and Non-Supportive. Each theme was used to determine if the patterns in the narrative responses related to the perceived support each consultant received from the district and/or TELG employee satisfaction.

**Data Analysis**

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analyzed for the purpose of this program evaluation. Employee demographics such as age, gender, additional language spoken, employment status, last position, educational and professional background, and retirement status were collected. Data about TELG services provided include, identifying a school/district where TELG services were provided, number of days served, TELG services provided, number of days spent overnight working with the school site, the type of services provided, the level of satisfaction with their relationship with the school/district, the data utilized to determine if respondent's work made a difference on student achievement, and respondent's interest in future employment with that school or district.

The data was exported from Qualtrics into google sheets. Data was reviewed for patterns and responses were organized by the school/district and TELG services provided. Fourteen participants responded to providing services to 31 schools/districts. The services provided were organized by school sites and districts.

The demographic data was reviewed, analyzed and organized using Qualtrics, Google Sheets, and Nvivo software for both qualitative and quantitative analysis (see Appendices F-I). The data regarding TELG services was reviewed, organized and analyzed using SPSS. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to test the difference between means that reflect participant satisfaction, such as overall satisfaction with the school, overall satisfaction with the school based on data, and the willingness to work with the school in the future. The independent variables were gender, age, number of language participant speaks, educational background, position held, use of data, services provided, retirement status, number of schools served and student achievement.

A dependent t-test analysis was used to answer the first question, what was the impact, if any, on English Learner student achievement, as measured by SBAC, for clients who received TELG services? Using SPSS, the dependent t-test compared the means of 2017 ELL student achievement to 2018 ELL student achievement on the CAASPP ELA SBAC. An additional dependent t-Test was used to compare the mean achievement gap on ELA SBAC between 2017 ELLs and EOs and 2018 ELLs and EOs.

An ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficients were used to answer the third question: is there a difference between TELG employee background and student achievement data, and overall TELG employee satisfaction? Using SPSS, the ANOVA was used to determine if there is a difference among participant satisfaction and their categorical demographics. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to determine if an association exists between any two variables among the participant's background, participant's satisfaction, and student achievement.

The qualitative data received through the survey was processed using a content analysis approach. Each comment or piece of data was categorized, classified, summarized and tabulated. Three themes emerged. The three themes were categorized as Supportive, Neutral and Non-Supportive. Additionally, the comments were then classified further by whether or not the data referred to a specific population. The identified populations included, in alphabetical order, consultants, district administrators, site administrators, site staff/teachers.

**Confidentiality and Data Integrity.** Throughout each step of the program evaluation, the researchers were cautious in ensuring the integrity of the data was maintained. In developing the survey instrument, the researchers repeated questions in each survey block to maintain consistency. Respondent confidentiality was explained in the informed consent form in an effort to solicit transparent responses.

The survey was sent to 14 TELG employees and 100% of those employees responded, making the survey reliable. However, TELG's CEO introduced the program evaluation to his employees. Posing as a threat to internal validity, although employees were assured anonymity, employees may have felt compelled to participate and as a result potentially were not as forthcoming in their responses.

**Comparison.** ELL achievement data, as measured by the ELA SBAC scores, was collected and compared with scores of EOs, and movement was compared from the 2016-17 academic year to the 2017-18 academic year. In addition to comparing ELLs to EOs, individual school sites that received TELG services were compared to California's ELLs. The researcher also sought to compare the school site test scores after receiving TELG's services to the scores prior to TELG's work. TELG employee satisfaction was gathered in an effort to examine potential connections to ELL student achievement.

**Limitations.** As with any research, there are limitations which affect the outcome of the study. This evaluation is no exception. The limitations of this evaluation, along with the mitigating actions taken by the researcher, are outlined below.

**Sample Size.** The sample size of the evaluation was limited to the fourteen consultants employed by TELG, which is a small population. While the researcher was able to secure the responses from all fourteen respondents, which represents 100 percent response rate, it is possible the 100 percent participation may have come as a result of the request to complete the survey coming from the owner of the TELG, Dr. Sam Nofziger. This request to complete the survey could have been perceived by the respondents as a mandatory requirement to employment as opposed to participation being optional. To mitigate this limitation, the researchers provided all respondents with information clearly stating participation was voluntary. Additionally, even though 100 percent of the population responded, the overall size of the population remained small. To mitigate for the small size of the population, inquiry about satisfaction was requested in three settings, relationship with the school, in response to the data, and the willingness to work with the school/district in the future.

**Lack of Available/Reliable Data.** When the original research questions were developed in the Scope of Work, the first question was designed to evaluate the impact, if any, on the

comparison between services provided and the results of the state test scores. The researcher expected the state test results to be released in early September, which would have provided sufficient time to analyze the data and meet the delivery deadline for this evaluation and assessment report of October 20, 2018. Unfortunately, state test scores for all school and district sites were embargoed, with no release date identified. This delay forced the researcher to retool the evaluation questions several times. However, the test data was finally released on October 2, 2018, which provided an opportunity for the researchers to create the finalized evaluation questions and answer them.

**Instrument Used to Collect the Data.** An issue which arose during the collection of the data was that although respondents were promised anonymity, for reasons unknown to the researchers, the names of the respondents were revealed to the researcher. To correct this error in data collection, identifying information was removed from the final survey data. The school site information was used to references the state data. The researcher destroyed the identifiable raw data.

**Self-Reported Data.** As with any survey completed by respondents which contains quantitative and/or qualitative data, the data is considered self-reported. This means the resulting data cannot be independently verified. In other words, the researchers have taken the responses of the survey at its face value. With any self-reported data, there is the possibility it can contain sources of bias including, but not limited to selective memory, attribution, and/or exaggeration. Selective memory can include remember or not remember experiences or events that occurred at some point in the past accurately. Attribution can be the act of attributing positive or negative events/experience/outcomes to external forces. Exaggeration can represent the act of misrepresenting outcomes or embellishing events as more or less significantly than occurred.

## Findings

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from respondents through collected through a survey created in Qualtrics. The quantitative survey data was exported from the Qualtrics platform, exported into google sheets and then imported into SPSS to be analyzed. The test scores were exported from the CAASPP website. The tables, below, were created during the data analysis. This data analysis was used to answer the three-evaluation questions in the Revised Scope of Work and are a part of the findings of this evaluation.

**Participants' Background.** Please see Table 3: Demographics - Frequency and Percentages for Demographic
Characteristics of the Participants, below:

Table 3: Demographics.
*Frequency and Percentages for Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

| Variable | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 2 | 14.3% |
| Female | 12 | 85.7% |
| Age | | |
| 35-44 | 2 | 14.3% |
| 45-54 | 3 | 21.4% |
| 55-64 | 3 | 21.4% |
| 65+ | 6 | 42.9% |
| Language | | |
| Armenian | 1 | 7.1% |
| Spanish | 6 | 42.9% |
| None or No response | 7 | 50.0% |
| Level of education | | |
| Doctorate | 2 | 14.3% |
| Masters | 11 | 88.6% |
| Teaching credential | 1 | 7.1% |
| Highest position | | |
| Superintendent office | 3 | 21.4% |
| District admin | 3 | 21.4% |
| County admin | 3 | 21.4% |
| Site admin | 2 | 14.3% |
| TOSA | 3 | 21.4% |

**Demographics.**

**Gender.**

Two of the participants are male (14.3%), and 12 of the participants are female (85.7%).

**Age.**

Two participants (14.3%) identify themselves between ages 35-44, three participants (21.4%) identify themselves between ages 45-54, three participants (21.4%) identified themselves between ages 55-64, and four participants (42.9%) identify themselves as 65 or older.

**Language.**

One of the participants (7.1%) speaks Armenian, six of the participants (42.9%) speak Spanish, two of the participants (14.3%) reported no other language, and five of the participants (35.7%) are the unknown, no response was given.

**Education.**

Two of the participants (14.3%) have a doctorate, eleven (88.6%) have a masters, and administration credential and one (7.1%) has a teaching credential.

**Employment.**

Three of the participants (21.4%) highest level job was Superintendent, Associate Superintendent, or Assistant Superintendent, three of the participants (21.4%) highest level job

was district administration, three of the participants (21.4%) highest level job was county administration, two of the participants (14.3%) highest level was site administration, and three of the participants (21.4%) highest level job was teacher on special assignment (TOSA).

Table 4: Retirement
*Frequency and percentages of the Retired Status for the Participants.*

| Variable | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Retired | | |
| No | 5 | 35.7% |
| Yes | 9 | 64.3% |
| Months retired | | |
| 6-12 | 6 | 66.7% |
| 12-18 | 1 | 11.1% |
| Other | 2 | 22.2% |

**Retirement.**

Five of the participants (35.7%) were not retired, and nine of the participants (64.3%) were retired. The mean months retired before joining TELG was 18.56 with a S.D. of 21.97.

**TELG Services Provided by Participant to School/District**

Table 5: TELG services provided per site

| Type of service | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Admin coaching | 9 | 30.0% |
| Admin & Inst. coaching | 9 | 30.0% |
| Inst. coaching | 12 | 40.0% |
| Total | 30 | 100.0% |

**Sites Served.** Participants were asked to enter a number for how many schools they served during the 2017-2018 school year. The mean number of sites per participants was 5.5 (N=14) with a S.D. of 3.04. The minimum number of schools a participant served was one school, and the maximum was ten schools. The fourteen participants provided TELG services to thirty schools. The following data is gathered from the survey questions regarding participants satisfaction as TELG coach.

Of the 30 sites that received TELG services, nine (30.0%) received administrative coaching only, nine (30.0%) received both administrative and instructional coaching, and 12 (40.0%) received instruction service only.

**Days of Service.** Participants were asked how many days they provide services to each school on behalf of TELG in the 2017-2018 school year. The mean number of days of service provided per sites by a participant was 12.3 (N=30) with a S.D. of 9.92. The minimum number of

days of service provided per site was one day and the maximum was 41 days.

**Overnight accommodations.** Participants were asked how many overnights accommodations, if any, were required to do their work with each school. Six participants required overnight accommodations, the mean number of overnight accommodations for the six was 18.3 (N=6) with a S.D. of 13.9.

Table 6: Satisfaction with School Relationship by Participants that Provided Administrative Services

| Level of satisfaction | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Not at all satisfied (1) | 0 | 0.0% |
| A little satisfied (2) | 1 | 5.9% |
| Mostly satisfied (3) | 3 | 17.6% |
| Definitely Satisfied (4) | 13 | 76.5% |
| Total | 17 | 100.0% |

**Satisfaction.** The 17 participants that provided administrative coaching were asked to choose their level of satisfaction with each school from a list. Of the 17 participants, that provided administrative coaching, one participant (5.9%) was a little satisfied, three (17.6%) were mostly satisfied, and 13 (76.5%) were definitely satisfied. The mean for participant's satisfaction with each school was 3.7 (N=17) with an S.D. of 0.59. Additional data related to subsequent survey questions were found to be insignificant for this program evaluation.

**Findings**

**Evaluation Question One.** To answer the first evaluation question, *What was the impact, if any, on English Learner student achievement (as measured by SBAC) for clients who received TELG services?* SBAC data from 2017 and 2018 for ELs and EOs was analyzed using dependent t-test on SPSS (see Table 7). The four variables from a data sets are as follows:

1) ELLs Met Standards or Exceeded Standards in 2017 compared to ELLs Met Standards or Exceeded Standards in 2018.
2) ELLs Not Meeting Standards or were Nearly Meeting Standards in 2017 compared to ELLs Not Meeting Standards or Nearly Meeting Standards in 2018.
3) ELLs Met Standards or Exceeded Standards more than EOs Met Standards or Exceeded Standards and therefore closed the achievement gap in 2017 compared to 2018.
4) ELLs Not Meeting Standards or Nearly Meeting Standards less than EOs, and therefore closed the achievement gap in 2017 compared to 2018.

Table 7: Dependent t-test, Means, standard deviations, and
sample sizes for the measures of English Learner and English Only vs English Learner

| Variable | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|
| EL meets or exceeds | | |
| Mean | 10.63 | 12.50 |
| Standard deviation | 6.93 | 6.92 |
| N | 47 | |
| EO v. EL achievement gap | | |
| Mean | 33.83 | 33.36 |
| Standard deviation | 16.19 | 20.32 |
| N | 47 | |

What was revealed was that there is a significant difference ($t = -2.135$, $df = 46$, $p = .038$) in mean English Learner who meets or exceeds which increases from 2017 ($M = 10.63$) to the 2018 ($M = 12.50$). In other words, schools/districts that received TELG services increased their SBAC mean score in the positive direction by 1.83 with a slight difference in standard deviations from the previous year. Furthermore, the achievement gap between EOs and ELs decreased slightly, a positive trend, though there is no difference ($t = .169$, $df = 46$, $p = .866$) in mean EOs versus ELs who meet or exceed from 2017 ($M = 33.83$) to 2018 ($M = 33.36$). Statistically speaking, the trend of decrease of the ELL achievement gap was slight. However, in educational settings, a 0.50% decrease in the achievement gap is a good move in the right direction for closing the achievement gap between EOs and ELLs

State achievement also verifies the significance of growth for those working with TELG. state-wide, ELLs grew 0.53% from 2017 to 2018. For TELG schools that received services grew 1.98% from 2017 to 2018. Also, on average for the state of California, the achievement gap of EOs and ELLs grew by 0.53%, while TELG decreased the achievement gap by 0.47% closing the achievement gap.

**Evaluation Question Two.** In an attempt to answer the second evaluation question, *Is there a difference between perceived TELG employee satisfaction and support received from the administration or district*? The researcher determined that the qualitative data received and analyzed could not provide an answer to Evaluation Question Two. While there are many factors which led to the inability of the researchers to answer this question, the primary factor is that qualitative data is defined as data that can be observed and recorded through one-on-one interviews, focus groups and other similar methods. However, the qualitative data collected for this evaluation was generated through two questions in a single survey, the answers were self-reported, and the respondents never observed.

Although the question of perceived employee satisfaction and support received from the administration or district cannot be answered, there were other interesting connections revealed through the data relating to support received and respondent satisfaction. It was found that there was a potential connection between the level of support at the school/district site and employee satisfaction (see Appendix F-I).

A total of fourteen respondents completed the survey for this evaluation. Of the 14 who completed the survey, 11 respondents voluntarily provided additional comments to the survey question, "Please use the box below to add any additional comments in regards to this school/district." A total of 23 individual comments were received. Of the 23 comments received, a total of 41 phrases/words were identified relating to the school/district. Three identifiable themes emerged. Those three themes are Supportive, Neutral or Non-Supportive. Of the 41 total responses received, 22 phrases/words or 53.7 percent were categorized as Supportive, three or 7.3 percent categorized as Neutral, and 16 phrases/words or 39 percent categorized as Non-Supportive (see Appendix F).

Additionally, as the three identified themes were coded, another theme emerged which revealed to the researcher that there were four influential groups at the school/district level. Those four influential groups include Site Staff/Teachers, Site Administrators, District Administrators and Consultants. A total of 30 phrases/words were provided by the respondents and coded as influential groups. Of the 30 phrases/words indicating an influential group, the most frequently denoted influential group was Site Administrators with 15 responses or 50 percent of the total responses, followed by Site Staff/Teachers with 9 responses or 30 percent of the total responses. Consultants and district administrators with received 3 responses or 10 percent of the total responses each.

By then further categorizing the responses by influential group, it was revealed that five phrases/words or 12.2 percent of the responses were coded as Supportive for Site Staff/Teachers and five phrases/words or 12.2 percent were coded as Non-Supportive for Site Staff/Teachers. There were zero Neutral phrases/words coded for Site Staff/Teachers. Additionally, fifteen phrases/words or 36.6 percent of the phrases/words were coded as Supportive to Site Administrators, nine phrases/words or 22 percent were coded as Non-Supportive to Site Administrators, and two phrases/words or 4.9 percent were coded as Neutral for Site Administrators. Only one phrase/word or 2.4 percent were coded as Supportive for District Administrators, three phrases/words or 7.3 percent coded as Non-Supportive and one phrase/word or 2.4 percent coded Neutral for District Administrators.

The results stated above are of particular value on their own because it shows that respondents appear to have reported receiving overall support at the School/District level, but when looking at the data on general satisfaction, there is an additional potential connection found. In a separate survey question, respondents were asked, *"In general terms, how satisfied were you with your relationship with this school/ district?"*. The respondents were given four ratings to select from: Not Satisfied, A Little Satisfied, Mostly Satisfied and Definitely Satisfied. A total of eleven responses or 78.6 percent responses were received. Of those 11 responses, 1 response or 9.1 percent indicated the respondents were a Little Satisfied, 8 responses or 72.7 percent indicated they were Definitely Satisfied, and 18.2 percent or two responses indicated they were Mostly Satisfied. No responses indicated respondents were not satisfied (see Appendix I).

While more research is needed determine what, if any, connection exists between site support and employee satisfaction, it appears a supportive site administrator has the potential to positively affect the level of consultant satisfaction. Additionally, there may also be a connection between supportive Site Staff/Teachers.

**Evaluation Question Three.** In an effort to answer the final evaluation question, *Is there a difference between TELG employee background and student achievement data, and overall TELG employee satisfaction?* ANOVA test was conducted on SPSS to identify any differences between the means among overall satisfaction, overall satisfaction using data, and the willingness

to work for the school/district. The group variables chosen are, the age group, language, highest degree, last professional position held, retirement status, and type of services provided by TELG participants (see Appendix G).

Table 8: Mean and Standard Deviation of Participants Demographics, and Sample Size.

| Variable | Standard Mean | Sample Deviation | Size |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age group | 2.87 | 1.02 | 31 |
| Language | .52 | .51 | 31 |
| Highest degree | 3.31 | .72 | 31 |
| Last position held | 1.97 | .48 | 31 |
| Retirement status | .55 | .51 | 31 |
| Type of service | 1.94 | .77 | 31 |

The ANOVA results did not show any significant difference in the means of overall satisfaction, overall satisfaction using data, and the willingness to work for the school/district of each of the group variables of age, language, highest degree, last professional position held, retirement status, and type of services provided by TELG participants (see Appendix I). Additionally, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine if an association exists between any two continuous variables among the participants, their satisfaction based on services provided, and student achievement on the SBAC. Table 23a illustrated the descriptive data of the continuous variables.

Table 9: Mean and Standard Deviation of Participant Services Provided, Satisfaction, and Sample Size.

| Variable | Standard Mean | Sample Deviation | Size |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of schools served | 6.59 | 3.21 | 29 |
| Days served per school | 12.13 | 9.82 | 31 |
| SBAC Achievement Score | 2.34 | 1.48 | 28 |
| Part. satis. with Admin Services | 2.61 | .70 | 18 |
| Part. satis. with Inst. Services | 2.27 | .83 | 22 |
| Part. overall satis. with TELG services | 2.40 | .77 | 31 |
| Part. overall satis. based on data | .68 | .48 | 31 |
| Willingness to work in the future | 1.58 | .67 | 31 |

The Pearson correlation coefficient results did not show any significant difference in the correlation involving the number of schools served nor the days each participant served each school. The resulting correlations between participant satisfaction based on the services provided and student achievement on the SBAC are shown in below.

Table 10: Pearson correlation between participant demographic, overall satisfaction and SBAC Achievement Score

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. SBAC Achievement Score | | | | | | |
| 2. Admin Satisfied | .64** | | | | | |
| 3. Instruct Satisfied | .53* | .74* | | | | |
| 4. Overall satisfied | .58** | .96** | .97** | | | |
| 5. Overall satisfied, data | .76** | .84** | .74** | .79** | | |
| 6. Overall future work | .42* | .46 | .41 | .40* | .50** | |

Note. * indicates *p<0.05;* ** indicates *p<0.01*

The positive, high and significant correlation coefficient (r = .64, p < .001) between SBAC Achievement Score and TELG participant's satisfaction with administrative services indicates that the high SBAC Achievement Score is very strongly related to high TELG participant's satisfaction with administrative services provided.

The positive, moderate and significant correlation coefficient (r = .53, p < .05) between SBAC Achievement Score and TELG participant's satisfaction with instructional services indicates that the high SBAC Achievement Score is moderately related to high TELG participant's satisfaction with instructional services provided.

The positive, very high and significant correlation coefficient (r = .74, p < .05) between TELG participant's satisfaction with administrative services and TELG participant's satisfaction with instructional services indicates that the high TELG participant's satisfaction with administrative services provided is very strongly related to high TELG participant's satisfaction with instructional services provided.

The positive, moderate and significant correlation coefficient (r = .58, p < .001) between SBAC Achievement Score and TELG participant's overall satisfaction indicates that the high SBAC Achievement Score is moderately related to high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided.

The positive, very high and significant correlation coefficient (r = .96, p < .001) between TELG participant's satisfaction with administrative services and TELG participant's overall satisfaction indicates that the high TELG participant's satisfaction with administrative services provided is very strongly related to high TELG participant's overall satisfaction.

The positive, very high and significant correlation coefficient (r = .97, p < .001) between TELG participant's satisfaction with instructional services and TELG participant's overall satisfaction indicates that the high TELG participant's satisfaction with instructional services

provided is very strongly related to high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided.

The positive, very high and significant correlation coefficient ($r = .76$, $p < .001$) between SBAC Achievement Score and TELG participant's overall satisfaction based on data indicates that the higher SBAC Achievement Score is very strongly related to high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided, based on the data.

The positive, very high and significant correlation coefficient ($r = .84$, $p < .001$) between TELG participant's satisfaction with administrative services and TELG participant's overall satisfaction based on data indicates that the high TELG participant's satisfaction with administrative services provided is very strongly related to high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided.

The positive, very high and significant correlation coefficient ($r = .74$, $p < .001$) between TELG participant's satisfaction with instructional services and TELG participant's overall satisfaction based on data indicates that the high TELG participant's satisfaction with instructional services provided is very strongly related to high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided, based on the data.

The positive, very high and significant correlation coefficient ($r = .79$, $p < .001$) between TELG participant's overall satisfaction and TELG participant's overall satisfaction based on data indicates that the high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided is very strongly related to high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided, based on the data.

The positive, moderate and significant correlation coefficient ($r = .42$, $p < .05$) between SBAC Achievement Score and TELG participants willing to work with the school/district in the future indicates that the higher SBAC Achievement Score is moderately related to high willingness of TELG participant to work with that school/in the future.

The positive, moderate and significant correlation coefficient ($r = .40$, $p < .05$) between TELG participant's overall satisfaction and TELG participants willing to work with the school/district in the future indicates that the high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided is moderately related to high TELG participant willingness to work with that school/in the future.

The positive, moderate and significant correlation coefficient ($r = .50$, $p < .001$) between TELG participant's overall satisfaction based on data and TELG participants willing to work with the school/district in the future indicates that the high TELG participant's overall satisfaction with services provided, based on the data is moderately related to high TELG participant willingness to work with that school/in the future.

**Conclusion**

To answer the first research question, *what was the impact, if any, on English Learner student achievement (as measured by SBAC) for clients who received TELG services?* TELG services have a significant positive increase in the mean of the SBAC score for the schools they serve in the year 2018, compared to the 2017 SBAC data. The achievement gap remained relatively the same, except for a slight decrease in differences, closing the achievement gap between EOs and ELs. Additionally, the State achievement from 2017 to 2018 was 0.53%, yet TELG schools that received services grew 1.98% from 2017 to 2018.

To answer the third research question, Is *there a difference between TELG employee background and student achievement data, and overall TELG employee satisfaction?* There are

positive, substantial, and significant Pearson correlation coefficients among the TELG participants administrative, instructional or overall satisfaction, willingness to work and SBAC achievement data. In other words, The TELG consultants are satisfied the work performed at the schools and the higher the satisfaction, the higher the SBAC achievement scores.

Concerning TELG employee background and student achievement or participant satisfaction, the results did not show any significant difference based on the background of the TELG participants nor the services they provided.

**Recommendations**

Four key recommendations are provided below.

1. Strengthen communication between district and TELG employees.
2. Continue with the PD platform provided by TE
3. Further research TELG effect on ELL as data becomes available for future years.
4. Conduct additional research as new districts and states are served by TELG.

**Strengthen Communication.** There were some comments provided by TELG employees that suggested that the district/administration did not always provide TELG employees with the adequate support. Some reported that they were "disappointed" and felt as though there was a "lack of buy in". Establishing regular meetings between the TELG employee, the district/administration, and perhaps TELG's CEO to discuss successes/challenges. This may provide an opportunity to increase collegiality and address any perceived challenges as quickly as possible. The researchers found that when TELG employees felt supported by the administration, their satisfaction improved, and at those campuses, ELs students performed better.

**Continue with the PD platform.** The PD provided by TELG is working to increase ELL achievement data and decrease the achievement gap between EOs and ELLs. Continue to provide the theoretical learning coupled with the peer-coaching for in-class application of the theory learned by teachers of ELLs.

**Further research with ELPAC.** As English Language Proficiency Assessment of California (ELPAC) scores are made available by the State of California, use the data to further research EL achievement results. Also, apply the same methodology to future SBAC assessments to measure growth in additional years.

**Conduct Additional Research with TELG.** TELG company is quickly expanding. As they expand into additional districts and states other than California, further studies should be conducted on their professional development, in particular, their instructional coaching model.

The objective for this case study on The English Learner Group (TELG) was: (1) to analyze the effect of job-embedded professional development, if any, on English Learner students' academic achievement as measured by California State Assessments Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) results from the 2017-2018 Academic Year, and (2) to provide Dr. Sam Nofziger, the owner of TELG, with specific insights into the perceptions of his employees and the school districts TELG has served. Though several elements of data were embargoed by the state of California for timely evaluation of original elements, the final three elements evaluated were still of use to TELG. The three questions asked were: (1) What was the impact, if any, on English Learner student achievement (as measured by SBAC) for clients who received TELG services? (2) Is there a difference between perceived TELG employee satisfaction and support received from the administration of district? (3) Is there a difference between TELG employee background and student achievement data, and overall TELG employee satisfaction?

*What was the impact, if any, on English Learner student achievement (as measured by SBAC) for clients who received TELG services?*

The researcher found those ELL students who received support from TELG grew more than 3.5 times other ELLs in the state of California. Moreover, the ELLs grew faster than EOs, thus they closed the achievement gap. In contrast, the achievement gap in the state of California grew 0.54% for EOs and compared to ELLs. Also, the schools/districts that received TELG services had a significantly increased their SBAC mean score, a change in the positive direction of 1.83 from 2017 (M = 10.63) to 2018 (M = 12.50).

*Is there a difference between perceived TELG employee satisfaction and support received from the administration or district?*

The researcher determined that this question could not to be answered due to many factors as enumerated earlier in this evaluation. However, the effect of a supportive Site Administrator on consultant satisfaction seem to indicate a strong connection between those two categories. Additionally, when a supportive Staff/Teacher is added to the equation, the potential for consultant satisfaction can increase as well. The result is the opportunity for increased satisfaction for all parties, which may prove to be beneficial in the long-term for TELG.

*Is there a difference between TELG employee background and student achievement data, and overall TELG employee satisfaction?*

The researcher found little to report in the way of TELG employee background, student achievement data, and employee satisfaction. In general, those with higher degrees served more sites. The more days an employee served, the more they were likely to also travel and have overnight stays. There was a strong connection between overall satisfaction with site served and with satisfaction with data results. Also, if the employee was satisfied with the site, they would be willing to return and work with them in the future.

In short, TELG's work is making a positive difference with ELLs with whom they work. This is good news for families, school districts and the state of California at large. The moral imperative to ensure that all of California's students are succeeding is at the helm of TELG's work.

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# Establishing Equity in Implementation of Restorative Justice in Schools: California Stakeholders' Perspectives

**Mary Kreger**, *University of California San Francisco*
**Katherine Sargent Cairoli**, *University of California San Francisco*

**Abstract:** Restorative Justice in Schools (RJS) is an important concept in California to reduce school suspensions and expulsions and thereby reduce educational inequities. RJS is designed to bring people together to prevent and reduce conflict, while forging pathways toward inclusion and academic achievement. While some outcomes are promising, RJS lacks the underpinnings of a developed methodology and has not been rigorously evaluated with comparison groups. As a step toward encouraging discussion among stakeholders, this article reviews 174 California RJS practitioner and stakeholder perspectives on successful implementation practices, facilitating factors, and barriers to implementation. Specific areas of focus include RJS training; data and evaluation; sustainability; and facilitating factors and barriers to implementation. As a positive alternative to zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, RJS must be skillfully implemented and carefully evaluated to document its potential to reduce school suspensions and dropouts, while reducing revenue losses and improving the lives of youth and communities.

**Keywords:** *Restorative Justice in Schools; Alternatives to zero tolerance policies; Suspensions, Dropouts; Disproportionality; School to Career Pipeline.*

Restorative Justice in Schools (RJS) is a positive alternative to traditional school discipline and the use of suspensions and expulsions. It provides an approach that seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts while keeping students in schools and focused on learning. This, in turn, keeps students on track to graduate and identify career paths, thus reducing economic and societal costs related to dropouts. This article focuses on implementation and the facilitating factors and barriers to a successful RJS program. In an earlier article, (Kreger *et al.*, 2018), we discussed practitioner perspectives on RJS core and supportive practices.

There are several terms practitioners employ: one is RJS, another is Restorative Justice in Education (RJE). In this article we employ RJS intending that it be synonymous with RJE.

As discussed in several articles, traditional disciplinary policies have failed to ensure the enforcement of school discipline in a manner that reduces racial/ethnic disparities and concomitant related societal costs. (Bacher-Hicks, Billings, & Deming, 2019; Rumberger & Losen, 2016) As the evidence mounted that traditional disciplinary approaches led to increased suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts (American Psychological Association, 2006; Zins, Bloodworth, Weisberg, & Walberg, (2004); American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003), educators and social scientists developed alternative disciplinary policies aimed at breaking the school to juvenile

justice and prison pipeline. Several positive alternatives to zero tolerance policies emerged, including Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS), and RJS. RJS employs a multifaceted approach that seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts and build positive relationships in schools and communities. Additional research on the social determinants of health has reinforced an educational approach that engages schools, families, and communities to coordinate across sectors to enhance individual and community health and economic vitality. (Heiman, & Artiga, 2015; Reynolds, *et al.,* 2008*;* Qu, Chattopadhyay, & Hahn, 2016; Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zara, & Giles, 2015; Shankar, Ip, Couture, Tan, Zulla, & Lam, 2013.)

**School Suspensions and Youth of Color**

As noted in our first article, traditional school discipline approaches lead to school suspensions, which have multiple adverse effects on youth. These include impaired grade-level progression (Marchbank *et al.,* 2015), reduced success in school and careers (Pufall Jones *et al.,* 2018), lowered community participation in volunteering and voting (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2014), and high economic costs for individuals and communities. (Rumberger & Losen, 2016)

Suspensions are responsible for a six and half percent reduction in graduation rates. (Rumberger & Losen, 2016) In California, a one percent suspension rate for a cohort of 10th graders over three years costs the State $180 million. Extrapolating, Rumberger and Losen project the statewide lifetime economic costs for this group is $2.7 billion:

- $809 million direct costs (criminal justice, reduced revenue generated); and
- $1.9 billion social costs (reduced economic productivity, increased health care expenditures).

These calculations indicate that each non-graduate sustains average economic losses of $579,820 over their lifetime. (Rumberger, & Losen, 2016)

In recent years, even as overall school suspension and expulsion rates decrease, youth of color remain a larger proportion of these actions than their proportion in the population. While California suspension rates have declined by 42% from the 2011-12 to 2016-17 school years, current suspension rates by race/ethnicity are: African American, 9.8%; American Indian/Alaskan Native, 7.4%; Asian, 1.1%; Filipino, 1.4; Latino, 3.7%; Pacific Islander, 5.0; and White, 3.2%. (CDE, 2017). These data make it imperative that we understand and evaluate the possibilities presented by more comprehensive alternative disciplinary approaches, such as RJS. Similarly, RJS practitioners' and stakeholders' perceptions of the implementation processes, as well as the opportunities and barriers schools face during these transitions are essential to inform work in the field.

## Practitioners and Stakeholders

Restorative School Vision Project (RSVP), a California RJS non-profit organization, which has been active in the field for over 10 years, sought to define promising practices in RJS in agreement with one of its funders. A two-day Guidance Group of recognized RJS experts from across the State was convened. The Guidance Group members and educational partners, in turn, invited practitioners and stakeholders from three geographic regions of the state (Southern, Central Valley, and Northern California) to attend stakeholder meetings. Attendees included RJS practitioners, educators, youth, community advocates, indigenous elders, and activists. Discussions on RJS key components, supportive practices, implementation, and factors that contributed to success or inhibited development were held at three one-day meetings across the state.

A total of 174 stakeholders contributed to the study. The Guidance Group consisted of 14 RJS practitioners and 16 other stakeholders. Practitioners are individuals working on RJS in school settings in California. Stakeholders include policymakers (statewide and local); students; teachers; school administrators; parents; community members; teachers union members; and other concerned individuals. Attendees at the one-day regional meetings included 21 RJS practitioners and 123 other stakeholders. Fifty-one of the regional convening attendees completed an anonymous survey that collected perspectives on RJS promising practices, and 36 completed an anonymous evaluation that collected data on important areas of RJS.

Attendees' perspectives were analyzed to create a taxonomy of RJS implementation strategies, as well as facilitating factors and barriers to implementation. Responses from attendees' discussions and survey data were categorized by content and analyzed by a review team, including experienced RJS practitioners, lawyers, a mediator, researchers, equity experts, and educators. The data were finally organized into RJS Implementation and Enabling Factors and Barriers to Implementation. RJS (and RJE) core concepts and supportive practices are discussed in our earlier article. (Kreger *et al.*, 2018)

In organizing the terms used by stakeholders, we strove to cluster similar concepts together while also reporting in the words employed by stakeholders. When words and concepts deviated from the cluster group such that there was concern about losing meaning by omitting the term, the terms or phrases were included within the cluster and reported as a separate line-item in the table. The sources of the data and the frequency of the comments were also documented. The review team further fleshed out these concepts, providing additional depth, and underscoring the importance of specific categories. Redundancy and overlap within and across categories were assessed and simplified to streamline the presentation.

## Implementation Strategies

Tables 1 and 2 include the major components of implementation, consisting of: School Assessment and Planning in Table 1; and RJS Training, Program Implementation in Schools, Evaluation, and Sustainability in Table 2.

### Assessments

Most stakeholders noted the importance of school assessments to determine existing support levels for RJS implementation. As in other aspects of RJS, it is important that assessments receive input from the multiple members of the school community, including students, teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, and others. Other recommendations included gaining an understanding of the school's capacity to change, use of data-friendly presentations, and identification of which stakeholders are most enthusiastic about RJS work. Components of the Assessments category were cited in all three geographic convenings.

### Planning

In this category, practitioners and stakeholders presented ideas such as providing an RJS narrative for school stakeholders; anticipating changes to infrastructure required to support the new program; and building communication strategies to assure consistent messages across all levels of the school community. Three convenings discussed the importance of being strategic and identifying clear directions (intentionality). Components of the Planning category were cited across the three geographic convenings, and in the promising practices survey.

**Table 1. Implementation Strategies Reported by 174 California RJS Practitioners and Stakeholders: Assessment and Planning**

| Implementation Components | Stakeholder Responses | Number of Convenings where concept was cited | Cited in Promising Practices Survey | Cited by Evaluation Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **School Assessment: Assets, Challenges, Data Analysis** | | | | |
| | Assess what school community wants to change and why. What is the capacity to implement change? | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Determine buy-in from stakeholders. Include:<br>• Teachers,<br>• District,<br>• Administration,<br>• Families, and Community. | 3 convenings | Yes | Yes |
| | Present data to all stakeholders in community-friendly terminology and setting. | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Determine who is excited to work with RJE and cultivate a learning environment. | 1 convening | No | No |
| **Planning** | | | | |
| | Be strategic and intentional. | 3 convenings | No | No |
| | Create a narrative about culture change and RJ practices. | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Parent / caregiver integration into process. | 2 convenings | Yes | No |
| | Establish supportive structures and systems, e.g., integrated guidance group, ongoing coaching and technical assistance. | 2 convenings | No | No |
| | Define roles for administration, teachers, parents, community stakeholders. | 1 convening | No | No |

| Implementation Components | Stakeholder Responses | Number of Convenings where concept was cited | Cited in Promising Practices Survey | Cited by Evaluation Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Create space and allocate budget for onsite RJ practitioners. | 2 convenings | No | No |
| | Employ prevention principles. Engage community with community building before there is a need for "harm and repair discussions." (Employ practices to build trust, create strong communication channels, personal connectedness, etc.) | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Tailor implementation strategy to school.<br>• Pilot test in small setting to make adjustments. | 3 convenings | No | No |
| | Identify a group that is excited, willing to learn, change, support others in the process to start. Then as success occurs, others will become excited and want to participate. | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Consistency<br>• Plan for systemwide implementation so that messages across all levels of a school, grade, or class are consistent. This means training and follow-up with teachers, administrators, coaches, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc. | 3 convenings | No | No |
| | Honor teachers. | 1 convening | No | No |

Table 2 summarizes strategies for training participants, collecting and analyzing data, and ensuring program sustainability.

**Training**

Stakeholders strongly endorsed the importance of ongoing training and support for teachers, students, and school staff throughout the implementation process. Components of the Training category were cited across the three geographic convenings, in the promising practices survey, and in the evaluation.

**Program Implementation in Schools**

This category addresses how the RJS implementation communications occur, how a learning environment is created, and how linkages to off-site providers is established. Components of the Implementation in Schools category were cited in the three geographic convenings, and in the promising practices survey.

**Evaluation**

Responses in this category focused on the importance of evaluation to document progress through the use of rapid turn-around data and ongoing feedback to participants. One convening also noted the importance of stakeholders learning to perform self-assessments to assure full participation and measure progress in the evaluation process. There is overlap among the categories of assessment and evaluation as a strong evaluation involves an assessment of school assets, collecting baseline data, and ongoing collecting and reporting of data for stakeholders so that interim adjustments can be made appropriately. Components of the Evaluation category were cited across one to two geographic convenings.

**Sustainability**

Stakeholders' responses in this category concentrated on the ongoing need for strategic planning to identify resources, to provide structural supports to ensure a leadership pipeline, to cultivate champions in all sectors. Components of the Sustainability category were cited in one to two geographic convenings, and in the promising practices survey.

**Table 2. Implementation Strategies Reported by RJE Practitioners and Stakeholders: Training, Active School Implementation, Evaluation and Data, and Sustainability**

| Implementation Components | Stakeholder Responses | Number of Convenings where concept was cited | Cited in Promising Practices Survey | Cited by Evaluation Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Training** | Quality training for teachers, administration, students, community. | 3 convenings | Yes | Yes |
| | Train teachers to understand their own social and emotional issues so they can understand trauma-informed approaches. | 2 convenings | Yes | Yes |
| | Train peer mediators. | 2 convenings | Yes | No |
| **Active School Implementation** | Create a learning environment. | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Orient systemwide stakeholders to plan rollout. | 3 convenings | No | No |

| Implementation Components | Stakeholder Responses | Number of Convenings where concept was cited | Cited in Promising Practices Survey | Cited by Evaluation Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Aim for whole school implementation, with consistent messages across school. | 3 convenings | Yes | No |
| | Communication between school and community. Good communication, meet community where they are. | 3 convenings | No | No |
| | Create connections to offsite providers for supports. | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Remove police from school. | 1 convening | No | No |
| **Evaluation** | • Quality Improvement.<br>• Rapid turn–around of data.<br>• Ongoing training and monitoring with feedback. | 2 convenings | No | No |
| | Create real-time (or frequent) data collection and feedback systems so decisions are made with data. | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Ongoing monitoring of implementation. | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Self-assessments to build understanding of processes and changes. | 1 convening | No | No |
| **Sustainability** | Continue strategic planning. | 2 convenings | No | No |
| | Create ongoing resources. | 2 convenings | No | No |
| | Involve school counselors. | 1 convening | No | No |
| | Build structure to develop leadership. Create structure of older students teaching younger students. | 2 convening | No | No |
| | Cultivate champions in all sectors. | 1 convening | No | No |

**Enabling Factors and Barriers to Implementation**

Table 3 presents issues that practitioners and stakeholders viewed as either facilitating factors or barriers to RJS implementation. Both teacher and administration buy-in and adequate funding are seen as necessary resources and were discussed in two convenings. Creating champions across sectors and adequate budget and space resources were cited in two convenings; and persistence was cited in one.

Under barriers to RJS implementation, stakeholders cited the punitive mindset and the rigidity of that mindset in three convenings. Similarly, the lack of resources for implementation was cited in all convenings.

**Table 3. Enabling Factors and Barriers to Implementation**

| Enabling Factors | Frequency by Number of Convenings |
|---|---|
| Teacher and administration buy-in. | 3 convenings |
| Funding from grants or school district. | 3 convenings |
| Champions across sectors. | 2 convenings |
| Resources: space and budget for onsite RJ practitioners. | 2 convenings |
| Persistence. | 1 convening |
| **Barriers** | **Frequency by Number of Convenings** |
| Punitive mindset. | 3 convenings |
| Rigidity of punitive disciplinary systems. | 3 convenings |
| Lack of funding. | 3 convenings |

## Discussion

It is important to understand how RJS practitioners envision successful RJS implementation, as well as their views on facilitating factors and barriers to implementation. Several themes emerge from the convenings and discussions: (1) the imperative for RJS training; (2) Data and evaluation; (3) sustainability; and (4) facilitators and barriers to implementation. Each topic is discussed below.

### 1. The Imperative for RJS Training

Stakeholders from the study convenings understand the importance of tailoring RJS to specific schools or districts and of training stakeholders to enable their full participation. Training must be consistent to support the introduction of RJS, and must be ongoing throughout the steps of implementation. We are presenting this continuum as "RJS training." Stakeholders are clear that RJS training is essential to create a "critical mass" of stakeholder investment in order to give planning and implementation momentum. Training also builds the common knowledge infrastructure for communication across stakeholder groups.

Building momentum for an RJS approach to school discipline requires education of the many sectors that make up the school community. There is a clear consensus among participants of the Guidance Group and the regional convenings that thorough trainings are essential for success. Research by the Oakland Unified School District (2014) and the San Francisco Unified School Districts (2018) supports this.

Trainings seek to help stakeholders understand the three primary RJS interventions: Tier 1 -- prevention of harm circles; Tier 2 -- mediations (harm circles and family conferences) after harm has occurred; and, Tier 3 -- restoration of balance between students and the school community to make reentry both possible and smooth. Key principles to be taught include: indigenous wisdom and balanced relationships; community inclusiveness; circle practices; SEL; narrative inquiry, and trauma-sensitive approaches. (Kreger *et al.*, 2018) By employing these approaches, trusting relationships and respectful, compassionate interactions are built. Trainings set the tone for a paradigm shift away from punitive practices and toward restorative, healing ones.

Beyond training in essential RJS principles, California practitioners recognize the desirability of training on a number of topics that support RJ practices, including SEL, narrative inquiry, and trauma- sensitive approaches. Employing these practices to address trauma, community stressors, and microaggressions contributes to the success of RJS programs. School administrators in California are now required to be proficient in RJS practices as well as most of the above-named practices noted above. (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2016)

**Ongoing training: a continuum.** Like many disciplines in which practitioner judgement is integrated into practice, RJS requires a significant amount of interaction, feedback, and reflection among trainers and trainees. (Martin, Zindel, & Nass, 2018; Goodman, Gbaje, Yassin, Dias, Gilbert, & Thompson, 2018; Serrano, *et al.*, 2019) Although the literature recognizes the importance of working toward a comprehensive RJS plan, stakeholders recognize that implementation of a whole-school RJS program is the most difficult task they have faced as practitioners.

Adapting to cultural paradigm shifts requires time and patience. This is true for the adoption of restorative relationships, as well. Due to the evolving nature of these relationships and the unanticipated events that can occur during implementation, it is especially important that time for training and practitioner feedback continue. In this respect, RJS is similar to the practice of psychology, social work, public health, medicine, and other disciplines where the development of expertise depends upon ongoing learning and mentorship. Thus, it is insufficient to hold introductory trainings of these practices without ongoing training and opportunities for teachers and administrators to share their experiences and hone their skills.

## 2. Data and Evaluation

A second critical area raised by stakeholders is the need for data collection and evaluation to support RJS implementation. (Butt, Aurangzeab, Naaranoia, & Savolainen, 2016) While study participants were not always knowledgeable in the ways data are collected and analyzed, most agreed that data results, if presented to them in understandable and digestible formats, would enable them to make informed decisions to adjust, adapt, and improve their RJS activities. They also made it clear that they wanted to participate in those data explorations.

**Range of data required: baseline through sustainability.** The scope of evaluation data ranges from initial baseline data to ongoing feedback on training and implementation approaches. Stakeholders must agree on the selection of goals and benchmarks that will be measured to demonstrate progress and therefore the data employed to document progress.

Baseline data can include demographics; academic performance by grade, race and ethnicity and gender; school suspensions and expulsions; absence rates; resources (both current and potential, including school staffing patterns for positions such as counselors); and a thorough evaluation of community assets and challenges.

Providing data in user-friendly ways in a timely manner facilitates both for mid-course corrections or adjustments and informing all stakeholders of progress in implementation. (Butt, *et al.* 2016) These rapid feedback loops also enable all stakeholders to identify what types of additional training and technical assistance is required to make the implementation smooth. Studies have documented the challenges of evaluating RJS due to the individual variability of schools, as well as a lack of standardized concepts and implementation practices. (Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016; RAND, 2016)

Stakeholder involvement in data collection and evaluation can ensure that critical assets are not overlooked (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003) and that RJS progress toward full implementation will have community support. (Rosenfield & Berninger, 2009) Moreover, stakeholders participating in these processes can become sophisticated participants in establishing priorities for the RJS program roll-out, and can assist initial and ongoing training.

**3. Sustainability**

A third area highlighted by stakeholders in their discussions of RJS implementation is the need for sustainability and funding. Without designated funding streams and a leadership and workforce pipeline, implementation of an ongoing RJS program would be doomed to failure. (Rosenfeld & Berninger, 2009; Kraiger, 2013) Participants were clear that meaningful implementation at the school level requires an in-house RJS coordinator as well as a guidance committee made up of teachers, administrators, students, and school employees, establishing these requires both economic resources and talented personnel. This is consistent with past research. (Oakland Unified School District, 2014)

While it is clear that many factors contribute to successful RJS programs, in order for RJS to move forward aggressively statewide, designated funding is imperative to assure the workforce pipeline. Such funding would validate the values proscribed by RJS and allow schools to experience firsthand the differences a restorative approach can make.

**Challenges.** Implementation is all too frequently sidelined by changes in administrators at both the school and district levels. A school may hire a principal with RJS experience who enthusiastically embraces RJS practices. The next year she may be replaced by a new principal with a zero-tolerance policy approach instead of one that enhances a long-term sense of responsibility and nurtures restorative relationships.

When this happens, RJS implementation frequently lacks the underpinnings of support, whether the plan exists on paper or not. Those schools with the greatest continuity and expansion of RJS are those with an underlying belief in just and equitable learning environments; in the power of restorative relationships; and in the ongoing training and support to implement these strategies. These schools have also established, from the onset, an infrastructure that includes ongoing training, as well as, a guidance group of teachers, administrators, students, and parents. This structure provides the basis for continuity, allowing for adjustments as the needs arise.

The phrase "whole school implementation" surfaced a number of times during discussions. While there are whole school implementation guides, (San Francisco Unified School District, 2018; Oakland Unified School District, 2017) implementing RJS, also requires practitioners and stakeholders to understand the nature of changing complex systems. (Williams & Hummelbrunner, 2011)

Creating this system in a school requires multiple steps over time, and must be tailored to the context and issues of the individual school. (Williams & Hummellbrunner, 2011) It is often helpful for goals to be designated into short-, medium-, and longer-term, while maintaining a seamless system that enables students, teachers, parents, caregivers, and community members to participate and learn. Pilot programs involving a single grade level or specific classrooms can provide an important development stage to make adjustments prior to whole school implementation.

**4. Facilitating Factors and Barriers to Implementation**

By focusing on enabling factors and barriers, RJ stakeholders can be strategic in harnessing resources for their local and statewide efforts. Under enabling factors, specific categories warrant mention. Teacher and administration buy-in, and identifying champions across sectors are important components of successful programs. (Kotter, 2012) Funding from grants or the school district speaks to the current need to supplement RJS budgets and build the capacity to tackle the multilayered work necessary. Additional evidence of successful RJS outcomes can contribute to the rationale for increased funding.

The training, evaluation, and sustainability categories discussed above outline critical facilitating factors for a smooth implementation of RJS. Buy-in from the many levels of stakeholders can be accomplished through RJS training. Similarly, the barriers cited can be addressed by understanding the goals and procedures of RJS and by understanding the flexible, non-punitive approach to maintaining and reestablishing peace in the school setting by respecting all voices and repairing harm when it occurs. These approaches can all be learned and reinforced through RJS training. (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2002)

**Recommendations**

The previous discussion highlights the commitment from practitioners and stakeholders who participated in the study to improve educational outcomes, create healthy communities, and reduce inequities. Recommendations for next steps include:

1. Standardizing RJS terminology, practices, common data collection elements, and desired outcomes;
2. Defining approaches to assess school and school district data in conjunction with stakeholder goals;
3. Developing funding for well-structured school RJS programs and evaluations so that promising practices can be documented within specific school contexts;
4. Promoting educational RJS training statewide so that programs can expand in California schools where they are needed;
5. Developing and disseminating resource allocation strategies that encourage school districts to adopt budgets that fund onsite RJ practitioners with dedicated space and resources;
6. Promoting legislation that provides funding for pilot school districts to measure RJ implementation fidelity;

7. Increasing opportunities for relationship-building and advocacy among RJS allies, including students, parents, practitioners, educators, funders, and researchers. Opportunities should reflect diversity across regions and demographic variables.

## Conclusion

A California RJS non-profit convened a diverse group of RJS practitioners and stakeholders from across the state to determine a set of RJS promising practices for schools. What emerged was a set of core principles and supportive practices for RJS (Kreger *et al.*, 2018), as well as key factors and core approaches to implementation. Additionally, facilitating factors and barriers to implementation were documented. Participants emphasized the need for training across RJS participant groups and the importance of employing data-driven evaluation strategies that support all sectors of the educational RJS community. Finally, they affirmed the importance of designated resources to create an RJS infrastructure. Further research and support for these endeavors will enable documentation of educational RJS outcomes and compare them to other approaches as we advance toward preventing and resolving conflict in more productive ways.

This study reveals that many educational practitioners are invested in furthering social change within schools to increase equity and reduce disproportionality. This work can be furthered by having a common set of practices that all RJS stakeholders are familiar with and that RJS trainings could solidify. Well-designed evaluations of RJS, from collecting accurate data to assessment of implementation fidelity and outcomes, can provide the data for tailoring programs to specific schools and communities, as well as increasing practitioner capacity and solidifying the case for funding. This, in turn, can assist stakeholders and policymakers to strengthen funding streams that enable programs to be sustainable and reduce current inequities.

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msuleiman@csub.edu
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