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## Leadership Strategies That Exemplary K-12 Latina Superintendents in California Use to Create an Organizational Culture of Inclusiveness Using Kennedy's Five Leadership Qualities of Cultural Differences

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Leadership Strategies That Exemplary K-12 Latina Superintendents in California Use to  
Create an Organizational Culture of Inclusiveness Using Kennedy's Five Leadership  
Qualities of Cultural Differences

A Dissertation by

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Irvine, California

School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

April 2021

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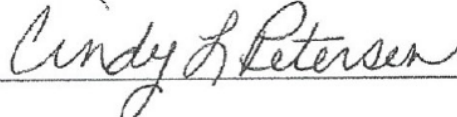
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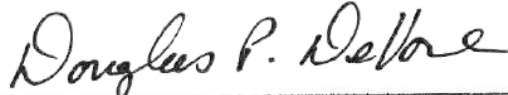
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April 2021

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Qualities of Cultural Differences

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“Sí se puede!”

—Dolores Huerta

## ABSTRACT

### Leadership Strategies That Exemplary K-12 Latina Superintendents in California Use to Create an Organizational Culture of Inclusiveness Using Kennedy's Five Leadership Qualities of Cultural Differences

by Martha Martín Pérez

**Purpose:** The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study was to identify and describe the leadership strategies that Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) 5 leadership qualities of cultural differences.

**Methodology:** This sequential explanatory mixed methods study analyzed quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to identify and describe strategies found when analyzing the data. This study summarized the findings that emerged to identify and describe strategies that create an organizational culture of inclusiveness.

**Findings:** Examination of mixed methods data from the 15 Latina superintendents in California participating in this study indicated that 14 major findings and 3 unexpected findings were substantiated by coded theme frequency.

**Conclusions:** The study supported 8 conclusions that affirmed the criticality to understand what strategies exemplary female Latina school superintendents use to create organizational cultures of inclusiveness: (a) take explicit personal responsibility for cultural inclusiveness (b) remove gatekeeper barriers, (c) dismantle the status quo, (d) take conscious ownership of their personal behavior, (e) be explicit in aligning personal and organizational values and beliefs, (f) provide multiple platforms for input

and feedback from diverse stakeholders, (g) develop a shared vision and value of equity with stakeholders, and (h) use bilingual code switching to build authentic rapport

**Recommendations:** Further research is recommended to replicate study conducted with a different group of exemplary superintendents Black/African American women; a meta-analysis of the thematic teams' 10 studies of cultural inclusive leadership be conducted to identify the most important strategies across different groups of leaders; a meta-analysis of the thematic teams' 3 studies of exemplary superintendent to identify and describe the most essential strategies across the California public school district leaders in time of COVID-19; and replication of study with exemplary, first generation, multilingual women of color in superintendent roles nationally.



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## PREFACE

Following discussions and considerations regarding the opportunity to study the leadership strategies exemplary leaders use to create a culture of inclusiveness, 10 peer researchers in collaboration with seven faculty advisors, explored the approaches exemplary leaders use to create a culture of inclusiveness in a variety of industry sectors to form this thematic research study. The thematic team examined approaches of the sample population in various leaders in government, public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations. This sequential explanatory mixed methods research study framework was designed using the five leadership qualities of cultural differences as identified in *Putting Our Differences to Work: The Fastest Way to Innovation, Leadership, and High Performance* (Kennedy, 2008). Each thematic peer researcher identified 15 exemplary leaders to survey and interviewed five exemplary leaders who volunteered for the qualitative portion of the study. To ensure thematic consistency and reliability across the study, the team of peer researchers collaboratively designed the purpose statement, research questions, definitions of terms, survey questions, interview guide, and research study procedures.

Throughout the study, the term *peer researcher* was utilized to refer to the 10 researchers who conducted this thematic study. The thematic team consisted of the following doctoral candidates and their selected fields of study: Martha Martín Pérez, Latina superintendents in California public schools; Stephanie Smart, dual immersion elementary school principals; Toloue Aria, chief nurse executives; Tonia Watkins, human resource leaders in K-12 schools; Marisol Alaniz, deans in nonprofit colleges; Kelly Kennedy, K-12 superintendents; Nemo Withana, finance leaders in banking; Nicole

Tafoya, school counselors; Leila Dodge, elementary school principals; and Lynn Carmen Day, K-12 superintendents.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

—Maya Angelou

According to the School Superintendents Association (AASA), in 2018, there were over 13,728 superintendents in the United States. Leaders of school districts are responsible for over 76,000,000 students enrolled in the K-12 public school system (U.S. Census, 2019). A school superintendent oversees the daily operations and the long-range planning of a school district. Serving as the point person for all district matters, the role of a superintendent is to supervise school principals and district staff, work with school board members, and manage fiscal operations. School superintendent responsibilities include hiring staff, solving problems and lobbying for additional resources, and implementing state legislative policy that benefits student learning (Middleton, 2019). Covey (2004) suggested that strong leaders must effectively know themselves before they lead others. When that happens, superintendents impact how people interact and work collaboratively toward the shared goals of the organization (Stolp & Smith, 1995).

Leaders make a difference in creating culturally inclusive environments through conversation, policy, vision, allocation of resources, and embracing differences (Marx, 2008). Leaders with vision are able to anticipate changes in national demographics, politics, economy, and civil and social issues that impact school culture and learning. The year 2020 has underscored the need for and importance of diversity and inclusion. In times of crisis, the leader is the person responsible for seeking out and valuing different

perspectives while creating a culture of compassion, kindness, and inclusiveness. Riehl (2000) affirmed that it is critical for school leaders to develop and validate a culture of inclusiveness.

According to Gardiner and Enomoto (2006), “Superintendents that lead cultural inclusiveness ensure that it is clearly written in district and school mission statements, core values, standards and evaluation expectations to serve students effectively” (p. 560). Gardiner and Enomoto stressed the importance of articulating mission, vision, values, and standards, and communicating the evaluation expectations for all staff. It is the superintendent’s responsibility to establish a set of beliefs, practices, and behaviors that support fair and effective interactions with people from all ages, abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, race/ethnicities, languages, cultures, and life circumstances. The superintendent must be the leader and guardian of cultural inclusiveness.

## **Background**

### **Leadership**

Superintendents are responsible for determining how to lead, hire, manage, and develop a school district’s vision in an environment that is accessible and equitable to staff and stakeholders all while being the chief advocates and voice for children (Middleton, 2019). The leadership of the superintendents and their vision is subject to the changing global and national demographics, politics, economic factors, civil and social issues of students, and conflicting demands of the community. In California, there are 1,037 K-12 superintendents who are actively leading school districts in collaboration

with their leadership team, school principals, school board members, and community stakeholders (California Department of Education [CDE], 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has left superintendents grappling with an online learning transition where there is a lack of technological infrastructure, inadequate preparation for online learning, training, curriculum, and more. Superintendents are struggling with keeping schools closed, how to provide meals for needy students, providing for students with disabilities, English learners, student athletes, music, prom, college preparation, concerned parents, and anxious teachers who are on the front lines whether at home or in face-to-face learning. Everyone is reaching out to superintendents to quickly solve the myriad problems while confronting conflicting health advisories and inadequate funding. While grappling with all of the educational issues impacted by COVID-19, superintendents are also facing life-and-death issues of raging fires, hurricanes, and floods. Central to the superintendent's responsibility is to ensure that all students have equitable opportunity to learn and grow. In the fall of 2020, a group of Latino superintendents in California in conjunction with the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) met to reflect and share experiences on what they were doing to support students and families. Don Austin, superintendent of Palo Alto Unified School District, stated, "From the student's lens, it's depressing, it's isolating, it's silent, it's void of love and interactions." The superintendent's job is a tough one on a good day. The pandemic has asked superintendents to make some impossible choices to balance the health, teaching, learning, and the needs of parents.

Superintendents can be blamed for the persistent problem of low-performing schools, especially in poor and minority neighborhoods. They are alternately lionized and condemned, depending on whether the community's mood about its schools is positive or negative. They are expected to suggest bold reform initiatives but can become politically isolated if their initiatives offend important groups. While the challenges are daunting for all superintendents, they are especially so for minority superintendents. In a 2014 study, Galiana reported that Latino superintendents need to work harder and longer to be better than other superintendents in order to dispel the misconception by some that they did not get their position based on the merit of their qualifications (Campbell-Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000).

The role of superintendent is a difficult one for males and females alike, but for a female Latina superintendent, the stakes are even higher. More so, there is a lack of research to explore how Latina superintendents, who have proven successful, acquired superintendent leadership roles. Additionally, the literature review of this phenomenon was limited because little to no research has been made to understand how Latina superintendents create inclusiveness in their successful organization. In addition, no studies exist that recognize and recount the leadership strategies that Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness that embraces staff, students, and community. Barron-Nevarez (2014) suggests that the stories, narratives, and testimonios (testimonials) of the experience will create awareness and understanding of the oppression, discrimination, and the systemically underserved Latinas in education face. Two Latina superintendents in California, Lisa Gonzales and Irella Perez, stated that they have struggled against board members who hold racial bias,

and both feel the added pressure to be twice as good to be taken seriously (Garcia Mathewson, 2016). Creating the platform to bring intersectionality to the forefront of the study is essential to provide deeper insight on how exemplary Latina superintendents create an organization that embraces cultural inclusiveness.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

**Cultural intelligence (CQ).** According to Ramírez (2014), CQ sustains because it is “an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings with specific intelligence focused on capabilities to grasp, reason, and behave effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (p. 337). Avila (2018) used Livermore’s definition that “CQ is a learned form of intelligence that can be applied to any culturally diverse situation” (p. 52). Moua (2010) described a person’s CQ as, the “ability to acquire information and knowledge that assists in the identification of cultural elements at work” (p. 167). Moua affirmed that knowledge CQ included recognizing through what agency cultures were interpreted, shared, and how cultural meanings and symbols can affect a person’s behavior and attitude.

Keung and Rockinsin-Szapinski (2013) reported that decision makers who exhibit elevated CQ demonstrate a higher intensity of transformational leadership styles. According to Bandura (2002), cultural is defined by diverse and dynamic social systems and not static monoliths. Notable components require intercultural flexibility and competence (Bandura, 2002). As a result, individuals with CQ embody realization of cross-cultural phenomena, mindfulness to process certain conditions, and behavior to act fittingly in situations (Bandura, 2002). Stewart’s (2006) research on James Burns’s 1978

findings suggested that transformational leadership is strengthened when aligned with a collective purpose by providing ability and accountability to make social changes. Zirak and Ahmadian (2012) recognized CQ as a strategic tool to achieve organizational goals.

**Critical race theory.** Banks's (1996, 2008; Banks et al., 2001) research studies included the historical context of the cultural responsiveness of the public school system. The evidence from the research proposed that educational policies aligned to cultural responsiveness construct transformative knowledge for marginalized academic communities of color (Banks, 1996). Banks's work in multicultural education in K-higher education probed the system-created gap by creating high-potential spaces. Banks considered character skills—determination, self-confidence, self-discipline, time management, strong communication skills, and social responsibility—as important noncognitive skills that enabled problem-solving collaboration in schools (Vavrus, 2007).

Furthermore, his findings of critical race theory (CRT) were chronicled in the following five themes: the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, the challenge to dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and the interdisciplinary perspective (Banks, 1996). Moreover, leadership founded in a culturally responsive environment creates the validating and inclusive transformational conditions for students of color (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Murtadha-Watts & Stoughton, 2004; Riehl, 2000; Webb-Johnson, 2006; Webb-Hasan, Carter Jones, & Moon, 2018). Ladson-Billings's (2005) findings were foundational in supporting personal and cultural understanding to motivate students and educational leaders foundational in CRT. CRT relates connections to lived realities of communities



of color storytelling, retelling of family narratives with the purpose of proving a counternarrative (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009).

Melendez de Santa Ana (2008) relayed the importance for children to know educators in leadership roles who look like them. Furthermore, Campbell-Jones and Avelar-Lasalle (2000) suggested that hearing how culture affects the ascension into educational leadership for Latinos and hearing their stories are critical in obtaining and retaining Hispanics and African American K-12 superintendents.

### **Culturally Intelligent Educational Leadership**

The disparity of representation of Latina educational leadership was recorded at 1% of the women in the superintendent role (Nieves, 2016). A review of literature demonstrates that education and *testimonios* (testimonials) are indispensable for exemplary CQ Latina educational leaders. The research gap in Latina educational leaders led to further inquiry into understanding Ladson-Billings's reference, "We teach what we value" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1).

There is a correlation of Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) and Yosso's (2005) findings of counternarratives in communities of color, with a focus on Latinas' described journey of overcoming barriers, cultural implications, and asset-based approach of their diverse leadership styles. Numerous scholars acknowledge *testimonios* as a practice of personal testaments with origins in Latin America that has often been used "to document experiences of oppression committed against oppressed communities" (Acevedo, 2001; Gonzalez-Barragan, 2014; Beverley, 2004; Gutiérrez, 2008; Pérez Huber, 2009; The

Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Testimonio is a process of a “collective memory,” that transcends connection to a larger group struggle (Pérez Huber, 2010, p. 83).

The AASA findings noted the scarcity of national Latina leadership representation with the 1% of Latina superintendent representation in California (Grogan & Brunner, 2004). The available research initially detailed the cultural stories that Latina leaders navigated, to manage the process of empowering women who are underrepresented in the public school system as superintendents (Nieves, 2016). This researcher will continue to build upon the foundational researchers and experts to find gaps in opportunities for the advancement of exemplary Latinas that foster culturally diverse and inclusive organizations.

**Cultural capital wealth.** Ladson-Billings’s (2005) findings asserted that personal and cultural knowledge was a vehicle for a strengthened student and educational leader academic pipeline (see also Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Solórzano (1998) argued that the following CRT findings were in education: “Basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the subordination of scholars of color” (p. 123). Yosso (2005) described Hooks (1994) and Freire’s (1970, 1973) connection to cultural capital wealth as “a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling” (p. 74).

Yosso (2005) further explained cultural capital wealth as “a challenge to deficit thinking and understanding of the empowering potential of the cultures of Communities of Color” (p. 1). Additionally, Paris and Alim (2017) summarized that Yosso’s (2004)

research findings of culturally responsiveness policies revealed that "underrepresented communities of color have wealth with an asset approach of familial, social, linguistic, aspirational, navigational and resistance capital" (p. 1). Consequently, the gap in research of disaggregated Latina data and insufficient information cannot be collected to address cultural capital among Latina leadership.

### **Politically Intelligent Leadership**

Politically contentious educational environments can cause limitations for practitioners and researchers, therefore, cultivating a mindset that allows for vulnerability and provides opportunity for community building among stakeholders. This could embody, "Culture is that collection of behavior patterns and beliefs that constitute standards for deciding what is, deciding what can be, what one feels about it, what to do about it, and deciding how to go about doing it" (Patton, 2015, p. 100).

### **Multicultural and Cultural Responsiveness**

The literature review focuses on studies that include the historical context of cultural responsiveness of the public school system. The evidence from the research proposes that educational policies aligned to cultural responsiveness construct transformative knowledge for marginalized academic communities of color (Banks, 1996). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) affirmed, "Between critical race theory and education, the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system" (p. 58).

In addition, Vergara (2017) discussed Lopez's 2009 findings that supported the effect that lack of cultural responsiveness in the school systems has on the advancement

of Latinos and Blacks. Vergara also shared Lopez's 2009 findings from the Census Bureau that 33% of Latinos ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in school, compared to 42% of the same aged, young adults. Patton (2015) stated, "Culture is that collection of behavior patterns and beliefs that constitute standards for deciding what is, deciding what can be, what one feels about it, what to do about it, and deciding how to go about doing it" (p. 100).

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Kennedy's theory of cultural inclusion.** Kennedy (2008) stated that culturally inclusive leaders use the following five leadership qualities of cultural differences to create a successful and inclusive culture in their organization: (a) diversity is a priority, (b) get to know people and their differences, (c) to enable rich communication, (d) to make accountability a core value, and (e) to establish a mutualism as the final arbiter. Her study asserted that diversity, as an organizational priority, is an intentional action to embrace individuals' unique differences, perspectives, and talents as an identifier for organizational success (Kennedy, 2008). Second, she specified that knowing people and their differences is intentionally developing deep knowledge, expertise, and empathy about diversity through curiosity, experiences, and daily practice (Hesselbein & Goldsmith 2009; Kennedy, 2008; Travis, Nugent, & Lengnick-Hall, 2019).

Furthermore, rich communication is the transfer of information with the intent to understand meaning and broaden one's perspective, resulting in a personal connection between individuals (Armengol, Fernandez, Simo, & Sallan, 2017; Daft & Lengel, 1986; Kennedy, 2008; Jensen, Moynihan, & Salomonsen, 2018). Personal responsibility as a

core value is leaders' conscious ownership of their actions and their impact on others (Kennedy, 2008; Molenmaker, De Kwaadsteniet, & Van Dijk, 2016; Tausen, Miles, Lawrie, & Macrae, 2018). In addition, Kennedy (2008) found that mutualism, as the final arbiter, is where everyone benefits and no one is harmed by the decisions and actions within the team or organization.

Mutualism establishes trust in organizations through a deep sense of shared purpose, a thoughtful inspection of each member's ideas and interests, and an interdependence when performing roles and responsibilities (Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Mishra, 1996; Rau, 2005). Therefore, mutualism creates a culture of inclusion and incorporates diverse individuals in an environment of mutual respect and acceptance that recognizes and values their success and personal contribution to the organization (Azmat, Fujimoto & Rentschler, 2014; Kennedy, 2008; Mak, Daly, & Barker, 2014; Tawagi & Mak, 2015). Culture is "all learned and shared human patterns or models that distinguishes the members of one group of people from another" (Damen, 1987, p. 51).

### **Women in Educational Leadership**

Consequently, disproportionate underrepresentation of Latinx superintendents in the K-12 public school system does not currently match the 43% Latinx population growth (ALAS, n.d.). According to AASA, in 2004, about 2,500 women led districts in the United States. However, 98% of female superintendents in the national public school system are White and overall 2% were Black or Latina (Grogan & Brunner, 2004). As of 2019, there were no available California Department of Education (CDE) data to specify

the gender of the 73 Latino (encompasses female and male) superintendents of the 1,037 superintendents in California.

Strengthening the equity pipeline by increasing culturally inclusive Latina superintendents in California could create prospective leadership pathways for the 22% female Latina administrators and the 15% Latina K-12 educators (CDE, 2019). The literature review (see Chapter II) supports disruption in systemic internal and external barriers that impede inclusive leadership and the ability to determine strategies that are under resourced and holistically developed that women of color use to lead organizations. Hermann Global (2002) emphasized that leaders, cognitively diverse in their own thinking, are essential in countering conflict, encouraging diverse standpoints, and creating an inclusive environment for change. Latina superintendents are positioned to lead culturally inclusive school districts, and it is important to know what strategies they use to create an environment that embraces all people.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

AASA (2019) reported that there are over 13,728 superintendents who are responsible for the 76,000,000 students enrolled in the U.S. K-12 public school system (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The role of the 21st-century school superintendent is becoming increasingly complex. Leaders in education are accountable to higher standards and seek balance with increased demands, fewer incentives than similar jobs in the private sector, limited financial resources, and intensification from outside the field (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006). Superintendents are responsible for determining hiring practices and managing accessible and equitable systems for staff and students while

working collaboratively with school board members. In today's educational arena, the superintendent is amenable for counterbalancing aspects related to fiscal, racial, social, political, and judicial complications that pervade school districts as well as for managing the tensions surrounding these problems. Cuban (1985) contended, "Conflict has become the DNA of the superintendency" (p. 28).

With the seemingly endless demands being placed on school district superintendents, they must also lead the effort to ensure that every student and staff member has an equitable opportunity to grow and succeed. Most districts are experiencing rapid growth of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and families. The racial strife in the United States has always existed in a variety of indoctrinated, institutionalized, and systemic racist policies. The murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minnesota was a catalyst for a national call to action to support Black Lives Matter. During the midst of a global health COVID-19 pandemic and social justice reawakening, the complexity of the problems for school leaders was cultural inclusiveness. Superintendents could no longer shy away from systemic and institutional racism because it is their role to navigate transformation in their organization, the culture, the policies, standards, and healing in communities with increasing demographics. State Superintendent Tony Thurmond, the first Afro-Latino to serve in this leadership role, noted, "Public education can play an important role in better exploring the connection between issues of educational equity and implicit bias in the classroom and the systemic racism that persists throughout society" (CDE, 2020, para. 6).

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the forefront of current shifts; therefore, female superintendents of color serve as a voice for the diverse communities.

Representation matters for young students to perform academically (Melendez de Santa Ana, 2008; Nieves, 2016). It is the superintendent who has the responsibility to ensure equitability and inclusiveness for everyone to thrive. Ryan (2006) asserted that meaningful inclusion is a way of leading organizations for superintendents because when superintendents fail to make this a priority, diversity and inclusiveness fail those who are consistently under resourced.

To address this challenge, superintendents must possess a strong CQ. According to several researchers, CQ does not change from culture to culture because it is “an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings . . . a specific form of intelligence focused on capabilities to grasp, reason, and behave effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang et al., 2007, p. 337). Exemplary skills are needed to navigate political accountability, inclusive communication, and educational transformation within a diverse school culture.

The executive role of superintendent was confirmed to be the highest gender-biased position in the country (Björk, 2000; Blount, 1998; Glass, 1992; Litmanovitz, 2010; Martin, 2016), because males are 40 times more likely to advance to the position of superintendent of schools than are women (Skrla, 2000). Considering that 73% of K-12 educators in the United States identify as female, women are not serving in the role of superintendent (Bitterman, Goldring, & Gray, 2013; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Glass, 2000; Litmanovitz, 2010; Martin, 2016).

Most recent nationwide statistics show that only 33% of superintendents are female (E. Tate, 2019). However, even fewer Latina females hold school superintendent



roles in California despite the 22% representation of Latina administrators and 15% Latina educators in the K-12 public school system today (CDE, 2019). Diversity and inclusion must be integrated into every element of the school district so people are comfortable taking risks and sharing ideas, and so they feel invested in their own success and the success of the organization at every level. This is the mandate for school superintendents: to make it possible for every staff member to understand that schools belong to everyone and that everyone is responsible for the behaviors that guard that culture. Ryan (2006) asserted that meaningful inclusion is a way of leading organizations for superintendents because when superintendents fail to make this a priority, then diversity and inclusiveness fail those who are consistently under resourced. It is critical to understand what strategies exemplary female Latina school superintendents use to create an inclusive culture within the organization.

### **Purpose Statement**

It was the purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's five leadership qualities of cultural differences.

### **Research Questions**

1. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?
2. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?

3. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?
4. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?
5. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?
6. What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?

### **Significance of the Problem**

Latinos comprise the largest minority group with a 17.6% of the national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). In 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) affirmed that Latinos make up 25% of school-age students, asserting that one in every four K-12 students is Latino. Further analysis revealed that one in five women in the United States identifies as Latina, notably one in four female students in public schools identify as Latina (Gándara, 2015). The relevance of this study is that it extends substantial exploration of female Latina superintendents' culturally inclusive leadership with diversity at the forefront. Gándara (2015) asserted that Latina students have not had equitable access to resources and support; therefore, they have the inequitable access that decreased educational fulfillment throughout their educational experience in K-12 journey. The research intent is to identify and explain how Latina superintendents' experiences create an organizational culture of inclusiveness that establishes equity for students and staff.

California is home to almost 15 million Latinos; however, according to *The State of Higher Education Report for California: The Latino Report*, only 12% of the Latino population between the ages of 25 and 64 has a baccalaureate degree or higher, compared with 42% of the White population (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2015). Martin (2016) stated that national changes in educational leadership accountability found women in roles of the highest level. Conversely, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) found that cultural knowledge was a vehicle to motivate the K-12 academic pipeline because it challenged dominant ideology. Thus, White educators lack acquired the experiential and education background to equip them with tools to for increasing wide range of diversity of their students (Ladson-Billings, 2002; Vavrus, 2007).

Because no research exists using the CQ theory with Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences with the following variables—(a) make diversity a priority, (b) know people and their differences, (c) enable rich communication, (d) make accountability a core value, and (e) establish mutualism as the final arbiter—it is essential to provide deeper insight on how Latina superintendents' leadership creates an organization that embraces cultural inclusiveness. Essentially, inclusion provides a sense of belonging for people in a safe and trusting environment in which they share their ideas and comments freely without fear.

There is an increasing urgency to support Latina educational leaders in developing rich cultural and linguistic interconnections with students and their families (Gándara, 2010). This study will benefit student success; Ott (2019) asserted that a school district benefits from inclusion and having role models that match the student

population. The California Association of Latina/o Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA) is the affiliation that strives to increase the pipeline of exemplary Latino leaders to become and remain superintendents (Middleton, 2019). This study will help guide the work of CALSA and other professional organizations to understand the imperative of cultural inclusiveness and the importance of encouraging and supporting Latina leadership in the K-12 school system.

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Organizational priority.** Diversity as an *organizational priority* is an intentional action to embrace *individuals' unique differences, perspectives, and talents* as an identifier for organizational success (Kennedy, 2008; Winters, 2015).

**Know people and their differences.** Knowing people and their differences is intentionally developing deep knowledge, expertise, and empathy about diversity through curiosity, experiences, and daily practice (Hesselbein & Goldsmith 2009; Kennedy, 2008; Travis et al., 2019).

**Enables rich communication.** Rich communication is the transfer of information with the intent to understand meaning and broaden one's perspective, resulting in a personal connection between individuals (Armengol et al., 2017; Daft & Lengel, 1986; Jensen et al., 2018; Kennedy 2008).

**Personal responsibility as a core value.** Personal responsibility as a core value is leaders' conscious ownership of their actions and the impact on others (Kennedy, 2008; Molenmaker et al., 2016; Tausen et al., 2018).

**Mutualism as the final arbiter.** Mutualism as the final arbiter is where everyone benefits and no one is harmed by the decisions and actions within the team or

organization (Kennedy, 2008). Mutualism establishes trust in organizations through a deep sense of shared purpose, a thoughtful inspection of each member's ideas and interests, and an interdependence when performing roles and responsibilities (Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Mishra, 1996; Rau, 2005).

**Culture of inclusion.** A culture of inclusion is the incorporation of diverse individuals in an environment of mutual respect and acceptance that recognizes and values their unique contribution to the success of the organization (Azmat et al., 2014; Kennedy, 2008; Mak et al., 2014; Tawagi & Mak, 2015).

**Culture.** Culture is all learned and shared human patterns or models that distinguish the members of one group of people from another (Damen, 1987).

**Afro-Latina.** Afro-Latinas identify one as female U.S. Latinos that self-identify as Afro-Latino descent with roots in Latin America (G. Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2016).

**Chicana.** Chicanas are defined as females of Mexican origin, first generation living in the United States as either U.S. citizens or permanent residents (Solórzano, 1993).

**Cultural intelligence.** Cultural intelligence (CQ) is “an individual's ability to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse settings” (Rámirez, 2014, n.p.).

**Exemplary.** Exemplary is a term given to people who are set apart from their peers in a supreme manner, having suitable behavior, principles, or intentions that can be copied (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014). For the purposes of this research, exemplary leaders are defined as those who are set apart from their peers in a transcendent manner and who exhibit at least four of the following characteristics: (a) identified as exemplary,

Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic; (b) served a minimum of 3 years as a superintendent in their current district with evidence of leading a culturally inclusive organization; (c) received recognition by a district office, county office of education, or California State Superintendent of Public Instruction for exemplary leadership; (d) identified by a panel of county superintendents and organization leaders who were knowledgeable of the work of superintendents and their participation in organizational and community activities involving diverse individuals; (e) has received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional organization such as CALSA, ACSA, CAAASA, CCEE, CCSESA, CABE, or other stakeholder organizations; (f) has published professional works, articles, papers on educational and university-level platforms or presented at conferences or association meetings about cultural intelligence (CQ) and cultural inclusiveness.

**Hispanic.** Individuals who classify themselves as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South American, Central American, or from any other Spanish origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

**Intersectionality.** In this study, intersectionality is defined as a framework that amplify experiences of women of color, non-White women. It describes how gender, race and ethnicity interconnect individual identities and characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989).

**Latina.** Latina is used to identify U.S. residents who identify Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic. It is another pan-ethnic term that is inclusive of females of Latin American

ancestry in the Western Hemisphere who are living in the United States (Montoya, 1994; Solórzano, 1998).

**Latino.** Latino is used as an umbrella term that includes all female and male groups of Latin American origin in the western hemisphere who are living in the United States as either U.S. citizens or permanent residents (Solórzano, 1998). It is used interchangeably with Latinx and Latina/o in this study.

**LatinX female.** In this study, LatinX female individuals who prefer to use gender inclusive identification.

**Latinx.** Latinx is a synonym for Latina and Latino.

**Transformational leadership.** Leaders who demonstrate a deeper understanding of change and a creative set of leadership skills and strategies (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

### **Delimitations**

This study was delimited to five exemplary Latina public school district superintendents in California. For the purposes of this research, exemplary superintendents are defined as school district leaders who are set apart from their peers in transcendent manner with the exhibition of at least four of the following characteristics:

1. Participation in organizational and community activities involving diverse individuals;
2. Evidence of leading a culturally inclusive organization;
3. A minimum of 3 years of experience in the profession;
4. Had articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings about cultural inclusion;
5. Recognition by their peers as a leader who gives respect to all people, and

6. Membership in professional associations in their field.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study was organized in five chapters. Chapter I introduced the study, background, statement of the research problem, and significance of the study. Chapter II provides a comprehensive review of the literature and research that has been conducted on culturally inclusive leadership, culturally intelligent theoretical foundations, and frameworks. Chapter III outlines and describes the methodology used to collect and analyze the data used in the study. Chapter IV illuminates the data analysis from the interviews and surveys and a discussion of the findings. Chapter V reports significant findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.



## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Diversity in the United States is persevering and it is critical that educational leaders have a strong, comprehensive consciousness of cultural intelligence (CQ). Learning organizations have diversity, but need innovative leaders who demonstrate culturally responsive leadership, behaviors, and abilities in all school aspects (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Mitchell, 2015). According to Keung and Rockinsin-Szapinski (2013), superintendents that exhibit elevated CQ demonstrate a higher intensity of transformational leadership styles.

Hollowell (2019) expressed that there were significant possibilities for educational leadership practices to advance instruction, teachers, and students with increasing racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. School superintendents should affirm the tone for a positive school community that embraces diversity. In addition, it is the superintendent's ability to provide meaningful and intellectually rich access that nurtures the hearts and minds of students from diverse identities, abilities, strengths, and backgrounds. This awareness informs and expands promising culturally competent policies in school systems; therefore, acuity of CQ of school superintendents is urgent.

The first section of the literature review commences with the background and overview of diversity, cultures, and the importance of leadership in culturally inclusive organizations and with public school superintendents. The second section includes the theoretical foundations of CQ, critical race theory (CRT), and a synopsis of seminal theorists. The third section establishes the culturally inclusive theoretical framework utilized in this study and examines the five variables—make diversity a priority, get to

know people and their differences, enable rich communication, make accountability a core value, and establish mutualism as the final arbiter—and how exemplary leaders use these variables. The fourth section focuses on school superintendents' historical context: who they are, what they do, and their role in setting the organizational culture from general to specifics as relates to diversity. The fifth section elaborates on Latina superintendents in California public schools, contributions, equity access, and the current social landscape environment for crucial change. The sixth section outlines the gap in the literature; and the final section of this chapter concludes with a summary of the literature, significance of the problem, and importance of this study.

### **Superintendents' Leadership**

The role of the 21st-century school superintendent is becoming increasingly complex. In the late 1830s, there was acknowledgement of school districts appointing superintendents who were also considered teacher scholars and/or instructional leaders who supervised classroom instruction (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011; Land, 2002; Moody, 2007). Leaders in education are accountable to higher standards and seek balance with increased demands, less incentives than similar jobs in the private sector, limited financial resources, and intensification from outside the field (Byrd et al., 2006). AASA (2006) asserted that the mean tenure for a superintendent was 5 to 6 years with the annual turnover rate of 15%. In addition, the superintendent must also steer the intertwined internal and external political systems of the school community (A. Muhammad, 2009, 2012).

The role of school district superintendents in the United States of America has evolved since the introduction of the position during the middle of the 19th century.

Since that time, the pace of technology and demographic and economic change has accelerated. These circumstances not only had a profound effect on the nature of schooling in the nation but also contributed to defining then redefining superintendents' work.

The call for change and social justice impacts all public schools because systemic racism in education is a root cause of so many other inequities. It is the school superintendent who shoulders the major responsibility for unraveling the issues of equity and social justice in public schools. Superintendents are responsible for culturally responsive leadership that supports inclusive environments and improved learning for students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The culturally responsive leadership of superintendents involves addressing the issues of privilege, power, and dominance while setting values, beliefs, and goals that are actionable in creating equitable outcomes for all students (AASA June, 2020)

Riehl (2000) identified essential skills that necessary for school leaders to develop multicultural leadership. Riehl emphasized fostering new meanings about diversity, involvement in promoting inclusive instructional practices by supporting, facilitating, and being a catalyst for change in schools by building connections between schools and communities. According to Gardiner and Enomoto (2006), culturally inclusive superintendents who lead ensure well-articulated mission, vision, values, standards, and the evaluation expectations that are communicated to all stakeholders.

### **Monoculturalism in Superintendent Representation**

In 2019, AASA reported there are over 13,728 superintendents who are responsible for the 76,000,000 students enrolled in the nation's K-12 public school

system (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The AASA study on superintendents in the country stated that 93.3% of the superintendents identified as White males, 60% of the superintendents had a doctoral degree, and the mean age of superintendents was 54.5 years of age (Kowalski et al., 2011). The large percentages of White male superintendents in the United States continue to maintain a steady rate (Kowalski et al., 2011). The 98% of female superintendents in the national public school system are White (Grogan & Brunner, 2004). To amplify the disparity of representation, the percentage of Latina educational leaders in the superintendent role is 1% (Nieves, 2013).

### **Increasing Diversity and Culturally Intelligent Superintendents**

It is the superintendent who has the responsibility to ensure equitability and inclusiveness for everyone to thrive. To address this challenge, superintendents must possess a strong CQ. According to Ang et al. (2007), CQ does not alter from culture to culture because it is “an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings with specific intelligence focused on capabilities to grasp, reason, and behave effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (p. 337). Wright (2019) affirmed that superintendents with high CQ establish trust that brings valuable insight that contributes to the mission of the organization, including student learning, fiscal solvency, strategic planning, and equity.

## **Theoretical Foundations**

### **Social Learning Theory**

Bandura (1977) affirmed that observing others' responses of information to form one's conception of new behavior patterns, along with symbolic construction, served as an action guide in Bandura's social learning theory. Bandura (2002) established that

foundational acquisition is a major aspect of learning; much human behavior is developed through modeling and self-efficacy beliefs, regulating cognitive processes, affective processes, motivational processes, and decisional processes through human functioning, furthermore, validating that acquiring knowledge can transpire through imitation and social modeling (Bandura, 1977).

In brief, culturally intelligent people have the competence to recognize intertwined cultural experiences, the mindfulness to observe and interpret particular phenomena, and the vital know-how to adjust behavior to undertaking aptly in a range of situations (Bandura, 2002). D. C. Thomas and Inkson (2017) elaborated on Bandura's 1977 framework of culture and described culture as an organized organization of ethics, attitudes, beliefs, and meanings that are related to the context, along with a commonality that is not typically available to outside members of the group. Self efficacy influences strong feelings of an internal potency to influence and endure (Bandura, 1977; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

### **Cultural Intelligence**

Van Dyne, Ang, and Livermore (2010) referred to CQ as a theoretical framework that focused on a person's competence to function because the awareness and understanding is an essential leadership skill to respond effectively in diverse contexts by building the necessary skills. Ang et al. (2007) explained CQ competence as to purposely interact in culturally diverse situations by emerging and evaluating a model that postulates distinct relationships between the four dimensions of CQ: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Ang et al. explained that stronger multicultural results, decision-making, and task performance supported diverse organizations. CQ is

defined as a person's ability to effectively adapt among different cultures (Earley & Ang, 2003). According to Earley and Ang (2003), CQ included CQ drive, which motivates a person to engage with different cultures; CQ knowledge states one's awareness of different cultural norms; CQ strategy is the competence to make sense of cultural differences; and CQ action, which is one's ability to adapt to diverse cultures.

Livermore (2011) identified that culture shapes how people lead and impacts how others perceive leadership. Livermore stated that "CQ is a learned practice of intelligence that can be applied to any culturally diverse situation" (p. 1). Moua (2010) described CQ as a person's capability to acquire information and knowledge that assists in the identification of cultural elements at work. She affirmed that knowledge CQ includes recognizing through what agency cultures are interpreted and shared and how cultural meanings and symbols can affect a person's behavior and attitude (Moua, 2010).

CQ awareness is a skill that increases the ability for individuals to connect with others, outside of their own culture, and in culturally diverse settings (Ang et al., 2007; Brislin, Worthley, & MacNab, 2006; Earley & Ang, 2003; Ramírez, 2014). CQ embraces the ability to discern appropriate interactions of emotions and social occurrences (D. Thomas & Inkson, 2004). Ang et al. (2007) reported that culturally intelligent individuals "are more effective than others in culturally diverse settings" (p. 336).

Earley and Ang (2003) conceived that CQ influences several key traits of intercultural interactions. CQ is "an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings with specific form of intelligence focused on capabilities to grasp, reason, and behave effectively in situations characterized by cultural

diversity” (Ang et al., 2007, p. 337). Earley and Ang (2003) also asserted that this ability adapts regardless of culture (Ng & Earley, 2003). There are four components of CQ, which include (a) cognitive, (b) metacognitive, (c) motivational, and (d) behavioral. CQ consists of four components that are interrelated to master CQ (Ang et al., 2007).

Metacognitive CQ understanding is being aware of the cultural norms, through the use of an individual’s mental process (Ang et al., 2007). In addition, this occurs before and after interaction with someone from a given culture and is able to adapt mental modes and responses to be culturally appropriate (Ang et al., 2007). Motivational CQ is the ability to place energy toward learning the cultural norms of a different culture in addition to determining how to function within cultural differences (Ang et al., 2007). Behavioral CQ refers to the ability to utilize the appropriate verbal/nonverbal actions within different cultures and to “exhibit situational appropriate behaviors” (Ang et al., 2007, p. 338).

To be an effective leader during 21st century, global skills that include cultural awareness, language and communication skills, international commercial awareness, and networking must be acquired (Robinson & Harvey, 2008). Deng and Gibson’s (2009) findings indicated that cultural awareness and cross-cultural leadership include transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and CQ. Stokes (2013) acknowledged that CQ plays a significant role in effective leadership (Ang & Inkpen, 2008; Alon & Higgins, 2005; Deng & Gibson, 2009).

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) has historical and foundational roots in research looking at educational systems with an equity lens. Using the lens of equity, there are

implications of race and multiculturalism with constructive knowledge for marginalized academic communities of color exist in education (Banks, 1995). CRT analyzes race, racism, power oppression, desegregation, race relations, human relations, antiracism, and guide leaders to develop culturally responsive skills and knowledge a cultural competence skills and knowledge (Lindsey, Nuri-Robbins, & Terrell, 2009). Moreover, there is an argument to intentionally “cast a new gaze of on [the] persistent problem of racism in schooling because of the failure of scholars to theorize race” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 60).

Educationalist and philosopher, Freire (1996), a seminal theorist of *conscientização*, critical consciousness, and knowledge as processes of inquiry in education that negate the “banking system” concept of education. Moreover, Freire argued against discriminatory practices that based knowledge as a gift, bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable, upon those whom they consider ignorant. Freire’s pedagogical beliefs asserted that education be intentionally designed to liberate both the oppressed and oppressor from biased systems through consciousness. Thus, critical consciousness awareness serves as a transformational practice to revolutionize global perceptions and humanity (Freire, 1996).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) described diversity as “racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, ability, linguistic and sexual orientation” as denoting differences (p. 61). Furthermore, Dixson, Rousseau, Anderson, and Donnor (2006) shared the relationship and impact between race and educational practices that create inequality. Moreover, “CRT is a radical critique of both the status quo and purported reforms” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 62). Hatton and Grundy (1994) described the transformative view



require critiquing, challenging, and changing the status quo and social structures that perpetuate unequal social relations. Correspondingly, Ladson-Billings (2001) advocated that educators create a transformative agenda for social consciousness that challenged status quo. Paris (2012) stated, “learning relevant and responsive to the languages, literacies, and cultural practices across difference and (in)equality” (p. 93).

**Cultural capital.** Solórzano (1997) utilized CRT in legal studies, where CRT has been extended to areas such as education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; W. F. Tate, 1997). CRT offers discernments, viewpoints, and pedagogies to transform fundamental cultural and educational aspects that sustain racial positions in and out of the classroom (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Tierney, 1993). Moreover, cultural capital imparts on Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) cultural responsive theory counternarratives that defy deficit-oriented educational systems for children of color. Furthermore, CRT challenged the dominant ideology by rooting the centrality of race, racism and intersectional subordination to lead social justice, and validate experiential knowledge with interdisciplinary perspectives (Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000).

Similarly, Lorde (1992) described racism as “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance” (p. 496).

Correspondingly, CRT is ingrained, as Marable (1992) explained racism as “a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color” (p. 5). Destructive occurrences transpired through cultural-deficit discourse in the classroom (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). Hence, researchers of

color confirmed urgency of creating safe counter-spaces for academic sustenance was vital for students of color (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998).

Yosso (2005) affirmed cultural capital abundance as a counter to stereotypical perceptions. CRT intentionally shifted the exploration the deficit mindsets, “to focus on cultural competence, abilities, and contacts influenced by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 1). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) researched diverse practices of capital nurtured through the asset lens of cultural wealth. Researchers affirmed that communities of color have community wealth with an asset approach of familial, social, linguistic, aspirational, navigational, and resistance capital (Paris & Alim, 2017; Yosso, 2005).

### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is considered by researchers to be a certain style by which the leader determines the needed change, creates a vision that inspires, and guides inspiration, and then garners the commitment of group to execute the needed change (Anderson, 2017; Burns, 2004; Simsek, 2013). Stewart’s (2006) research on James Burns’s 1978 findings suggested that transformational leadership is strengthened when aligned with a collective purpose by providing ability and accountability to make social changes. Transformational leadership theorists reported motivation as means to initiate others when the leader demonstrates, communicates, and does whatever it takes to get the audience to see a vision that urges them to work toward it (Anderson, 2017; Burns, 2004; Simsek, 2013).

According to Bass's transformational leadership theory, individuals follow a leader who is honest and has trustworthy qualities (Anderson, 2017). The strong virtues the leader possesses motivate and inspire change (Burns, 2004). Burns (2004) confirmed that the leader transforms the followers and the organization because they have the virtues the followers value. Bass and Avolio (1994) affirmed that transformational leaders engage the interest of others to interpret their work from various viewpoints. The responsiveness of vision and goals in the organization "developed higher levels of ability and potential in others and motivated them to look beyond their own interests toward those that will benefit the group" (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 2).

Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam (2003) affirmed that transformational leadership incorporated (a) attributed idealized influence that suggested the charisma of the leader, viewed confident, ethical, and/or powerful; (b) idealized influence (behavior); (c) inspirational motivation; (d) intellectual stimulation; and (e) individualized consideration. Thus, idealized behavior in charismatic leaders was perceived to be values centered, mission driven, and high in morals (Antonakis et al., 2003). Leaders with elevated consideration were attentive to the follower's fulfillment and focused their attention on followers (Stokes, 2013). Among the various purposes of leadership is that it offers support for the development of values, attitudes, diversity, and beliefs that optimize organizations to advance (Canabou, 2003; Dunn, 2000; Nahavandi, 2006). A decisive dynamic that decided the realization or failure of any organization was leadership (Bass, 1990; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012).

## **Social Justice Leadership**

The theory of social justice initially came about from through theology (Ahlstrom, 1972). Several scholars stated the pivot of social justice foundations into educational disciplines by way of frameworks, paradigms, and curriculum to reflect awareness of diversity perspectives (Apple, 2013; Freire, 1996, 1998; Koerin, 2003). Moreover, extensive research in interdisciplinary social sciences, law, and public policy demonstrated findings that current policies in place were tied to systemic oppression for communities of color (Brooks, 2008). Several theorists established that social justice was propelled by many variables including (a) accountability pressures, (b) educational equity, (c) demographic shifts, and (d) increased achievement and opportunity gaps of socially disadvantaged and culturally diverse populations and that has become a significant concern for educational scholars and practitioners at the dawn of the 21st century (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Shields & Sayani, 2005; Theoharis, 2007).

As district leaders, it is important to understand the historical impact of inequity in public schools as it relates to the current cultural climate (ACSA, 2020). Climate describes the shared perceptions of the people in a group or organization, while culture includes how people feel about the organization and the beliefs, values, and assumptions that provide the identity and set the standards of behavior (Stolp & Smith, 1995). Cultural climate within schools refers to the school's effects on students, including teaching practices; diversity; and the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and students. School culture refers to the way teachers and other staff members work together and the set of beliefs, values, and assumptions they share. Both climate and cultural climate are critical to cultural competence (Stolp & Smith, 1995). For both

culture and cultural climate to address diversity and cultural awareness, practices, policies and training are urgently needed and necessary to guide key educational decision makers' personal interactions with people of various backgrounds and identities in classrooms and communities (National Association of School Superintendents [NASS], 2020). The National Education Association (NEA, 2019) asserted that cultural competence is one's own cultural identity and perceptions that interact with the learning uniqueness the community, students, and families' cultural customs.

### **Theoretical Foundations Summary**

The theoretical foundations of this study pointed out the urgency of understanding culturally intelligent leadership, CRT, cultural capital, and culturally responsiveness. The review of the literature focused on exploring diverse seminal scholars that included Latina and Black women of color. Leadership in public school systems with the cognitive CQ states a broad knowledge about culture; however, leaders who possess knowledge of cultural universals, similarities, and differences have high cognitive CQ (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, & Ng, 2004). The literature points out that skillful cultural intelligent leadership in educational systems will make a difference in all stakeholders' understanding other cultures' systems and to be open-minded and aware of norms and practices of diverse cultures through education and cultural experiences (Rockstuhl, Seiler, Ang, Van Dyne, & Annen, 2011).

The comprehensive review of the literature highlights the possible role CQ plays in leadership. Culturally inclusive leadership is a call to action for inclusion, diversity, and social justice. It is critical that school superintendents have a strong, comprehensive consciousness culture, diversity, and CQ.

## Theoretical Frameworks

### Kennedy's Theory of Cultural Inclusion

Kennedy's (2008) theory of cultural inclusion established that there are five major variables in her research that support conditions for an organization to transform into an inclusive culture. According to Kennedy, the following variables were identified to describe leadership strategies that exemplary organizational leaders utilize to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's five leadership qualities of cultural differences: (a) diversity a priority, (b) get to know people and their differences, (c) to enable rich communication, (d) to make accountability a core value, and (e) to establish a mutualism as the final arbiter. There is no current research to identify strategies exemplary Latina superintendents utilize to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness, thus the need for this study.

### Diversity an Organizational Priority

Diversity as an organizational priority is defined in this research study as follows: "Diversity as an *organizational priority* is an intentional action to embrace *individuals' unique differences, perspectives, and talents*" as an identifier for organizational success (Kennedy, 2008; Winters, 2015). Increases of burnout in leaders rise in a more diverse society (Farber, 2000). However, findings state that CQ, effective leadership, and emotional health may be a protective factor against this (Stokes, 2013). Consequently, the educational background of the faculty and the variance of professional development support may be factored in close-minded attitudes and beliefs about diversity (Cochran-Smith & Zeicbner, 2005).

Czop Assaf, Garza, and Battle (2010) examined racial, multilingual, diverse beliefs and found that instructional practices have “contributed to simplistic notions of diversity” (p. 1). To develop awareness and discuss racism with connections to multicultural education by understanding how colorblind perspectives negatively discriminate students, educators, and families of color (Bartolome, 1994), Pace (2018) conveyed that strengthening a diverse leadership pipeline would benefit organizations in global sectors. Ethnically diverse executive teams outperformed their peers by 33% on profitability, and gender diverse executive-level leaders demonstrated 21% of their leaders outperforming their global industry competitors (Pace, 2018).

### **Know People and Their Differences**

Kennedy (2008) explained that knowing people and their differences is necessary to create an inclusive space. Many scholars proposed that this is intentionally developing deep knowledge, expertise, and empathy about diversity through curiosity, experiences, and daily practice (Hesselbein & Goldsmith 2009; Kennedy, 2008; Travis et al., 2019). School organizations and leadership can either enhance or detract from the development of learning communities that prepare students for a multicultural and democratic society. Schools that are administered from the top down are unlikely to create a collaborative, caring culture (Gay, 2002). Travis et al. (2019) affirmed that fostering healthy, inclusive workplaces creates positive conditions for the organization to progress. Cultivating and growing levels of CQ impact interconnectedness with decreased social issues in cross-cultural interactions and decreases levels of depression (Ward, Fischer, Zaid Lam, & Hall, 2009). A scarcity mindset invokes inconsistent growth of inclusion.

## **Enables Rich Communication**

Rich communication is the transfer of information with the intent to understand meaning and broaden one's perspective, resulting in a personal connection between individuals (Armengol et al., 2017; Daft & Lengel 1986; Jensen et al., 2018; Kennedy 2008). Leaders with high-level behavioral CQ are likely to be capable of exerting situational appropriateness, nonverbal and linguistic awareness based on communicating capabilities, facial expressions, and body language (Zhang, Ding, Peng, & Bush, 2017). Peterson (2004) posited CQ by competence to "participate in a set of behaviors that uses skills (i.e., language or interpersonal skills) and qualities (e.g., tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility) that are tuned appropriately to the culture based values and attitudes of the people with whom one interacts" (p. 89). Effective communication transpires when individuals recognize cultural cues, learn cultural knowledge, and realize implications of their own interactions with others (Stokes, 2013).

Therefore, findings state that clear communication is a vital political strategy for a superintendent to have (Finnan et al., 2015; Harris, 2010). Thus, an upsurge of communication will hold a positive light on a superintendent's relationship with the school board trustees (Finnan et al., 2015). In addition, to integrate conversations in the workplace is an instrument to sustaining aspiration, unlocking potential, and driving engagement in diverse talent because it can support advocacy for advancement (Pace, 2018). When one allows access from stakeholders in a variety of platforms, it fosters meaningful relationships and develops trusting credibility (Middleton, 2019).



### **Personal Responsibility as a Core Value**

For purposes in this study, personal responsibility as a core value is a leader's conscious ownership of their actions and the impact on others (Kennedy, 2008; Molenmaker et al., 2016; Tausen et al., 2018). Similarly, Fullan (2014) asserted that educational leaders have the obligation to guide schools and accountability responsibilities, deliver support for school staff, and serve their diverse learners. Notably, Hollie (2017) identified that cultural responsiveness is not a fast accountability remedy for "race relations, diversity issues, achievement gap challenges" (p. 1), because it is a catalyst for transformation of learning pedagogies and policies and fosters relationships between top educational leaders and learners.

### **Mutualism as the Final Arbiter**

Mutualism as the final arbiter is where everyone benefits and no one is harmed by the decisions and actions within the team or organization (Kennedy, 2008). Mutualism establishes trust in organizations through a deep sense of shared purpose, a thoughtful inspection of each member's ideas and interests, and an interdependence when performing roles and responsibilities (Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Mishra, 1996; Rau, 2005). Organizational strategies have an obligation to ensure that decision-making is inclusively shared, so the school community acquired collaborative dispositions foster an inclusive culture of learners (Banks et al., 2001). Gay (2002) affirmed that schools state they were founded in democracy, yet falter to embrace collective decision-making. Thus, negotiating through multifaceted matters that pursue reciprocally acceptable resolutions fosters participation from members involved in the consensus decision-making

development (Brierton, Wilson, Kistler, Flowers, & Jones, 2016; Harvey & Drolet, 2005).

### **Culture of Inclusion**

CQ supports an individual's capability to relate and work commendable in culturally diverse settings (Rámirez, 2014). Educational organizations and strategies should ensure a culture of equity in collaborative decision-making that creates shared spaces with diversity or will impact practices, policies, beliefs, motivations, and expectations in the school community (Banks et al., 2001). Consequently, school changes administered from the top down are unlikely to create a collaborative caring culture (Banks et al, 2001).

Multiple studies confirmed that collective goals align personal behaviors that impact the collective group (Harris, 2010; A. Muhammad, 2012). As for this, Tooker (2019) elaborated that the purpose of a shared sense of culture resulted in collaborating and team building that created a supportive environment. Therefore, superintendents created stronger individual and collective relations with the board trustees (Brierton et al., 2016; Harris, 2010; Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Meyer, Jenness, & Ingram., 2005; Wright, 2019). Thus, they intentionally focused to improve and expand opportunities for emerging school system leaders to develop the knowledge and proficiencies essential to serve all children with an emphasis on marginalized students (ALAS, n.d.).

### **Culture**

Damen (1987) affirmed that culture includes “all learned and shared human patterns of common living patterns that are existent in human social interaction. Thus, culture is mankind's primary adaptive mechanism” (p. 367). Additionally, culture is

known as “collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another” (Damen, 1987, p. 51). Patton (2015) stated, “Culture is that collection of behavior patterns and beliefs that constitute standards for deciding what is, deciding what can be, what one feels about it, what to do about it, and deciding how to go about doing it” (p. 100).

The country thrives with ethnic, cultural, and language diversity (Banks et al, 2001). Schools’ recognition of diverse linguistic, gender, and racial identities affect all students’ educational experiences (Nieto, n.d.). The impact of this study is that it will support women of color organizational educational leaders to influence student success. As Ott (2019) asserted, school districts benefit from inclusion and having role models that match the student population. Metacognitive CQ is an individual’s level of conscious cultural awareness during intercultural interactions (Rockstuhl et al., 2011). Ang et al. (2004) asserted that metacognitive and cognitive CQ predicted cultural judgment, decision-making, and task performance. Correspondingly, Kennedy (2008) reported that there is familiarity for leaders’ ability to find opportunity to reinvent themselves.

### **Organizational Leadership and Superintendents in California**

Accordingly, the California Department of Education (CDE, 2019) serves 1,037 public school districts in the state. There are 1,037 K-12 superintendents who are actively leading school districts that are single purpose governmental units that operate and provide public educational services within the geographically defined areas (CDE, 2019) characterized into elementary (primary) districts, high school (secondary) districts, or unified school districts. The CDE commonly maintains the district boundary lines and

collaboratively works with the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education to determine the annual allocation to states and school districts. Asserting collaboration with their leadership team, school principals, school board members, and community stakeholders propose transformational influence (CDE, 2019).

Superintendents are responsible for determining hiring practices and managing accessible and equitable systems for staff and students, while working collaboratively with school board members. Superintendents affirm that the reputation of their relationship with the board is harmful if there are unpleasant relations with the board (Byrd et al., 2006; Tooker, 2019; Wright, 2019). In today's educational landscape, the superintendent is responsible for balancing the social, political, economic, and legal problems that plague the school district as well as managing the tensions surrounding these problems.

**Addressing crisis distant learning.** The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has created immediate and unprecedented challenges in the field of education. Undeniably the lockdown created an unpredicted pressure on the system to secure the education of nearly 50.6 million children across the country. The concept of education changed overnight in these times of crisis. One of the purposes of *The Advancing Equity in an Era of Crisis* states, "Highlight the challenges facing California schools as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, which has impacted nearly every aspect of life" (p. 3). In *Advancing Equity in an Era of Crisis*

Webinar Session #6, L. James and A. Watkins shared Anti-racist Educational Consultant Enid Lee's description of educational equity: "Educational equity is the principle of altering current practices and perspectives to teach for social

transformation and to promote equal learning outcomes for students of all racial, cultural, linguistic and socio-economic groups.” (California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators [CAAASA], Center for Transformational Schools – University of California, Los Angeles [CTS-UCLA], California Collaborative for Educational Equity [CCEE], and San Diego County Office of Education [SDCOE]. 2020, p. 3)

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020),

In spite of being a desirable option compared to no schooling—which would have caused major interruptions in student learning with possible long-lasting consequences for the affected cohorts (Burgess, 2020[2]; Hanushek and Woessmann, 2020[3])—the sudden switch to using digital instruction may have led to sub-optimal results if compared to a business as usual in-presence instruction, as teachers, students and schools all had to unexpectedly adjust to a novel situation. (para. 6)

COVID-19 caused the education system to suddenly shift to distance learning in March of 2020. This shift to digital learning in the United States underscored that the divide between students who have internet access and computer devices at home and those who do not has never been more apparent as schools rushed to implement distance learning. School superintendents were responsible for addressing the significant disparities in academic opportunity and achievement based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, 2020). The Children’s Defense Fund (CDF, 2005, 2020) affirmed that COVID-19 has upended many parts of

people's lives but magnified systemic racism and economic and educational disparities. Crisis distance learning has impacted superintendents' pivot to a virtual new learning environment.

**Gender and superintendents of color.** In this study, people of color are defined as those persons of African American, Latinx/a/o, Asian American, and Native American ancestry. It should be noted that each of these descriptors has a political dimension that this study does not discuss. Studies have shown that among women and men of color, superintendents are growing at a slow pace with 8.6% identifying as superintendents of color in 2020 (Modan, 2020).

To illustrate comparison, in 2000 the percentage was 5%, and in 2010, the increase of one percentage point informed a 6% national representation of superintendents of color in public school leadership roles. Furthermore, of the relatively small 8.6% of superintendents who identified as African American, Latinx, or other minority groups, only 42% were women (AASA, 2006; Modan, 2020; NASS, 2020). As declared by to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 75% of public school enrollment in 2017 consisted of students who identified as Black, Latinx, Native American, Pacific Islander, and two races, inconsistently falling short of the diversity of student populations. Glass stated that 10% of superintendents from 1919 to the 1950s in the United States were women (Glass & Blount, 1999). However, there was a slight growth in 2000 where 14% of superintendents were female (Glass, 2000). Consequently, findings displayed an increase to 22% of superintendents being female in 2006 (Kowalski et al., 2011). Despite this subtle increase with female superintendents, the gap illustrated

a significant underrepresentation of women in the top education leadership position (Glass, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014).

### **Women and Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Leadership**

Crenshaw (1989) affirmed that White feminists discount intersectionality and how their own race functions to mitigate sides of sexism that privileges them and contributes to the dominance of non-White women. Gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in leadership reveals that of the 127 women in congressional leadership roles, 10% are Latina (Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics, Center for American Women and Politics, 2020). Sandberg (2013) affirmed that there are gender division disparities with women, and while women continue to outpace men in educational achievement, women's voices are not equally heard, which has ceased the leadership progress of any industry. Hinchliffe (2018) reported that 7.4% of women lead a Fortune 500 organization. In spite of there being 37 women executive leaders, only three are women of color (Hinchliffe, 2018).

Moreover, the 2011 McKinsey study illustrated that men receive promotions based on potential, yet women advance slowly based on previous accomplishments (Sandberg, 2013). McKinney & Company's latest analysis reaffirmed that gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity in corporate leadership showed that diverse businesses are now more apt to outperform nondiverse colleagues on profitability (Dixon-Fyle, Dolan, Hunt, & Prince, 2020). In addition, the studies presented that gender diversity is connected to outperforming profitability and value generating with women leading executive teams versus occupying staff roles (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyfe, & Yee, 2017). Furthermore, Dixon-Fyle et al. (2020) positively correlated women-led organizations where strategic and operational decisions are made with higher profitability in those organizations.

## Latina Leadership and Cultural Intelligence

Rivera (2014) discussed that Latina leaders emphasized their leadership styles empowered by encouraging collaborative network that gave back to the community. Latina leaders identified their innate sense of responsibility to be change agents, thus serving as motivation to be in leadership position. She stated,

Also, being bilingual and multicultural allows Latinas to integrate into Latinx communities with greater ease and inform parents on how to best assist in their children's education. Bonilla-Rodriguez (2011), in *A Profile of Latina Leadership in the United States: Characteristics, Positive Influences, and Barriers*, created five categories of characteristics that study participants believed effective leaders should possess. (Rivera, 2014, p. 22)

Stewart's (2006) research on James Burns's 1978 findings suggested that transformational leadership must be aligned with a collective purpose and effective leaders must be judged by their ability to make social changes. As a result, 40 years later Burns's definition maintained relevance. Bonilla-Rodriguez (2011) described that with leadership styles among most Latina leaders self-identify was transformational or participative leaders because "participants preferred for decisions to be made by a group, but the participant was ultimately responsible for the end results" (p. 22).

Furthermore, Bonilla-Rodriguez noted that transformational leadership involved a process of growth because the leader motivates her followers to become leaders themselves. The process is to encourage democracy in a group where emerging Latina leaders could be similarly encouraged with participatory leadership (Bonilla-Rodriguez,



2011). Nieves (2016) reported Bonilla-Rodriguez's 2011 findings on Latina leadership styles as

- High integrity—ethical, honest, and reliable
- Marianista—compassionate, understanding, and willing to sacrifice
- New Latina—assertive, competitive, and determined
- Transformational leader- team-oriented, charismatic, politically savvy
- Visionary- creative, passionate, and risk-taker. (Rivera, 2014, p. 22)

Nieves further described leadership style of high integrity to personifying characteristics that were honest, ethical, and reliable. The second style was “marianista,” which compared the Catholic religious cultural value of being like Mary (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). Nieves (2016) identified the style to encompass being compassionate, understanding, and willing to sacrifice.

Next, was the leadership style of the “new Latina,” which Nieves (2016) noted was Latinas being determined, competitive in school, work, and home life. Bonilla-Rodriguez (2011) distinguished another style as the “transformational leader.” Nieves (2016) further described this transformative leadership approach as the ability to be team-oriented, charismatic and politically savvy. Out of the 305 Latina leader participants, 36% stated that they were transformational leaders (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). Houston (2001) focused on describing challenges the 21st-century superintendent faces: changing demographics, economic resources, devaluation of children), de-emphasis on citizenship, deregulation, and devolution of power. The superintendency is a mission, not a job.

McKee, Boyatzis, and Johnston (2008) reported the competence results with people working in sync with others and with alignment of thoughts and emotions

important to CQ. Leaders who create resonance intuitively understand and embody developed self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relational emotional intelligence competencies are more effective leaders (McKee et al., 2008).

### **Latina Superintendents in California**

The California public school system serves 6,187,278 students in 1,037 school districts (CDE, 2019). Further research is needed to eliminate disproportionate gaps of superintendent leadership. Gándara (2015) asserted that in the United States, one in three females are Latina and affirmed,

A significant percentage of the U.S. population and majority of the youth in three states, Latinos are projected to be nearly a third of the total U.S. population by 2060. The future of the United States very much depends on the future of Latinas. That future is being constructed today with the youth who will represent such a large portion of the U.S. economy. It is urgent that we increase equality of opportunity for this population now. (p. 22)

Latina participation in essentials, such as education, health, labor, and the economy, can inform and advance policy and provide investments aimed at closing opportunity gaps.

Pew Research reported that 1:4 residents in the state of California identified as Latinx/a/o, Chicana/o, or Hispanic (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011).

Moreover, the gap exists and the urgent need to better understand the behaviors exemplary Latina superintendent leaders practice will inform pathways of increasing Latina top educational leadership roles. Women have created progress to top leadership positions; however, intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender and disproportionate

underrepresentation of women of color leaders is an urgent issue (Lyness & Grotto, 2018; Reza-López, Huerta Charles, & Reyes, 2014).

**Intersectional barriers.** Crenshaw (1991) defined intersectionality as “intersectional identity of women and of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both” (p. 1244). Race and gender as a significant political and conceptual obstacle navigate against structures of domination with an intersectional sensibility, both antiracism and feminism, barriers for culturally intelligent Latina superintendents (CILS). Latinas navigate varied constructed identities that can still feel caught between the traditional understandings of what it means to be a “real Latina” (Montoya, 1994).

**Race, ethnicity, and gender discrimination.** Bonilla-Rodriguez (2011) stated that major barriers hindering Latinas’ pursuit of leadership roles involved lack of self-confidence, motivation, mentors, educational attainment, and leadership training, which would each fall under one of the types of barriers. Amaro, Russo, and Johnson (1987) studied the sources of strength and stress for Hispanic women in professional and managerial positions and found that a Hispanic woman’s well-being was connected to discriminatory experiences that increased the stress of balancing roles, lowered personal life satisfaction, and increased psychological distress.

Shahtalebi and Yarmohammadian (2012) discussed the structured and unstructured barriers women face in career advancement that repress representation. Intersectionality of Chicana/Latina women in leadership elucidated barriers of low representation. Studies reported women’s qualities; physiological traits were viewed less favorably in leaders, consequently halting possibilities of being promoted in

organizations and succumbing to cultural, social, economic, and political obstacles (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009; Shahtalebi & Yarmohammadian, 2012).

Peery and Grady (1998) reported that Latina women experience different kinds of barriers, including internal, external, and institutional: (a) internal barriers include feeling underprepared and being risk averse; (b) external barriers include not being taken seriously, or society's emphasis on girls' and women's looks; and (c) institutional, family, and cultural barriers discouraged them from applying for higher positions.

Barron-Nevarez (2014) affirmed that an analysis of intersectionality for Chicanas/Latinas in academia addressed how race, class, and gender inequalities provided a voice to their stories, narratives, and *testimonios* experiences to build empathy and a better understanding of the oppression, discrimination, and the marginalization they faced.

Female administrators face more barriers in becoming superintendents than their male counterparts, primarily because of gender bias and perceptions of women related to power and politics (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Eagly, 2007; Lemasters & Roach, 2012).

Martin Pérez (2018) affirmed that female superintendents navigating politically charged situations are hesitant to engage in the use of political strategies (see also McNay, 2016).

However, Watkins and Smith (2014) found that female leaders who develop their political skills are better able to overcome biases in male-dominated organizations.

Effective superintendents strategically use political skill to transform conflicts involving values and priorities of board members and stakeholders to achieve more productive outcomes (AASA, 2005; Björk & Gurley, 2005; Hill & Jochim, 2018).

Winston (2019) stated that despite biases and access inequities, women with higher levels of political skill were likely to obtain leadership roles over women with low levels of

political skill in male-dominated organizations (Watkins & Smith, 2014). The Association of California Administrators (Melendez de Santa Ana, 2008) asserted the fact that less than 1% of educational leaders are women of color. Representation has not increased with continued disproportionately underrepresentation of women in all areas of school leadership (ACSA, 2020).

Lopez-Zafra, Garcia-Retamero, and Martos (2012) attested current female gender stereotyping misperceptions as, “Women are mostly viewed as occupying feminine occupations, whereas men are viewed as occupying masculine occupations” (p. 98). Female superintendents have stated that they have experienced gender discrimination from some school board members and trustees (VanTuyle & Watkins, 2010). Murakami, Hernandez, Valle, and Almager (2018) reported that female Latina superintendents stated that their gender was a key factor in how they felt as professionals on a daily basis. Bañuelos (2008) asserted that Latina superintendents experienced colleagues, school board, and the public disrespecting and questioning their authority, and affirmed that their gender was often part of conversations in the school community.

### **Leadership and Cultural Inclusiveness**

**Conocimiento.** Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2015) *Conocimiento* (awareness /consciousness) called on people of color to transform epistemology framework, challenged awareness of individuals, and asked them to reconsider realization and shift their ideas, motivations, and beliefs. Hurtado (2003) stated that conjunction of *conocimiento* and inclusive culture can transform self, community, family, and educators. Chicana and Chicano studies used *testimonio* narratives; however, Chicanas internalized a reflexive form of *testimonio* concepts as a transformational agency of empowerment

(Anzaldúa, 1987; Galarza, 1971; Lomas, 1994; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Pardo, 1998; Perez, 1999; Sandoval, 2000; Villarreal, 1970). Matsuda (1991) described narratives can reveal potential for challenging the governing conversation through individual accounts, and in particular, Latina narratives are acts of resistance.

**Intersectionality.** Crenshaw (1989) coined *intersectionality* in 1989 to illustrate disparities Black, Latina, and Indigenous women of color experienced and how White women with their own race functions mitigated aspects of sexism that privileged them and contributed to other female dominance. According to Crenshaw, narratives of women of color should be explored with a CRT lens among interdisciplinary and cross-institutions to understand how race and racism impacted opportunities for scholars of color. Crenshaw (2002) believed the experiences across legal disciplines and sectors reveal how disciplinary conventions themselves constitute racial power; however, they also provide critical tools developed over time to dismantle oppressive powers with counter-narratives.

**Testimonios.** *Testimonios* is a methodology and narrative of experiences with CRT conceptualization within educational studies; *testimonios* can disclose the oppression that occurs in learning institution systems, and engage BIPOC learners and educators of color to change academic spaces (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). Several researchers described *testimonios* as a practice of personal testament with origins in Latin America that has often been used to document and denounce the experiences of oppression or violence committed against oppressed groups from that region of the world (Beverley, 2004; Gonzalez-Barragan, 2014; Gutierrez, 2008; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Pérez Huber, 2009). Chicana scholars believed that in order to understand

microaggressions as systemic racism, it was essential to use Chicana testimonio critical race framework (Cruz, 2006; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). Reyes and Curry Rodríguez (2012) conveyed *testimonios* serve as firsthand recounts and methodology to conduct research, identify, and describe experiences.

Matsuda's (1991) studies were foundational for Montoya's (1994) research that stories too can bear potential for challenging the dominant discussion to transform community and individuality. Furthermore, the recounting of personal stories in two languages served as resistance against cultural and linguistic domination (Matsuda, 2002). Delgado-Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores-Carmona (2012) affirmed that the methodology of *testimonios* (testimonials) established in qualitative interviews also "serve as a bridge to connect the lived experience as a data collecting tool and as the analytical process" (p. 364), creating counterspaces within school institutions that challenge oppression and seek to transform the educational spaces that marginalize them and explore the process of *conocimiento* throughout these findings (Anzaldúa, 1987; Freire, 1970a; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). *Testimonios* is a methodology in the form of interview, documented and transliterated to enable women to communicate, heal, and share their resiliency (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012)

Furthermore, *testimonios* are intentional qualitative interviews that bring light to a wrong perception and oral history narration, or an urgent call to action not kept secret, and a means to describe lived experiences of disproportionately underserved communities. A form of cultural capital wealth that Solórzano and Yosso (2002) identified as familial, linguistic, social, resistance, navigational, and familial. Moraga (n.d.) described it as, "Sometimes a breakdown can be the beginning of a kind of

breakthrough. A way of living in advance through a trauma that prepares you for radical transformation” (para. 1).

### **Culturally Responsive Leadership**

Culturally responsive leadership originates its groundwork from the concept of pedagogical paradigms that are both culturally responsive and relevant. The conversations of responsive practices in schools once remained concentrated on teachers; however, several reputable scholars affirmed that the framework must also apply to school leadership (Davy, 2016; Gay, 1995, 2010; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; A. E. Lopez, 2015; Smith, 2016; Webb-Johnson, 2006). The knowledge that educators construct represents their understandings and their values (Banks et al., 2001). Banks (1993) asserted, “The school curriculum relegates people of color experiences” (p. 1).

Cultural responsiveness authenticates and affirms schoolchildren, their culture, linguistic abilities, and lived experiences that construct meaningful learning (Gay, 2002; Hollie & Muhammad, 2012). Gay’s (2000) framework of cultural responsiveness affirmed educators, “Acknowledge the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum” (p. 1). Gay (2002) affirmed that cultural responsiveness created meaningful interconnections with the lived realities of home that allowed students to be proud of their heritages. Gay affirmed that how and students are taught, influences the level of student achievement.



## **Politically Intelligent Leadership**

Tooker (2019) described political intelligence as a set of skills and ethical behaviors used to achieve organizational and/or personal goals. Political intelligence is a skill for which leaders negotiate strategies, principles, systems, and regulations within organizational culture “while considering the wants, needs, values, motivations, and emotions of all stakeholders to accomplish organizational goals” (Tooker, 2019, p. 23). In addition, Winston (2019) reported experiencing dynamic conditions when school leaders explicitly integrated an enhanced degree of political intelligence to navigate value conflicts and competition for scarce resources. The work of White et al. (2016) established nine politically intelligent leadership styles initially developed by DeLuca (1999). The nine political styles under the framework included the analyst, the adaptor, the supporter, the planner, the balancer, the developer, the challenger, the arranger, and the strategist (White et al., 2016).

A leader’s use of politics in an organization can be a successful instrument to elicit differences and motivate people to work toward a mutual objective (Fairholm, 2009; Grenny, Patterson, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2013; White et al., 2016). Politics impacts all aspects of society and organizations and is about power, influence, control, relationships, community, and ethics (DeLuca, 1999; Tucker, 1995; White et al., 2016). Several studies have confirmed the increasing complexity politics play in the superintendent role (Alemán, 2002; Annunziato, 2008; Björk, Bell, & Gurley, 2002; Björk & Blasé, 2009; Björk & Gurley, 2005; Björk & Lindle, 2001; Dao & Cranston, 2018; Hart, 2018; Hollie & Muhammad, 2012; Hunt, 1968; Lynch, 1993; McNay, 2016; Tremblay, 2014; Whitmarsh, 2014). Therefore, demonstrating the important significance

for superintendents to develop and understand political strategies effectively lead the district (DeLuca, 1999; White et al., 2016).

**Intersectionality of Latina superintendents in educational leadership styles.** It is critical to understand what strategies exemplary female Latina school superintendents use to create an inclusive culture within the organization. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) identified that cultural knowledge was a vehicle to motivate the academic pipeline. ACSA (2020) affirmed that women are underrepresented in all areas of school leadership. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) informed that in the 2015-2016 academic year, female students earned the majority of both master's and doctoral degrees. To serve as an administrator, and superintendents in all California districts, the minimal qualifications for the superintendent role in California require a master's and an administrative credential to lead a school system (CDE, 2020).

The absence of Latinas serving as top educational leadership superintendents may influence limited mentorship and pathways for more culturally inclusive Latina school leaders (Rodriguez, Martinez, & Valle, 2016). The California public school system serves 6,187,278 students in 1,037 school districts (CDE, 2019). The CDE (2019) reported that 7% of superintendents are Latino; however, the number of females was not available. The review of literature demonstrates the urgency to disaggregate data to accurately inform an intersectional representation of women of color in organizations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), women of color will be the majority of all women in the United States by 2060. Yet, the discrepancy of women of color in leadership roles is inadequately reciprocated in public school systems because less than 1% of female organizational leaders are Black and Latina women (U.S. Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission, 2015). Melendez de Santa Ana (2008) affirmed urgency for diverse and inclusive leadership to mirror the student population to support student achievement.

The superintendent role is the most gender-biased executive leadership position in the United States, because men are 40 times more likely to advance to the position of superintendent of schools than are women (Björk, 2000; Blount, 1999; Glass, 1992; Litmanovitz, 2010; Martin, 2016; Skrla, 2000). Studies reviewed found that approximately 73% of K-12 educators are female (Bitterman et al., 2013; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Glass, 2000; Litmanovitz, 2010; Martin, 2016). Thus, an elucidated disproportionate percentage of less than one third of women serve in the public funded leadership role of superintendents (AASA, 2006; Middleton, 2019). Even more disappointing is the disproportionate representation of Latina leaders in the high-ranking education leadership position.

Even more significant is that there are fewer Latina female superintendent roles in California despite the 22% representation of Latina administrators and 15% Latina educators in the K-12 public school system today (CDE, 2019). Martín Pérez (2015) stated she saw apparent gaps in access for Latinx female elementary and secondary educators, with an additional administrative credential and a doctoral degree, to follow a traditional route for entry to district administrative leadership in rural and suburban districts in part because of the following factors: decrease of student enrollment, budget shortfalls, low attrition, and turnover of administrators in small elementary and secondary schools. Furthermore, Martín Pérez (2020) developed awareness and opportunity to engage and transform pathways for culturally intelligent emerging Latina educators to

access leadership and advocacy. Looking at superintendents, females are more highly educated than their male counterparts (Glass, 2000), as 52% of female superintendents hold doctoral degrees in comparison to only 41% of male superintendents (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). There is a lack of more current data on the representation of females in California superintendent positions; the lack of current statistical data is a concern in itself.

Research conveys that women must engage in purposeful growth at the personal, interpersonal, and organizational level so they can successfully navigate advancements in their leadership career and move closer to their unique destiny (Avila, 2018; Lerner, 2012; T. N. Thomas, 2020). Several authors agree that the number of women in leadership is gradually increasing, but executive women still remain an uncommon occurrence as pervasive prejudices and complex external barriers limit the progress of women desiring positions of power (Avila, 2018; Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, & Burke, 2017; Ruderman, 2005; Ryder & Briles, 2003; T. N. Thomas, 2020; Schwanke, 2013). Testimonios are vital in raising the voices of women in the profession, work-life balance of women, exploring pathways to leadership, providing educational learning opportunities related to an equity-driven culture, and understanding the importance of an executive presence (CAAASA, 2020).

Latina leadership styles are conveyed, according to Bonilla-Rodriguez's (2011) findings that, in terms of leadership styles, most women self-identify as transformational or participative leaders. Transformational leadership involves a process of growth because the leader motivates her followers to become leaders themselves, thus similarly, participatory leadership encourages democracy in a group (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). As

a result, Stewart's (2006) research on James Burns's 1978 findings suggested that transformational leadership must be aligned with a collective purpose, and effective leaders must be judged by their ability to make social changes. Bonilla-Rodriguez's (2011) found Latina leadership styles as (a) high integrity—ethical, honest, and reliable; (b) marianista—compassionate, understanding, and willing to sacrifice; (c) new Latina—assertive, competitive, and determined; (d) transformational leader—team-oriented, charismatic, politically savvy; and (e) visionary—creative, passionate, and risk taker.

Intellectual stimulation holds to the concept that the leader provides support (stimulation) for the followers and therefore enables followers to think critically and problem solve (Antonakis et al., 2003). Edelman (personal communication, October 2019) affirmed, “You can't be what you can't see” (n.p.). Huerta (n.d.) stated,

When you are organizing a group of people, the first thing that we do is we talk about the history of what other people have been able to accomplish - people that look like them, workers like them, ordinary people, working people - and we give them the list: these are people like yourself; this is what they were able to do in their community. (para. 1)

According to Bonilla-Rodriguez (2011), “Latinas may face more challenges than female leaders of other ethnic backgrounds because many of them are in the first generation in their families to access higher education and have a professional career outside of the home” (p. 17).

### **Gap in Research**

This study addresses the gap of understanding the role of female Latina superintendents' culturally inclusive leadership. The focus of first generation Latinas is

necessary, as Latinas have been disproportionately underrepresented in the leadership role of superintendents in California and nationally. Research in CQ, gender, and ethnicity in leadership affirmed that there is a lack of more current data on the representation of females in the California superintendent positions. The lack of current statistical data is a concern in itself.

To elaborate, the leadership frame in California showed that 22% of principals are female Latinas (CDE, 2019), thus reflecting that Chicana/Latina women remain greatly underrepresented as superintendents. A study conducted by ACSA (2017) reported that approximately 23% of superintendent respondents were female, yet less than 1% were Latina. The gap between leadership and California student demographics elicits a need for further research. Of the 6,100,000 students in California, 3,400,000 students are Latinx and make up 54.9% of the student population (CDE, 2020). This study's researcher recognizes that students have their home language(s) and are adding English to their multilingual repertoire. The NCES (2020a) affirmed that 10.1% or 5,000,000 students are English language learners. Inspirational motivation is expressed in leaders who are visionary and focused on the optimism of the future (Antonakis et al., 2003). Thus, in the nation's ethnic and cultural texture, multiculturalism is imperative in the 21st century (Czop Assaf et al., 2010). There are no studies of Latina school superintendents as it relates to their competence in culturally inclusive school environments.

### **Summary**

Representation of school system leaders that matches student demographics matters, and field-based experience is valued among researchers in educational settings (Capella-Santana, 2003; Duarte & Reed, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Banks et al. (2001) asserted that educational spaces should be culturally responsive to students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups. Superintendents are responsible for educational experiences, and affirming authentic understanding of students' cultural backgrounds will positively impact effective instruction and curriculum (Gay & Howard, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Researchers have indicated that culturally responsive leadership is underresearched, undertheorized, and much of the past research has been conducted in rural or urban contexts (Dodo Seriki & Brown, 2017; Emdin, 2017; Gay, 2002; Howard, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2007; Merchant, Garza, & Ramalho, 2013; Mitchell, 2015; Riehl, 2000; Smith, 2016; Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015; Webb-Johnson, 2006; Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2007).

Women are underrepresented in all areas of school leadership (ACSA, 2020) and more women today are finding ways to prepare for and take advantage of positions in leadership. Affiliations and networks intentionally create women in school leadership learning opportunities for efficacy development, networking, and supporting educational experience designed to engage, enlighten, empower, and connect women of color education leaders from across the country (CALSA, ACSA, AASA, ALAS, CABE, and MiniCorps). Pace (2018) indicated that in order to develop trustworthy connections, there must be open and safe communication to discuss negative stereotypes, micro aggressions, and challenges or barriers that women of color face in the workplace. Superintendents need to lead with a “compelling, driving conceptualization” in which they have a clear understanding of district needs (Fullan, 2005a, p. 12). Fullan (2005a) discussed that effective leaders embrace a moral purpose, understand change, develop

relationships, foster culture, build capacity, and create coherence. Banks (1996) affirmed that antiracist multiculturalism aims created “cultural, education and political equity” (p. 1). It is critical to understand what strategies exemplary female Latina school superintendents use to create organizational cultures of inclusiveness.



## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### **Overview**

Chapter III defines the rationale for the methodology used to answer the research questions, describes the population and sample, identifies the instruments used to collect the data and how the researcher analyzed the data, and recognizes the limitations of the current study. Chapter III is an outline of the selected sequential explanatory mixed methods used in this study, which analyzed quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews used to secure data to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary culturally intelligent (CQ) Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences.

### **Purpose Statement**

It was the purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's five leadership qualities of cultural differences.

### **Research Questions**

1. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?
2. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?
3. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?

4. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?
5. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?
6. What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?

### **Research Design**

The purpose of the research design was to determine the best inquiry approach that would provide specific direction for procedures that allow the researcher implicit and explicit postulations that informed the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods design chosen to address and identify the leadership strategies that Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences. Accordingly, using a mixed method approach is "an intuitive way of doing research that is continually displayed through our everyday lives" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 66).

Creswell (2013) defined explanatory sequential mixed methods as a strategy that requires the researcher to conduct two consecutive phases to collect quantitative data in the first stage, followed by the qualitative approach utilizing thematic analysis. The inquiry approach resulted in the ability to draw reliable and valid conclusions from the data collected by the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A sequential explanatory mixed methods approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to gather important quantitative data regarding the perceptions of the

respondents through the Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey. In addition, the qualitative data collected through one-on-one interviews allowed the researcher to explain, or elaborate on, the quantitative results. This mixed methods approach supported the researcher exploring and explaining the phenomena of culturally inclusive leadership in Latina superintendents. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data provide rich data that expose themes describing the lived experiences of Latina superintendents. This sequential explanatory mixed methods design was chosen as the best approach to answer the purpose and research questions of this study (see Figure 1).

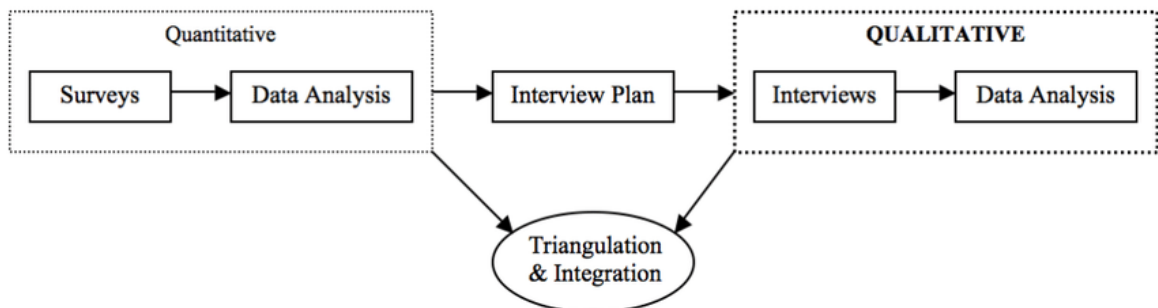


Figure 1. Sequential explanatory mixed methods design. From *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell, 2003. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Recognizing multiple inquiry methods in research adds complementary strengths in the evaluation (Brewer & Hunter, 1989). Researchers stated that narratives, a predominant component of qualitative research, produce rich data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Roberts, 2010). Triangulating quantitative and qualitative data sources across the study occurs adding validity to the findings (Jick, 1979).

Quantitative studies are intended to measure and describe a phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) through a design that informs a level of neutrality or objectivity through the use of statistical measurements and statistical analysis to support

or contest the hypothesis (Campbell, 2014; Creswell, 2003; Roberts, 2010). Patton (2010) affirmed that the quantitative approach is referred to logical positivism as the inquiry is initiated with specific manner, detailed inquiries, or hypotheses.

Qualitative research methods are intended to develop narratives as a means to understand perceptions through stories in order to give meaning to experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Therefore, qualitative research needs to be comprehensively defined to do justice to its key characteristics (Yilmaz, 2013). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research provides the researcher with the opportunity to analyze and communicate the perspectives of the participants in a manner that will elicit a rich description of their meaning to others.

The mixed methods design was collaboratively chosen by the 10 peer researchers working as a thematic team because it was deemed the best design to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary organizational leaders use to create a culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences: (a) to make diversity a priority, (b) to know people and their differences, (c) to enable rich communication, (d) to make accountability a core value, and (e) to establish mutualism as the final arbiter, and what they perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness. The 10 thematic researchers conducted the study across an interdisciplinary set of organizations including public schools, higher education, nonprofits, healthcare, and financial institutions in California.

The researchers used the same sequential explanatory mixed methods methodology allowing the researchers to explore the breadth and depth of the topics

studied through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Each of the 10 researchers surveyed 15 exemplary leaders and interviewed five exemplary leaders within their identified field of study.

### **Population**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a population in research is a group of individuals who suitably match up to a specific set of criteria and to which the researcher intends to generalize the results of the research. Additionally, the population is a group of individuals who have one or more distinguishing characteristics that differentiate them from other groups (Creswell, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2017). According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2019), there are over 1,037 K-12 superintendents in California.

Leading a school district as a superintendent is a complex and challenging responsibility, while one of the most arduous challenges is collaborating with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013). Tooker (2019) asserted that the superintendents operate as the chief executive officer of the district and are responsible for managing the budget, implementing policies, and following state and federal regulations. Martens (2013) affirmed that the superintendent implements the elected school board's vision by making daily decisions about educational programs, and hires, supervises, and manages the central staff and principals to serve the needs of the students to meet the district's goals.

Public school superintendents are actively leading school districts in collaboration with principals, school sites, school board members, and other community stakeholders (CDE, 2019). Imperative to this study is the superintendents' responsibility to set the

stage of inclusiveness through their actions as leaders and to show how they hold themselves accountable through policy and direction. It is important to this research to note that the school superintendency is the most gender-biased executive position in the country (Björk, 2000; Blount, 1999; Glass, 1992; Litmanovitz, 2010), with males likely to advance 40 times more often to the position of superintendent of schools than do women (Skrla, 2000).

### **Target Population**

Creswell (2003) stated, “The target population or ‘sampling frame’ is the actual list of sampling units from which the sample is selected” (p. 393). The target population is a smaller group identified within the population from which a sample will be studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Of the 1,037 superintendents in California, it was determined that there are 73 superintendents—female and male—who identified as Latino (CDE, 2019). The target population selected for this study included exemplary Latina superintendents identified as exemplary, Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic superintendents. There is not an existing data base in California that shows how many of the 73 Latino superintendents are female. The researcher cross-referenced Latina superintendents through her research analysis of public information in the CDE, communication with the California county superintendents, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS, n.d.), California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE, n.d.), and California Association of Latina/o Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA, n.d.) to review membership data in an effort to identify the number of potential female Latina

superintendents. That search resulted in the identification of 21 female Latina superintendents in California public schools (Martín Pérez, 2020).

### **Sample**

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population the researcher intends to generalize. Specifically, the sample identifies who will be studied from within the broader population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A sample can also be described as a subset of the target population, which represents a larger and broader population (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling is a technique commonly utilized in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002).

The researcher used purposeful sampling to identify participants for this study who met the specific criterion, desirable characteristics, and the objective of the study (Creswell, 2008; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 1990). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) noted the importance of availability, willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an expressive, articulate, and reflective manner.

For purposes of this study, participants were selected for their knowledge and experience related to the purpose and research questions. In addition, the participants were identified as exemplary in their field to ensure that the data provided would be authoritative and reliable.

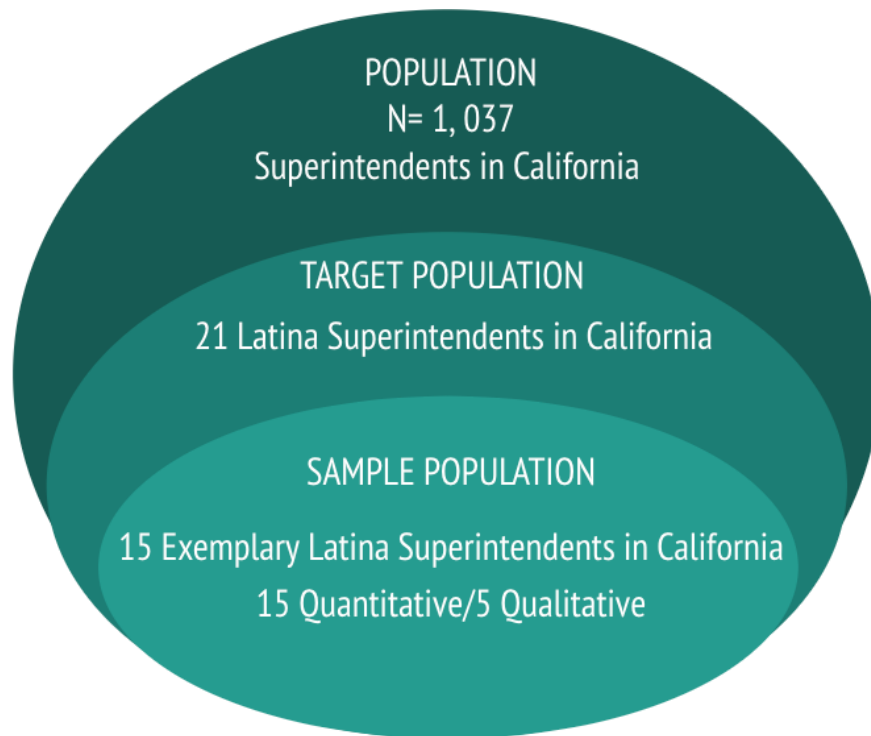
Identifying participants included researching the CDE websites, and contacting the following organizations and affiliations to identify and nominate potential participants: CALSA, ACSA, California Association of African-American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA), California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE, 2020), California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA), and CABE to identify and nominate participants. The researcher created a comprehensive list with the superintendents from California public unified, elementary, and high school districts. The researcher was able to evaluate study criterion on the superintendents in regard to gender and racial/ethnicity identification, first generation, awards and recognitions, length of time in their position, organization and association affiliations, speaking engagements, and published articles.

The study sample included 15 exemplary Latina superintendents from the target population (see Figure 2).

To be considered exemplary, the selected participants needed to meet at least four of the following six criteria to receive consideration for this study:

- Identified as exemplary, Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic.
- Served a minimum of 3 years as a superintendent in their current district with evidence of leading a culturally inclusive organization.
- Received recognition by a district office, county office of education, or California State Superintendent of Public Instruction for exemplary leadership.





*Figure 2.* 2019 California Department of Education superintendent population sample funnel. Adapted from *Fingertip Facts on Education in California – CalEdFacts*, by California Department of Education, 2019 (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp>) and *Transformational Change Project: Emerging Latina Leadership (ELLVC XYQ)*, by M. Martin Pérez, 2020. MMP, SHINE., unpublished manuscript.

- Identified by a panel of county superintendents and organization leaders who were knowledgeable of the work of superintendents and their participation in organizational and community activities involving diverse individuals.
- Has received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional organization such as CALSA, ACSA, CAAASA, CCEE, CCSESA, CABE, or other stakeholder organizations.
- Has published professional works, articles, papers on educational and university-level platforms or presented at conferences or association meetings about cultural intelligence (CQ) and cultural inclusiveness.

## **Quantitative Sampling**

The researcher created an expert panel for nomination of respondents who were perceived to meet the study criteria. The researcher contacted leaders in CALSA, ACSA, county superintendents, CCEE, and CABE and asked each to nominate five Latina superintendents they perceived met the established criteria. The researcher compiled that list. The researcher searched awards, web sites, digital platforms, and LinkedIn to collect supportive data for identification criteria as exemplary. The sample population chosen for the quantitative analysis was limited to 15 Latina superintendents.

After this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher identified and communicated with 15 exemplary Latina superintendents who matched the eligibility criterion to complete the quantitative survey. The process for contacting sample participants is outlined as follows:

1. The researcher identified sample participants and advisors reviewed the list.
2. The researcher contacted the superintendents via e-mail with an informational letter (Appendix B) and explained the purpose, benefits, and risks of participating in the study. The researcher also explained the associated terms of anonymity for participants in the study.
3. Upon agreement to participate in the study, the researcher e-mailed the following:
  - a. Invitation to participate letter (Appendix B)
  - b. Informed consent form, which was included in the survey to be signed and collected at the time of the interview (Appendix C)
  - c. Research Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix D)
  - d. The SurveyMonkey link of the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey was e-mailed.

## **Qualitative Sampling**

The researcher contacted the randomly chosen five superintendents who were willing to participate in an interview. The researcher selected the five participants for the qualitative Zoom interview portion of the study in the following manner:

1. The researcher contacted the participant by phone or e-mail to restate the purpose of the study.
2. The researcher scheduled a 60-minute Zoom interview with each of the five exemplary superintendents. Prior to the interview, the researcher e-mailed the following documents to the participant: (a) an invitation to participate letter with the researcher's secure Zoom link (see Appendix B), (b) the Brandman University Research Participant's Bill of Rights (see Appendix D), (c) an informed consent form (see Appendix C) prior to the start of the Zoom interview, (d) an audio release form to be signed and e-mailed at the interview (see Appendix F), and (e) a copy of the interview questions and definitions of the variables in Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences contained in the Latina Superintendents Interview Protocol (see Appendix E).

## **Instrumentation**

The researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative data analysis for this mixed methods study instrumentation. Creswell (2005) emphasized that a mixed methods study could be advantageous because the data collected from the different methods may allow the researcher to understand the research problem more strongly. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) declared, "Mixed-method studies combine qualitative and quantitative paradigms in meaningful ways. It is a convergence of philosophy,

viewpoints, traditions, methods, and conclusions” (p. 396). With the guidance of faculty advisors, the peer researchers designed a survey for quantitative data collection titled Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey and developed an interview guide for qualitative data collection titled Cultural Intelligent Leadership Thematic Interview Guide. The researcher administered the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey through the online SurveyMonkey program. Furthermore, the researcher also utilized the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Thematic Interview Guide with five of the exemplary CQ Latina superintendents in California.

### **Quantitative Instrumentation**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted that using an instrument to acquire data is a central component of quantitative research that relates to some characteristics of the subjects of the study. A closed-ended quantitative instrument titled Cultural Intelligent Leadership was used to collect quantitative data. In addition, the survey allowed anonymity for participant responses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As a component of the mixed methods research design, the quantitative data collected provided the numerical data.

For this study, 10 thematic researchers developed survey questions in collaboration with faculty chairs. Peer researchers were placed into smaller groups and assigned study variables. Study questions were developed from culmination of the literature review conducted by the peer researchers, the knowledge of faculty advisors, and based on Kennedy’s (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences framework regarding culturally inclusive leadership. The 10 thematic researchers developed multiple questions for each variable of the study that addressed the

quantitative and qualitative questions representing a data bank of possible questions. The thematic team and expert faculty advisors conducted a series of meetings in which draft questions were reviewed and aligned with the study purpose prior to selection.

The 10 thematic peer researchers, in partnership with faculty developed a SurveyMonkey tool for the collection of quantitative data and an interview protocol for the qualitative interviews. The survey questions solicited strategies that exemplary leaders use to create a culture of inclusiveness based on Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences. Kennedy described the qualities as follows: (a) "makes diversity an organization priority," (b) "gets to know people and their differences," (c) "enables rich communication," (d) "holds personal responsibility as a core value," and (e) "establishes mutualism as a final arbiter" (pp. 35-39).

The survey questionnaire developed for this study utilized Likert scaled items. A Likert-scale questionnaire allows research participants to provide responses of agreement or disagreement related to a specific question (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The Likert scale selected for this study was six direction responses from *agree strongly*, *agree moderately*, *agree slightly*, *disagree slightly*, *disagree moderately*, and *disagree strongly*.

### **Qualitative Instrumentation**

To address the purpose of the study, qualitative data are necessary to further explain and understand effective strategies identified by the exemplary leaders of the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) identified five common methods for collecting data: "interviews, observations, questionnaires, document reviews, and audiovisual materials" (p. 343). Patton (2015) emphasized the importance of collecting data using

inquiry through open-ended questions, observations, and artifact collection in order to provide rich descriptions of the research questions.

The researcher and thematic researcher peers collected qualitative data through interviews. The semistructured open-ended interview questions were developed for this study with guidance of faculty chairs. The 10 researchers were organized into smaller groups and assigned study variables to draft interview questions based on the literature review, study definitions, and survey questions. The interview questions were designed to enhance the survey responses by allowing participants to further describe the leadership strategies that the exemplary Latina superintendents used to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences. Furthermore, a series of thematic meetings were held to review and revise the draft interview questions to ensure that the interview questions answered the six research questions for this study. The thematic group of 10 peer researchers developed additional probing questions in order to clarify and gather further details to answer the research questions (Appendix E). During interviews, the researcher was allowed to gather information at a deeper level regarding the lived experience of the participants and was also able to probe and get further details regarding the superintendent's responses, which may have elicited additional details and data that were valuable to the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Furthermore, the 10 thematic researchers, with the support of faculty chairs, developed an introduction protocol that was shared with participants prior to the interview questions. The purpose of the introductory protocol was to provide consistency among interview participants. The protocol afforded a brief overview of the study,

requested verbal agreement, notified participants of recording, and provided an opportunity for questions before beginning the interview process.

For this study, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted face-to-face interviews; therefore, all interviews were conducted in a virtual, one-on-one Zoom modality. The qualitative interview design included an opening introduction to the research and the researcher. The researcher discussed the Research Participants' Bill of Rights and obtained the participant's signature on the informed consent form by e-mail. The researcher proceeded with the interview of open-ended questions to the participant.

Furthermore, the researcher used the discussion prompts identified in the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Thematic Interview Protocol to engage the participants in an interactive dialogue. Specifically, a culmination of the literature review conducted by peer researchers, the knowledge of faculty advisors, and Kennedy's (2008) framework influenced the interview questions in this study: make diversity an organizational priority, personal responsibility, rich communication, know people in their differences, mutualism as a final arbiter, and culture of inclusiveness.

**Researcher as an instrument of the study.** The researcher is considered an instrument when conducting qualitative research (Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). Accordingly, Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) cautioned that in qualitative studies researchers, as instruments, potentially influence the data collection due to the unique personality, characteristics, and interview techniques of the researcher. In short, the study may contain biases because of how the researcher influenced the interviewee during the qualitative interview sessions.

The researcher's extensive educational background of over 2 decades of public service in education, equity advocacy, Master's in Education based on the culturally responsive pedagogy framework, role of associate director of largest public school central office, and national educational consultant could bring proclivity based on work within the education field and experiences. Based on aptitude and familiarity with the participants' roles and lived experience, the researcher brought potential bias to the study. The researcher facilitated qualitative interviews with the research participants. The interview questions and responses were done in a secure virtual one-on-one interview in Zoom. Responses were recorded via Zoom and digitally via a handheld recording device.

### **Field Testing**

The researcher field tested the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey (Appendix G) with sitting superintendents who met four of the six identified criteria. The superintendents selected for the field test were not included in the final study. A draft of the survey was provided to respondents who would not be recruited as a part of the final study. As a part of the thematic peer researchers, field-testing was completed by 10 researchers with 22 participants through the utilization of a shared SurveyMonkey link. The researcher completed field-testing of the survey instruments with two current superintendents who met at least four of the six criteria as exemplary leaders.

Following completion of the survey, the researcher provided the field participants with the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey Feedback Form (see Appendix H) to solicit their feedback regarding the quantitative survey instrument, including the length of time to complete the assessment, appropriateness of the questions, and relevance of the questions to their leadership capabilities. The researcher and thematic group submitted



field-test feedback to faculty chairs and discussed revisions to the survey instrument. The field-test feedback results were used to evaluate the study's reliability and validity through statistical analysis.

The researcher and thematic peer researchers met in small groups and collectively developed interview questions and the introductory protocol. Upon qualitative instrument completion, the thematic group of researchers conducted field-testing of qualified exemplary leaders to ensure that the interview questions aligned with the research questions. The 10 thematic peer researchers conducted field-testing of the semistructured open-ended interview questions with participants who met at least four of the characteristics of the study criteria for an exemplary leader. The qualitative field-test responses of participants were not included in the data collection for the final study.

At the conclusion of the field-test interview, the researcher solicited feedback from the exemplary leader regarding the interview questions and evaluated the researcher's ability to facilitate the interview (Appendix I). In addition to the instrumentation assessment, the researcher received feedback from an expert peer observer who holds a doctorate and is trained in qualitative interviews. The peer observer was tasked with completing the evaluation, giving specific feedback to the researcher, and assessing the neutrality of the researcher, body language, and other behaviors (Appendix I). Furthermore, the researcher analyzed the interview process, interview questions, and her facilitation of the session (Appendix J). The 10 thematic researchers collected and analyzed field-test responses with the intent to revise the interview questions and protocol. The evaluations were submitted to the faculty and instrumentation expert for review. The semistructured open-ended interview questions

were revised based on the feedback from the thematic researchers, field-test participants, and experts.

### **Validity**

Validity in research covers a broad range of areas. Roberts (2010) established validity as “the degree to which your instrument truly measures what it purports to measure” (p. 151). In particular, validity indicates the extent to which the assessment tool measures the intended outcome, therefore ensuring the study findings are accurate. For outcome measures, such as surveys or tests, validity refers to the accuracy of measurement. In regard to research, validity refers to the accuracy with which a study answers the research questions or the strength of the findings of the study conclusions are true (Patten, 2017; Roberts, 2010).

Content validity must also be present in a study to ensure that the reader can make reasonable interpretations about the relationships from the gathered data that would impact the conclusions (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the content validity, as the dependence upon the construction of instruments, provides the elements of the construct to measure the research questions (Patton, 2015). In the context of this study, with the researcher as the primary instrument, the validity of the method depended largely on the competence and skill of the researcher (Bartels, 2017). The researcher addressed this limitation in part by the following steps:

1. The researcher administered a practice interview with participants with similar exemplary leadership traits before the commencement of the data collection phase of the study. The practice interview was performed on a secure virtual Zoom platform and video and audio recorded, with additional handheld audio recorders, and observed

by an expert peer with a doctorate who had knowledge and expertise regarding interviewing skills.

2. The researcher reviewed the audio tape, and the observer notes were reviewed for feedback with intent to pacing, delivery, body language, and other interview techniques. This strategy assisted the process to validate appropriateness of the researcher's interview skills.
3. Prior to deployment of the final survey, in the demographic review, demographics that are collected in a survey are typically used to describe the study sample and/or to disaggregate survey results. To that end, the form in which they are collected should support the goal. Feedback included consideration of the following:

- *Number of years in the current position* was collected as a free response.

Depending on how it is being used in the study, consider using a selected response format (like age).

- *Ethnicity* was collected in a “mark all that apply” format. Investigators should consider how to use this information effectively. For example, creating a “two or more ethnic groups” category or double counting respondents in each of the ethnicities listed.

As a result of the field test, revisions were made to five questions to increase reliability through an interactive process with the survey development expert, the faculty panel, and thematic peer researchers. This process ensured that the instruments were aligned to what was needed to be asked for the purpose of responding to the research question. This helped validate the interview protocol and developed survey questions.

## **Reliability**

The literature explains that when a study achieves consistency with data collection, data analysis, and results, it is then identified as reliable (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). Cox and Cox (2008) explained reliability as developing a survey that is consistent over time, so if the study were replicated, similar results would be obtained. The researcher, thematic team peer researchers, and faculty advisors implemented strategies to increase reliability. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal reliability. It measures (on a scale of 0 to 1) how consistently a set of items measures a particular construct (SPSS). A commonly-accepted rule is that an alpha of 0.7 (some say 0.6) indicates acceptable reliability. The composite score of the Cronbach alpha for the Cultural Intelligent Leader Survey is .708.

Intercoder reliability occurs when a third party evaluator analyzes, codes the data, and corresponds to the agreement level of 80% or higher in conclusion as the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). Similarly, the internal reliability of data suggests that an independent researcher of the study would generate the same conclusions by reviewing the same data. The peer research team members each acquired at least 80% agreement on codes and themes with a peer researcher, therefore ensuring the accuracy of the themes.

A researcher can accomplish external reliability when an independent researcher replicates the study and generates the same results and conclusions. The qualitative data within this study would be difficult to replicate because the human interactions and behavior of both the participants and the researchers in the interview may differ. As a result, there is no concern in the study with external reliability of the data.

## Data Collection

The researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) for Social-Behavioral Educational Research Certification (Appendix A) in protecting human subjects research participants and obtained approval (Appendix A) from the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB). Afterwards, specific steps in the data collection process were used with an electronic survey for quantitative data collection and one-on-one Zoom interviews for qualitative data collection. Following are the specific steps in the data collection process:

1. The purpose of the study was clearly stated in writing to the participants.
2. The link to the instrument Culturally Inclusive Leadership Survey was sent to the participants; the researcher sent the URL to the participants.
3. The participants reviewed the consent and received verbal consent to record Zoom.

The process ensured the protection of participants' privacy rights throughout the study. All participants agreed to informed consent prior to data collection. Thus, protecting confidentiality "means keeping the interviews in a secure place, so that others cannot run across the interviews by chance" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 99).

Data, including printed documents of audio transcripts, and Zoom video and audio were kept in a locked safe and on a secure password-protected computer. Secure measures were utilized to protect the identity of study participants as the person who provided any specific information for the research. After 3 years of the completion of the study, the data will be disposed of. Accordingly, written notes and transcriptions will be shredded; video, audio recordings and digital transcriptions will be deleted.

4. Participants were identified as Superintendent A, Superintendent B, Superintendent C, and so forth, and not by their actual names.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

Potential participants from the study sample were initially contacted through an e-mail request to be part of the research study. Latina superintendents who affirmed interest to participate in the research were asked to verify meeting the minimum criteria for exemplary leaders defined in the study. Subsequently, the researcher provided an e-mail with instructions for the exemplary Latina superintendents that included the definitions of the study research questions described by the thematic peer researchers, and the IRB consent materials. In addition, study participants were provided with the following documents: (a) a description of the study including the definitions of the five qualities as described by the thematic group, (b) an electronic link and password to the survey (Appendix D), (c) the Brandman Participants' Bill of Rights (Appendix E), and (d) information to review, accept, and sign the informed consent document (Appendix F). The researcher downloaded the SurveyMonkey responses to further explore during the interview process.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that when conducting the use of interviews, "responses can be probed, followed up, clarified, and elaborated to achieve specific accurate responses" (p. 205). Mixed methods studies require data from both quantitative and qualitative methods. The 10 peer researchers, and seven faculty advisors drafted 12 in-depth, semistructured interview questions (Patton, 2015). The interview

questions were collaboratively developed by the thematic research team to ensure consistency in the questions asked to participants.

The five participants in this study agreed and signed an audio-recording release form before engaging in the interview process. The interview was recorded with the permission of the participants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher conducted virtual one-on-one interviews on a secure password-protected Zoom to establish rapport and build personal connections. The qualitative interviews established the researcher with the opportunity to take notes during the 60-minute interviews to better understand the exemplary Latina superintendents' nonverbal cues and body language nuances, which added depth to the interview results. The responses were digitally recorded and transcribed by using an application. The researcher gave their transcripts to the participants to give them the opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy.

The researcher launched a systematic process to translate the raw data into themes (Roberts, 2010). This system included analyzing the transcribed interview data, coding the data, categorizing the codes, and identifying recognizable patterns within the data (Patton, 2002). The data were analyzed and coded by the researcher using a qualitative analysis software program called NVivo.

### **Data Analysis**

This mixed methods study implemented both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The researcher collected the quantitative data through surveys and the qualitative data were collected through one-on-one interviews. Most important, because this was a sequential explanatory research study, the researcher collected the qualitative data first, then transcribed the data. To follow, the researcher transcribed the qualitative

data and then subsequently coded the data. As a result of completion of both research methods, the data were examined and the findings of the study were concluded.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

The researcher surveyed 15 exemplary superintendents who met the identified criterion. The researcher implemented descriptive statistics to analyze the collected quantitative data. Accordingly, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) emphasized the value of descriptive statistics by expressing, “Descriptive statistics are used to transform a set of numbers or observations into indices that describe or characterize the data” (p. 149).

**Central tendency.** The central tendency provides the following three numerical data sets: mean, median, and mode. The most commonly used central tendency to determine the average is the mean. The median includes the midpoint of a data set with numbers equally distributed above and below the middle score of the data. The mode is the score that occurs most frequently (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, the mean is the average Likert score for all participants who completed the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey. The researcher used the mean accompanied by the frequency in the quantitative analysis of data.

**Standard deviation.** Standard deviation is a single number that indicates the variability of numerical index scores by reporting the mean (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, the standard deviation was used to inform the variability, or spread, of a group of scores collected from the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey. The researcher used the mean accompanied with the frequency in the quantitative analysis of data.



## **Qualitative Data Analysis**

According to Patton (2015), “Qualitative analysis involves interpreting interviews, observations, and documents—the data of qualitative inquiry—to find substantively meaningful patterns and themes” (p. 5). For the qualitative data analysis, the researcher analyzed the data gathered from one-on-one Zoom interviews with the five CQ Latina superintendents in California. According to Patton, “The major way in which qualitative researchers seek to understand the perceptions, feelings, experiences, and knowledge of people is through in-depth intensive interviews” (p. 27). After recording the qualitative interviews with the five exemplary CQ Latina superintendents, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings with an application with the purpose of creating a narrative of the interview questions and participant responses. The researcher typed up all of her observation logs and field notes.

Creswell (2003) created a process of organizing and preparing the data, reading and reviewing all of the data, and then coding the data. The raw data obtained from the transcription provided essential information about categories and patterns, that in turn illustrated strength and frequency of the data. These transcriptions were shared with the interviewee to review for accuracy, allowing the opportunity for feedback to ensure that the interview was accurately transcribed. Following a comprehensive arrangement of the data, the researcher read, reviewed frequency tables, and reflected on the data elements to cultivate general impressions and to develop an overall sense of meaning from the data. The information obtained was also used to answer the research questions. After the researcher collected, transcribed, and coded the data, she transitioned into the validation stages. The researcher identified general themes in an effort to find patterns and meaning

in the qualitative data. Finally, the data were formally coded using NVivo, an electronic coding software, to identify patterns and frequency of themes, categories, and assertions (Patton, 2015). The frequency tables describe the number of occurrences of a particular type of data within a dataset (Creswell, 2003). The researcher analyzed the data to identify obvious trends within the given set of data.

### **Intercoder Reliability of Data**

Patton (2015) described intercoder reliability as the process of utilizing a third-party evaluator to analyze, verify, and determine the same conclusion for the data collected. For the qualitative interview, the researcher completed the verification of the data and looked for the level of intercoder reliability. Patton affirmed, “A final review alternative involves using experts to assess the quality of analysis” (p. 671). To support intercoder reliability for this study, the researcher relied on a peer researcher to cross-check codes identified that correspond to the agreement level of 80% or higher in conclusion as the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). The qualitative data analysis results assisted the researcher with answering the research questions relating to what strategies exemplary Latina superintendents use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy’s (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences and what they perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness.

### **Limitations**

Limitations in any study are typically out of the researcher’s control and may impact the results of the research and affect the generalizability of the study (Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). This thematic study was replicated by 10 different peer

researchers who utilized the same methodology and quantitative and qualitative instrumentation but were focused on different exemplary CQ organizational leaders; therefore, the validity of this study's findings was supported. There were a variety of limitations that may have affected the sequential explanatory mixed methods study including the COVID-19 pandemic, sample size, and the researcher as the instrument.

### **Coronavirus Pandemic**

With regard to the qualitative data collection of this study, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability to conduct face-to-face qualitative interviews. To maintain safety and health precautions, the executive orders placed in California shifted qualitative methods to one-on-one interviews and were conducted on secure virtual Zoom.

### **Sample Size**

The utilization of a purposeful convenience reputational sample for this study—15 CQ Latina superintendents for the quantitative survey and five CQ Latina superintendents for the qualitative interviews, all within the geographical boundaries of California—may have limited the extension of research findings and conclusions of the results to the total population of superintendents. The sample size for the quantitative portion of this mixed methods study was limited to 15 CQ organizational leaders for each of the thematic peer researchers. The sample size for the qualitative interviews was limited to five CQ organizational leaders for each of the thematic peer researchers. These sample sizes were purposive and assessed by the thematic peer researchers and the faculty advisors.

## **Researcher as the Instrument**

The researcher is considered an instrument when conducting qualitative research (Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). The researcher of this study has served in public education for over 20 years and served in leadership roles and worked closely with superintendents in urban, suburban, and rural districts and offices of education. Based on aptitude and familiarity with the participants' roles and responsibilities, the researcher brought potential bias to the study. The researcher has conducted numerous interviews for various purposes in an educational setting. The researcher facilitated the qualitative interviews with the participants in a one-on-one, secure, virtual Zoom meetings.

The transcriptions of the interviews were sent to the participants for review of accuracy to ensure that the superintendents were represented and quoted with neutrality and accuracy.

## **Summary**

This chapter began with a brief explanation and overview of the methodology. In this sequential explanatory mixed methods approach, the quantitative data were collected and then used to inform the qualitative design approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The purpose statement, research questions, and research design were also restated. The researcher then described and outlined the population, sample, data collection instruments, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis. The study was conducted through mixed methods with the use of both qualitative data (via interviews) and quantitative data (via surveys). The purpose and research questions were elucidated and examined using data collection and analysis. The chapter concluded with potential limitations to the study, and also subsequently outlined the precautionary

measures taken to protect human subjects who volunteered to participate in the study. This study was conducted with CQ Latina superintendents while another nine peer researchers conducted a similar study, utilizing the same methodology and instruments with different populations of CQ organizational leaders. The goal of the thematic peer researchers was to identify and describe the strategies exemplary CQ leaders use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences and what they perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness.

Mutually, the thematic peer researchers provided insight into why exemplary organizational leaders use strategies to make diversity a priority, to get to know people and their differences, to enable rich communication, to make accountability a core value, and to establish mutualism as the final arbiter, and what they perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness. Chapter IV provides the results of the research findings and detailed descriptions of both the qualitative and analysis. Chapter V then proceeds with a descriptive analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, and therefore, illuminates the significant findings of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

### **Overview**

This sequential explanatory mixed methods case study identified and described the leadership strategies that exemplary culturally intelligent (CQ) Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences. Chapter IV provides a summary of the purpose statement, methodology, data collection procedures, and population sample. In addition, this chapter describes the quantitative results collected through an electronic survey from exemplary Latina superintendents, and qualitative results obtained through Zoom interviews with exemplary Latina superintendents. The data collected from the quantitative surveys address research questions and are presented in narrative form, followed by a table format. The data collected from the qualitative interviews address the research questions and are presented in a narrative format, including direct quotes from exemplary Latina superintendents. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the data and a summary of the findings.

### **Purpose Statement**

It was the purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's five leadership qualities of cultural differences.

## **Research Questions**

1. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?
2. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?
3. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?
4. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?
5. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?
6. What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?

## **Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

This study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods design chosen as the best inquiry approach that would provide specific direction for procedures that allow the researcher implicit and explicit postulations that informed the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Intentionally, this study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach by which quantitative data were collected first, and the qualitative data collection followed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Both the electronic survey and the interview questions for qualitative data collection were cocreated with faculty advisors and thematic peer researchers. Accordingly, using a mixed method approach is “an intuitive way of doing research that is continually displayed through our everyday lives” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 66).

Numerical data were collected through a quantitative method utilizing a survey to identify the leadership strategies that Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences. It allowed the researcher to gather important quantitative data regarding the perceptions of the exemplary superintendents through the Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey. As a qualitative method, data were then collected through Zoom interviews with exemplary Latina superintendents to identify strategies exemplary Latina superintendents use to create a culture of inclusiveness in their organizations.

Quantitative research methods are intended to measure and describe a phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) through a design that informs a level of neutrality or objectivity through the use of statistical measurements and statistical analysis to support or contest the hypothesis (Campbell, 2014; Creswell, 2003; Roberts, 2010). Further, the quantifiable data may be collected through surveys, questionnaires, or polls or by researching preexisting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The quantitative portion of the study obtained electronic survey results from 15 exemplary Latina superintendents.

Qualitative research methods are intended to develop narratives as a means to understand perceptions through stories to give meaning to experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Therefore, qualitative research needs to be comprehensively defined to do justice to its key characteristics (Yilmaz, 2013). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research provides the researcher the opportunity to analyze and communicate the perspectives of the participants in a manner that will elicit a rich description of their meaning to others. To add authentic richness to the survey results,



the qualitative portion of the study interviewed five exemplary Latina superintendents in California.

In addition, qualitative research does not try to be predictive but rather explores breadth and depth to understand issues and people (Patton, 2015). In this study, all 15 participants volunteered within the construct of the quantitative survey to be interviewed. As a result, five of the Latina superintendents were randomly chosen for the interview. In this study, interviews were used to gather data to describe perceptions and the leadership strategies that exemplary CQ Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness.

Recognizing multiple inquiry methods in research adds complementary strengths in the evaluation (Brewer & Hunter, 1989). The inquiry approach results in the ability to draw reliable and valid conclusions from the data collected by the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Researchers stated that narratives, a predominant component of qualitative research, produce rich data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Roberts, 2010). Triangulating quantitative and qualitative data sources across the study occurs, adding validity to the findings (Jick, 1979).

This mixed methods approach supported the researcher exploring and explaining the phenomena of cultural inclusive leadership in Latina superintendents. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data provided rich data that exposed themes describing the lived experiences of exemplary Latina superintendents. This sequential explanatory mixed methods design was chosen as the best approach to answer the purpose and research questions of this study (see Figure 1, repeated here for ease of reference). In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described that in an

explanatory research design, the quantitative data are gathered first, followed by the collection of qualitative data to further explain and expand upon the quantitative data.

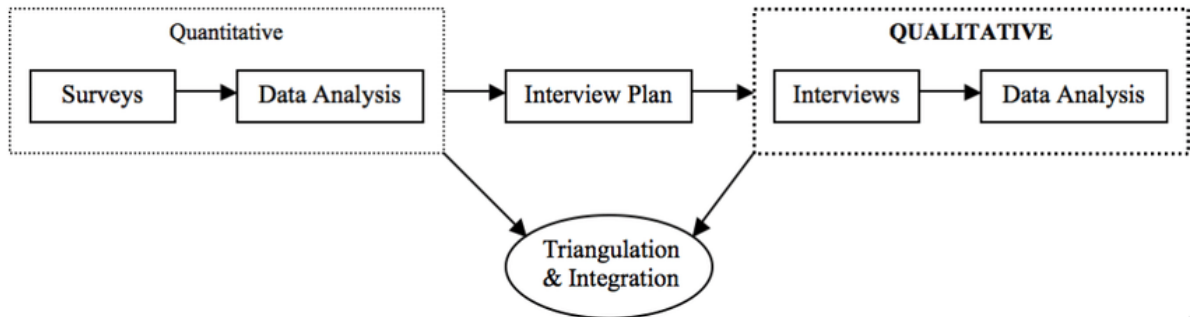


Figure 1. Sequential explanatory mixed methods design. From *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell, 2003, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### Population

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a population in research is a group of individuals who suitably match up to a specific set of criteria and to which the researcher intends to generalize the results of the research. Therefore, the population is made up of individuals who have one or more distinguishing characteristics that differentiate them from other groups (Creswell, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten & Newhart, 2017). Tooker (2019) asserted that superintendents operate as the chief executive officer of the district and are responsible for managing the budget, implementing policies, and following state and federal regulations.

Leading a school district as a superintendent is a complex and challenging responsibility, and one of the most arduous challenges is collaborating with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013). Martens (2013) affirmed that the superintendent implements the elected school board’s vision by making daily decisions about educational programs and hiring, supervising, and managing the central staff and

principals to serve the needs of the students to meet the district's goals. There are 1,037 K-12 superintendents in California (CDE, 2019). However, it was not feasible to study a large population because of time, the COVID-19 pandemic, geography, and financial constraints. Consequently, this study narrowed the population to a target population of 73 Latino superintendents in California (CDE, 2019) to make the study feasible. In this study, the term *Latino* encompasses female and male superintendents because the gender demographics are not disaggregated on the CDE (2019) website. This population was narrowed to a target population to make the study achievable.

### **Target Population**

The target population is a smaller group identified within the population from which a sample will be studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Of the 1,037 superintendents in California, it was determined that there are 73 superintendents—female and male—who identified as Latino (CDE, 2019). To make the study feasible, a target population selected for this study included exemplary Latina superintendents identified as exemplary, Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic superintendents. Because there is no existing database in California that shows how many of the 73 Latino superintendents are female, the researcher cross-referenced Latina superintendents through her research analysis of public information in the CDE, communication with the California county superintendents, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA, 2020), Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS, n.d.), California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE, n.d.), and California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA, n.d.) to review memberships data in an

effort to identify the number of potential female, exemplary Latina superintendents. That search resulted in the identification of 21 female Latina superintendents in California public schools.

### **Sample**

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population the researcher intends to generalize. Specifically, the sample identifies who will be studied from within the broader population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A sample can also be described as a subset of the target population, which represents a larger and broader population (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling is a technique commonly utilized in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The researcher used purposeful sampling to identify participants for this study who met the specific criterion, desirable characteristics, and the objective of the study (Creswell, 2008; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 1990). The sample population was identified as Latina superintendents in California public schools.

Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) noted the importance of availability, willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an expressive, articulate, and reflective manner. In addition, the participants were identified as exemplary in their field to ensure that the data provided would be authoritative and reliable. For purposes of this study, the 15 sample participants were selected for their

knowledge and experience related to the purpose and research questions. All 15 sample participants participated in the quantitative survey, and of those 15, all volunteered within the construct of the survey to participate in the qualitative interviews. Five were randomly selected for the qualitative interview. The target population for this study considered exemplary Latina superintendents who demonstrated four of the six following criteria (see Tables 1 and 2):

- Identified as Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, or Hispanic.
- Served a minimum of 3 years as a superintendent in their current district with evidence of leading a culturally inclusive organization.
- Received recognition by a district office, county office of education, or California State Superintendent of Public Instruction for exemplary leadership.
- Identified by a panel of county superintendents and organization leaders who were knowledgeable of the work of superintendents and their participation in organizational and community activities involving diverse individuals.
- Had received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional organization such as CALSA, ACSA, CAAASA, CCEE, CCSESA, CABE, or other stakeholder organizations.
- Had published professional works, articles, papers on educational and university-level platforms or presented at conferences or association meetings about cultural intelligence (CQ) and cultural inclusiveness.

Table 1

*Criteria Selection for Exemplary Latina Superintendents in California Quantitative Survey*

Must meet 4 of the 6 exemplary criteria requirements for this study	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15
Identify as Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Served a minimum of 3 years as a superintendent	X	X		X		X	X		X	X			X	X	X
Received recognition by a district office, county office of education, or California State Superintendent of Public Instruction for exemplary leadership	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Identified by a panel of county superintendents/ organization leaders	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional organization	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
At least one published professional works, articles, papers on educational/ university-level platforms/ presented at conferences or association meetings about cultural intelligence (CQ) & cultural inclusiveness	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

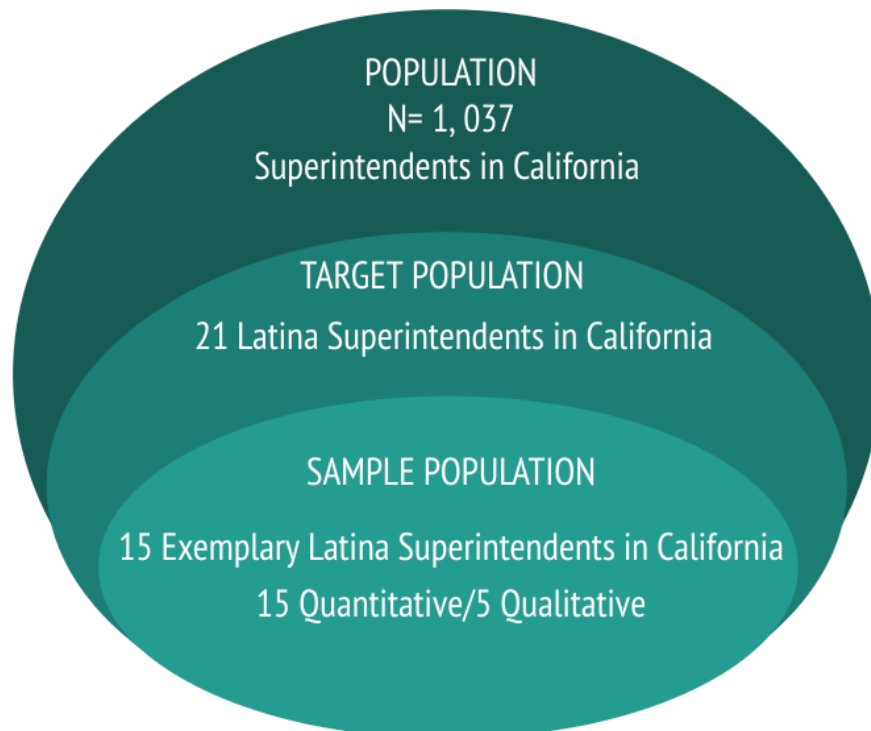
*Note.* S = Superintendent.

Table 2

*Criteria Selection for Exemplary Latina Superintendents Qualitative Interviews*

	Superintendent A	Superintendent B	Superintendent C	Superintendent D	Superintendent E
Qualitative interviews					
Identify as Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Served a minimum of 3 years as a superintendent	✓		✓	✓	✓
Received recognition by a district office, county office of education, or California State Superintendent of Public Instruction for exemplary leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identified by a panel of county superintendents/ organization leaders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional organization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
At least one published professional works, articles, papers on educational/ university-level platforms/ presented at conferences or association meetings about cultural intelligence (CQ) & cultural inclusiveness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Identifying participants included researching the CDE websites and contacting organizations and affiliations to identify and nominate potential participants. CALSA served as an active professional organization that highly nominated multiple Latina superintendents who met the study’s criteria for exemplary superintendents. The researcher created a comprehensive list with the superintendents from California public unified, elementary, and high school districts. The researcher was able to evaluate the study’s exemplary criteria about the superintendents in regard to gender and racial/ethnicity identification, awards and recognitions, length of time in their position, organization and association affiliations, speaking engagements, and published articles. The study sample included 15 exemplary Latina superintendents from the target population (see Figure 2, repeated here for ease of reference).



*Figure 2.* 2019 California Department of Education superintendent population sample funnel. Adapted from Fingertip Facts on Education in California – CalEdFacts, by California Department of Education, 2019 (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp>) and *Transformational Change Project: Emerging Latina Leadership (ELLVC XYQ)*, by M. Martin Pérez, 2020. MMP, SHINE., unpublished manuscript.



## Demographic Data

This sequential explanatory mixed methods study surveyed 15 exemplary Latina superintendents and interviewed five exemplary Latina superintendents from the target population who met the study criteria. The 15 participants who participated in the quantitative Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G) ranged in years of experience from 1 year to 9 years in the superintendent role (see Table 3). All the California superintendents (100%) identified as a female Latina. The student enrollment in the 15 districts averaged 138,773 in unified, elementary, high school districts (CDE, 2019).

Table 3

### *Quantitative Data Participant Demographics*

Superintendent	Years in role	Age range	Gender	Ethnicity
1	5.0	41-50	F	Latina
2	8.0	61-70	F	Latina
3	2.5	51-60	F	Latina
4	3.5	41-50	F	Latina
5	1.0	41-50	F	Latina
6	4.0	41-50	F	Latina
7	3.0	51-60	F	Latina
8	1.5	41-50	F	Latina
9	7.0	51-60	F	Latina
10	7.0	51-60	F	Latina
11	2.0	51-60	F	Latina
12	1.0	41-50	F	Latina
13	5.0	51-60	F	Latina
14	2.5	41-50	F	Latina
15	9.0	61-70	F	Latina

The five superintendents who participated in the qualitative portion of the study were women ranging in age from 41-70. Although the criteria for participation sought female Latina superintendents with 3 or more years of experience, because of the small

number of female superintendents this was not possible. Although five of the superintendents had less than 3 years of experience, they met all other criteria and were included in the study. Two superintendents were in their first year of the superintendency, and six others had 5-9 years of experience. Table 4 represents the demographics of the superintendents who participated in the qualitative study.

Table 4

*Demographics of Qualitative Study Participants*

Superintendent	Gender	Ethnicity	Age range	Years in position
A	Female	Latina	61-70	8.0
B	Female	Latina	51-60	2.5
C	Female	Latina	41-50	5.0
D	Female	Latina	41-50	4.0
E	Female	Latina	51-60	5.0

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The presentation and analysis of data include the quantitative data collected from the Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G) and the qualitative data collected from the Cultural Inclusive Interview Protocol (Appendix E) during Zoom interviews. The quantitative data along with the qualitative data collected in the interviews provided a better understanding of the data results. The combined quantitative and qualitative data of the respondents' perceptions and a deep explanation of the respondents lived experiences as a superintendent provided a rich description of the participants' perceptions. These data allowed the researcher to answer the research questions and purpose of this study, which was to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents in California used Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences.

For this study, 15 exemplary Latina superintendents who met five of six criteria for participation received and completed the Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G) via a SurveyMonkey survey. The survey responses were recorded with numerical value of 6 = *agree strongly*, 5 = *agree moderately*, 4 = *agree slightly*, 3 = *disagree slightly*, 2 = *disagree moderately*, and 1 = *disagree strongly*. All 15 surveys were completed (100%). Of the 15 exemplary Latina superintendents who completed the Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G), all participants volunteered to participate in a 60-minute Zoom interview. The researcher randomly selected the five participants. Because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, all participants were interviewed in a 60-minute Zoom interview for the qualitative portion of this study. The Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G) and the Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E) asked exemplary Latina superintendents to identify inclusive leadership strategies they use to create an inclusive organization and describe what they perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural difference: make diversity a priority, get to know people and their differences, enable rich communication, make accountability a core value, and use mutualism as a final arbiter.

As an explanatory mixed methods study, the quantitative data were first collected. The Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G) contained questions to identify the strategies exemplary CQ Latina superintendents use to create a culture of inclusiveness. The survey responses were downloaded into Excel and compiled for analysis. The responses were statistically evaluated using mean, standard deviation, for each item group. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated descriptive statistics are

utilized to “transform a set of numbers or descriptions into indices that describe or characterize the data” (p. 149).

The qualitative interviews were uploaded to the transcription application, Temi.com. The researcher calibrated all five interviews to verify transcription accuracy. The researcher provided a transcription copy to the participants to review and verify the accuracy of their interview. The transcribed interviews were analyzed for codes and emerging themes. Afterwards, the interview transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo software for theme frequency occurrence support. The findings from the surveys and interviews were compiled, analyzed, and organized into a narrative and a chart related to how they answered each of the research questions.

### **Quantitative Data Research Question Results**

#### **Research Question 1: Make Diversity a Priority**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?*

Specifically, the intent of Research Question 1 was to have superintendents identify their strategies they utilize to make diversity an organizational priority (see Table 5). Overall, ratings for *making diversity a priority* were high, ranging from 6.0 to 5.67, with an overall average rating of 5.81 and less than half rubric point of deviation ( $SD = 0.46$ ). Of the five strategies, 100% of the 15 exemplary Latina superintendents identified the culturally inclusive strategy “take personal responsibility for inclusion of all people” as the highest with all *agree strongly* ratings with a zero point of deviation ( $SD = 0.00$ ). The culturally inclusive strategy “provide coaching to develop talent within the organization” had an *agree strongly* mean rating of 5.87 with a 0.35 point of deviation.

The strategy, “communicate the importance of culture differences” had the lowest average mean (5.67) and the greatest variation in responses with a standard deviation of 0.62. It is interesting to note that although it received the lowest of the substrategies, it yielded among the highest frequencies in the qualitative portion of the study.

These findings are consistent with the research of Kennedy (2008) and Winters (2015). Diversity as an organizational priority is an intentional action to embrace individuals’ unique differences, perspectives, and talents as an identifier for organizational success. Exemplary leaders take on personal responsibility to be inclusive of all organizational stakeholders. Table 5 shows the participant quantitative responses for Research Question 1.

### **Research Question 2: Know People and Their Differences**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?*

Specifically, the intent of Research Question 2 was to have exemplary Latina superintendents identify their strategies they utilize to get to know people and their differences (see Table 6). Overall, ratings for *knowing people* were high with an overall average mean of 5.89 and less than a half rubric point of deviation ( $SD = 0.31$ ). Of the five strategies presented, “listen without judgement to understand diverse cultures,” “embrace interaction with others from different cultures,” and “stand up for others if they are being treated unfairly” all received 100% *agree strongly* ratings and were rated the highest. These data indicate that all of the exemplary Latina superintendents utilized the culturally inclusive practices in their organizations. This shows the importance of leaders

Table 5

*Participant Quantitative Responses for Research Question 1: Making Diversity an Organizational Priority*

Making diversity an organizational priority	<i>n</i>	Agree strongly		Agree moderately		Agree slightly		Disagree slightly		Disagree moderately		Disagree strongly		Ave.	<i>SD</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Model diversity as an organizational priority	15	12	80.00	2	13.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.73	0.59
Take personal responsibility for inclusion of all people	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
Communicate the importance of cultural differences	15	11	73.33	3	20.00	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.67	0.62
Provide coaching to develop talent within the organization	15	13	86.60	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.35
Provide opportunities for people to develop new skills	15	12	80.00	3	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.80	0.41
Overall	75	63	84.00	10	13.33	2	2.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.81	0.46

Table 6

*Participant Quantitative Responses for Research Question 2: Knowing People and Their Differences*

Knowing people and their differences	<i>n</i>	Agree strongly		Agree moderately		Agree slightly		Disagree slightly		Disagree moderately		Disagree strongly		Ave.	<i>SD</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Listen without judgment to understand diverse cultures	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
Embrace interaction with others from different cultures	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
Stand up for others if they are being treated unfairly	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
Encourage open dialog about controversial issues	15	11	73.33	4	26.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.73	0.46
Intervene when intolerance is present	15	11	73.33	4	26.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.73	0.46
Overall	75	67	89.33	8	10.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.89	0.31

engaging in intent to listen without bias or judgment. Building relationships is powerful. One-to-one connections with each other are the foundation for change, and building relationships with people from different cultures, often many different cultures, is key in building diverse communities that are powerful enough to achieve significant goals. The data suggest that female Latina leaders embrace interactions with others to get to know them personally while being steadfast in their values to stand up for those in the organization who may be experiencing inequities and injustice.

The three highest yielding approaches are not practiced independently. The power is in the interconnected and interweaving strategies that must be synergized simultaneously to effectively build authenticity, trust, and empowering relationships. These study data are consistent with Covey's (2006) research that intentionally developing deep knowledge and empathy, listening first or listening to others before speaking, and demonstrating respect or genuine empathy creates a transformational culture of inclusiveness. Avila (2018) and Livermore (2015) believed that leaders could accomplish this with cultural intelligence (CQ) applied to any culturally diverse situation.

The findings specified that knowing people and their differences is intentionally developing deep knowledge, expertise, and empathy about diversity through curiosity, experiences, and daily practice (Hesselbein & Goldsmith 2009; Kennedy, 2008; Travis et al., 2019). The data findings differ slightly from Covey and Merrill's (2006) research that concluded that leaders who confront reality or address challenges are a component of transforming culture in organizations. However, it received a 73% *agree strongly* value.

The lowest rated strategies were "encourage open dialog about controversial issues" and "intervene when intolerance is present" with 73.33% *agree strongly*. Both



received similar but lower ratings than the other three items with an average mean rating of 5.73 and 0.46 standard deviation. Table 6 lists each strategy and 75 participant responses to the survey questions related to Research Question 2 of getting to know people and their differences. Overall, the ratings were high with a mean average of 5.89 along with a low standard deviation of 0.31.

### **Research Question 3: Enable Rich Communication**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?*

For the purpose of this study, “enable rich communication” was defined as follows: Rich communication is the transfer of information with the intent to understand the meaning and broaden one’s perspective, resulting in a personal connection between individuals (Armengol et al., 2017; Daft & Lengel, 1986; Jensen et al., 2018; Kennedy, 2008).

The focus of Research Question 3 was to have exemplary Latina superintendents identify the strategies they utilize to enable rich communication. The exemplary Latina superintendents were given five culturally inclusive strategies aligned to Research Question 3, *enable rich communication* (see Table 7). Of the five strategies presented, “approach conflict by looking at all sides” and “remain accessible to others” rated highest with 93.33% *agree strongly* ratings with a mean of 5.93 and a 0.26 standard deviation. Of the total responses to *enable rich communication*, the strategy “share honestly what is going on when the chips are down” was rated lower than other items. The mean was 5.73 with a 0.46 standard deviation. Overall, the ratings for Research Question 3, enable rich communication, scored a mean of 5.87 and a 0.34 standard deviation (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Participant Quantitative Responses for Research Question 3: Enable Rich Communication*

Enable rich communication	<i>n</i>	Agree strongly		Agree moderately		Agree slightly		Disagree slightly		Disagree moderately		Disagree strongly		Ave.	<i>SD</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Remain open to feedback to develop deeper understanding of different perspectives	15	13	86.67	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.35
Approach conflict by looking at all sides	15	14	93.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.93	0.26
Remain accessible to others	15	14	93.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.93	0.26
Share honestly what is going on when the chips are down	15	11	73.33	4	26.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.73	0.46
Create a culture where people feel safe to share controversial ideas	15	13	86.67	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.35
Overall	75	65	86.67	10	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.34

The data in Table 7 indicate 93% of exemplary Latina superintendents suggest that the respondents approach conflict by looking at all sides and being accessible to all in the organization to foster a positive culture of inclusion. These data are consistent with Stokes's (2013) findings that effective communication transpires when individuals recognize cultural cues, learn cultural knowledge, and realize implications of their own interactions with others.

#### **Research Question 4: Make Accountability a Core Value**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?*

The intent of Research Question 4 was to have exemplary Latina superintendents identify the strategies they utilize to make accountability a core value. Overall, ratings were high with an average rating of 5.95 and less than a half rubric point of deviation ( $SD = 0.28$ ). The three strategies “take ownership of personal behavior that supports respect of others,” “willing to take personal risks to see that others are valued,” and “promote a culture where everyone sees themselves as an important part of the organization” all rated the highest with all *agree strongly* ratings. The strategy “the importance of diversity is shown in organizational hiring practices” received the lowest ratings with an average rating of 5.80. This item also had the greatest differences among responses ( $SD = 0.56$ ). Table 8 shows the participant quantitative responses for Research Question 4.

The findings raise questions about the possibility that exemplary Latina superintendents begin their initial foundational work of taking personal responsibility by demonstrating that hiring diverse candidates occurs in all departments. From there, promoting and fostering a culture that genuinely values inclusion to mirror student

Table 8

*Participant Quantitative Responses for Research Question 4: Personal Responsibility as a Core Value*

Promote responsibility as a core value	<i>n</i>	Agree strongly		Agree moderately		Agree slightly		Disagree slightly		Disagree moderately		Disagree strongly		Ave.	<i>SD</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Promote organizational culture that values inclusion	15	14	93.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.93	0.26
Take ownership of personal behavior that supports respect of others	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
The importance of diversity is shown in organizational hiring practices	15	13	86.67	1	6.67	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.80	0.56
Willing to take personal risks to see that others are valued	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
Promote a culture where everyone sees themselves as an important part of the organization	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
Overall	75	72	96.00	2	2.67	1	1.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.95	0.28

demographics is desired. Established research supports the documented benefits of representation that mirrors student demographics matters for young students to perform academically (Melendez de Santa Ana, 2008; Nieves, 2016). It is the superintendent who carries the responsibility that ensures equitability and inclusiveness for everyone to thrive. To amplify the disparity of representation, the percentage of Latina educational leaders in the superintendent role is 1% (Nieves, 2016). Ott (2019) asserted the long-lasting benefits of student success from inclusion and having role models that match the student population.

The data suggest that the 15 exemplary Latina superintendents in the study (100%) explicitly worked toward an inclusive culture by taking personal accountability and ownership that provides a respectful environment for all stakeholders in the organization. In addition, the exemplary leaders were ready to take personal risks that ensured others are valued, and they fostered an environment of belonging and being vital to the organization. The research findings suggest that success occurs for the leaders when the set of strategies work in synergy and not in isolation. This study is consistent with other research findings that stated that personal responsibility as a core value is a leader's conscious ownership of her or his actions and the impact she or he has on others (Kennedy, 2008; Molenmaker et al., 2016; Tausen et al., 2018).

#### **Research Question 5: Establish Mutualism as the Final Arbiter**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?*

The exemplary Latina superintendents in California were presented five culturally inclusive strategies to establish *mutualism as the final arbiter* when making decisions.

The exemplary Latina superintendents identified “lead with intentional collaboration where no one is placed at risk” as the highest ranking culturally inclusive approach they utilize with 93.3% *agree strongly* ratings. However, “insist on fairness as core value” was rated lowest with an average rating of 5.67. Less than 7% *agree slightly*, and there was more deviation in responses than seen in other items ( $SD = 0.62$ ). Despite this strategy being the lowest in this set of strategies, its mean of 5.67 is still high in relation to the rating scale. Core values determine how executive leadership creates overall success in a culturally inclusive organization and affects performance to effectively serve students (Gardiner & Enomoto (2006). Table 9 represents quantitative data on Research Question 5: *mutualism as the final arbiter* responses.

Overall, ratings for *mutualism as the final arbiter* were high with an overall average rating of 5.83 and less than a half rubric point of deviation ( $SD = 0.45$ ). This is consistent with various researchers’ conclusion that exemplary leaders use mutualism as the final arbiter because mutualism establishes trust in organizations through a deep sense of shared purpose, a thoughtful inspection of each member’s ideas and interests, and interdependence when performing roles and responsibilities (Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Mishra, 1996; Rau, 2005). Although the organizational leaders classified the study’s lowest rating of 73% *agree strongly* for “insisting on fairness as a core value,” it supports the 15 exemplary superintendents to then lead with intentional collaboration, creating a culture in which no one is placed at risk and no one is harmed by the decisions within the team or organization.

Table 9

*Participant Quantitative Responses for Research Question 5: Mutualism as the Final Arbiter*

Mutualism as the final arbiter	<i>n</i>	Agree strongly		Agree moderately		Agree slightly		Disagree slightly		Disagree moderately		Disagree strongly		Ave.	<i>SD</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Create a deep sense of shared purpose	15	13	86.67	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.35
Insist on fairness as a core value	15	11	73.33	3	20.00	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.67	0.62
Encourage new ideas that benefit all stakeholders	15	13	86.67	1	6.67	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.80	0.56
Cultivate a thoughtful inspection of diverse thinking	15	13	86.67	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.35
Lead with intentional collaboration where no one is placed at risk	15	14	93.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.93	0.26
Overall	75	64	85.33	9	12.00	2	2.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.83	0.45

## **Research Question 6: Advantages of Creating an Organizational Culture of Inclusiveness**

*What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?*

Research Question 6 asked participants what they perceived as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness. In this study, the operational definition of culture was defined as follows: “Culture is all learned and shared human patterns or models that distinguishes the members of one group of people from another” (Damen, 1987, p. 51). In addition, the definition of cultural intelligence is “an individual’s ability to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse settings” (Rámirez, 2014).

Overall, ratings for *culture* were high with an overall average rating of 5.84 and less than a half rubric point of deviation ( $SD = 0.37$ ). Exemplary Latina superintendents of California public school districts were asked to identify advantages of creating culture through cultural intelligence. Two strategies, “interact respectfully with different people in the organization” and “treat people with genuine regard regardless of position,” received all (15/15) *agree strongly* responses. The two lowest rated strategies, “challenge intolerance in others” and “collect regular employee feedback,” received nine *agree strongly* with an average rating of 5.60. The findings are consistent with the current research that stated how a culture of inclusion incorporates diverse individuals in an environment of mutual respect and acceptance that recognizes and values their unique contribution to the success of the organization (Azmat et al., 2014; Kennedy, 2008; Mak et al., 2014; Tawagi & Mak, 2015). Table 10 illustrates the responses of advantages to cultural inclusion.



Table 10

*Participant Quantitative Responses for Research Question 6: Advantages of Creating Culture of Inclusion*

Advantages of creating a culture of inclusion	<i>n</i>	Agree strongly		Agree moderately		Agree slightly		Disagree slightly		Disagree moderately		Disagree strongly		Ave.	<i>SD</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
See things from other people's point of vies	15	12	80.00	3	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.80	0.41
Consider diverse perspectives when making decisions	15	14	93.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.93	0.26
Encourage open dialog with stakeholders	15	14	93.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.93	0.26
Challenge intolerance in others	15	9	60.00	6	40.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.60	0.51
Enhance interaction with people of different cultures	15	14	93.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.93	0.26
Overall	75	63	84.00	12	16.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.84	0.37

Table 11 identifies approaches that exemplary Latina superintendents perceive are advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness.

### **Quantitative Survey Data Summary**

In alignment with Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences, 15 exemplary Latina superintendents of California public school districts were surveyed to evaluate the identified strategies mirrored with their culturally inclusive approaches.

The researcher identified nine strategies that stood out from other strategies as they received *agree strongly* responses and a mean score of 6.0. Table 12 demonstrates the top approaches sorted by research question. As a group it appears that these are the most important strategies for a Latina superintendent to utilize in creating a culture of inclusion. All 15 exemplary Latina superintendents identified nine culturally inclusive strategies used intentionally to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness. Furthermore, the data demonstrate the mean scores of 6.0 across the research questions with the exception of Research Question 3. It is interesting to note the discrepancy was minimal with the 5.87 mean and 0.34 standard deviation. Moreover, six top identified strategies were associated with Research Questions 2 and 4; however, Research Question 3 did not rank any high-yielding culturally inclusive approaches.

Table 11

*Advantages of Creating an Organizational Culture of Inclusiveness*

Advantages of creating a culture of inclusiveness	n	Agree strongly		Agree moderately		Agree slightly		Disagree slightly		Disagree moderately		Disagree strongly		Ave.	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Promote policies that ensure cultural participation	15	13	86.67	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.35
Interact respectfully with different people in the organization	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
Encourage everyone to be themselves	15	12	80.00	3	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.80	0.41
Listen carefully to make people comfortable	15	14	93.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.93	0.26
Collect regular employee feedback	15	9	60.00	6	40.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.60	0.51
Show respect by helping people	15	13	86.67	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.35
Value the contributions of people through positive recognition	15	12	80.00	3	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	4.80	0.41
Treat people with genuine regard regardless of position	15	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6.00	0.00
Celebrate the unique contributions of diversity to the success of the organization	15	13	86.67	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.87	0.35
Hold others accountable for inclusion	15	12	80.00	2	13.33	1	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.73	0.59
Overall	150	128	85.33	21	14.00	1	0.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5.85	0.38

Table 12

*Culturally Intelligent Strategies Exemplary Latina Superintendents in California Utilize to Create an Organizational Culture of Inclusiveness*

RQ	CQ strategies	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Take personal responsibility for inclusion of all people	15	6.00	0.00
2	Listen without judgment to understand diverse cultures	15	6.00	0.00
2	Embrace interaction with others from different cultures	15	6.00	0.00
2	Stand up for others if they are being treated unfairly	15	6.00	0.00
4	Take ownership of personal behavior that supports respect of others	15	6.00	0.00
4	Willing to take personal risks to see that others are valued	15	6.00	0.00
4	Promote a culture where everyone sees themselves as an important part of the organization	15	6.00	0.00
6	Interact respectfully with different people in the organization	15	6.00	0.00
6	Treat people with genuine regard regardless of position	15	6.00	0.00
	Overall	135	6.00	0.00

### Qualitative Data Results

The researcher utilized a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design. To add depth to the quantitative Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey, qualitative data were collected through a semistructured 60-minute Zoom interview from the randomly chosen five exemplary leaders who volunteered to participate in the qualitative portion of this study. Each of the five exemplary Latina superintendents responded to semistructured questions aligned with the six research questions. The researcher completed over 300 minutes of interview time to learn their *testimonios*, their lived experiences, and how they created a successful organizational culture of inclusiveness.

The researcher asked every interview question and prompting questions from the Thematic Interview Script (Appendix E) to engage each exemplary Latina superintendent and elicit reflective discourse to enrich the study. Patton (2015) affirmed that qualitative analysis enables interpreting one-on-one interviews through inquiry to find meaningful patterns and themes that emerge. The researcher analyzed the qualitative data by reviewing transcripts and coding responses to research questions to identify emerging themes. The researcher then utilized a data analysis software, NVivo, to organize her extensive list of themes that emerged from the five interviews with the exemplary leaders. To extrapolate approaches identified by the interview participants, the researcher constructed themes when at least three out of five exemplary leaders identified strategies. Table 13 provides the qualitative data themes and frequency count for associated research questions. The qualitative study generated 30 themes with 598 frequency marks.

Table 13

*Qualitative Data Themes and Frequency by Research Question*

Research question	Qualities of cultural differences	Themes	Frequency
1	Make diversity an organizational priority	6	129
2	Knowing people and differences	4	69
3	Enable rich communication	4	63
4	Personal accountability	4	84
5	Mutualism as the final arbiter	4	91
6	Advantages of creating a culture of inclusiveness	8	162
	Overall	30	598

## Research Question 1

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?*

In this study, diversity was defined as follows: Diversity as an organizational priority is an intentional action to embrace individuals' unique differences, perspectives, and talents as an identifier for organizational success (Kennedy, 2008; Winters, 2015). Table 14 identifies the themes and frequencies for Research Question 1: "What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?" The total coded themes that emerged were six with a frequency of 129 (see Table 14). In addition, the highest frequency recorded was for the strategy of "hiring practices" for all five of the exemplary leaders with a 27 frequency. The theme with the lowest number of frequencies was "consciousness of walk the walk" with a frequency count of 12. All five participants mentioned all the inclusive practices listed in the table.

Table 14

*Qualitative Data for Research Question 1*

Research question	Theme	Frequency
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?	● Hiring practices	27
	● Conscious accountability of core values: equity and diversity	26
	● Criticality for responsiveness capacity building	25
	● Create constant space for critical conversations	22
	● Cultivate tangible aspirational opportunities for students	17
	● Consciousness of walk the walk	12

**Hiring practices.** The most critical approach the exemplary Latina leaders demonstrate to prioritize diversity as organizational priority is hiring practices. All of the five participants (100%) identified the practice of ensuring hiring practices and hiring protocols is an essential part of making diversity a priority in their districts with an overall frequency of 27. Superintendent B elaborated,

I think diversity has to be a priority in your hiring. You want multiverse, multi diverse, a variety of people with different backgrounds, different experiences who can relate to the students that you serve and who are going to be able to be role models for them. And who are going to be able to think about what they need and be able to provide what your students of various backgrounds need. So I think it starts with the hiring process.

Several participants stated that they want to ensure the job description allows many diverse candidates to apply; ensures the recruiting process is inclusive; prioritizes hires of diverse linguistic and cultural mindset, experiences, abilities; and is inclusive to mirror student demographics. Superintendent A shared, “First thing is that you walk the walk, you know, as far as inclusiveness is concerned, you demonstrate it and you do that by who you hire.” She continued to share,

It is very critical to be involved in the process of hiring management because then they are in charge of other hires. Who I hire and coach is critical because it communicates the things that I value and an effective way that inclusiveness is an intentional system.

Superintendent E described the hiring process for her organization to set the tone for using a diversity lens as an organizational leader:

Through our hiring process, our practice for example either screening candidates and through the interview process. So we aim to have a diverse team of individuals who come with not only a language diversity, ethnic diversity, but also diversity in perspectives and diversity across the organization from different departments that might be working with an individual who would fill a position in the screening process. In the hiring process on the interview teams, we have a policy in place that states that we will have a diverse group of individuals who would also be in the interviewing process. And that means diversity in ethnicity, diversity in language, again, diversity in perspectives that they may come to the table and surface the most qualified candidate for a position.

Identification of hiring practices did not yield the highest responses in the quantitative portion of this mixed methods study. It is interesting to note that hiring practices yielded the highest responses in the qualitative portion of this study. The research supports hiring is an important indicator as Ott (2019) asserted that school districts benefit from inclusion and having role models that match the student population.

**Conscious accountability of core values in equity and diversity.** The coded themes identified a frequency of 26. All of the five exemplary superintendents referenced conscious accountability through (a) the strategic plan; (b) mission and vision founded in core values of equity and diversion; (c) transparent internal and external data aligned to organizational priorities; and (d) the tone that is set for diversity, equity, and inclusion in organization.

This is consistent and critical in Kanold and Luhmann's (2010) assertion that it is through accountability that leaders manifest transition from conceptual vision toward



tangible action and implementation to sustain continuous improvement. Superintendent C shared,

So we actually took a step back and really started with our, why, who are we? Who do we serve? And then, um, from that work, we really, we realized that, um, we had an old framework for a vision, mission and goals. And so, we kind of embarked on that work. I met with the board first, to see what their priorities were and then based on their priorities, went out to several different meetings with parents. Every campus had a meeting. So we split the cabinet because I couldn't go to every single site, got feedback from every single teacher, our classified employees, our parents, and our students. That led to the creation of a new vision, a new mission statement, goals.

She also added,

And then we added something that I always think is important and that's having core values. And so, within our core values, there are two that really lead to kind of diversity. One is, is having the core value of equity and ensuring that we infuse equity into everything we do. And then the second is embracing and celebrating diversity. Our board said that we're always going to look at things through equity and also celebrating, um, diversity and embracing diversity. It framed how as an organization we went about our business.

Likewise, Superintendent C stated, "Accountability in their core values of diversity and equity are part of the evaluation goals for cabinet and school site administrators." She elaborated, "Core value of equity and ensuring that we infuse equity into everything we

do. Every department, every campus selects three strategic actions that they're going to work on for the year and then that becomes a part of everyone's evaluation."

All exemplary Latina superintendents spoke to equity-focused policies and allocation of local county and accountability of resources and funds for diverse student populations: English language learners, homeless and foster youth (National Center for Homeless Education, n.d.), Native Indigenous learners, and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). Superintendent E expressed,

In our organization, really having an equity lens through which we view everything. We do allocation of resources is another way that we really focus on diversity and equity looking at diversity and perspectives and how we're going to allocate our resources not all. And, you know, it's not always fiscal resources, it includes human resources. It includes facilities resources. It includes materials resources; it includes fiscal resources. So having diversity of perspective and how those resources should be allocated, and also, again, looking through an equity lens, that it means that not everybody gets the same thing, but that we really look at what either individuals or, or organizationally our departments need in order to do the best job that they can to serve are very diverse our very diverse student population and their families.

Superintendent D stated,

I talk a lot about just equity and all means all is our mission here. If you look behind me, these wordles and canvases are in all of our halls. I'm in my fourth year as the superintendent here and what is really important to us, is all means all. That every single student, no matter which school you're at, no matter which

program you're in or whatever grade you're in, you're going to be provided with opportunities to diversify your outlook, to provide you with experiences that then help you make an informed decision in the postsecondary world.

**Criticality for capacity building.** All five interview participants identified an urgency of providing capacity building for culturally inclusive responsiveness with an overall frequency of 25. All affirmed that purposeful, professional learning development for staff to create an environment where students of all diverse backgrounds thrive is important. All five participants referenced awareness of disproportionate inequities affecting communities of color in the current COVID-19 pandemic and social uprisings. Superintendent D stated, "We intentionally focus on building an asset-oriented lens of inclusion." The student demographics in California shows that 5.3% are identified as African American but are overrepresented in the 13% dropout rate (CDE, 2020). Research affirms criticality responsiveness in culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy, and cultural and linguistic sustaining responsiveness that responds and embraces population (Alim, 2011; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mordechay, Gándara, & Orfield, 2019).

Historically, communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by deficit approaches and current linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural research tendency of researchers and practitioners to assume unidirectional correspondence between race, ethnicity, language, and cultural ways of being (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Irizarry, 2007; Paris & Alim, 2017). The study findings suggest that exemplary Latina superintendents intentionally use professional learning days in their districts to actively counter systemic

inequalities by fostering explicit capacity building for all members of the organization regardless of position. Superintendent C stated,

I use things to educate that aren't as subjective. I use our data. A practice that we implemented was desegregating all of our data down to our subgroups, down to our school sites, and then cross. So you have to have conversations about the difference between equity and equality. You have to have honest conversations when your staff and your leadership about everyone's biases, we all have them. It's innate in our nature as human beings, you know, we're tribal, all of those pieces. You understand you have to use data because data isn't subjective. Then ask them what the solutions are. Not you telling them this is what we have to do, but this is what it is. What are we going to do about it?

**Create constant space for critical conversations.** All five interview participants identified importance to establish diversity as a priority by their intentional practice of being cognizant to create a constant space for critical conversations with an overall frequency of 22. Superintendent A stated,

I'm very conscious of the fact that as people look at me, they're making judgements about my cultural, my actions. The way I pronounce my name communicates about my acceptance of my culture. I have found that storytelling and conversations prepare us for having the hard conversations about culture and racism.

Four participants stated they model vulnerability and lead the conversations. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, much of this was done through a variety of platforms that interweaved with Research Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Moreover, Superintendent A and

Superintendent D shared that antiracist training on unconscious bias is for all organization members. This is supported by G. Muhammad's (2020) affirmed criticality that students and educators need the space for conversation for capacity and ability to understand power, equity in order to understand and promote antioppression.

**Cultivate tangible aspirational opportunities for students.** This theme was the fourth recorded theme that was referenced 17 times. If superintendents cultivate tangible experiences for students, this builds inclusive opportunities for district stakeholders to be part of the learning community. This is aligned with the seminal researchers who affirm cultural responsiveness authenticates and affirms schoolchildren, their culture, linguistic abilities, and lived experiences that construct meaningful learning (Gay, 2002; Hollie & Muhammad, 2012). All exemplary Latina superintendents shared that they are the first ever Latina superintendents in their district's history and that their lived experiences are not different from the students who sit in their classrooms. However, 100% of them emphasized the importance of ensuring students have tangible, hands-on experiences that support aspirational opportunities. Storytelling and testimonios were recorded multiple times in all qualitative interviews. One superintendent expressed that she shares her story with all district stakeholders about growing up as a Mexican American student in the very district she now leads. She stated, "Vulnerability about challenges and celebrations educate and influence her organization in allowing students to see and be seen."

As Melendez de Santa Ana (2008) stated, "Others feel that it is valuable for children to have people in leadership roles who look like them" (p. 1). Furthermore, Martinez (2016) noted Campbell-Jones and Avelar-Lasalle's 2000 research that suggested hearing how culture affects the ascension into educational leadership for

Latinos and hearing their stories are critical in obtaining and retaining Hispanics and African American K-12 superintendents. A sample of high-yielding strategies gathered from all interviews are listed as the following approaches that have been successful in their organizations: robust master schedule in K-12 with ethnic studies from elementary through secondary grades; science, technology, and mathematics through offerings of architecture, robotics, digital animation; college and career readiness in elementary and secondary schools; and leveraging their social and professional networks and partnerships with ACSA, CALSA, universities, and private and public corporations to bring diverse guest speakers, experiences, and experts from the outside to serve as aspirational role models who look like the diverse population of students.

**Consciousness of walk the walk.** This theme recorded a frequency of 12. All participants in the qualitative interviews stated that they are conscious of the fact that they hold an additional personal responsibility for being in a key leadership role that only less than 1% of Latinas hold in the country and state (Banuelos, 2008). Representation has not increased, and disproportionate underrepresentation of women in all areas of school leadership continues (ACSA, 2020). All five interview participants highlighted that as leaders they are aware of the various roles: holding the highest level of leadership position and being Latina, a woman of color, first generation in U.S. school systems, community member, mother, mentor, and coach. It suggests exemplary Latina superintendents demonstrate their CQ acuteness, and this is supported by seminal CQ research findings that asserted that metacognitive and cognitive CQ predicted cultural judgement, decision-making, and task performance (Ang et al., 2004). All of the exemplary Latina superintendents affirmed their conscientiousness of being Latina in this

predominantly White male role motivates them to show up authentically, be vulnerable, and lead with their dynamic skills that led them to take on the highest leadership role in California public schools (Kowalski et al., 2011). All (5/5 participants) stated that they serve as models who empower multilingual learners and community members as they lead with their bilingual fluency and multiculturalism (100% fluent in Spanish and English). Superintendent A reflected,

I think probably the most effective way of communicating that inclusiveness is you walk the walk. And you walk it all of the time, not sometimes, but all of the time, even when you're at a grocery store and in the community and someone is having difficulty understanding (English or Spanish) and you jump in and you translate for them, you interpret for them., that's something that you just do it because that's, that's who you are. You are communicating that's a very acceptable and valuable skill, that's who you want.

She also proceeded to ensure that appropriate and accurate translations and interpretations were occurring in meetings with parents, caregivers, and community members:

The translator was obviously struggling with translations, so I gently dismissed them and I translated the town hall meeting in both languages. That showed that I value both languages and models. To others it is valued and welcomed in our district.

A sample of high-yielding strategies gathered from all interviews are listed as the following approaches that have been successful in their organizations: bilingual and multilingualism being honored, respected, and deserving of academic spaces; saying their

own names as their parents named them by not anglicizing them; modeling the natural flow of their first language of Spanish; calling out racism and microaggressions; initiating space for others to speak through professional learning; and leading critical conversations

An exemplary Superintendent D shared that she led a voluntary book club with *How to be Antiracist* by renowned scholar, Ibram X. Kendi, after the social uprisings in May 2020 concerning the murder of George Floyd. She shared that she had thought only 10 people in her organization would participate; however, she was impassioned to share that 32% of her district staff from a variety of positions within the organization participated through the Zoom book club. From school bus drivers to schoolteachers, her leadership evoked a shared learning space for her organization to understand their role in supporting the child as well as their family.

Superintendent C discussed how she set the tone against internal microaggressions and stereotypes. Rooted in her core value of equity and leadership position, she shared,

You know, as a Latina, first Latina superintendent here, when I came in, I was the only cabinet member who wasn't blonde. So there's this part that they expect you to talk equity because you only care about kids that look like you. Um, and you have to do it in a multipronged approach. One is you have to just really be honest about it because I had people say that to me. "Oh, of course you're talking about English learners, you're an English learner" and I'm like, "Oh, did you say that to the last superintendent who was White, monolingual, blonde and blue eyes that she only cared about kids that looked like her?" And so sometimes you have to



add a little bit of shock, because it makes them stop and think through what they said.

## Research Question 2

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?*

The total coded themes for the culturally inclusive strategies exemplary Latina superintendents use reported four themes with a frequency total of 69. It is reasonable to infer that exemplary leaders foster personal connections to build relationships with individuals in their organization as a beginning place because it had the overall lowest frequency of 13 (see Table 15). The researcher suggests it would be difficult to be accessible to engage in discourse for disproportionately underrepresented culturally linguistic working families.

Table 15

*Qualitative Data for Research Question 2*

Research question	Theme	Frequency
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?	● Create opportunities to engage in interactions	22
	● Authentically listen to learn about others	19
	● Accessibility through visibility of visiting them where they are	15
	● Making personal connections to build relationships	13

**Create opportunities to engage in interactions.** Although making personal connections to build relationships had the lowest frequency of 13, it may be the

beginning place for exemplary leaders to accomplish the other three strategies. This is supported with critical race theory (CRT) connections to lived realities of communities of color storytelling, retelling of family narratives with the purpose of proving a counternarrative (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso et al., 2009). Superintendents mentioned they are out of the office as much as possible. They expressed awareness and mindfulness of messages conveyed to individuals if they were asked to be in a meeting with the superintendent at the district office. To alleviate any misconstrued negative stigma, they all stated they prefer being face-to-face and will go to their campuses and facilities. They all stated that rather than sending an e-mail, they intentionally go and check in with them about their families and listen. This intentional behavior supports Bass's transformational leadership theory which states that individuals follow a leader who is honest and has trustworthy qualities (Anderson, 2017). Once a leader has built a trusting relationship, it opens up opportunities to engage authentic interactions and learn from others in the organization. When leaders do this, it leads to a sustainable inclusive culture. All superintendents described the authentic interaction resulted in transformational shifts. Superintendent D shared,

They trust me as their leader. They know that I am here for the best outcomes of our students and it is not through being a leader that asks for their voices. Our conversations send a message that they are part of the organization. In our district, we don't say staff members, we say family. We are rising above together.

I am conscious and aware of social injustice and pandemic.

She went on to further explain,

And so each of our team members, if you're hired as a bus driver, you get a deck of cards you're hired as a nutrition server. You get a deck of cards. If you're our head cook at one of our kitchens, you get a deck of cards because I want them to take pride in their role, um, as part of our team members. The cards have our logo and a quote that says, "I'm part of an elite team dedicated to the arduous task of saving student lives." And so our mission is to break students free from the cycle of poverty; because if we don't, no one else will.'

This is supported with Muhammad and Cruz's research affirmation that educational organizations and strategies should ensure a culture of equity in collaborative decision-making that creates shared spaces with diversity or will impact practices, policies, beliefs, motivations, and expectations in the school community (Banks et al., 2001).

**Authentically listen to learn about others.** This recorded a frequency of 19.

Superintendent E elaborated,

Although I am doing all the talking right now in this interview, I always am last to speak. I genuinely want to learn about individuals in our organization. There is power in authentically listening. I learn so much and am empathetic, vulnerable and I want to learn.

Superintendent C elaborated on the power of listening:

I am not going to learn if I am talking. I personalize everything, some need an agenda and some are fluid when I get there. Building community is really important and something we build in formal and informal ways.

The shared message among the dynamic leaders in education resulted in their ability and constant practice to check the researcher's assumptions. Creating space to

engage diverse individuals in districts in dialog about disproportionate inequalities has initiated new learning, new perspectives, and the criticality of learning cultural differences that will positively move the organization as transformational change agents. The researcher's findings align with research that authenticated Latina leaders create change and fulfill their strong sense of responsibility toward others; these are reasons why they are attracted to leadership positions (Gomez et al., 2001).

**Accessibility through visibility of visiting them where they are.** This theme recorded the third level rating with a frequency of 15. All superintendents stated they visited sites, community-based organizations, students, and families "where they are." All superintendents took the moments to describe that they want to stand together and be a partner in the journey for families and their children. The importance of leaders' ability to be accessible and visible and have frequent contact with people in the organization is critical to creating a culture that is safe, inclusive, and critical to cultural competence (Stolp & Smith, 1995). Superintendent B shared that it is important to meet her families where they are and described,

My community has a high population of migrant workers. Many speak Spanish and work long hours in the fields, and unable to attend meetings or give and receive input. I didn't grow up as a migrant student. So asking the questions, you know, when did you start? How did you start? What did it feel like? You know, to walk in their shoes for a minute. So I get in my car and go to them. They are working in the fields, picking lettuce or strawberries, whatever *pisca*, harvest. I am fortunate; I live in a very large migrant community, that I could go to the fields and see my parents. And if necessary, you know, go out there and cut up a

couple of vines, uh, harvest a couple of lettuces and things like that, and see how the difficulty that they're going through to understand that is. But I think it's being willing to go out of your comfort zone and to learn from them, and not to make them ever feel less. And I think most people are okay with this when you say, I want to learn. And so I can better understand how I can later help you. People are willing to show you who they are really, and they're willing to let you into those parts of their lives. That may be a little, um, embarrassing for some people or challenging for others or beautiful to some other ones, but they have to know that your heart is open and that your mind is also open to it.

**Making personal connections to build relationships.** This theme recorded the least frequency marks of 13. It could be inferred that superintendents who intentionally build relational capacity through personal connections create a strong foundation to initiate a strong culturally inclusive culture in their organization. Superintendent B stated,

I think most people are okay when you say, I want to learn. And so I can better understand how I can later help you. People are willing to show you who they are really, and they're willing to let you into those parts of their lives. That may be a little embarrassing for some people or challenging for others or beautiful to some other ones, but they have to know that your heart is open and that your mind is also open to it.

All respondents identified as Mexican, Mexican American, and Latina, and they said that storytelling is an essential part of who they are with familial connection. While all participants stated the inability to hug and limited face-to-face interactions due to

Covid, Superintendent E captured the essence as she sat up, looked intently in the camera, placed her hands on her heart and shared,

You know, being Latina that personal connection with people is really important.

And I actually had someone say to me the other day, “Man, this COVID stuff must be really hard for you” because they know that I’m a hugger that I’m, you know, it’s inherent in who I am and how I communicate.

This theme is strongly supported with CRT that affirmed connections to lived realities of communities of color storytelling, retelling of family narratives with the purpose of proving a counternarrative and asset-oriented cultural capital wealth (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso et al., 2009).

*Testimonios* are vital in raising the voices of women in the profession, work-life balance of women, exploring pathways to leadership, providing educational learning opportunities related to an equity-driven culture, and understanding the importance of an executive presence (California Association of African-American Superintendents and Administrator [CAAASA], 2020). Research that storytelling, *testimonios*, is a methodology and narrative of experiences with CRT conceptualization within educational studies; *testimonios* can disclose the oppression that occurs in learning institution systems and engage Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) learners and educators of color to change academic spaces (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012).

### **Research Question 3**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?*

For the purpose of this study, enable rich communication was defined as follows:

Rich communication is the transfer of information with the intent to understand the meaning and broaden one’s perspective, resulting in a personal connection between individuals (Armengol et al., 2017; Daft & Lengel, 1986; Jensen et al., 2018; Kennedy, 2008). Among the five exemplary Latina leaders, the total coded themes concluded four themes with a frequency of 63 (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Qualitative Data for Research Question 3*

Research question	Theme	Frequency
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?	● Lead by example	19
	● Capacity building through relationships	18
	● Multimodalities	15
	● Consistent frequent communication	11

**Lead by example.** This theme elicited the highest response frequency of 19 among the dynamic and exemplary Latina superintendents in California. The theme is supported with evidence that transformational leadership involves a process of growth because the leader motivates her followers to become leaders themselves; similarly, participatory leadership encourages democracy in a group (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). Superintendent A stated that personal communication demonstrates valuing the individuals in your organization because you took the time to come over to see them and ask questions to get to know them. She further elaborated,

I usually ask someone to come to my office if it's something more formal and that's the tone that I want to set, but, um, if I want to decide someone and have them not be anxious about our meeting, I'll say, I'll meet in your classroom. I'll come over to your office or I'll, I'll go into their setting. And, um, to have that communication, um, because I, I want them to feel comfortable. I don't want them to be anxious that they're coming into the superintendent's office and what's going on there, you know? Um, and, and I'm very conscientious of that.

Superintendent C shared,

I give them my entire calendar, like everyone in the district knows what I'm doing every minute of the day. They know that I'm talking to you right now. Um, it takes away the mystery of what they do at the district office.

This is consistent with Pace's (2018) research that to develop trustworthy connections, there must be open and safe communication to discuss negative stereotypes, microaggressions, and challenges or barriers that women of color face in the workplace.

Superintendent C elaborated,

Here at the central office, I do a lot of leading by walking. I walked the different departments, talked to folks, and spent 2 days a week out at campuses, even right now [referring to COVID-19]. Even though we had to pivot back into remote learning, we have learning hubs at all of our schools because we have kids that parents work two jobs and need a safe space for, with two meals a day, Wi-Fi and supervision. They know I am coming so a lot of conversations are informal. It is about the interpersonal one-on-one that is really important. For all my direct



reports, we have one-on-one meetings 30 minutes every single week. That face time works. It keeps me informed and still going in the right direction.

This is consistent with Bonilla-Rodriguez's (2011) research that found Latina leadership styles as (a) high integrity—ethical, honest, and reliable; (b) *marianista*—compassionate, understanding, and willing to sacrifice; (c) new Latina—assertive, competitive, and determined; (d) transformational leader—team oriented, charismatic, politically savvy; and (e) visionary—creative, passionate, and risk taking. Superintendent B shared,

You have to be open. I have two lenses. One as a parent and one of a superintendent. I tell parents I understand their struggle with virtual learning. I have one child who, you know, she's just going on with their life. She's just, she's fine. But I have another child who's really struggling. So when I mentioned, and when I tell those stories, the parents will thank you. If you know, somebody understands. So when we talk about their challenges, they know that whatever possible solutions I come up with are coming from the right place.

Williams (2017) asserted educational leadership development programs strive to develop culturally proficient leaders who can disrupt inequitable or ineffective trends. Leaders in education are expected to influence current and future educational practices in ways that disrupt conditions of oppression to foster equity and justice.

**Capacity building through relationships.** This theme had a close second highly effective strategy that enables rich communication with a frequency of 18. Wright (2019) affirmed that superintendents with high CQ established trust that brings valuable insight that contributes to the mission of the organization, including student learning, fiscal solvency, strategic planning, and equity. Superintendent B shared,

Tell your stories because we all have our stories for why we do what we do. It's a different kind of communication and a different kind of relationship and trust that can be built.

Building interpersonal relationships through cultural responsiveness authenticates and affirms schoolchildren, their culture, linguistic abilities, and lived experiences that construct meaningful learning (Gay, 2002; Hollie & Muhammad, 2012). Superintendent E stated,

We established at our management meetings no longer spend management meetings on minutiae that can be handled via e-mails. We focus our meetings on professional development. We have established diversity as a priority. We have brought in numerous organizations or individuals to provide us professional learning for all levels of management. All levels of management and the expectation is that those individuals then take it to their groups.

Superintendent C elaborated,

I think there were seven different links of activities and lesson plans that they can use. And then I gave them my expectation that I want them to invite me to their Zoom or, or to share their lesson plan with me. I celebrate them, ensuring that they celebrate Black excellence. Then there's always the piece of reminding them please don't rely on your Black student or the Black teacher on your campus to teach you how to be culturally sensitive and provide critical culturally proficient pedagogy because it's not their job.

All superintendents stated they are devoted to efforts about diversity and equity.

For both culture and cultural climate to address diversity and cultural awareness,

practices, policies, and training are urgently needed and necessary to guide key educational decision makers' personal interactions with people of various backgrounds and identities in classrooms and communities (National Association of School Superintendents, 2020). Superintendents are responsible for educational experiences, and affirming authentic understanding of students' cultural backgrounds will positively impact effective instruction and curriculum (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Gay & Howard, 2000; Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Superintendent C stated,

We are very intentional in where we meet families to be respectful of where they are coming from, in terms of experiences that they may have had in the past with the schooling system and that has a lot to do with communication.

**Multimodalities.** This theme was referenced 15 times. All five exemplary leaders stated equitable access to multilinguistic platforms through Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility via various social media, websites, YouTube channel, podcasts, learning management platforms, phone calls, texts, e-mails, radio time, and face-to-face meetings established opportunities for rich communication.

Superintendent E stated,

Again, it's going out of what we would traditionally call inclusive. We translate videos with closed captioning that we send out or have a sign language interpreter. When you're talking about diversity, inclusivity, really for us, it's also broadening what we traditionally think of.

Superintendent D stated, "We use social media to make sure we can highlight what we're doing, whether it's anti-racism, whether it's valuing students, whether it's valuing staff or it's highlighting the robust distance learning we're doing within our classrooms." Three

of the five exemplary Latina leaders shared that the Zoom meetings were good in some respects because they allow you to get to more people.

Educational leaders must adopt and model attitudes, values, and leadership strategies that acknowledge and respond to the cultures of students, families, and communities (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Leaders with high-level behavioral CQ are likely to be capable of exerting situational appropriateness and nonverbal and linguistic awareness based on communicating capabilities, facial expressions, and body language (Zhang et al., 2017). Effective communication transpires when individuals recognize cultural cues, learn cultural knowledge, and realize implications of their own interactions with others (Stokes, 2013). Superintendent C stated, “I schedule purposefully face time, but now through Zoom, with all the groups, advisories, PTA round table. We can have conversations; they ask clarifying questions and I ask their input. Everything is done through distributive leadership.” All exemplary superintendents stated that equitable access for families, students, community members, and district staff initiated innovative learning platforms.

**Consistent frequent communication.** This theme was referenced 11 times (17%) indicating that leaders in the highest leadership roles utilized communication that overcomes monolingualism by ensuring all stakeholders have accessibility to a variety of information. Superintendent B affirmed consciousness and purpose-driven communication:

You have to be explicit. Communication-wise in a more global sense, our strategic plan, again, going back and talking equity. It’s really important to us.

We send it out to a graphic designer, so that they can make it pretty and it's accessible. It's translated in Spanish so that everyone can access it.

Superintendent D illustrated, "We'll actively engage our family, school and community partners through ongoing communication outreach, because we value, respect and believe we are stronger together and ensuring in advocating for the future success of all of our students." Gay (2002) affirmed that cultural responsiveness created meaningful interconnections with the lived realities of home that allowed students to be proud of their heritages. All exemplary leaders spoke about consistency in communication with stakeholders. A superintendent provides weekly personalized communication to schools, parents, school board trustees. All of the superintendents stated that they prefer face-to-face communication that allowed nonverbal nuances, as they are part of communication; however, COVID-19 created new platforms for communication. A sample of the highest yielding strategies used by the exemplary leaders included multilingual access that includes interpreters and translation for multilingual learners; Spanish, Triqui, Mixteco, Tagalog, and sign language interpreters; ADA access; podcasts; radio time; and various social media platforms. This finding is supported with Lawyer's (2021) and Rice's (2020) research that there must be an open dialog built on trust that allows for successful teams to be built. Superintendent D elaborated,

One thing is I communicate with my school board to make sure that they know exactly what we're doing so that the initiatives that were taking place, the pride, the pride that we have and things that we've accomplished are communicated weekly. The second group that I communicate with every Friday is our staff family. I e-mail them and I let them know the state of the district, what's

happening this week with the vaccine, what's happening this week with counselors, what's happening is with our nutrition program, with our Wi-Fi and our technology office hours. You have a family resource center that's available for workshops. So that goes out to them. And then the third group I communicate with on a weekly basis is our parent community. So our parent community will get a text message as well as a letter, uh, via social media on the state of the district as well. And so it highlights what we're doing and it also highlights things that are coming. Along with videos Superintendent Story Time, my animations. When I do that, I read in Spanish and English. So they get to see a little bit of both. Then I'll do like video messages. We have a YouTube channel that we put all of our videos on there. If anything big is happening at the state level or the local level, like with the vaccines, as soon as we know that we're ready to receive our vaccines here, I'll put out a video to connect with them. We have a very large indigenous population from Oaxaca here, and we translate in Mixteco or Triqui.

#### **Research Question 4**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?*

For the purpose of this study, personal responsibility as a core value is defined as follows: Personal responsibility as a core value is a leader's conscious ownership of her or his actions and the impact she or he has on others (Kennedy, 2008; Molenmaker et al., 2016; Tausen et al., 2018). The total coded themes were four themes with a frequency of 84 (see Table 17).

Table 17

*Qualitative Data for Research Question 4*

Research question	Theme	Frequency
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?	● Take personal responsibility	32
	● Lead the hard conversations by intentional capacity building	30
	● Invested in building culture through relationships	18
	● Leverage network to provide role models	4

**Take personal responsibility.** The results from this study indicated that exemplary leaders explicitly make accountability a core value in their leadership. The successful Latina women change agents recorded a frequency of 32 (38%) of highest yielding approaches to creating and sustaining an inclusive culture in their organizations. It is inferred that a holistic identity of successful and exemplary leaders embody accountability. This finding is supported by Muhammad and Cruz’s (2019) research that affirms school leaders account for their actions because it communicates that change within the organization is needed. Superintendent D elaborated,

Another thing that I’ll share with you as our strategic plan. It’s a one sheet strategic plan in English, Spanish, Mixteco, and Triqui. That sets the vision, the mission, our core values, and how the actionable movements in our local control accountability plan are then going to turn into actions that are closest to kids. And the one thing that I tell people is if you really want to know where a school district is, um, how they value students, is look at the LCAP because those actions should reveal actions that are closest to children.

This study aligned with personal responsibility as a core value in leaders' conscious ownership of their actions and their impact on others (Kennedy, 2008; Molenmaker et al., 2016; Tausen et al., 2018). Superintendent D continued to inform,

Personal responsibility is huge. Um, first of all, as a Latina and as a superintendent, there aren't many of us. So I take a huge responsibility of being a model for others, and that I can't blow this. You know, I can't mess this up because I don't want to mess it up for the future generations that are going to be judged because of something that I did, I need to be an excellent model of what to do correctly. And when I say not mess it up is that I, my job is to serve kids, but it's also to provide additional role models that our kids can aspire to be like. So if you want to be a superintendent, I'll show you exactly how to do it. And I'm going to give you all the tools that I've learned, um, through my course and my journey, because I've fallen and I made some mistakes, um, and not understanding how to navigate the school board or particular, um, things that comes to the dynamic between a board and a superintendent, that I learned and I overcame. Um, but the thing that with the community and serving our people, that's something that, um, it comes a little bit easier to me because I am so invested in relationships and validating who you are and who you bring to the table, because once we know, and we are able to have a discussion about who you are and what your hopes and dreams are, we can then put some actions into place and move forward to help support their child, to be able to be whatever they want and the postsecondary world.



Superintendent E reflected,

I think not only thinking about what you say, but what unintended or intended consequence, what impact it will have and really being intentional about that, I think is one of the things that I have really shifted to. In fact, over the last few years it has been intentional. When I'm writing a communication to the entire organization, I am intentional about thinking about what I wanted to say and what impact it will have and modeling that for others is, is something that is, I think really, we've got to be more intentional and we've got to get to the point where we are thinking about the impact, that what we say or what we do will have on others. And I feel like that's a shift that I've seen in our organization, and that's something that I'm very proud of.

She continued to illustrate her level of personal responsibility:

And in terms of personal responsibility, I felt like it was my responsibility as a leader to move forward, despite it being hard and not back away from the hard conversations just because they were hard. I had to have the courage to take people there despite their uncomfortableness and their vulnerability, and to help people understand that it was okay to be vulnerable. And it was okay to be uncomfortable because it is through vulnerability and being in those uncomfortable states that we grow as human individuals and we grow as an organization. And so my personal responsibility was to be courageous and to continue down that path, despite folks wanting to either shut the conversations down or not engage in the tough conversations, that was my personal responsibility. And frankly, my moral imperative. I have seen people's minds

changed over the past years. Certainly not everyone. And we are not where we need to be, but I have seen people's minds be opened and their mindset be open to seeking, to understand where others are coming from and where we can go together as an organization, frankly, on behalf of the children and the families that we serve.

**Lead the hard conversations by intentional capacity building.** This theme recorded the second highest frequency of 30. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) identified that cultural knowledge was a vehicle to motivate the academic pipeline. Superintendent E shared,

We have set equity and diversity as a priority in our organization so that every management meeting, we try to bring in some kind of training that focuses in that arena. And we also had deep dialog around key critical issues such as for example Black Lives Matter or the movie *13th* and really looking at how we break down those barriers. The equity collaborative and professional learning we have had over the past 2 years, I feel like the conversations that we are having as an organization are hard conversations and hard topics. I mean they haven't been easy when you're talking about White privilege, about the wrongs that have happened throughout history, and providing our educators professional learning for example, in critical race theory. This is for our managers across the organization. That means whether you're in facilities, maintenance, and transportation, whether you're in the business office, whether you're in HR, when, whether you're in the production it's at, at all levels of the organization, there is a diverse perspective.

This study is supported in the seminal research that affirms CRT analyzes race, racism, power oppression, desegregation, race relations, human relations, and antiracism and guides leaders to develop culturally responsive skills and knowledge about cultural competence skills and knowledge (Lindsey et al., 2009). The researcher's findings affirm it is critical for exemplary transformational leaders to use the lens of equity.

Superintendent C expressed, "We're not going to shy away from saying that we're looking at ways of improving student outcomes in particular for students who have been historically disenfranchised." There are implications of race and multiculturalism with constructive knowledge for marginalized academic communities of color that exist in education (Banks, 1995). The participants stated their *testimonios* are power connectors, and research supports it is vital in raising the voices of women in the profession, work-life balance of women, exploring pathways to leadership, providing educational learning opportunities related to an equity-driven culture, and understanding the importance of an executive presence (CAAASA, 2020).

**Invested in building culture through relationships.** This theme recorded 18 frequency among the exemplary Latina superintendents. The conversations of responsive practices in schools once remained concentrated on teachers; however, several reputable scholars affirmed that the framework must also apply to school leadership (Davy, 2016; Gay, 1995, 2010; Webb-Johnson, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; A. E. Lopez, 2015; Smith, 2016).

Riehl (2000) contended that because schools are entrenched within larger communities, schools may possibly improve not only the lives of students but also of neighborhoods and whole communities. When one allows access from stakeholders in a

variety of platforms, it fosters meaningful relationships and develops trusting credibility (Middleton, 2019). Superintendent B stated,

Telling stories, I think is your best communication tool because we all have the stories. We all have the motivations for why we do what we do. Opening yourself up to telling those stories. It can be, challenging for some people, um, vulnerable. I guess, putting yourself in the vulnerable position of sharing that can be challenging to people. But I think a lot more, a lot of people respond to the fact that you are sharing your stories and that you are more than just the name they see on the weekly updates or, and district e-mails with good or bad news.

It is in alignment with several researchers that affirm *testimonios* are a practice of personal testament with origins in Latin America that has often been used to document and denounce the experiences of oppression or violence committed against oppressed groups from that region of the world (Beverley, 2004; Gonzalez-Barragan, 2014; Gutiérrez, 2008; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Pérez Huber, 2009). Superintendent D stated,

When I show up to schools and I walk through, they know what I'm all about. They know that I want our kids to understand that through the social, emotional learning, that we value them, that it's Maslow's before Blooms. So they have to know that you love them and you care about them before they'll even think about your cognitive demands. Right? And I model that, I model that through the little things. So the little things that I do for our staff make the biggest difference when it's time for the big things. So racist things, political things, it's all the things that I do with them that earn their trust in me when it comes to those big things.

Chicana scholars believed that to understand microaggressions as systemic racism, it was essential to use a Chicana *testimonio* critical race framework (Cruz, 2006; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). Reyes and Curry Rodríguez (2012) conveyed *testimonios* serve as firsthand recounts and methodology to conduct research, identify, and describe experiences. Matsuda's (1991) studies were foundational for Montoya's (1994) research that stories too can bear potential for challenging the dominant discussion to transform community and individuality. Moreover, the recounting of personal stories in two languages served as resistance against cultural and linguistic domination (Matsuda, 2002). Delgado-Bernal et al. (2012) affirmed that the methodology of *testimonios* established in qualitative interviews also "serve as a bridge to connect the lived experience as a data collecting tool and as the analytical process" (p. 364), creating counter spaces within school institutions that challenge oppression and seek to transform the educational spaces that marginalize them and explore the process of *conocimiento* throughout these findings (Anzaldúa, 1987; Freire, 1970a; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Furthermore, *testimonios* are intentional qualitative interviews that bring light to a wrong perception and oral history narration, or an urgent call to action not kept secret, and a means to describe lived experiences of disproportionately underserved communities. They are also a form of cultural capital wealth that Solórzano and Yosso (2002) identified as familial, linguistic, social, resistance, navigational, and familial. Moraga (n.d.) described it as follows: "Sometimes a breakdown can be the beginning of a kind of breakthrough. A way of living in advance through a trauma that prepares you for radical transformation" (para. 1).

**Leverage networks to provide role models.** The least accounted theme scored a frequency of 4 for exemplary leaders leverage their networks to provide diverse and dynamic role models for their districts.” This is an important beginning place for leaders to begin establishing the tone for diversity as a priority. The researcher noted there is a lack of more current data on the representation of females in California superintendent positions; the lack of current statistical data is a concern in itself. Looking at superintendents, females are more highly educated than their male counterparts (Glass, 2000), as 52% of female superintendents hold doctoral degrees in comparison to only 41% of male superintendents (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Superintendent D elaborated,

I talk a lot about equity and all means all is our mission here. Every single student, no matter which school you’re at, no matter what program you’re in, or whatever grade you’re in, you are going to be provided with opportunities to diversify your outlook, to provide you with experiences that help you make an informed decision in the postsecondary world.

Latinas navigate varied constructed identities, and they can still feel caught between the traditional understandings of what it means to be a “real Latina” (Montoya, 1994). Exemplary superintendents specified the importance of leveraging community and networks. Superintendent C stated that she goes on tour to engage diverse community-based organizations. Several stated that they mentor aspiring superintendents in ACSA, CALSA, and university partnerships. They all stated the support of organizations were part of their leadership capacity building. Superintendent D enthusiastically stated,

I do a lot of presentations at ACSA and CALSA, at universities just sharing the work that we do so that it can inspire others to do similar types of things for kids, but in my message to, to the community. And when we talk about that, it's so important to be a positive role model and to open the doors for others and to not mess it up.

### **Research Question 5**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?*

For the purpose of this study, mutualism as the final arbiter is defined as follows: Mutualism as the final arbiter is where everyone benefits, and no one is harmed by the decisions and actions within the team or organization. Mutualism establishes trust in organizations through a deep sense of shared purpose, a thoughtful inspection of each member's ideas and interests, and an interdependence when performing roles and responsibilities (Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Mishra, 1996; Rau, 2005). The total coded themes were four themes with a frequency of 91 (see Table 18).

Table 18

*Qualitative Data for Research Question 5*

Research question	Theme	Frequency
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?	● Explicit equity focused heat of inquiry aligned to core values	26
	● Create access to multiple platforms that elicit authentic input and feedback from diverse stakeholders	24
	● Navigate political relationships	21
	● Take responsibility for final decision	20

**Explicit equity focused heat of inquiry aligned to core values.** This theme recorded the highest frequency of 26 (29%). Exemplary superintendents who intentionally establish mutualism as the final arbiter use explicit equity-focused inquiry. The heat of inquiry is a process that includes multiple perspectives to ensure the purpose-driven why is at the forefront. Superintendent E affirmed, “The heat of inquiry process is the best example through our work. This process occurs at executive cabinet level to ensure explicit intentional and/or unintentional consequences are vetted.” All exemplary superintendents declared their unwavering equity-focused core values fostered authentic discourse for critical decisions that had strong implications for student outcomes. This study correlates with Brooks’s (2008) confirmation that social justice school leadership is a necessary approach to address diversity in today’s schools. This supports the researcher’s finding that exemplary superintendent leaders establish mutualism as the final arbiter. Among the various functions of leadership is that it offers support for the development of values, philosophies, and diversity and beliefs that enable the success of organizations (Canabou, 2003). Superintendent A elaborated,

You get much better decisions, you know, involvement and people have staking in what's going on. They debate it out, and then they come to a conclusion, then offered recommendations. Which we presented to our board and then our board adopted those recommendations and strategies and put into place. So inclusiveness, served so many different purposes.

**Create access to multiple platforms that elicit authentic input and feedback from diverse stakeholders.** The theme elicited a frequency of 24. The findings are supported with Aurik, Fabel, and Jonk’s (2015) assertion that these leaders enlist the



talents of the organization to construct the strategy and gather essential feedback continually throughout the process. The strategic plan becomes a living document for all employees to formulate ideas, share insights, and find answers. Over time, this ongoing engagement process becomes the foundational belief of the organization, thereby broadening participation and shared responsibility for the organization's continual growth and development (Aurik et al., 2015). An exemplary leader stated,

I will write them an e-mail as soon as I come back to the office and thank them for allowing me the opportunity to visit. And then I had very specific feedback about what I saw because that's, that's, you know, what we, what we what we pay attention to and the feedback people are like, "Oh my gosh, that was really important." And so I want to keep doing it. And the other thing that I do, and I, you know, this is kind of a lost art.

Superintendent A informed,

As we started this whole, this whole journey, with COVID and we came up with a new way of delivering instruction, one of the things that really worked well for us and maybe is, you know, giving that inclusiveness is. We created these different committees focusing on different aspects that we needed to address, you know, the safety, the communication, the health issues, instruction, for example. And, we invited community members. We put the invitation out to students, staff and community members.

This finding is supported by Crowley's (2021) research that exemplary millennial leaders in nonprofit academic management engaged their teams in decision-making to increase their team's sense of ownership.

**Navigate political relationships.** This theme gathered a frequency of 21 (23%). All exemplary educational leaders shared their responsibility to navigate relationships with political decision-making. All of the leaders emphasized they had influence in educating the school board trustees. Tooker's (2019) study indicated community politics has a profound impact on the operation of school districts, "including school board elections, policy development, district governance, and the relationship with the superintendent of schools" (p. 6). Superintendent D reflected,

And I'll move in a different direction real quickly about the school board. So the school board is the body, uh, that makes decisions on behalf of the districts as set by, um, the political dynamics of our communities and of our States and of our nation. So that board does have the power to make decisions or direct me to make decisions that they feel are in the best interest of the district. My job as a superintendent is to always advise them and make recommendations, strong recommendations on what I feel is in the best interest of the community that we serve. So in that sense, I always want to make sure that I informed them. I make recommendations that are in the best interest and pretty much most of the time, they will agree with that.

They may ask questions and, you know, ponder some different directions, but in the end, uh, they always will make that decision in the best interest that serves our students, our community, and our staff members. So that one is definitely a role as a superintendent, that those that are new, uh, you might have some growing pains or just some different dynamics when it comes to the board superintendent relationship, because it's not like any other job you've ever held.

This finding is corroborated with research that confirms political intelligence is a skill for which leaders negotiate strategies, principles, systems, and regulations within organizational culture “while considering the wants, needs, values, motivations, and emotions of all stakeholders to accomplish organizational goals” (Tooker, 2019, p. 23). In addition, Winston (2019) reported experiencing dynamic conditions when school leaders explicitly integrated an enhanced degree of political intelligence to navigate value conflicts and competition for scarce resources. An exemplary superintendent stated,

I communicate with my school board to make sure that they know exactly what we’re doing so that the initiatives that were taking place, the pride, the pride that we have and things that we’ve accomplished are communicated weekly. The board looks to me for recommendations because they trust me as their leader.

This is supported by the idea that a leader’s use of politics in an organization can be a successful instrument to elicit differences and motivate people to work toward a mutual objective (Fairholm, 2009; Grenny et al., 2013; White et al., 2016).

**Take responsibility for final decision.** The theme was referenced with a frequency of 20 and represented 22% of the data for high-yielding strategies exemplary Latina superintendents utilize to create inclusive culture that establishes mutualism as a final arbiter. The findings supported the research of Balyer, Özcan, and Yildiz (2017) affirming that empowerment in the school setting is related to promoting actual change made within the professional setting. The exemplary superintendents shared a variety of stories that emphasized the explicit fact that they each (5/5) take personal responsibility for the final decision. Two participants’ responses began with, “The buck stops with me.” Superintendent C expressed,

I was the kid that had every, at-risk, English learner, free, reduced lunch, um, you know, all of those pieces. And, and yet I survived the system, um, to be able to go to college. And even though it took me 6 years, because I had work, but you know, I eventually was able to get a college degree and then continue. So, because I know the struggle of working within the system and having parents that don't speak English, that can't go to the school and have that kind of what the American traditional, you know, PTA mom and what all of that looks like. I feel, I've always felt that it's my responsibility to do two things to remove the barriers in the system, to help kids that we serve, not have that same song and dance that I had back in the 80s and early 90s because it's exhausting. It's exhausting to hear that kids are still going through the same crap that we went through. And then on the flip side, to build leaders, whether those are parent leaders, student leaders, teacher leaders, um, or administrators in the district, um, because a lot of people help me. And so I think just culturally, probably like I, as a people, um, being Latina, we help one another. Your success is my success and I want to help. I feel a responsibility to help those that come behind. And that personal responsibility piece is almost, it's so internal innate to who I am and why I'm even an educator.

Lawyer's (2021) and Rice's (2020) studies affirmed empowerment promotes autonomy and decision-making among educational professionals. Superintendent D reflected,

So as a frontline administrator, it's important to surround yourself with people that are good advisors, right? So myself as the superintendent, I have a cabinet

that I lean on to help support me with the information that I need when it's time to make a final decision.

Increased diversity in values, beliefs, priorities, expectations, and accountability have made the role of superintendents more complex as they navigate competing interests (Tooker, 2019). Superintendent D elaborated,

So that's one piece that has as superintendents that may be a shock because if you haven't been exposed to the board dynamics between the board and the superintendent, it can, um, it can hurt you and people that have gotten fired within the first month. It's because I didn't really know how to navigate that relationship. And that's a whole 'nother kind of a story when final decisions are made. Um, so as soon as you realize that as a superintendent, you make recommendations to a board, your recommendations may be denied, or they may be accepted. We have to come to terms of that if you want to stay in the position. And that's a real hard reality for a lot of people. Now, I'll go with the other side that I wanted to share with you as my role, because my board is very good and they do give me a lot of liberties to do the things that I know will benefit our community because they trust me as their leader.

### **Research Question 6**

*What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?*

For the purpose of this study, culture of inclusion is defined as follows: A culture of inclusion is the incorporation of diverse individuals in an environment of mutual respect and acceptance that recognizes and values their unique contribution to the success

of the organization (Azmat et al., 2014; Kennedy, 2008; Mak et al., 2014; Tawagi & Mak, 2015). In addition, the operational definition of culture was defined as follows: “Culture is all learned and shared human patterns or models that distinguishes the members of one group of people from another” (Damen, 1987, p. 51). In addition, the definition of cultural intelligence is “an individual’s ability to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse settings” (Rámirez, 2014).

The researcher synthesized eight themes that elicited a frequency of 162. Table 19 identifies the emerging themes and frequency counts identified. The beneficial advantages of creating an inclusive culture are listed in order from highest frequency counts to least frequency counts.

Table 19  
*Qualitative Data for Research Question 6*

Research question	Theme	Frequency
What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?	● Increases authentic, diverse family and community engagement	32
	● Shared oneness of equity remains at forefront	26
	● Empowering relationships	25
	● Encourages innovative internal leadership engagement	24
	● Attracts diverse hiring of mindsets and abilities	20
	● Open dialog	16
	● Increases representation to mirror student representation	12
	● Honors asset-oriented cultural capital	7

**Increases authentic, diverse family and community engagement.** The exemplary Latina superintendents in California shared a critical advantage of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness. The frequency of 32 emerged among the exemplary leaders having a culturally diverse and inclusive culture in the organization. According to well-documented research, the evidence affirms parent/caregiver involvement has a notable effect on student achievement, more validly foreseeing student success than income or social status (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The superintendents in the qualitative interviews affirmed that parents and student caregivers were essential partners in holding one another accountable. Linguistic and special abilities were welcomed and celebrated. Superintendents created opportunities for authentic capacity building that allowed the leaders to step in and translate in and out of school hours. Multilingual barriers were removed and equitable access to key decision makers was affirmed. Many leaders stated they intentionally ensured ADA access for individuals with special abilities. Another key component one exemplary leader stated was as follows:

I'm an elementary district, but I know how high school districts work. So teaching our parents how to navigate the courses that are available at a high school is essential how to navigate the university system. And learning about GPA is empowering and that's our responsibility. Making sure that our parents know how to navigate the American public school system. And how things are going to work with grading and opportunities. Just being cognizant of those things I feel is a responsibility that we owe the communities that we serve.

**Shared oneness of equity remains at forefront.** The exemplary leaders determined that an advantage that was beneficial to the organization was the shared oneness of equity that remains at the heart of the districts. This theme ranked in the second highest frequency of 26. Disaggregated data led the narrative in transparency with diverse stakeholders. Muhammad and Cruz (2019) asserted,

Transformational leaders effectively use data to not only inform adults throughout their school district, but also along with the context and a basis for comparison, inspire, and motivate them to seek and eventually commit to changes designed to increase student learning. (p. 115)

It was not subjective, and the exemplary leaders intentionally focused on designing experiences and opportunities, for example, to have a robust master schedule; access to ethnic studies, robotics, and science; access to resources on campuses; and diverse student organizational goals for student outcomes. This was a shared responsibility among diverse stakeholders. Superintendent C affirmed, “I use things to educate that aren't as subjective. So I use our data. A practice that we implemented was desegregating all of our data down to our subgroups, down to our school sites.” This is supported by Banks et al.’s (2001) affirmation that educational organizations and strategies should ensure a culture of equity in collaborative decision-making that creates shared spaces with diversity or will impact practices, policies, beliefs, motivations, and expectations in the school community.

**Empowering relationships.** This theme emerged with a frequency of 25. The vulnerability and empathy demonstrated by the participants in the interviews elicited that sharing stories was valuable. It fostered interpersonal relationships and established trust.



This was a perceived advantage for internal and external partners regardless of position. The exemplary Latina superintendents established consistent communication, informal and formal, to establish rich communication. This is consistent with research that politics impacts all aspects of society and organizations and is about power, influence, control, relationships, community, and ethics (DeLuca, 1999; Tucker, 1995; White et al., 2016). It is also supported by Harvey and Drolet's (2005) findings that a positive building block for positive organizational climate is through empowering people: "Empowerment is the art of increasing competence and capability of others by endowing them with a sense of self-worth and potency" (p. 166). All Latina superintendents reflected that they were conscious of being Latina and leading by example. The authentic opportunities and structures the dynamic leaders established embraced, celebrated, and honored diversity. They led with an asset-oriented lens of diverse stakeholders with cultural capital wealth. This is further supported by research that reinforces that great leaders believe, "Power is the only thing that multiplies when you divide it" (Harvey & Drolet, 2005, p. 166).

**Encourages innovative internal leadership engagement.** An advantage that emerged recorded a frequency count of 24. All participants stated the following benefits: people want to go to work; individuals feel validated; they are happy, productive, and valued; there is high morale; and they feel they are part of the solution. One participant stated, "People show up as authentic self." A participant shared, "This creates an environment built on trust that supports vulnerability, cognizance that diversity of individuals is critical, mindsets, experiences and asset-oriented strengths are valuable in the organization that serves diverse student populations." This finding is supported by Bass's transformational leadership theory, which states that individuals follow a leader

who is honest and has trustworthy qualities (Anderson, 2017). It also created a “commitment to clear, focused goals, and a vision on how to accomplish those goals is necessary for high-performing teams and groups and is a sought-after objective of organizations” (Henderson, 2011, p. 66).

**Attracts diverse hiring of mindsets and abilities.** An advantage that emerged recorded a frequency count of 20. The organization is perceived by others as a premier organization to work in. This supports research that affirms diversity as an *organizational priority* is an intentional action to embrace *individuals’ unique differences, perspectives, and talents* as an identifier for organizational success (Kennedy, 2008; Winters, 2015). Superintendent E affirmed,

We hire our very students with moderate to severe disabilities. And especially, you know, we have our 18- to 22-year-olds who are transitioning into independent adulthood. Many of them have amazing skills and they just need an organization who is willing to take a chance on them and support them to be successful.

Superintendent A elaborated,

I’m going to go back to, again, one of the most important things is the hiring decisions that you make. And making sure, that as we look at candidates, that you consider culture as something that is valued. Casting a wide net, and at the same time, looking at what does that person bring to the table that brings value.

**Open dialog.** An emerging advantage by the exemplary Latina superintendents recorded a frequency count of 16. All stated that they get to know people and their differences on a personal level by listening. One superintendent stated,

Being a good listener and walking through campuses and honoring people for who they are and asking them but then asking them how they are and really listening, really listening to the response that they share with me and how's their family. We honor, we want to validate, so it's really about creating the space, in terms of being able to be vulnerable and just learn about each other in the day-to-day interactions that I have when I walk through campuses.

They are conscious of the fact that as Latina and as the leader of their districts, they engage in asking questions with the intent to learn by listening, and the organization becomes a safe place to be authentic. They lead the critical conversations on social justice and antiracism and foster trust to increase the diverse voices in the organization. This advantageous phenomenon is supported through effective communication that transpires when individuals recognize cultural cues, learn cultural knowledge, and realize implications of their own interactions with others (Stokes, 2013).

**Increases representation to mirror student representation.** An advantage that emerged recorded a frequency count of 12. An exemplary superintendent reflected, "My job is to serve kids, but it's also to provide additional role models that our kids can aspire to be like." Representation of school system leaders that matches student demographics matters, and field-based experience is valued among researchers in educational settings (Capella-Santana, 2003; Duarte & Reed, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Banks et al. (2001) asserted that educational spaces should be culturally responsive to students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups. Superintendent C expressed,

If we have openings, especially in leadership positions and we have women of color, African American, Filipino or Latina, that can move into those roles. All things being equal. I'm going to give them the position because they don't typically get those opportunities. And so, I think the responsibility to bring others up to help the kids.

Superintendents are responsible for educational experiences, and affirming authentic understanding of students' cultural backgrounds will positively impact effective instruction and curriculum (Gay & Howard, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

**Honors asset-oriented cultural capital.** An advantage that emerged from the qualitative interviews recorded a frequency count of 7. Superintendent D shared, "I come from a place of, I need to honor who you are." This study supports Yosso's (2005) findings that cultural capital abundance counters stereotypical perceptions. This equity lens intentionally shifted the exploration of the deficit mindsets "to focus on cultural competence, abilities, and contacts influenced by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 1). All of the exemplary Latina superintendents were bilingual and stated they speak Spanish to demonstrate to students and families that culturally linguistic aptitude is valuable, celebrated, and honored. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) researched diverse practices of capital nurtured through the asset lens of cultural wealth. Superintendents in this study demonstrated the findings that researchers affirmed that communities of color have community wealth with an asset approach of familial, social, linguistic, aspirational, navigational, and resistance capital (Paris & Alim, 2017; Yosso, 2005).

## Summary

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study was to identify and describe the leadership strategies Latina superintendents in California public schools used to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural difference: making diversity a priority; get to know people and their differences; enable rich communication; make accountability a core value; and use mutualism as a final arbiter. This was chosen as the best inquiry approach that would provide specific direction for procedures that allow the researcher implicit and explicit postulations that informed the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Intentionally, this study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach by which quantitative data were collected first, and qualitative data collection followed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Moreover, the quantitative Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G) and the qualitative thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E) data were collected and evaluated to answer the research questions.

The quantitative Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey revealed that the 15 exemplary Latina superintendent participants (100%) identified the most effective culturally inclusive strategies they utilize. "Take personal responsibility for inclusion of all people" was the highest with all *agree strongly* ratings. Other strategies presented, "listen without judgement to understand diverse cultures," "embrace interaction with others from different cultures," and "stand up for others if they are being treated unfairly" all received 100% *agree strongly* ratings and were rated the highest. Highest yielding approaches are not practiced independently. The power is in the interconnected and

interweaving strategies that must be synergized simultaneously to effectively build authenticity, trust, and empowering relationships. The researcher evaluated that the survey elicited one of the lowest responses in “hiring practices,” yet the CQ Latina leaders spoke to the importance of prioritizing hiring during the qualitative 60-minute interviews, as it emerged with largest theme frequency.

The qualitative data presented the top two greatest numbers of themes and frequencies, which were in Research Question 6 with eight themes and 162 frequency, followed by Research Question 1 with six themes and frequency of 129. It is interesting to note that the lowest recorded themes occurred in Research Questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 with four emerging themes. However, it was present in all interview responses to the six research questions was “consciousness of being Latina.” It was a constant throughout their personal reflections with how their personal accountability is intertwined with how they enable rich communication that then holistically leads into knowing people and their differences and creating mutualism as the final arbiter. The findings are supported by Harvey and Drolet (2005) who believed that mutualism is a shared and enduring benefit.

Chapter IV presented the data analysis results of this study. The researcher analyzed each research question and ordered the quantitative responses commencing with highest mean score and ending with the lowest mean score. In addition, the qualitative themes were listed by research question and frequency from highest to lowest. Furthermore, Table 20 presents the summary of findings by research question. Chapter V presents a summary of the major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for future action, and recommendations for further research.

Table 20

*Summary of Findings by Research Question*

Research question	Survey findings	Interview findings
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take personal responsibility for inclusion of all people</li> <li>● Provide coaching to develop talent within the organization</li> <li>● Model diversity as an organizational priority</li> <li>● Provide opportunities for people to develop new skills</li> <li>● Communicate the importance of culture differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hiring practices</li> <li>● Conscious accountability of core values: Equity and Diversity</li> <li>● Criticality for capacity building</li> <li>● Create constant space for critical conversations</li> <li>● Cultivate tangible aspirational opportunities for students</li> <li>● Consciousness of Walk the Walk</li> </ul>
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen without judgement to understand diverse cultures</li> <li>● Embrace Interaction with others from different cultures</li> <li>● Stand up for others if they are being treated unfairly</li> <li>● Encourage open dialog about controversial issues</li> <li>● Intervene when intolerance is present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create opportunities to engage in interactions</li> <li>● Authentically listen to learn about others</li> <li>● Accessibility through visibility of visiting them where they are</li> <li>● Making personal connections to build relationships</li> </ul>
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remaining accessible to others</li> <li>● Approach conflict by looking at all sides</li> <li>● Remain open to feedback to develop deeper understanding of different perspectives</li> <li>● Create a culture where people feel safe to share controversial ideas</li> <li>● Share honestly what is going on when the chips are down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lead by example</li> <li>● Capacity building through relationships</li> <li>● Multimodalities</li> <li>● Consistent frequent communication</li> </ul>
What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take ownership of personal behavior that supports respect of others</li> <li>● Willing to take personal risks to see that others are valued</li> <li>● Promote organizational culture that values inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take personal responsibility</li> <li>● Lead the hard conversations by intentional capacity building</li> <li>● Invested in building culture through relationships</li> <li>● Leverage network to provide role models</li> </ul>

Table 20 (continued)

Research question	Survey findings	Interview findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote a culture where everyone sees themselves as an important part of the organization</li> <li>● The importance of diversity is shown in organizational hiring practices</li> </ul>	
<p>What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lead with intentional collaboration where no one is placed at risk</li> <li>● Create a deep sense of shared purpose</li> <li>● Encourage new ideas that benefit all stakeholders</li> <li>● Cultivate a thoughtful inspection of diverse thinking</li> <li>● Insist on fairness as core value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explicit equity focus heat of inquiry aligned to core values</li> <li>● Create access to multiple platforms that elicit authentic input and feedback from diverse stakeholders</li> <li>● Navigate political relationships</li> <li>● Take responsibility for final decision</li> </ul>
<p>What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interact respectfully with different people in the organization</li> <li>● Treat people with genuine regard regardless of position</li> <li>● Consider diverse perspectives when making decisions</li> <li>● Encourage open dialog with stakeholders</li> <li>● Embrace interaction with people of different cultures</li> <li>● Listen carefully to make people comfortable</li> <li>● Promote policies that ensure cultural participation</li> <li>● Show respect by helping people</li> <li>● Celebrate unique contributions of diversity to organization success</li> <li>● See things from the other people's point of view</li> <li>● Encourage everyone to be themselves</li> <li>● Value the contributions of people through positive recognition</li> <li>● Hold others accountable for inclusion</li> <li>● Challenge intolerance in others</li> <li>● Collect regular employee feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increases authentic, diverse family and community engagement</li> <li>● Shared oneness of equity remains at forefront</li> <li>● Empowering relationships</li> <li>● Encourages innovative internal leadership engagement</li> <li>● Attracts diverse hiring of mindsets and abilities</li> <li>● Open dialog</li> <li>● Increases representation to mirror student representation</li> <li>● Honors asset-oriented cultural capital</li> </ul>



## CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Do the work that matters. *Vale la pena.*

—Dr. Gloria E. Anzaldúa

### **Overview**

Chapter V provides a summary of the purpose, research questions, methodology, data collection procedures, and the population sample. The demographic data of the exemplary Latina superintendents who participated in the study are also recapitulated. In addition, the chapter presents major findings, unexpected findings, and conclusions. Chapter V ends with implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks and reflections.

### **Purpose Statement**

It was the purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's five leadership qualities of cultural differences.

### **Research Questions**

1. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?
2. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?
3. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?
4. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?

5. What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?
6. What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?

### **Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

This study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods design chosen to address and identify the leadership strategies that Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences. Accordingly, using a mixed method approach is "an intuitive way of doing research that is continually displayed through our everyday lives" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 66). Specifically, this study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach by which quantitative data were collected first, followed by the collection of qualitative data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher collected numerical data through a quantitative instrument called the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey (Appendix G). The quantitative tool was administered to 15 exemplary Latina superintendents to identify the culturally intelligent strategies they use to create a culture of inclusiveness in their organizations and what advantages they perceive in creating a culture of inclusiveness.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic the globe was experiencing at the time of this study (in 2021), the safety protocol of conducting interviews were adhered to and done through the Zoom platform in lieu of face-to-face interviews. In the qualitative method, data were collected through five, 60-minute Zoom interviews with exemplary Latina superintendents to describe strategies they use to create a culture of inclusiveness

in their organizations and what advantages they perceive in creating an inclusive culture. Creswell (2013) defined explanatory sequential mixed methods as a strategy that requires the researcher to conduct two consecutive phases to collect quantitative data in the first stage, followed by the qualitative approach utilizing thematic analysis. The inquiry approach resulted in the ability to draw reliable and valid conclusions from the data collected by the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

### **Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated a population in research is a group of individuals who suitably match up to a specific set of criteria and to which the researcher intends to generalize the results of the research. Therefore, the population is made up of individuals who have one or more distinguishing characteristics that differentiate them from other groups (Creswell, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten & Newhart, 2017). Tooker (2019) asserted that superintendents operate as the chief executive officer of the district and are responsible for managing the budget, implementing policies, and following state and federal regulations.

Leading a school district as a superintendent is a complex and challenging responsibility, and one of the most arduous challenges is collaborating with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013). Martens (2013) affirmed that the superintendent implements the elected school board trustees' vision by making daily decisions about educational programs and hiring, supervising, and managing the central staff and principals to serve the needs of the students to meet the district's goals. According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2019), there are over 1,037 public school, K-12 superintendents in California. However, it was not feasible to study

a large population because of time, the COVID-19 pandemic, geography, and financial constraints. Consequently, this study narrowed the population to a target population of 73 Latino superintendents in California (CDE, 2019) to make the study achievable. In this study, the term *Latino* encompasses female and male superintendents because gender demographics were not disaggregated on the CDE (2019) website. This population was narrowed to a target population to make the study viable.

### **Target Population**

The target population is a smaller group identified within the population from which a sample will be studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Of the 1,037 superintendents in California, it was determined that there are 73 superintendents—female and male—who identified as Latino (CDE, 2019). To make the study feasible, a target population selected for this study included exemplary Latina superintendents identified as exemplary, Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic superintendents. Because there is no existing database in California that shows how many of the 73 Latino superintendents are female, the researcher cross-referenced Latina superintendents through her research analysis of public information in the CDE, communication with the California county superintendents, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA, 2020), Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS, n.d.), California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE, n.d.), and California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA, n.d.) to review membership data in an effort to identify the number of potential female Latina superintendents. That search resulted in the identification of 21 female Latina superintendents in California public

schools (Martín Pérez, 2020). The researcher focused on exemplary Latina superintendents in public schools throughout the state of California.

### **Sample**

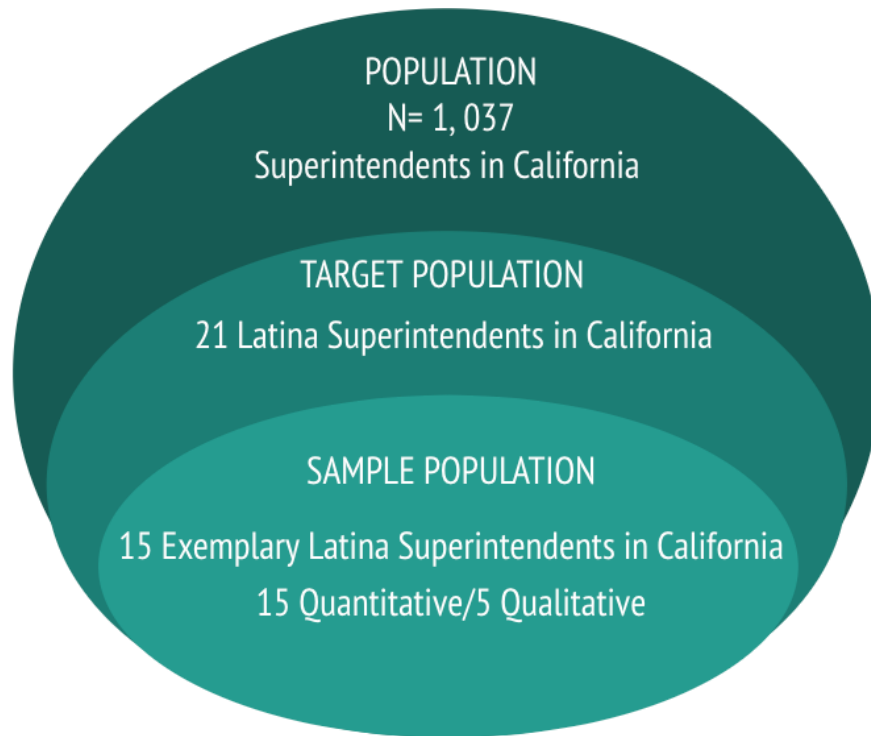
The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population the researcher intends to generalize. Specifically, the sample identifies who will be studied from within the broader population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A sample can also be described as a subset of the target population, which represents a larger and broader population (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling is a technique commonly utilized in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The researcher used purposeful sampling to identify participants for this study who met the specific criterion, desirable characteristics, and the objective of the study (Creswell, 2008; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 1990). The sample population was identified as K-12 Latina superintendents in California.

Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) noted the importance of availability, willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an expressive, articulate, and reflective manner. In addition, the participants were identified as exemplary in their field to ensure that the data provided would be authoritative and reliable. For purposes of this study, the 15 sample participants were selected for their knowledge and experience related to the purpose and research questions. All 15 sample

participants participated in the quantitative survey, and of those 15, all volunteered to participate in the qualitative interviews. Five were randomly selected for the qualitative interviews. To be considered exemplary, the selected participants needed to meet at least four of the following six criteria to receive consideration for this study:

- Identified as exemplary, Latina, Chicana, Mexican American, Mexicana, Afro-Latina, Puerto Rican, Dominicana, LatinX female, Hispanic.
- Served a minimum of 3 years as a superintendent in their current district with evidence of leading a culturally inclusive organization.
- Received recognition by a district office, county office of education, or California State Superintendent of Public Instruction for exemplary leadership.
- Identified by a panel of county superintendents and organization leaders who were knowledgeable of the work of superintendents and their participation in organizational and community activities involving diverse individuals.
- Had received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional organization such as CALSA, ACSA, CAAASA, CCEE, CCSESA, CABE, or other stakeholder organizations.
- Had published professional works, articles, papers on educational and university-level platforms or presented at conferences or association meetings about cultural intelligence (CQ) and cultural inclusiveness.

The quantitative study sample included 15 exemplary Latina superintendents from the target population, and the qualitative interviews included five of the 15 exemplary leaders from the target population (see Figure 2, repeated here for ease of reference).



*Figure 2.* 2019 California Department of Education superintendent population sample funnel. Adapted from *Fingertip Facts on Education in California – CalEdFacts*, by California Department of Education, 2019 (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/cef/fingertipfacts.asp>) and *Transformational Change Project: Emerging Latina Leadership (ELLVC XYQ)*, by M. Martin Pérez, 2020. MMP, SHINE., unpublished manuscript.

### **Demographic Data**

This sequential explanatory mixed methods study surveyed 15 exemplary Latina superintendents. Of those 15 Culturally Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G) participants, 100% (15/15) volunteered to be interviewed. The researcher randomly selected and interviewed five exemplary Latina superintendents from the target population who met the study criteria. The 15 participants who participated in the quantitative Culturally Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G) ranged from 1 year to 9 years in the superintendent role. All of all the California superintendents identified as a female Latina and had a combined total of 138,773 student enrollment (CDE, 2019).

Table 3 (repeated here for ease of reference) represents the participant demographics of the Culturally Inclusive Leadership Survey (Appendix G).

Table 3

*Quantitative Data Participant Demographics*

Superintendent	Years in role	Age range	Gender	Ethnicity
1	5.0	41-50	F	Latina
2	8.0	61-70	F	Latina
3	2.5	51-60	F	Latina
4	3.5	41-50	F	Latina
5	1.0	41-50	F	Latina
6	4.0	41-50	F	Latina
7	3.0	51-60	F	Latina
8	1.5	41-50	F	Latina
9	7.0	51-60	F	Latina
10	7.0	51-60	F	Latina
11	2.0	51-60	F	Latina
12	1.0	41-50	F	Latina
13	5.0	51-60	F	Latina
14	2.5	41-50	F	Latina
15	9.0	61-70	F	Latina

In this study, all 15 participants volunteered to be interviewed at the end of the quantitative Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey. As a result, five of the Latina superintendents were randomly chosen for the interview. In this study, interviews were used to gather data to describe perceptions and the leadership strategies that exemplary culturally intelligent (CQ) Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness.

The five superintendents who participated in the qualitative study were leaders ranging in age from 41-70. The superintendents had between 2.5 years and 8 years of experience as a superintendent in California public schools. The collective years of superintendent experience of all five superintendents who participated in the study totaled



24.5 years. In addition, among the five superintendents who participated in the interviews, the district enrollment totaled 97,562 (CDE, 2019). Table 4 (repeated here for ease of reference) represents the demographics of the superintendents who participated in the qualitative study.

Table 4

*Demographics of Qualitative Study Participants*

Superintendent	Gender	Ethnicity	Age range	Years in position
A	Female	Latina	61-70	8.0
B	Female	Latina	51-60	2.5
C	Female	Latina	41-50	5.0
D	Female	Latina	41-50	4.0
E	Female	Latina	51-60	5.0

### **Major Findings**

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study was to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents in California utilize to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy’s (2008) five leadership qualities of cultural differences: make diversity a priority, get to know people and their differences, enable rich communication, make accountability a core value, establish mutualism as the final arbiter, and what they perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness. This study’s research questions were responded to through the analysis of the study’s subquestions. The findings were substantiated by coded theme frequency and evaluated with references for each theme. Fourteen major findings emerged from the data and are presented in relation to the related research question.

## Research Question 1

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make diversity a priority?*

**Major Finding 1: Latina superintendents take personal responsibility for cultural inclusiveness.** Exemplary superintendent leaders recognize that it is critical to take personal responsibility for cultural inclusiveness to create a climate to create school district success. All of the quantitative surveys selected “take personal responsibility for inclusion of all people.” Furthermore, based on the qualitative data analysis, all five exemplary Latina superintendents in California identified the approach “conscious accountability of core values: equity and diversity,” which emerged with a frequency of 26. According to Bandura (2002), culture is defined by diverse and dynamic social systems and not static monoliths. Notable components require intercultural flexibility and competence (Bandura, 2002). As a result, individuals with cultural intelligence (CQ) embody realization of cross-cultural phenomena, mindfulness to process certain conditions, and taking personal accountability with behavior (Bandura, 2002). Stewart’s (2006) research on James Burns’s 1978 findings suggested that transformational leadership is strengthened when aligned with a collective purpose by providing ability and accountability to make social changes.

**Major Finding 2: Latina superintendents use hiring of diverse candidates to mirror student demographics.** All exemplary leaders identified that they demonstrate priority through their hiring practices. The qualitative interview findings yielded the highest frequency of 27 for “hiring practices” as an essential part of making diversity a priority in their districts. Moreover, exemplary educational leaders identified “cultivate

tangible aspirational opportunities for students” with an overall frequency of 17.

Kennedy (2008) asserted that diversity, as an organizational priority, is an intentional action to embrace individuals’ unique differences, perspectives, and talents as an identifier for organizational success. Ladson-Billings’s (2005) findings asserted that personal and cultural knowledge was a vehicle for a strengthened student and educational leader academic pipeline (see also Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This finding supports diverse linguistic, cultural, gender, and special abilities of school leadership representation matters for young students of color to perform academically (Melendez de Santa Ana, 2008; Nieves, 2016).

## **Research Question 2**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to get to know people and their differences?*

**Major Finding 3: Latina superintendents use active listening to understand without judging.** In their responses, all exemplary leaders described the viability of actively asking questions to listen, with genuineness to learn more by consciously checking their own biases and assumptions. Based on the analysis of the quantitative data, 15 (100%) of the exemplary Latina leaders selected the strategy “listen without judgement to understand diverse cultures,” which received 100% *agree strongly* ratings and was among the three highest ratings. These data indicate that all of the exemplary Latina superintendents utilized the culturally inclusive practices in their organizations. This was further substantiated in the qualitative interviews with all of the five exemplary leaders identifying the themes “create opportunities to engage in interactions” (22 frequency) and “authentically listen to learn about others” (19 frequency). An exemplary

superintendent stated, “I genuinely want to learn about individuals in our organization. There is power in authentically listening. I learn so much and am empathetic, vulnerable, and I want to learn.” This shows the importance of leaders engaging in intent to listen without bias or judgement. Leaders who create resonance intuitively understand and embody developed self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relational emotional intelligence competencies and are more effective leaders (McKee et al., 2008).

**Major Finding 4: Latina superintendents act as guardians of justice for everyone in the organization.** All exemplary Latina superintendents recognize that they set the tone by standing up for justice when others are being treated unjustly and regardless of their position in the district and community. The quantitative data elicited 100% of participants to identify “stand up for others if they are being treated unfairly” as one of the top three highest ratings the exemplary leaders selected. It is critical to dismantle the status quo of being an observer of institutional and systemic racism. All leaders stated they lead critical conversations, explicitly and intentionally, to create the space for diverse voices. According to Gay (2005),

Competing constituencies of power: values, programs, and practices about the police in character of ethnic, racial, social, cultural, and linguistic diversity. . . . debates are about redistribution of power between the defenders of the status quo and advocates of change and different conceptions of new direction. (p. 221)

**Major Finding 5: Latina superintendents intentionally create meaningful engagement with culturally diverse stakeholders.** The exemplary leaders in education feel it is critical to intentionally create meaningful engagement opportunities with culturally diverse stakeholders in their community. The quantitative data analysis

identified “embrace interaction with others from different cultures” with 100% of participants selecting the highest value of 6 (*agree strongly*). An exemplary superintendent stated,

You know, to walk in their shoes for a minute. So I get in my car and go to them. They are working in the fields, picking lettuce or strawberries, whatever *pisca*, harvest, and I roll up. I am fortunate, I live in a very large migrant community, that I could go to the fields and see my parents. And if necessary, you know, go out there and cut up a couple of vines, uh, harvest a couple of lettuces and things like that, and see how the difficulty that they're going through to understand that is. But I think it's being willing to go out of your comfort zone and to learn from them, and not to make them ever feel less.

All of all qualitative interview participants identified “accessibility through visibility of visiting them where they are” (15 frequency) and “making personal connections to build relationships” (13 frequency).

Bass (1981) concluded critical emphasis on human relationships evoke transformational leadership. To address this challenge, exemplary leaders must possess a strong CQ. According to several researchers, CQ does not change from culture to culture because it is “an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings . . . a specific form of intelligence focused on capabilities to grasp, reason, and behave effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang et al., 2007, p. 337). Muhammad and Cruz (2019) asserted transformational leaders’ ability to connect with others’ emotions to establish personal and intellectual connection is essential to “an ethical connection to their purpose” (p. 74).

### Research Question 3

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to enable rich communication?*

#### **Major Finding 6: Latina superintendents are accessible and visible to others.**

All exemplary leaders identified the necessity to be present among stakeholders in the organization by creating access, regardless of others' role, linguistic abilities, or economic, immigration, and power status. Based on the analysis of the survey data, "remain accessible to others" received a 93% of the *agree strongly* (6) rating. The qualitative data revealed exemplary leaders lead by example, build capacity through relationships, and have consistent frequent communication. One exemplary superintendent stated, "Personal communication demonstrates valuing the individuals of your organization because you took the time to come over and ask questions to get to know them." The power of connectedness and the responsibility is within exemplary leaders' influence and control. The importance of leaders' ability to be accessible and visible and have frequent contact with people in the organization is critical to creating a culture that is safe and inclusive and is critical to cultural competence (Stolp & Smith, 1995).

#### **Major Finding 7: Latina superintendents use problem-solving to ensure that**

**all sides are considered.** All exemplary Latina leaders in this study identified the benefits of establishing rich communication through intentional problem-solving to ensure that all perspectives are considered. The quantitative data analysis presented "approach conflict by looking at all sides" with one of the highest 93% selection. Pace's (2018) research showed that to develop trustworthy connections, there must be open and

safe communication to discuss negative stereotypes, microaggressions, and challenges or barriers that women of color face in the workplace. Rich communication is the transfer of information with the intent to understand the meaning and broaden one's perspective, resulting in a personal connection between individuals (Armengol et al 2017; Daft & Lengel, 1986; Jensen et al., 2018; Kennedy, 2008).

#### **Research Question 4**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to make accountability a core value?*

**Major Finding 8: Latina superintendents take conscious ownership of their personal behavior when interacting with diverse groups.** Exemplary leaders provided a deep innate connection to their metacognitive consciousness of who they are, whom they represent, whom they serve, and their roots of legacy. Based on the survey data, 100% of the respondents selected “take ownership of personal behavior that supports respect of others.” The exemplary Latina leaders identified they are conscious of taking ownership of their personal behavior when interacting with diverse groups as they intentionally lead by example. This is further supported in the qualitative data with all five exemplary Latina superintendents identifying the themes “take personal responsibility for inclusion of all people” (32 frequency) and “invested in building culture through relationships” (18 frequency). Anzaldúa's (2015) *conocimiento* (awareness/consciousness) called on people of color to transform an epistemology framework, challenged awareness of individuals, and asked them to reconsider realization and shift their ideas, motivations, and beliefs.

**Major Finding 9: Latina superintendents promote a culture where everyone sees themselves valued and as a part of the organization.** All exemplary Latina superintendents described the connection of promoting an environment that everyone feels valued, feels honored, and feels they are part of the success of the organization. Based on the survey data, 100% of the respondents selected approaches “willing to take personal risks to see that others are valued” and “promote a culture where everyone sees themselves as an important part of the organization.” In addition, the qualitative data analysis identified that all five exemplary Latina leaders indicated “lead the hard conversations by intentional capacity building” (30 frequency). CQ supports that an individual’s capability to relate and work is commendable in culturally diverse settings (Rámirez, 2014).

#### **Research Question 5**

*What strategies do exemplary Latina superintendents use to establish mutualism as the final arbiter?*

**Major Finding 10: Latina superintendents lead with intentional collaboration solidified in trust.** Exemplary Latina superintendents recognize it is crucial to build trust in order to lead with intentional collaboration by fostering an environment solidified in trust. The quantitative data analysis identified the strategy “lead with intentional collaboration where no one is placed at risk” with the highest rating of 93%. If superintendents utilize the ongoing engagement process, it becomes the foundational belief of the organization, thereby broadening participation and shared responsibility for the organization’s continual growth and development (Aurik et al., 2015). Tooker (2019) elaborated that the purpose of a shared sense of culture resulted in



collaborating and team building that created a supportive environment. Therefore, superintendents created stronger individual and collective relations with the board trustees (Brierton et al., 2016; Harris, 2010; Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Meyer et al., 2005; Wright, 2019).

**Major Finding 11: Latina superintendents align core values with conversations about equity.** The exemplary superintendents identified the empowering benefits through an explicit equity focused heat of inquiry that is aligned to the organization's core values. Based on the analysis of the survey, the leaders identified “cultivate a thoughtful inspection of diverse thinking,” which received an 86.6% rating. The exemplary Latina superintendents recognized “explicit equity focus heat of inquiry aligned to core values” is important to establishing mutualism as the final arbiter, with the 26 frequency. One exemplary superintendent stated,

Seek to put ourselves by using empathy. How may this decision make this group or that group of individuals feel? Are we missing the mark in addressing the certain segment of the organization's needs might be? We use this term “the heat of inquiry.” Over time, people now say, ok, let's engage in the heat of inquiry. Are we missing something? Are there unintentional consequences of what the decision is about to be made at the executive level. We engage in the heat of inquiry.

Educational organizations and strategies should ensure a culture of equity in collaborative decision-making that creates shared spaces with diversity or will impact practices, policies, beliefs, motivations, and expectations in the school community (Banks et al., 2001). Consequently, school changes administered from the top down are unlikely

to create a collaborative caring culture (Banks et al, 2001). To add, Bandura (2002) affirmed direct connection between transformational leaders' actions, their credibility as an ethical role model, and the ethical decision-making with their behavior (Bandura, 2002; Crowley, 2021).

**Major Finding 12: Latina superintendents create access to multiple platforms that elicit authentic input/feedback from diverse stakeholders.** From the total of 300 minutes of interview time with the exemplary Latina superintendents, all cited the importance to intentionally create access to multiple platforms that boldly and explicitly provide diverse stakeholders the safe place to give authentic input/feedback. The exemplary leaders identified the strategy “create access to multiple platforms that elicit authentic input and feedback from diverse stakeholders” with a 24 frequency. The quantitative data presented the culturally inclusive approaches “create a deep sense of shared purpose” and “encourage new ideas that benefit all stakeholders” received 86.6% responses among the Latina leaders.

The leaders' outreach for inclusiveness moves beyond compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), federal, state, and local metrics of feedback from stakeholders. All five exemplary leaders stated that having equitable access to multilinguistic platforms through accessibility via various social media, websites, YouTube channel, podcasts, learning management platforms, Zooms, phone calls, texts, e-mails, radio time, and face-to-face meetings established opportunities for rich communication. Educational organizations and strategies should ensure a culture of equity in collaborative decision-making that creates shared spaces with diversity or will

impact practices, policies, beliefs, motivations, and expectations in the school community (Banks et al., 2001).

### **Research Question 6**

*What do exemplary Latina superintendents perceive as the most important advantages of creating an organizational culture of inclusiveness?*

**Major Finding 13: Latina superintendents when making decisions, advocate empowerment by creating spaces for interaction of respectful dialog.** Exemplary leaders are intuitive about being inclusive when making critical decisions and they recognize their advocacy to empower diverse perspectives by creating spaces for interaction of respectful dialog that honors, validates, and embraces regardless of positional power in the organization. Based on the analysis of the quantitative survey, 100% of the participants strongly agreed with “treat people with genuine regard regardless of position” and “interact respectfully with different people in the organization.” Moreover, the qualitative data analysis identified “increases authentic, diverse family and community engagement” (32 frequency), “empowering relationships” (25 frequency), “open dialog” (16 frequency), “encourages innovative internal leadership engagement” (frequency of 12). and “honors asset-oriented cultural capital” (7 frequency). Diversity as an organizational priority is an intentional action to embrace individuals’ unique differences, perspectives, and talents as an identifier for organizational success (Kennedy, 2008; Winters, 2015).

**Major Finding 14: Latina superintendents evokes shared oneness of equity in the organization.** Exemplary Latina superintendents reflected on their CQ approaches that create advantages by evoking shared purpose of mission and vision with a deep

equity lens and then establish oneness of shared responsibility in the organization. The quantitative data analysis recognized the advantage of “hold others accountable for inclusion,” which elicited 80% responses from the survey participants. The qualitative data analysis supported findings as “shared oneness of equity in the organization” summoned an overall frequency of 26. Muhammad and Cruz (2019) asserted,

Transformational leaders effectively use data to not only inform adults throughout their school district, but also along with the context and a basis for comparison, inspire, and motivate them to seek and eventually commit to changes designed to increase student learning. (p. 115)

Superintendent C shared, “I use things to educate that aren't as subjective. So I use our data . A practice that we implemented was desegregating all of our data down to our subgroups, down to our school sites.” Banks (1996) affirmed that antiracist multiculturalism aims to create “cultural, education and political equity” (p. 1).

### **Unexpected Findings**

As a result of this study, the researcher discovered three unexpected findings. The unexpected findings reflect the data analysis in Chapter IV and is supported by the literature review in Chapter II.

**Unexpected Findings 1: Bilingual code switching is a culturally intelligent strategy.** Exemplary Latina superintendents in California utilize bilingual code switching as a CQ strategy. The exemplary leaders take conscious ownership of their personal behavior when interacting with diverse groups all leaders repeatedly shared that their deep connection to their Latina identity and their Mexican American/Chicana culture was

a critical benefit in creating a culturally diverse organization. One exemplary superintendent shared,

I jump in to translate for somebody that I see is in need of interpreting. Whether I am at school, grocery shopping or whatever, I jump in and translate to them in Spanish. It is part of who I am. I am conscious that I am always representing as a Latina and as superintendent.

The researcher finds it imperative to include code switching in the formal use and informal use for communities of color as a CQ and culturally inclusive strategy. The superintendents in the study shared language, race, and ethnicity of majority of student population they serve. Anzaldúa (1990) affirmed mestizaje theories created new categories for those left out of or pushed out of existing ones.”

The researcher affirms CQ interweaves behavior, metacognition, cognition, and motivation. Moreover, the four approaches are utilized without prioritizing one component over the other. This is corroborated by research that identified the following dimensions that demonstrate CQ: individuals must have (a) the metacognitive ability to gain an understanding of various cultures apart from their own, (b) the cognitive ability to act on that knowledge to make informed decisions, (c) the motivation to actively engage in multicultural environments, and (d) the behavior to make appropriate decisions within a variety of cross-cultural contexts (Ang & Inkpen, 2008).

Aguirre (1977) asserted the “goal of this dimension of code-switching research is to demonstrate that switching is not merely the accidental co-occurrence of many independent variables, but that it is itself an abstract entity which ought to have a place in a sociolinguistic grammar” (p. 3). Pride (1971) affirmed that the social value of language

reveals itself in all manners of socially motivated behavior. The sociolinguist attempts to demonstrate that code switching serves a social function for California Chicanos (Aguirre, 1977).

**Unexpected Finding 2: Exemplary superintendents use hiring of diverse candidates to mirror student demographics.** The researcher discovered that the survey elicited one of the lowest responses in “hiring practices,” yet the CQ Latina leaders spoke to the importance of prioritizing hiring during the 60-minute interviews, because it emerged with largest theme frequency. All exemplary leaders identified that they demonstrate priority through their hiring practices. Kennedy (2008) asserted that diversity, as an organizational priority, is an intentional action to embrace individuals’ unique differences, perspectives, and talents as an identifier for organizational success. Ladson-Billings’s (2005) findings asserted that personal and cultural knowledge was a vehicle for a strengthened student and educational leader academic pipeline (see also Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This finding supports diverse linguistic, cultural, gender, and special abilities of school leadership representation matters for young students of color to perform academically (Melendez de Santa Ana, 2008; Nieves, 2016).

**Unexpected Findings 3: Consciousness of identity and gender is a constant.** Based on the qualitative interviews with the exemplary Latina superintendents in California, the data suggest the importance of identifying this new finding. What made it unexpected was the frequency the five exemplary Latina superintendents shared consciousness of identity and gender during the qualitative interviews. The internal identity of ethnicity and gender was not part of the Kennedy’s (2008) cultural differences. However, the variable “consciousness of being Latina” was present in all interview

responses to the six research questions. The researcher determined this was a constant theme throughout the personal reflections with how superintendents personal accountability is intertwined with how they enable rich communication that then holistically leads into knowing people and their differences and creating mutualism as the final arbiter.

## **Conclusions**

This study found 10 conclusions that affirm criticality of understanding what strategies exemplary female Latina school superintendents use to create organizational cultures of inclusiveness. The major findings and unexpected findings of this study are synthesized into conclusions. Conclusions for this study are provided.

### **Conclusion 1**

*When Latina superintendents take explicit personal responsibility for cultural inclusiveness, it will thrive in the organization.*

Based on the finding that exemplary Latina superintendents explicitly take personal responsibility for cultural inclusiveness, it can be concluded that superintendents who intentionally take personal responsibility for cultural diversity and inclusive efforts in their organization nurture a culturally inclusive organization that will thrive. Personal responsibility as a core value is a leader's conscious ownership of her or his actions and the impact she or he has on others (Kennedy, 2008; Molenmaker et al., 2016; Tausen et al., 2018). They will create a climate leading to student and school district success.

Additionally, Superintendent E stated,

And so my personal responsibility was to be courageous and to continue down that path, despite folks wanting to either shut the conversations down or not

engage in the tough conversations, that was my personal responsibility. And frankly, my moral imperative. I have seen people's minds changed over the past years. Certainly not everyone. And we are not where we need to be, but I have seen people's minds be opened and their mindset be open to seeking, to understand where others are coming from and where we can go together as an organization, frankly, on behalf of the children and the families that we serve.

As a result, individuals with CQ embody realization of cross-cultural phenomena, use mindfulness to process certain conditions, and take personal accountability with behavior (Bandura, 2002). Stewart's (2006) research on James Burns's 1978 findings suggested that transformational leadership is strengthened when aligned with a collective purpose by providing ability and accountability to make social changes.

## **Conclusion 2**

*Latina superintendents who remove gatekeeper barriers and support hiring diverse candidates will build a more diverse staff who represent diverse students.*

Based on the findings of exemplary superintendents utilize hiring of diverse candidates to mirror student demographics, it can be concluded that top decision-making executives follow through with the organization's core values by hiring, supporting, and sustaining top-level positions that mirror diverse student demographics. It supports the inspirational message for students that if you can see it, then you can be it. All exemplary leaders identified that they demonstrate priority through their hiring practices. Kennedy (2008) asserted that diversity, as an organizational priority, is an intentional action to embrace individuals' unique differences, perspectives, and talents as an identifier for organizational success. Ladson-Billings's (2005) findings asserted that



personal and cultural knowledge was a vehicle for a strengthened student and educational leader academic pipeline (see also Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This finding supports diverse linguistic, cultural, gender, and special abilities of school leadership representation matters for young students of color to perform academically (Melendez de Santa Ana, 2008; Nieves, 2016).

### **Conclusion 3**

*Latina superintendents who do not work to dismantle the status quo will not create a culture of inclusion.*

The researcher of this study concluded that, based on the findings of her study, 100% of all exemplary Latina superintendents recognized that they set the tone by standing up for justice when others are being treated unjustly and regardless of their position in the district and community. It is critical to dismantle the status quo of being an observer of institutional and systemic racism. All leaders stated they lead critical conversations by explicitly and intentionally creating the space for diverse voices to be heard and seen. Redistribution of power between the defenders of the status quo and advocates of change and different conceptions of new direction set the precedence (Gay, 2005).

### **Conclusion 4**

*Latina superintendents who take conscious ownership of their personal behavior when interacting with diverse groups will build trust.*

Based on the findings that exemplary leaders take conscious ownership of their personal behavior, it can be concluded that this innate metacognitive and cognitive oneness leads an inclusive public school organization. All exemplary leaders provided a

deep innate connection to their metacognitive consciousness of who they are, whom they represent, whom they serve, and their roots of legacy. The exemplary Latina leaders identified their level of consciousness of personal responsibility ownership when interacting with diverse groups by leading with intention and by example. Anzaldúa's (2015) *conocimiento* (awareness/consciousness) called on people of color to transform epistemology framework, challenged awareness of individuals, and asked them to reconsider realization and shift their ideas, motivations, and beliefs.

### **Conclusion 5**

*Latina superintendents who are explicit in aligning personal and organizational values and beliefs will be more successful in promoting equity.*

Based on the conclusion that exemplary superintendents identified the empowering benefits of explicit equity focused heat of inquiry, aligned to the organization's core values, it can be concluded that opportunities for key decision makers to lead equity-founded inquiry processes is beneficial for organizations to be successful. Educational organizations and strategies should ensure a culture of equity in collaborative decision-making that creates shared spaces with diversity or will impact practices, policies, beliefs, motivations, and expectations in the school community (Banks et al., 2001). Additionally, research asserted direct connection between transformational leaders' actions, their credibility as an ethical role model, and the ethical decision-making with their behavior (Bandura, 2002; Crowley, 2021).

### **Conclusion 6**

*Latina superintendents who provide multiple platforms for input and feedback from diverse stakeholders will create trust within the organization.*

Based on the finding that exemplary Latina superintendents intentionally move with purpose to create equitable access to multiple platforms that elicit authentic input/feedback from diverse stakeholders, the researcher concludes that moving beyond compliance is an urgent action. This was an important approach that exemplary leaders embraced to create an inclusive culture. All justified importance to intentionally create access to multiple platforms that boldly and explicitly provide diverse stakeholders the safe place to give authentic input/feedback. The candor and established relationships created authentic spaces for district stakeholders—students, educators, administrators, staff, parents, caregivers, school board trustees—to speak up and give input and feedback when critical decisions need to be made. Exemplary leaders are intuitive about being inclusive when making critical decisions and they recognize their advocacy to empower diverse perspectives by creating spaces for interaction of respectful dialog that honors, validates, and embraces regardless of positional power in the organization. Diversity as an *organizational priority* is an intentional action to embrace *individuals’ unique differences, perspectives, and talents*” as an identifier for organizational success (Kennedy, 2008; Winters, 2015).

### **Conclusion 7**

*Latina superintendents who develop a shared vision and value of equity with stakeholders will be successful in creating a culture of inclusiveness.*

Based on the findings that exemplary leaders create trust, shared leadership, and shared responsibility through evoking shared oneness of equity that is at the heart of the organization. It is substantiated with Muhammad and Cruz’s (2019) research that transformational leaders “use data to not only inform adults throughout their school

district, but also along with the context and a basis for comparison, inspire, and motivate them to seek and eventually commit to changes designed to increase student learning” (p. 115). All 100% of the exemplary Latina superintendents reflected on their CQ approaches that create advantages by evoking shared purpose of mission and vision with a deep equity lens and establish oneness of shared responsibility at the forefront of the organization.

### **Conclusion 8**

*Latina superintendents who use bilingual code switching will build authentic rapport and create a culturally linguistic inclusive organization.*

Based on the unexpected finding in this study that exemplary Latina female superintendents consciously demonstrate CQ by fluently flowing in Spanish and English bilingual code switching, it can be concluded that multilingual and multicultural exemplary leaders enable trusting relationships and rich communication with diverse stakeholders by interacting inclusively. Their unique experiences language, race, and diverse experiences connect with student population they are serving. Gumperz and Hernandez (1969) confirmed that whenever Chicano identity was an underlying theme, Spanish was used.

### **Implications for Action**

CQ leadership is critical for highest ranking organizational leaders. Gándara (2015) confirmed that one in four students in California is a female of Latina ethnicity, but the representation of Latina superintendents who lead a culturally inclusive public school organization is less than 2% (CDE, 2019). Gándara (2015) reported, “Latinas begin school significantly behind other females and are not able to catch up to their peers.

More than one in five Latinas has not completed high school by age 29 and 19 percent complete a college degree” (p. 5). For educational opportunities to improve, it will take strong action at the local level and new aggressive policies that support equity and inclusiveness.

### **Implication 1: Administrative Credentials**

To build capacity among leaders, it is imperative that Administrative Credential Programs in California invest in culturally responsive and CQ skill capacity-building for aspiring administrators in public schools. It is recommended that the ACSA legislative committee in partnership with CALSA develop new credential requirements to be presented to the CDE. The wealth of knowledge and the intentionally and explicit understanding of learning to be an inclusive leader is imperative to the success of students, families, and communities. All exemplary superintendents stated they wish they had had initial training as administrators to build a culturally inclusive school organization.

### **Implication 2: Establish Employee Resource Group**

To prepare the teachers of diverse learning communities in schools, it is critical that LatinX Employee Resource Groups (ERG) exist within California districts at county levels, regional levels, and state levels. This is a common practice in the business world, and it creates a shared space for professional support that honors and builds leadership pathways for LatinX leaders. School districts’ human resources departments could create innovative ERGs that foster LatinX, African American/Black, Asian American, LGTBQ, and caucuses of superintendents and administrators.

### **Implication 3: School Board Training**

To support and provide personal accountability to diverse school board trustees with the commitment of serving diverse learners, it is critical that school board trustees understand the critical role they play in breaking generational academic deficit (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It could be argued that the California School Board Association (CSBA) deepens their privileged elected position that affects students in public schools. Their role comes with privilege because as noneducators, they have powerful influence over diverse students in public schools. The CSBA Masters in Governance program has an explicit focus on strategies that school boards need to take to be an inclusive school district. The accountability measures would be included in publicly reported annual goals, monitored, and then presented transparently to the public. Moreover, the shared learning experiences and leadership capacity increases. Increasing public awareness on the purpose and role of school board trustees will increase accountability. It is imperative that superintendents and school board trustees identify institutional, instructional, and systemic barriers that disproportionately impact outcomes for culturally diverse linguistic, special abilities, and LGTBQ plus student populations. In the words of Dr. Maya Angelou, “You do better, when you know better” (Salters, 2014, Quote #16). The opportunity to be innovative leaders and set policy and procedural precedence for all of the U.S. public schools to follow is one that is too valuable to be complacent, docile, and silent. The courage for explicit and intentional cultural inclusiveness for school board members is vital for an organization to be healthy and vibrant with thriving change agents.

#### **Implication 4: Engagement Campaign With Nonprofits and State Agencies**

The researcher's study findings will add depth and complexity to the realm of how exemplary Latina superintendents in California and the country use their CQ to lead thriving school districts. The researcher will engage agencies that work alongside local education agencies' superintendents, such as CCEE, ACSA, and Brandman University, Stanford Emerging Women in Leadership, university training programs to create leadership learning opportunities embedded with this study's findings to co-lead engagement. Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley facilitates innovative leadership and learning in advancement of Latinx and Parent Institute for Quality Instruction (PIQE) has over 128 partnerships with over 128 school districts. The shared learning with superintendents and PIQE families would be an opportunity for innovative fostering of cultural inclusiveness. Also, collaborate with Prospanica to build critical CQ leadership skills for inclusiveness in university and C-Suite spaces. Leveraging institutional and systemic transformational change for systems leaders is key for long-term sustainability.

#### **Implication 5: Training and Development**

Professional organizations are increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives. The researcher will work with a key CDE agency, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), to intentionally support superintendents in California to build district leaders' culturally inclusive efficacy. It is important that CQ leadership skills are showcased in training. This study focused on one target population: exemplary Latina superintendents in California public schools. Intersectionality creates intentional space to amplify the powerful voices of women of color. ACSA, CAAASA, and CALSA are primed for bridging connections and shared

learning leadership for women of color leaders and allyship. Solórzano (1998) defined CRT in education as “a set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the subordination of scholars of color” (p. 123). Positional power, mentorships, and networking opportunities will provide women the opportunity to grow and thrive to their fullest potential.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The study’s findings influenced recommendations for future research. Increasing accountability for equitable access in education and fostering leadership trajectories for underrepresented communities of color, women of color, LGBTQ communities, students with abilities and special abilities, culturally linguistically diverse individuals in diverse communities are critical. The following four recommendations are introduced to elicit inquiry and inclusiveness in academia in providing amplification on diverse perspectives of this study’s findings.

#### **Recommendation 1**

*It is recommended that a replication study be conducted with a different group of exemplary superintendents who are Black/African American women.*

This research study could be replicated to identify and describe strategies exemplary African American/Black superintendents in public education utilize to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness. Dynamic and exemplary African American/Black women have rich perspectives that could add to the research of intersectionality of women of color. Similar to exemplary Latina superintendents in California and nationally, women of color are disproportionately underrepresented in the highest



education leadership positions. Therefore, creating the academic spaces to learn their *testimonios* could have a substantially positive effect in increasing leadership representation.

### **Recommendation 2**

It is recommended that a meta-analysis of the thematic team's 10 studies of cultural inclusive leadership be conducted to identify the most important strategies across different groups of leaders. The findings could produce rich approaches and practices that executive-level leaders utilize to create culturally inclusive organizations.

### **Recommendation 3**

It is recommended that a meta-analysis of the thematic team's three studies of exemplary superintendents be conducted to identify and describe the most essential strategies across the California public school district leaders in the time of COVID-19. The thematic team meta-analysis of culturally inclusive leadership the California superintendents used would benefit leadership capacity building in emerging and current superintendents. The urgent call for equity leaders in the highest education decision maker role is one that can no longer be overlooked.

### **Recommendation 4**

It is recommended that a replication study be conducted nationally with exemplary, first-generation, multilingual women of color in superintendent roles. The exemplary leaders in this study demonstrated that their bilingual and bicultural consciousness allowed them authentic opportunities to get to know people, enable rich communication with diverse educational stakeholders, lead by example, and embody cultural capital wealth as a means of accelerating a culturally inclusive organization.

## Concluding Remarks and Reflections

This journey has been perfectly imperfect. As a first-generation Head Start, Migrant Education student, forever *Maestra*, and educational advocate for over 2 decades, I am humbled and honored to be in this moment of rawness, vulnerability, resilience, and *Ikigai*. As a young single mom, sitting in my first Chicana/o and Latina/o studies course, I felt like I belonged. Time is a valuable currency, and I recall the numerous conversations with my phenomenal mentors to discuss my lifelong dream of being a *Doctora*. *Dios proveera*. Navigating the uncharted doctorate world had me leaning in on my familia, my sisterhood, mentors, my cohort, my thematic, vino, cafe, and Brutus. *J's* Aptitude over attitude. The journey was filled with elation, growth, and enlightenment. Sometimes a breakdown can be the beginning of a kind of breakthrough, a way of living in advance through a trauma that prepares you for a future of radical transformation (Moraga, n.d.).

I am honored and humbled by the expression of gratitude the exemplary Latina superintendents bestowed on me. All 15 participants graciously took time from leading school districts during the COVID-19 crisis through distant remote learning to pay it forward and participate in the Cultural Intelligent Leadership Survey. In addition, all volunteered to be interviewed to share their reflections, positional acuteness, and leadership journey in creating a culturally inclusive organization. As I listened to the dynamic Latina superintendents share their *testimonios*, I had to intentionally work on my nonverbal communication because what I was witnessing was a testimony to all individuals who ever felt they were not enough that they are more than enough. I learned to stand in my power. The leaders did everything with intention.

The exemplary CQ and courageous Latina leaders are living examples of what our world needs to advance equity in education and to advance healing in our global communities. Identity, intellect, and powerhouse confidence exuded through their mannerisms, their body language, their laughter, and their powerful words. Every interview session felt like a prestigious moment that I was honored to have experienced. The exemplary leaders were leading and advancing equity in communities experiencing COVID-19 pandemic health, economic, and social injustices; crisis online learning phases; and the development of in-person learning, but they all were extremely supportive of my research study and humbly accepted to be part of the first research study focused on exemplary Latina superintendents in California and how they make diversity an organizational priority by creating a culturally inclusive organization. The exemplary Latina leaders' *testimonios* are much needed contributions to academia and transformational leadership.

This transformational journey is one that I will continue to pay forward for all leaders who have been systemically ostracized for being themselves. As women of color, we all have our stories—stories that connect, humanize data, teach, inspire, and advance others. Our lenses, our experiences, our *raices* are our super powers. In the words of Bozoma Saint John (2021),

I identify with “kintsugi,” a Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold—built on the idea that embraces flaws and imperfections, you can build an even stronger, more beautiful piece. And whew chiiiiiiile, I’ve been broken by grief, disappointment, unmet expectations, betrayal, unfair circumstances and a myriad of life events which have seemingly come out of left

field to fail me. But the miracle of resiliency is in the ability to pick up the pieces of life and rejoin them to make ourselves whole again. I am stronger because of it. (paras. 1 and 2).

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## APPENDICES









Synthesis Matrix	THEMES	Diversity	Culture of Inclusiveness	Rich Communication	Accountability	Cultural Intelligence (CQ)	Social Learning Theory	Critical Race Theory (CRT)	Superintendents' Contest Frame	Mutualism	Political Intelligence	Latinas in Education	Testimonios Chicana	Cultural Differences	Leadership	Women of Color in Leadership	Mentorship	Cultural Capital	Gender/sex	Methodology
Soldano, D. (1998). Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. <i>Qualitative Studies in Education</i> , University of Los Angeles, 1998. Vol. 8, No. 1, 121-38. Retrieved from		X				X		X				X								
Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1991). Stereotype threat and the intellectual performance of African Americans. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 69(5), 797-811.		X					X	X								X				
Stephens, J.P., E.D. Heugan, A. Carmel, G.M. Soneizer, and J.E. Dutton. Relationship Quality and Virtuousness: Emotional Carrying Capacity as a Source of Individual and Team Resilience. <i>The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science</i> , Vol. 48, No. 1, 13-41, 2010. "Relationship quality and virtuousness: Emotional carrying capacity as a source of individual and team resilience" <a href="https://psyc.apa.org/record/2013-07-01/psycap:20130701001">https://psyc.apa.org/record/2013-07-01/psycap:20130701001</a>			X											X				X		
Stewart, J. 2006. Transformational leadership: An evolving concept examined through the works of Burns, Bass, Avolio, and Leifwood			X	X																
Stokes, D. M. (2013). Exploring the relationship between cultural intelligence, transformational leadership, and burnout in doctorate of education students. Liberty University		X	X		X	X			X		X			X	X					
Thomas, D. C., & Hinson, K. (2017). <i>Cultural Intelligence: Surviving and Thriving in the global village</i> (6th, Third edition). Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.								X	X											
Thomas, T.N. "Women in Judicial Leadership: Using Personal Power to Overcome Self-Doubt" (2020). Dissertations, 320. <a href="https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/ed_essays/dissertations/320">https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/ed_essays/dissertations/320</a>						X						X	X							X
Wade, B. (2019). "Strategies Exemplary Urban School Superintendents Use to Work With the Political Styles of School Board Members". Dissertations, 210. <a href="https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/ed_essays/dissertations/210">https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/ed_essays/dissertations/210</a>				X	X															
U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). <i>Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016</i> (NCES 2016-036). United States Census Bureau (2016)		X						X	X			X	X		X	X				X
U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). <i>Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016</i> (NCES 2016-036). United States Census Bureau (2016)		X										X								
Vivona, M. (2007). <i>Reviewed Work: Race, Culture and Education: The Selected Works of James A. Banks by James A. Banks. The Journal of Negro Education</i> Vol. 76, No. 3, Celebrating the Legacy of "The Journal": 75 Years of Facilitating Excellence in Black Education, pp. 515-517.		X			X			X						X						
West, E. (2010). <i>Raising the Latino Demographic: Begins With Attention</i> . <a href="https://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=32100">https://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=32100</a>		X			X				X			X			X	X				X
White, P., Thomas, H., Fox, S. (2016). <i>The politically intelligent leader: Dealing with the dilemmas of a high-stakes educational environment</i> . New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield				X	X				X		X			X						X
Winston, Lela. "Strategies Exemplary Female Superintendents Use to Work with the Political Styles of School Board Members" (2016). Dissertations, 284. <a href="https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/ed_essays/dissertations/284">https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/ed_essays/dissertations/284</a>			X	X	X			X	X	X				X						
Winters, M. F. (2015). <i>What's in a word? - Part 1: Defining diversity</i> . Retrieved from <a href="http://www.theinclusionsolution.me/whats-in-a-word-part-1-defining-diversity/">http://www.theinclusionsolution.me/whats-in-a-word-part-1-defining-diversity/</a>		X							X											
Wright, B. J. (2019). "How Exemplary Urban Superintendents Build Trust With and Between School Board Members". Dissertations, 234. <a href="https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/ed_essays/dissertations/234">https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/ed_essays/dissertations/234</a>									X						X					X
Winnak, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. <i>European Journal of Education: Research, Development and Policy</i> , 48, 311-325.																				X
Yosso, T. J. (2005). <i>Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth</i> . <i>Race, Ethnicity and Education</i> , 9(1), 69-91. DOI: 10.1080/1361332052000341006 <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006">https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006</a> <i>Race Ethnicity and Education</i> Vol. 8, No. 1, March 2005, pp. 69-91.		X	X	X		X		X						X					X	

## APPENDIX B

### Invitation to Participate

Dear ...,

My name is Martha Martín, and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Brandman University. I am participating in a thematic dissertation with nine other researchers. This letter serves as an invitation for you to participate in a research study. In my study, I am seeking to research strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents utilize to create a culture of inclusiveness. As an exemplary leader of ..., I ask for the opportunity to learn your insight and invite you to participate in my research study.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods study was to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's five leadership qualities of cultural differences: making diversity a priority, getting to know people and their differences, empowering rich communication, making accountability a core value, and establishing mutualism as the final arbiter. In addition, this study will survey exemplary Latina superintendents in California to identify cultural inclusive leadership strategies they use to create an inclusive organization based on Debbé Kennedy's five qualities of inclusive leadership. Results from this study will be summarized in a doctoral dissertation.

**PROCEDURES:** If you choose to participate in this study, you will be invited to participate in a questionnaire and a 60 minute, one-on-one interview conducted on Zoom. I will ask a series of questions designed to allow you to share your experience as an exemplary Latina superintendent in California. The survey questions will assess strategies that you utilize to create a culture of inclusiveness. The research is framed around the five qualities of culturally inclusive leadership as defined in Debbé Kennedy's book, "Putting Our Differences to Work". The interview questions will assess specific strategies used to create a culturally inclusive organization. The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes.

**RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS:** There are no major risks to your participation in this research study. The interview will be at a time and place, which is convenient for you.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS:** There are no major benefits to you for participating; nonetheless, a potential benefit may be that you will have an opportunity to identify future practices and add new knowledge of the strategies to create a culturally inclusive environment. The information for this study is intended to inform researchers and leaders of strategies used by exemplary culturally inclusive leaders to create a culture of inclusiveness.

**ANONYMITY:** If you agree to participate in the survey and interview, you can be assured that it will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the survey or interview. All information will remain in locked files, accessible only to the researchers. No employer will have access to the interview information. You will be free to stop the survey or interview and withdraw from the study at any time. You are also encouraged to ask any questions that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. Feel free to contact the principal investigator, Martha Martín at [mmarti67@mail.brandman.edu](mailto:mmarti67@mail.brandman.edu) or by phone at \*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\*, to answer any questions or concerns you may have. If you have questions, comments, or concerns about the study or your rights as a participant, you may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, 949-341-7641.

Sincerely,

Martha Martín, M. Ed.  
Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, Ed. D.

APPENDIX C

**Informed Consent Form**

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY

16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD

IRVINE, CA 92618

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Leadership Strategies That Exemplary K-12 Latina Superintendents in California Use to Create an Organizational Culture of Inclusiveness Using Kennedy's Five Leadership Qualities of Cultural Differences

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Martha Martín, Doctoral Candidate

TITLE OF CONSENT FORM: Consent to Participate in Research

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods study was to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary Latina superintendents in California use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's five leadership qualities of cultural differences: making diversity a priority, getting to know people and their differences, empowering rich communication, making accountability a core value, and establishing mutualism as the final arbiter. In addition, this study will survey exemplary Latina superintendents in California to identify cultural inclusive leadership strategies they use to create an inclusive organization based on Debbie Kennedy's five qualities of inclusive leadership: making diversity a priority, getting to know people and their differences, empowering rich communication, making accountability a core value, and establishing mutualism as the final arbiter. Results from this study will be summarized in a doctoral dissertation.

PROCEDURES: In participating in this research study, I agree to partake in an audiorecorded semi-structured interview or survey. The interview will take place in person at my school site or by phone, and lasts about an hour. During the interview or survey, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share my

experiences as a superintendent, who has experience using culturally intelligent strategies that create a culture of inclusiveness. I understand that:

1. The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at my school site or at an agreed upon location, to minimize this inconvenience. Surveys will also be utilized depending upon participants scheduling availability.
2. I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding the strategies that exemplary leaders use to create an inclusive organization. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.
3. Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Martha Martín, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Martha Martín may be contacted by phone at (\*\*\*) \*\*\*-\*\*\*\* or email at [mmarti67@mail.brandman.edu](mailto:mmarti67@mail.brandman.edu). The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Keith Larick at [larick@brandman.edu](mailto:larick@brandman.edu).
4. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.
5. The study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. Audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview

transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years by the investigator in a secure location.

6. No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed and my consent re-obtained.

If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights. I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

---

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party Date

---

Signature of Witness (if appropriate) Date

---



## APPENDIX D

### **Research Participants Bill of Rights**

#### **BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

### **Research Participant's Bill of Rights**

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

## APPENDIX E

### Script and Interview Questions

#### Introduction Script

My name is Martha Martín and I'm a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the Department of Organizational Leadership. I'm a part of a thematic dissertation team conducting research to determine what strategies are used by exemplary leaders to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness.

I want to thank you for expressing your agreement to participate in this interview on culturally intelligent leadership *and for completing the survey* prior to this interview. This interview is intended to explore further information and provide depth to what was provided in the electronic survey.

As an exemplary leader in public education, you are responsible for providing strategies and directions that create a positive organizational culture. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the strategies that you utilize to create a culture of inclusiveness. We are framing our research around the five qualities of culturally inclusive leadership as defined in Debbe Kennedy's book, "Putting Our Differences to Work". Those five leadership qualities are: making diversity a priority, getting to know people and their differences, empowering rich communication, making accountability a core value, and establishing mutualism as the final arbiter. Together these qualities are believed to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness. During this interview, please feel free to refer to the document sent to you by e-mail that gives specific descriptions of these qualities.

I am conducting 5 interviews with leaders like you. The information you give, along with the others, hopefully will provide strategies that exemplary leaders, such as yourself, have identified to create an organization of inclusiveness that will add to the body of research currently available.

Incidentally, even though it appears a bit awkward, I will be reading most of what I say. The reason for this to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews with all participating exemplary leaders will be conducted in the same manner.

#### Informed Consent (Required for Dissertation Research)

I would like to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s).

Did you receive and read the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email and do you agree to participate in this research. I need to hear your affirmative answer so it is recorded as confirmation of consent to participate. Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let's get started, and thanks so much for your time.

**Introduction- Establish a comfortable environment with the interviewee.**

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### ***Organizational Priority***

1. As you reflect about your work as a leader, what are some ways you make diversity an organizational priority?

*Probe: What are some examples?*

2. In your role as leader, how do you educate your organization about the significance of diversity?

*Probe: Why do you think that this was effective? worked well?*

### ***Personal Responsibility***

3. In your role as leader, how have you intentionally incorporated personal responsibility in your decision making?

*Probe: Can you give me an example of a time when that happened and how behavior changed?*

4. As leader, how do you influence others to take personal responsibility as a core value?

*Probe: Give me an example of a time when that happened and how behavior changed?*

### ***Rich Communication***

5. What communication strategies do you use to foster a deeper cultural understanding within your organization?

*Probe: Can you share an example?*

6. How do you use communication to develop a personal connection with individuals?

*Probe: Can you share an example?*

### ***Know People and their Differences***

7. How do you get to know the people in your organization on a personal basis?

*Probe: Can you tell me about a time when this worked very well in establishing a personal connection?*

8. How do you interact with people in the organization to gain a better understanding of their cultural differences?

*Probe: Describe some of the things that you do to gain a better understanding?*

### ***Mutualism as the Final Arbiter***

9. As you think about your work as a leader how are final decisions decided in your organization?

*Probe: How do you engage members of your organization in conversations that are respectful of all ideas and interests?*

10. What do you perceive are the most important advantages of creating a culture of inclusiveness within your organization?

*Probe: Can you give me an example of how this created a culture of inclusiveness in your organization?*

### ***Culture of Inclusiveness***

11. In your role as a leader, how have you been able to create a culture of inclusion within your organization?

*Probe: Can you provide an example of what have you implemented to increase cultural inclusion in your organization*

12. In your experience as a leader, in what ways do you believe there are advantages in creating an environment of mutual respect and acceptance?

That concludes my questions. Is there anything else that you would like to share at this time?

“Thank you very much for your time. If you like, when the results of our research are known, I will send you a copy of my findings.”

APPENDIX F

**Audio Release Form**

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** Leadership Strategies That Exemplary K-12 Latina Superintendents in California Use to Create an Organizational Culture of Inclusiveness Using Kennedy's Five Leadership Qualities of Cultural Differences

**BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY  
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD  
IRVINE, CA 92618**

I authorize Martha Martín, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant or Responsible Party**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## APPENDIX G

### Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey

#### Cultural Inclusive Leadership 2.0FT

The success of any organization depends in large part on the interactions among the leader and team members. What determines the quality of these interactions is tied closely to the commitment of leaders. Positive perceptions are closely tied to the leader's commitment to integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into the organization. This study of cultural inclusive leadership is based on Debbie Kennedy's five qualities of inclusive leadership. This survey is intended to solicit the expert perceptions of leaders regarding strategies used to implement the five qualities. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

**PURPOSE OF STUDY:** You are being asked to participate in a thematic research study conducted by Martha Martin, Stephanie Smart, Toloue Aria, Tonia Watkins, Marisol Alaniz, Kelly Kennedy, Nemo Withana, Nicole Tafoya, Leila Dodge, and Lynn Carmen Day, doctoral students from Brandman University. The purpose of this explanatory mixed method study to identify and describe the leadership strategies that exemplary leaders use to create an organizational culture of inclusiveness using Kennedy's five leadership qualities of cultural differences.

I understand that:

- a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigators will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researchers.
- b) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding the strategies that exemplary leaders use to create an inclusive organization.
- c) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher using the information provided in the invitation to participate.
- d) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. In addition, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.
- e) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of Rights." I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

**ELECTRONIC CONSENT:** Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button indicates that you have read the informed consent and the information in this document and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

If you do not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button. The survey will not open for responses unless you select agree to participate.

- AGREE. I acknowledge receipt of the complete "Informed Consent" packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in this study.
- DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey.

### Demographics

\* Please choose the pass code provided to you by the researcher from the drop down list.

Please indicate your gender

Please indicate the number of years you have been in your current position

Please select your age from the list below

Please choose the ethnicity(s) with which you identify. (Mark all that apply)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American     | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American/Alaskan Native   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino             | <input type="checkbox"/> White                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latinx      |   |



## Cultural Inclusive Leadership 2.0FT

**Directions:** For purposes of this research, cultural inclusiveness is defined as the incorporation of diverse individuals in an environment of mutual respect and acceptance that recognizes and values their unique contribution to the success of the organization.

- 6 = Agree Strongly
- 5 = Agree Moderately
- 4 = Agree Slightly
- 3 = Disagree Slightly
- 2 = Disagree Moderately
- 1 = Disagree Strongly

Listed below are the strategies that research suggests that leaders use to create cultural inclusive leadership in organizations. Using the following descriptions, to what degree do the strategies reflect your cultural inclusive leadership.

### \* Part I - Making Diversity a Priority

Diversity as an organizational priority is an intentional action to embrace individuals' unique differences, perspectives and talents as an identifier for organizational success. (Kennedy, 2008 and Winters, 2015).

	Agree Strongly	Agree Moderately	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Strongly
Model diversity as an organizational priority	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take personal responsibility for inclusion of all people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicate the importance of culture differences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide coaching to develop talent within the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide opportunities for people to develop new skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### \* PART II - Knowing People

Knowing people and their differences is intentionally developing deep knowledge, expertise and empathy about diversity through curiosity, experiences and practice (Hesselbein & Goldsmith 2009; Kennedy, 2008; Travis, Nugent, & Lengnick-Hall, 2019).

	Agree Strongly	Agree Moderately	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Strongly
Listen without judgement to understand diverse cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embrace interaction with others from different cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stand up for others if they are being treated unfairly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage open dialog about controversial issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intervene when intolerance is present	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### \* PART III - Communication

Rich communication is the transfer of information with the intent to understand meaning and broaden one's perspective, resulting in a personal connection between individuals (Daft & Lengel 1986; Armengol et al 2017; Kennedy 2008; Jensen, Moynihan, & Salomonsen 2018).

	Agree Strongly	Agree Moderately	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Strongly
Remain open to feedback to develop deeper understanding of different perspectives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Approach conflict by looking at all sides	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remain accessible to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Share honestly what is going on when the chips are down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Create a culture where people feel safe to share controversial ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### \* PART IV – Personal Responsibility

Personal responsibility as a core value is a leader's conscious ownership of their actions and the impact on others (Kennedy, 2008; Molenmaker, De Kwaadsteniet, & Van Dijk, 2016; Tausen, Miles, Lawrie, & Macrae, 2018).

	Agree Strongly	Agree Moderately	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Strongly
Promote organizational culture that values inclusion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take ownership of personal behavior that supports respect of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The importance of diversity is shown in organizational hiring practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Willing to take personal risks to see that others are valued	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promote a culture where everyone sees themselves as an important part of the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\* PART V – Mutualism**

Mutualism as the final arbiter is where everyone benefits and no one is harmed by the decisions and actions within the team or organization (Kennedy, 2008). Mutualism establishes trust in organizations through a deep sense of shared purpose, a thoughtful inspection of each member's ideas and interests, and an interdependence when performing roles and responsibilities (Harvey & Drolet, 2006; Rau, 2005; Mishra, 1996).

	Agree Strongly	Agree Moderately	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Strongly
Create a deep sense of shared purpose	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insist on fairness as core value	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage new ideas that benefit all stakeholders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultivate a thoughtful inspection of diverse thinking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lead with intentional collaboration where no one is placed at risk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\* PART VI - Culture**

Culture is all learned and shared human patterns or models that distinguishes the members of one group of people from another. (Damen, 1987, p. 51).

Cultural Intelligence is "an individual's ability to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse settings. (Ramirez, 2014)

	Agree Strongly	Agree Moderately	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Strongly
See things from other peoples point of view	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consider diverse perspectives when making decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage open dialog with stakeholders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Challenge intolerance in others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embrace interaction with people of different cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\* PART VII - Culture of Inclusion**

A culture of inclusion is the incorporation of diverse individuals in an environment of mutual respect and acceptance that recognizes and values their unique contribution to the success of the organization. (Azmat, Fujimoto & Rentschler, 2014; Mak, Daly & Barker, 2014; Tawagi & Mak, 2015; Kennedy, 2008).

	Agree Strongly	Agree Moderately	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Strongly
Promote policies that ensure cultural participation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interact respectfully with different people in the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage everyone to be themselves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listen carefully to make people comfortable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collect regular employee feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Show respect by helping people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Value the contributions of people through positive recognition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Treat people with genuine regard regardless of position	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Celebrate the unique contributions of diversity to the success of the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hold others accountable for inclusion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for your participation. If you are willing to participate in a follow up interview to be conducted on Zoom please check the box and provide your contact information. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

I would be willing to participate in an interview.

Yes

No

Cultural Inclusive Leadership 2.0FT

Please provide the following information so that a researcher may contact you regarding an interview.

Please provide your name.

Please provide the best contact phone number.

Please provide the best email address for you.

APPENDIX H

**Field-Test Participant Feedback Questions**

**Cultural Inclusive Leadership Survey Feedback Form**

**SURVEY CRITIQUE BY PILOT PARTICIPANTS**

As a doctoral student and researcher at Brandman University your assistance is so appreciated in designing this survey instrument. Your participation is crucial to the development of a valid and reliable instrument. .

Below are some questions that I appreciate your answering after completing the survey. Your answers will assist me in refining both the directions and the survey items. You have been provided with a paper copy of the survey, just to jog your memory if you need it. Thanks so much.

1. How many minutes did it take you to complete the survey, from the moment you opened it on the computer until the time you completed it? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Did the portion up front that asked you to read the consent information and click the agree box before the survey opened concern you at all? \_\_\_\_  
If so, would you briefly state your concern \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Was the Introduction sufficiently clear (and not too long) to inform you what the research was about? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, what would you recommend that would make it better? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Were the directions to, and you understood what to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, would you briefly state the problem \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Were the brief descriptions of the rating scale choices prior to your completing the items clear, and did they provide sufficient differences among them for you to make a selection? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, briefly describe the problem \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. As you progressed through the survey in which you gave a rating of # through #, if there were any items that caused you say something like, “*What does this mean?*” Which item(s) were they? Please use the paper copy and mark those that troubled you? Or if not, please check here: \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks so much for your help!

## APPENDIX I

### Field Test – Observer Feedback

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set based on experience and feedback. Gaining valuable insight about interview skills and affect with the interview will support the collection of data gathering when interviewing actual participant. As the interview observer you should reflect on the questions below after the interview is finished. You should provide independent feedback at the conclusion of the interview field test. As observer you should take notes that will assist the interviewer to be successful in improving their interview skills.

1. How long did the interview take? \_\_\_\_\_ Did the time seem appropriate?
2. Did the interviewer communicate in a receptive, cordial, and encouraging manner?
3. Was the introduction of the interview friendly with the use of commonly understood language?
4. How did the interviewee feel during the interview?
5. Was the interviewer prepared and relaxed during the interview?
6. Did the interviewee understand the interview questions or did they require clarification?
7. What parts of the interview went smoothly and why?
8. What parts of the interview seem to struggle and why do you think that was the case?
9. Did the interviewer maintain objectivity and not interject value judgments or lead the interviewee?
10. Did the interviewer take the opportunity to discuss or request artifacts that support the data gathered from the interview?
11. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you suggest changing it?
12. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

***\*Conducting interviews virtually is different than face-to-face and requires more attention to number 2 & 3 above. As an observer give specific feedback on these items***



## APPENDIX J

### Interview Feedback Reflection Questions

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set/experience. Gaining valuable insight about your interview skills and affect with the interview will support your data gathering when interviewing the actual participants. As the researcher you should reflect on the questions below after completing the interview. You should also discuss the following reflection questions with your 'observer' after completing the interview field test. The questions are written from your prospective as the interviewer. However, you can verbalize your thoughts with the observer and they can add valuable insight from their observation.

1. How long did the interview take? \_\_\_\_\_ Did the time seem to be appropriate?
2. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?
3. Going into it, did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?
4. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?
5. What parts of the interview seemed to struggle and why do you think that was the case?
6. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you change it?
7. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

APPENDIX K

**Human Subjects Research Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers**

**Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Course Certificate of Completion**

