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Equity Leadership Informed by Community Cultural Wealth: Counterstories of Latinx School Administrators

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this article is (a) to analyze how Latinx school administrators draw on their Community Cultural Wealth to inform their leadership for educational equity and (b) to examine how they navigate varying equity initiatives and beliefs in rapidly diversifying districts. **Research Method:** This study employs Latina/o Critical Race Theory counterstorytelling methodology to explore four Latinx school administrators' experiences across three districts in the Pacific Northwest. Data sources include semistructured interviews, observations, and local demographic data. **Findings:** Latinx administrators' counterstories revealed complex ways their childhoods, educational histories, and current equity leadership were informed by their Community Cultural Wealth as bilingual people of color. They also faced White dominant administrative spaces, where their equity visions often conflicted with district equity initiatives. Sometimes these differences led to tensions with district officials or constrained their advocacy. **Conclusion and Implications:** Our findings affirm existing research on the potential equity and culturally responsive leadership contributions of Latinx

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educational leaders. Our article also raises questions to the field about how we understand social justice leadership, and support current and aspiring leaders of color who seek to promote equity in their work. Our analysis brought forth a particular geographical region as a key in influencing our research participants' experiences. More research is needed to understand how to support and sustain leaders of color in diverse regional contexts, as they seek to combat educational inequities for children and young adults facing similar injustices they faced themselves as students of color.

Keywords
Latinos, Critical Race Theory, social justice, principals, assistant principals

> Just because we work for the whole, not the I, does not mean that our leadership is less important. At times, it is even more important. You can sound like you know everything, look so well put together and know nothing. That is the "I" culture, but this work is about relationships, this work is about people, this work is about kids.
>
> —Josefina "Josie" Garcia.

In the epigraph above, elementary school principal Josefina "Josie" Garcia[1] described how her leadership differed from other administrators in her district. In her interview, she emphasized how leadership for the "I" was often rewarded in her district, because it looked and sounded like the majority of administrators. When asked what she meant by the majority of administrators, she explained, "A White man, a White woman, a White very articulate woman" who "can talk well," and "can look perfect." Despite the fact that under her leadership her school was recognized by the state for closing student achievement gaps for low-income students and English learners, Josie recounted feeling outside of district conversations about equity and isolated as one of only two Latinx[2] principals (out of 40 total) in her district. Similar to the three other Latinx administrators in our study, Josie described a distinctly different vision for equity than she witnessed at the broader district level—a vision she saw as directly informed by her childhood and upbringing.

This article analyzes the equity leadership visions and experiences of four Latinx school administrators working across three districts in the demographically diversifying region of the U.S. Pacific Northwest. Specifically, this article considers how the Latinx administrators in our study built on their experiences as bilingual people of color to inform their orientations toward

equity. The four Latinx administrators (two building principals and two assistant principals) described how their families and experiences in U.S. schools informed both their desire to become leaders, as well as deep beliefs in equitable practices for marginalized students. Additionally, each leader described how their equity practice and beliefs differed from district equity initiatives and understandings, and how, at times, they faced critiques or direct resistance from district officials because of their leadership decisions. Analysis of their counterstories reveals: (a) how their equity orientations and leadership were informed in large part by their Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) as bilingual and bicultural people of color and (b) the racialized politics of administration in their districts that impacted their equity advocacy.

In this article, we first discuss how the notion of Community Cultural Wealth has been examined in existing research on Latinx educational leadership. We then present our Latina/o Critical Race (LatCrit) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) theoretical framework, and how we use counterstorytelling in our data collection and analysis procedures. Our findings consist of our research participants' counterstories, organized around three key themes: Childhoods of Strength and Resiliency, Personal Sacrifices for Educational Aspirations, and Deeper Visions for Equity in Schools. In our discussion, we examine how the leaders' counterstories demonstrate key forms of Community Cultural Wealth and how working in White dominant administrative spaces affected their equity leadership. We conclude with a discussion of implications for the field, particularly how as a field we prepare and support aspiring leaders of color to encounter injustices in their school and districts.

Community Cultural Wealth in Latinx Educational Leadership

Several scholars have documented how Latinx school leaders build on their experiential knowledge (Martinez, Marquez, Cantú, & Rocha, 2016; Peterson & Vergara, 2016) and Community Cultural Wealth as people of color (Yosso, 2005) to inform their leadership practices (Hernandez, Murakami, & Quijada Cerecer, 2014; Méndez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne-Jiménez, & Hernandez, 2015). In her seminal article, Yosso (2005) describes that despite dominant, educational ideologies that highlight the deficits of students of color, in fact people of color use "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts" in order "to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). These forms of capital create "Community Cultural Wealth" and counter middle-class, White notions of "cultural capital": aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, resistant, and navigational (pp. 77-78; see Table 3 for definitions of each form). Within the existing Latinx educational leadership

literature, there are three principal ways Yosso's (2005) framework has been utilized to understand the leadership of Latinx administrators.

First, researchers have documented how Latinx administrators *use the Community Cultural Wealth of the students and families they serve to inform their leadership practices*. For example, in Méndez-Morse et al.'s (2015) nationwide survey as part of the National Latina/o Leadership Project, many of the 132 Latina research participants stated that they built on the familial and linguistic capital of Latinx families in strength-based ways to promote parent engagement in schools. Cuevas (2016) considers how educational leaders in general (not just Latinx leaders) can support all students by harnessing students' Community Cultural Wealth in school. Other scholars have highlighted the ways Latinx school leaders support bilingual student learning (Hernandez et al., 2014; Martinez et al., 2016) or family school engagement (Hernandez et al., 2014; Murakami, Valle, & Méndez-Morse, 2013) as well.

The second way Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) has been described in the literature on Latinx leaders is documenting how *Latinx administrators used their own Community Cultural Wealth to support and sustain them on their educational and professional pathways* toward administrative positions. For example, Horak and Valle (2016) analyze how the eight Latino male principals in their study used all six forms of Community Cultural Wealth to support their pathways into the principalship. Other scholars have described how Latinx administrators have been deeply motivated by their own experiences of racism, classism, and xenophobia to support students coming from similar backgrounds (Hernandez et al., 2014; Martinez et al., 2016; Murakami et al., 2013). Martinez et al. (2016) documented how Latina administrators utilized their own "familial capital" by utilizing their mothers as mentors, when formal professional mentors were not available or supportive of them.

The final way researchers have analyzed Community Cultural Wealth in studies of Latinx administrators is examining how Latinx leaders use *their own Community Cultural Wealth to inform their leadership practices once on the job*. In particular, how their equity focus is related to their own experiences and backgrounds as people of color, from marginalized backgrounds, or low-income communities. For example, Niño, Hernandez, Valle, and McPhetres (2017) study of the instructional leadership of Latina/o leaders considered how administrators' tasks, time, and priorities aligned with Yosso's (2005) model. Other studies have considered how Latinx leaders more deeply understand the experiences and identities of students (Martinez et al., 2016; Murakami et al. 2013) and are seen as role models by Latinx families and students, because of their cultural backgrounds (Murakami, Hernandez, Méndez-Morse, & Byrne-Jiménez, 2016). Burciaga and Kohli's

(2018) critical study of two veteran women of color teachers found that they built on their own Community Cultural Wealth to co-create "culturally relevant and rich learning communities" with their students (p. 10), but often their expertise and assets as educators went unrecognized and undervalued by their schools as measures of teacher quality. This study highlights the ways in which White dominant administrative spaces do not see the culturally responsive leadership many "racial justice-oriented teachers" and leaders of color bring to their practice (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018, p. 11).

Critical Gaps in Our Knowledge of Latinx School Leadership for Equity

While studies of Latinx educational leadership have provided important insights into the ways Latinx administrators build on their Community Cultural Wealth to inform their leadership, fewer studies have considered how district and regional contexts impact administrators' equity leadership responses and visions. Also, most studies examining the experiences of Latinx educational leaders focus on the Southwest United States and Texas, in schools with larger Latinx student populations (Avalos & Salgado, 2016). One area for exploration are regions of the United States where Latinx persons are a relatively small, but growing population, and where there are few educators of color. What does it mean for Latinx administrators to lead in these changing demographic contexts? How can Latinx educational leaders in White-majority regions focus their work on equity issues, serving students and families of color? This study seeks to understand how Latinx administrators conceptualize their equity leadership within their broader school district contexts. Drawing on Yosso's (2005) framework and counterstory methodology from LatCrit theory (Pérez Huber, 2008; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), this study seeks to address these gaps by analyzing the following questions: (a) How do Latinx administrators in the Pacific Northwest draw on their Community Cultural Wealth to inform their leadership in schools? (b) How do Latinx administrators' understandings of equity compare with district initiatives to address equity in schools?

Theoretical Framework

This article draws on CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016) and LatCrit (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002) to analyze the experiences of four Latinx school administrators in the Pacific Northwest. CRT in education empowers "researchers to work towards the elimination of racism through

understanding the multiple ways people of color experience subordination, as defined by race, class, gender and other forms of oppression" (Pérez Huber, 2008, p. 165). LatCrit expands and builds on CRT's central critique to include issues such as immigration status, language, nativism, gender, class, and race (Alemán, 2009; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). LatCrit and CRT scholars have outlined several key tenets which inform an analysis of the experience of people of color, including (a) centrality and ubiquity of racism (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Taylor, 2016); (b) interest convergence (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016); (c) historical context and interdisciplinary perspectives (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 2016); (d) importance of narrative and experiential knowledge of people of color (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 2016); and (e) intersectionality of racism and other forms of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Three key tenets inform our analysis: the *centrality of racism and intersectionality* with other forms of oppression, *importance of counternarrative*, and *historical context*.

The *centrality of racism and intersectionality* highlight the ways in which people of color must navigate a broader society where "racism is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order" (Ladson-Billings, 2016, p. 18). At the same time, people of color may have intersecting identities, which may compound the forms of oppression they experience (Crenshaw, 1989). The four Latinx principals in our study had to navigate complex sociocultural landscapes in which oftentimes their experiences were colored not just by their racialized identities but also by their gender, immigration status, and language ideologies around their use of Spanish and English. Intersectionality is a vital lens for us to consider the multiple forms of oppression that affected their childhoods and careers as educational leaders.

The notion of *counter-narrative*[3] or counterstory is also critical to our analysis. Within CRT and LatCrit, the stories, experiences, and narratives of people of color are central to understanding broader systems of racism and oppression (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As Pérez Huber (2008) describes, "critical race counterstories are a direct challenge to majoritarian stories because of the way they disrupt dominant perceptions of race to reveal the realities of racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of subordination experienced by people of color" (p. 167). A majoritarian narrative is "one that privileges Whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28). Within a field like educational administration in the

United States, majoritarian narratives often reify the majority White administrative and teacher experience as normal or "natural" (Rodela, Rodriguez-Mojica, & Cochrun, 2019). The four Latinx administrators in our study acutely felt their difference to their mostly White colleagues, particularly in the White dominant administrative spaces they occupied in Oregon and Washington. Understanding their lived experiences as valid leadership knowledge reveals not just insights about their own lives, but also reveals tensions between their equity visions and local contexts.

The final key concept in our theoretical framework is the notion of "historical context." Taylor (2016) describes how discussing the historical past and its relationship to present inequities allows us to reveal how racial inequities perpetuated within school systems are part of the "expected outcomes of intentional politics and practices" within a racist social order, and not aberrations (p. 6). Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) add that it is critical to dispute "ahistoricism" by engaging our analysis "in both an historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods" (p. 314). "Historical context" is critical in helping us interrogate three key aspects of "context" in our research participants' experiences. First, the historical legacy of racism in the Pacific Northwest affects the lives of all people of color and indigenous persons in the region. For example, there were specific state laws and regulations that were expressly racist and anti-immigrant. Famously, both Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, had racial restrictive covenants outlawing the purchase of homes or dwelling of persons of Black, Asian, and Jewish descent until the mid-20th century (Imarisha, 2013; McGregor, 2003). As Rodela (2014) described, the region's "hipster and progressive mystique" masks "serious racial inequalities and a particularly troubling history of racial exclusion and segregation in the state" (p. 50).

Second, the regional sociopolitical contexts our research participants encountered in their work affected how they as Latinx leaders of color engaged in equity-focused initiatives. While the states of Oregon and Washington are often labeled progressive "Blue States," in fact they have large geographic areas in suburban, rural, and eastern regions of the states that are heavily Republican. All four participants in our study worked in suburban and rural contexts that lean more conservative politically and socially. Similar to other educators on the West Coast they have to enact more progressive state policies (e.g., inclusion of transgender students), often with little explicit guidance from district leaders, but with the added burden of being one of the only administrators of color in their districts.

Finally, the histories they lived and experienced growing up in the Pacific Northwest as students of color attending schools near the current districts they later worked in as administrators affect how they led. As we will describe

in our method section, the Pacific Northwest has experienced dramatic demographic shifts with unprecedented growth in the local Latinx populations across Oregon and Washington. These demographic shifts affected how local schools responded (or failed to respond) to our research participants' learning needs as bilingual and bicultural children in the 1970s-1990s. These shifts also affected the contexts in which they later became educators and administrators in the 1990s-2000s. Other research has found that both in the Pacific Northwest and other regions of the United States where there has been a growth of Latinx students and families recently, often bilingual and Latinx teachers bare the brunt of addressing the needs of Spanish-speaking students and families (Amos, 2016; Harklau & Colomer, 2015; Rodela et al., 2019). In previous work, we found that Latinx administrators in the Pacific Northwest "were often charged with serving bilingual students and English language learners with limited school support or district infrastructure, particularly in the early years of dramatic Latinx student population growth" (Rodela et al., 2019, p. 17). This is an experience unique to our research participants and other bilingual Latinx educators in the Pacific Northwest since the 1990s. In this study, we draw on publically available school demographic data from the years of our study (2015-2016), and historical demographic data to consider regional demographic changes over time. In the next section, we report our data collection and analysis methods.

Method

Data Sources

The counterstories presented in the findings draw from (a) four semistructured, in-depth interviews (1.5-2 hours each); (b) field notes from eight ethnographic observations in school and community meetings with the research participants (total 24 hours of observation); and (c) district public records and local newspapers and media to document information about regional sociopolitical contexts. We engaged in purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 2005), recruiting school administrators in K-12 schools in Oregon and Washington, and who self-identified as Latina/o/x or Hispanic. Our goal during the interview was to allow research participants to narrate their own stories related to the following topics: personal and educational histories, professional experiences, and current leadership work and issues of import in their districts.

Researcher Positionalities

Our own sociocultural and professional positionalities were important factors in our data collection and analysis. The authors are both bilingual, Latina

assistant professors, with experience as teachers in K-12 schools. Both authors have lived in the Pacific Northwest, worked with local teachers and administrators, and have experience with some of the sociopolitical dynamics of the region's diversifying schools.

Along with our LatCrit and CRT theoretical framework, Delgado Bernal's (1998) notion of "cultural intuition" informed how we approached data analysis as Latina women. There are four sources of "cultural intuition," which can inform how researchers (especially Chicana women) interpret research participants' experiences: (a) personal experiences (e.g., having shared racial identities); (b) existing literature (e.g., research on Latinx educational leadership); (c) professional experience (e.g., having been K-12 teachers); and (d) analytical research process (e.g., coding methods; p. 566). Our shared experiences and identities as Latina educators strengthen our analysis; however, at the same time, we take seriously Delgado Bernal's (1998) warning that "researchers must be careful to not let any of the four sources block them from seeing the obvious or assume everyone's personal and professional experiences are equal to theirs" (p. 566). Closely attending to the data itself and engaging in reflexivity were critical to making sure we honored and were truthful to our research participants' counterstories.

Data Analysis

Our first step in data analysis was to transcribe and de-identify all interviews. Using Dedoose Qualitative Software, we divided the interviews and each coded emergent themes, developing "parent codes" (e.g., negative school experiences) and "child codes" (e.g., deficit comments from staff). We then exchanged transcripts and blind-coded each transcript. During this analysis, we were guided in part by "cultural intuition" as we would notice experiences of racism and sexism; but, we also coded without prescribed codes to allow participants' own words to inform the codes. After this first round, we unblinded the codes to identify where themes overlapped in our analysis. We examined our code list, identifying redundancies and major themes across the interviews. We then revisited the existing literature (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), and wrote analytical memos for each participant to connect themes to their specific counterstories. In the findings, where possible we chose to include direct interview quotes section in order to bring our research participants' voices forward as much as possible.

Research Setting and Participants

The Pacific Northwest, including the U.S. states of Oregon and Washington, presents a unique location to understand how Latinx school administrators

Table 1. Percentages of White and Latinx Teachers and Principals in 2015-2016 (Chief Education Office, 2016; ODE, 2016; OSPI, n.d.; Plecki, Elfers, & Wills, 2017; Taie & Goldring, 2017, 2018).

	Oregon		Washington		United States	
Race/Ethnicity	Teachers	Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers	Principals
White, %	91	90	90	89	80	78
Latinx (reported as Hispanic/ Latino), %	4	5	4	3	9	8

Note. Oregon only provides whole numbers, the percentages for Washington and the United States were rounded to the nearest whole number for consistency.

conceive and address equity issues. According to recent U.S. Census (2017a, 2017b) estimates, approximately 13.1% of Oregon's and 12.7% of Washington's populations identify as Hispanic/Latino. This represents a more than tripling of the total Latinx population since 1990 (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011; Guzmán, 2001). The growth of the Latinx population in the state's public schools has been even more dramatic. In the year of study (2015-2016), Hispanic/Latino students in the state of Oregon accounted for 22.45% of all students enrolled in public schools (129,410 students; Oregon Department of Education [ODE], 2016). That same year, in Washington, Hispanic/Latino students made up 22.4% of all public school students (243,149 students; Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], n.d.). Compared with U.S. states like California, Texas, or Florida, these numbers seem quite small, but it is important to consider change over time. Comparing these data with state enrollment 10 years prior (2005-2006), in Oregon these represent a 53% increase in the number of Hispanic/Latino students (from 84,504 to 129,410 students; ODE, 2016). In Washington, there was a 75% increase in the number of Latinx students from the 2005 to 2006 school year (from 138,385 to 243,149 students; OSPI, n.d.).

This diversification has not been matched with diversification in the teaching and administrative populations. Table 1 presents demographic data comparing the percentages of White and Hispanic/Latino public school teachers and administrators in Oregon, Washington, and nationally. Although most educators across the United States are White, in the Pacific Northwest, there is an even smaller percentage of Latinx teachers and principals. Given the growth of the Latinx student population in both states, it is essential to more deeply understand Latinx administrator experiences and how they navigate changing demographic contexts to advocate for equity.

Table 2. Demographic Information About Participants' Schools and Districts.

Participant	District Size	School Size	Percentage of Students on Free or Reduced Lunch	Percentage of English Learners	Percentage of Students of Color	Percentage of Latinx Students
Gregorio	25,000	500	90	35	70	50
Josie	25,000	650	60	25	55	40
Roger	4,500	550	80	50	90	90
Teresa	27,000	700	55	35	45	30

Participants. Our research participants include two school principals and two assistant principals who identified as Hispanic or Latina/o. All four administrators were the first in their families to attend college (three out of the four were the first in their families to graduate high school). They were all bilingual, attended schools in the Pacific Northwest, and became teachers as the Latinx population experienced dramatic growth. Table 2 provides their school demographic information. It is important to note that all four administrators worked in schools with higher numbers of students of color, students who qualified for free and reduced lunch, and English learners, compared with their district and state averages. We introduce each leader briefly.

Josie. At the time of our study, Josefina "Josie" Garcia was in her 10th year as a principal at Morningstar Elementary, a dual immersion school in a busy urban area. She had about 8 years of experience as a teacher before beginning her administrative career. As a child, Josie's family moved around a lot as her father worked in the lumber industry. Spanish was her first language and she acquired English in school as a young child.

Roger. Rogelio "Roger" Martinez was in his fifth year as the principal at Heartwood Elementary in a rural farming community that served many Spanish-speaking migrant farmworker families. Roger was a teacher for about 12 years before entering administration. While both his parents' first language was Spanish, he grew up primarily speaking English, though always understanding Spanish.

Teresa. Teresa Segura was in her second year as an assistant principal at Spring Meadows Elementary, a dual immersion school in a suburban school district. She had 5 years of teaching experience before entering her administrative position. Teresa lived most of her childhood in Southern California and attended high school in the Pacific Northwest.

Gregorio. Gregorio Lara was an assistant principal at Davis Elementary, a diverse elementary school in the same urban district as Josie. He was entering his third year as an assistant principal. He had over 18 years of teaching experience, and worked in diverse school communities, including rural schools with larger migrant populations. Gregorio was born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States as a child.

Findings: Counterstories of the Four Latinx Leaders

In our analysis, we surfaced three major themes: Childhoods of Strength and Resiliency, Personal Sacrifices for Educational Aspirations, and Deeper Visions for Equity in Schools. All the research participants in our study experienced different challenges in their childhoods. Each leader connected these experiences to their own leadership in schools. They described the critical equity issues they saw as most pressing in their schools, and ways in which their equity visions were not shared in their district, directly challenged by district leaders, or limited because of the racialized politics of administration. In these findings, we seek to describe the leaders' counterstories in their own words as much as possible. Later in the discussion, we more explicitly connect these counterstories to Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework.

Childhoods of Strength and Resiliency

All of the Latinx administrators in our study faced challenges in their childhoods. These included facing racism in schools and experiencing poverty or financial hardships. Notably, the Latinx administrators reported experiences with racism and financial hardships as "normal." While their experiences could be viewed as "adversity," their counterstories testify to normalization of such experiences for children of color in the United States, and the strength and resiliency they developed in their childhoods. They often saw themselves in the students they served now.

Gregorio. In his interview, Gregorio shared how from fourth grade until he graduated from high school, he would wake up at 4 a.m. to work in the fields before going to school. Like other migrant farm laborer families in the Pacific Northwest, Gregorio and his family spent spring breaks cutting asparagus and summers harvesting strawberries and blueberries. Gregorio began his days well before sunrise and did not engage in extracurricular activities or sports, like other classmates. When asked what colleagues might think of this, he replied,

> I mean, that's how it was. We were taught to be supportive, all the qualities of being respectful and supportive, and you're part of the family, and this is how you make a living and then it's going to help you later in life.

For Gregorio and his eight siblings, being a contributing member of his family was critically important. Gregorio described the deep support he felt from his parents and his family, especially to pursue his education. While he had to juggle working in the fields with school, he saw other families doing the same and reflected:

> I know it's about hardship. I don't know if it has to do with something that I knew what hard labor was at a young age, so did my siblings so I guess for us, I know that my parents were very supportive.

Gregorio felt his upbringing inspired him to pursue higher education and become an educator.

Josie. Josie described moving schools along the West Coast as a child because her father worked in the lumber industry. In the 1980s and early 1990s, she and her siblings were often the only students of color in the schools they attended:

> I liked learning. I liked reading. Maybe I didn't like some of the things that happened in schools when you're growing up. People they don't understand you or they don't know you, they don't understand why you speak a second language, or you look different—because all those places really we were the only brown ones there.

The first author prompted Josie to explain what she meant about people not understanding her or her siblings, she elaborated:

> Teachers didn't know how to teach you because English isn't your first language. They didn't know how to teach ELL kids. They didn't know the strategies or anything. So, I mean if you didn't get it, you didn't get it. And then some kids, you're friends because you're friends and kids don't see color; but, other kids do, or their parents influence them. They call you brown or other names. [. . .] You face racism from kids and from teachers.

Josie described particularly difficult moments like being spanked by the teacher for not understanding her directions in English in second grade, or when her sister was told by a high school teacher: "Anybody in America can become a president except this Mexican." Josie emphasized the role of

teachers in perpetuating racism or ignoring racist incidents in class. She also recalled positive interactions. For example, a teacher allowing her to finger-count in Spanish, or her only Latina teacher encouraging her to continue with schooling. Josie discussed at length how these experiences affected her leadership today.

Roger. Unlike Josie, Roger grew up in an area of the Pacific Northwest where Latinx persons are a majority, close to agricultural areas where many migrant farmworkers settled in the 1970s and 1980s. Growing up among many Latinx families and being a third-generation Mexican American whose first language was English created a complex relationship with his ethnic identity. Roger described,

> I was the Whitest brown kid on campus, that was my angle. I only hung out with my cousin who was just like me, we went to college together, we had similar experiences but we didn't hang out with the brown kids. That's not what you did. You played sports and you did your best in school, but there was just tremendous pull to assimilate and to deny some of those things that you saw in your extended family or that you know was your parents' experience. [. . .] That was almost a requirement, if you were going to be successful. [. . .] You couldn't speak Spanish on the playground, you couldn't be one of those kids who left at Christmas time and didn't come back for 3 months, you couldn't be that guy. So I did everything I could not to be that guy.

From a very early age, Roger could see that in his school, to be successful a student had to assimilate. He knew he had to deny part of himself to be able to fit in and not be judged by teachers or staff members. The first author asked if he was told not to speak Spanish or if it was implied. Roger replied, "No, it was something that was said. We weren't supposed to speak Spanish on the playground." Roger did not face similar overt racist insults that Josie experienced, but felt the penetrating reality of linguistic racism and the ways educators saw speaking Spanish and being Mexican as a deficit. These lessons he later connected to his leadership vision.

Teresa. In contrast to Roger, Josie, and Gregorio, Teresa lived most of her childhood in Southern California. Her life changed dramatically when she was in high school and her family moved to a large metropolitan area in the Pacific Northwest. Teresa struggled to find her place initially:

> I didn't fit in with the White kids that's for sure, they looked at me like. . . . You can tell I wasn't from here. Then I didn't fit in with Latino kids, I just didn't fit in. They would look at me too.

Teresa recalled a critical moment in high school when a high school guidance counselor suggested she attend cosmetology school. She asked her "why" and the counselor replied,

> "Well, because your hair's always done, you always have it nice." I'm like, "And?" I remember feeling this rage enter me and I wasn't sure if it was because my mom did hair, and I knew how much she struggled financially because she was always working. Or, if it was because the guidance counselors were encouraging my friends to pursue careers as lawyers and doctors and I wasn't.

Teresa recalled feeling like her counselor's suggestion had to do with being Latina and described how that moment sparked a "little warrior" in her. She recalled thinking: "Well, okay, now I want to go somewhere." Her resistance to being seen from a deficit perspective rose in her a sense of *coraje* (rage). She described developing a "little, small angry part of me because [. . .] I had not experienced being discriminated upon as I had when I moved to [the Pacific Northwest]." Teresa's resistance and anger about injustices she faced informed her desire to advocate for students of color like her.

Personal Sacrifices for Educational Aspirations

The leaders in our study all made sacrifices to attend college. While they shared similar struggles of working-class Latinx families, the two Latina women in our study confronted cultural norms about being "good daughters" or "good mothers" in their educational journeys.

Josie: "A girl cannot leave her house 'til she's married." This sentence is commonly heard by many Latina young women growing up in the United States, where they might see female peers leaving home for college. Josie recounted hearing this when she talked about going to a 4-year university. After studying at a community college and deciding she wanted to become a teacher, Josie applied and was accepted into a university an hour and a half drive from home. She recalled, "I really wanted to live on campus, but [. . .] my dad said, 'No, how could you? A girl cannot leave her house 'til she's married.' So this is bad . . . " Josie went on to describe how in order to focus on her studies (worried about the long commute and potential distractions living at home), she lied to her parents about receiving a scholarship covering room and board. She fabricated a letter from the university and mailed it to herself:

> My parents got it, they opened it and they said, "What is this?" And my grandma and my aunt from Mexico were visiting. And then I read it to them

> aloud and they go, "Wow." And, everybody's really happy. "Congratulations" and stuff like that. And then my dad goes, "Wait a minute, but she can't. That means she's not gonna live at home. She can't accept it." And my grandma, who was 80-something and she had black, long, braided hair, very Mexican, and in Spanish, of course, she didn't speak any English, she goes, "Oh no. She won it. She has to go. She's going to go."

While her father was still against the idea, the whole family visited the campus, including "my two sisters, my mom, my dad, my grandma, my aunt from Mexico, and my nephew who is three." While she recalled being embarrassed by the whole group on a campus with "a lot of people with money," Josie was determined, "'Nope, I'm gonna do it.' So I did. I did work-study and I worked and took out loans."

Josie emphasized that her parents were always supportive of her education and had aspirations for her and her siblings: "They knew they wanted something better, they just didn't know what it was or how to get us there personally [. . .] in this system." She expresses regret when remembering lying to her family, but also recognizes that she did what she felt was best at the time. While some readers might interpret Josie's actions as deceitful, we interpret her actions as evidence of deep persistence and resistance in bucking the strong cultural expectation of being a "good daughter." Josie connects her persistence and drive to her work as a leader, focused on supporting students like her navigating different cultural expectations and worlds.

Teresa: "You need to quit school, you're a bad mother, you're being selfish." After the deficit-oriented comment from her high school guidance counselor, Teresa was determined to go to college. Soon after graduation, she enrolled in a program for future teachers of color at a local university; but, she did so behind her mother's back. Her mother felt she should work first to help support the family: "I was going to school for about the first year behind my mom's back. [. . .] She just thought I had long hours at work because I'd go to work then I'd go to school." Her mother eventually found out she was going to school at night, while she was cleaning Teresa's room and found her books. She was angry, but told Teresa that she could continue her studies as long as it did not interfere with her work.

This changed a few months later when Teresa fell in love and became pregnant. She was told by her mother: "You need to quit school, now you're going to be a mother and being a mom needs to be your number one priority." Her mother emphasized to her that she would be selfish if she stayed in school; but, Teresa continued to attend. When her boyfriend left town, her mother told her: "You need to quit school, you're a bad mother, you're being

selfish." The tension between her and her mother continued to grow. After about a year, she reunited with her ex-boyfriend and they married. Teresa recalled: "I finally quit. I was a horrible wife, a selfish mother, a selfish daughter, and the only thing that meant anything to me was being the best mom that I could be." When she quit school, Teresa spoke with the advisor for the future teachers of color program where was enrolled, who she described as being tough and no nonsense. She described how the advisor told her that many people fail out of the program and "only the strong survive." Like the high school counselor who doubted her, the advisor's comment was a wake-up call for Teresa and she decided to go back to school.

Teresa talked about the lack of support from her then husband, who had drug and alcohol addictions and would disappear for days at a time. She had two more children and was married for 5 years, working full-time at a bank and attending school full-time at night. She recalled how after giving birth to her third child, she decided to leave her husband: "Through that relationship, it made me so strong because I had to. I had to grow up and I had to learn how to stick up for myself not only for me but for my children." Teresa described breaking out of a submissive shell through her struggles to get an education, overcoming deficit perspectives at school, relationship struggles, and cultural norms at home—all struggles she connects as affecting her strength as a leader.

Deeper Visions for Equity in Schools

Informed by their experiences as students of color, our research participants repeatedly shared how their equity ideas contrasted with dominant conceptions of equity in their districts. Their districts tended to promote more generalized equity calls for "all students to succeed," without explicit connections to addressing systemic forms of racism, xenophobia, or deficit ideologies about families and communities like the ones they came from.

Gregorio. Gregorio discussed the importance of culturally responsive leadership and systems. In particular, he described the critical need for families of color to be more engaged and find educational opportunities for parents. He described immigrant parents' need to learn more about "what the community has to offer, what things are for free, where can you find [resources]" as well as be provided opportunities to learn English because "they want to get better and they want to help their kids." He connected this to issues of diversity in staffing. Gregorio explained,

> Making an investment in me, I don't think they had a Hispanic or Spanish-speaking person here before. If you look at the district level, I don't see anyone

> there that's Latino. And I think maybe they're slowly starting to. All I hear this coming year is about building equity all around, but what does that look like? It could be really anything. What's good for everybody to have? What does it mean to you, and what do you want in place?

For Gregorio, leading for equity required clarity around defining what "equity" meant and the goals the district should have. He discussed the need for schools to have "equity in other things, [not] just having money or supplies." In the region, local superintendents had a focus on "equity for all," but often concentrated on poverty over other social justice issues, centering most of their efforts on purchases of school supplies district-wide or implementation of school food pantries. Also, a local superintendent led a "culture of poverty" professional development initiative citing increases in the number of students in poverty in his district. Despite this focus on poverty, when examining demographic changes over the past 10 years in his district, the biggest increase was in fact the number of students of color, and specifically Latinx students.

Gregorio saw district and school administrators conflate equity work with simply working with students from low-income backgrounds. His vision of equity involved more than providing school supplies or having food pantries (though he also supported those initiatives). Equity was something deeper to Gregorio and not restricted to poverty alone. As a child he had experienced what truly supported migrant families. Equity to Gregorio was about serving the whole family in a way that was responsive to their unique cultures, languages, and identities.

Teresa. Teresa focused on advocacy for low-income students of color. Describing why she pursued leadership, she explained that her participation in a local bilingual education association taught her a great deal:

> I truly started to see outside of a classroom world and how it could influence exactly why I wanted to start to be a teacher: to be a role model for children, to be able to stop so much inequities in education—from discipline, to how certain things are being taught, to certain prejudices about families or children and what they can and can't learn, to how certain students here they are held to this standard and other kids are held to this standard. As I was getting involved in that I realized, "I want to be that voice, I want to be that advocate for that."

She had a clear sense of the inequities students of color faced, including deficit perspectives about their families or what they can do, informed from her own lived experiences.

At the same time, she faced criticism of her leadership style and directness. She described how in a predominantly White administrative environment, her questions about curriculum or programs could be seen as “hostile” despite her intentions. She explained, “I ask a lot of questions and I guess they don’t like that I don’t stay quiet.” Teresa recognized that it was critical for her as an advocate to be thoughtful around her approach to raising concerns:

> I have to be so much more intentional only because of me, because I am a Latina, because I do have a certain background that if I don’t phrase it a certain way it’s looking like I am insinuating or questioning their level of expertise, which I’m not. [. . .] “Here she goes again with this equity issue.” It’s like my concern is pretty valid but it’s not looked upon, as if maybe [my principal] might have that same equity issue. It’s who is delivering it is looked upon so differently. For me, I can’t deliver the same way as my White counterpart will; my delivery has to be via inquiry. It just can’t be like, “Yeah, that’s not okay or why don’t you do that?’ It’s got to be more like, ‘How might you or it seems like.”

Teresa was deeply inspired by the challenges she faced along her way and educators’ deficit perspectives she had to overcome. She recognized these were strengths in her understanding of the students of color and families she worked with, but she knew she had to be measured in her equity approach because she was Latina. In this way, her *Latinidad* (Latina-ness) was a strength, but also a liability in leading change for equity in her predominantly White district.

Roger. Unlike Gregorio and Teresa, Roger and Josie were the head principals in their buildings and could foster school improvement centered on their own visions. For Roger, this visioning work was central to his understandings of equity and inextricably tied to his family. Roger’s goal was a 90-90-90 model at his school, where 90% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch, 90% are students of color, and 90% test at grade level. His goal was inspired by his father: “With my mind on that goal, that someone like my dad, his life circumstance would have been different if someone thought about him like that.” His focus on 90-90-90 informed his work with his staff and particularly his leadership team to refocus their school mission and vision, targeting instructional improvements school-wide.

Roger recognized that this was not the mentality held by other principals in his district. He described how his peers often looked to other districts with similar percentages of English learners and low-income students, and

use them as comparisons for achievement data. Roger felt this limited their students:

> Well, all those kids eventually are going to have to apply to some university with every kid in the state. [. . .] If you don't set the bar where everyone else is shooting for, our kids are going to miss out on some opportunities.

He repeatedly pushed against deficit perspectives about what their students could or could not do.

He recalled taking his leadership team to a district with similar demographics that had high levels of academic achievement for students of color. He described realizing: "We're not working as hard as we could. We're not doing the right things." With this renewed focus, he went back to his school and provided a visual to the staff to focus them around instructional improvements and the inequities their students experienced:

> I took these one-gallon glass jars and I put them in front of the teachers. I had some gum drops, they were red, yellow, and green. I said, "Here's how many kids we have reading at standard at Heartwood Elementary." I dropped in the green ones and there was 12, 12 kids fell in there. Then I said, "Here's how many kids are below standard." I dropped in the yellow ones in. When they heard that sound and that clinking, it was really personal for some folks. Then, we just had this massive jar of red students: kids who can't read. We shared that visual and I said, "We've got to do something different. Common Core is coming, the test is going to be hard, our kids are already struggling, we have to do something different, are you in?" Everybody was in and we've been plugging away ever since at that kind of work, and that's when the vision and mission came clear.

Roger was adamant in our interview about the need to combat deficit perspectives about students and families, as well as about what teachers were capable of. He saw himself as an instructional leader who also sought to protect teachers from the new fads or initiatives coming from district office, which he believed did not align to their vision.

This stance got Roger in trouble a number of times with district administrators who saw him as not always "being a team player." He described how his school leadership team pushed back on particular district initiatives they felt did not fit their system. For example, the district sought to launch a one-to-one technology initiative, where students would receive tablets. Similar to Gregorio, Roger knew that equity involved deeper work than simply buying supplies or technology. For Roger, equity was about focusing on aligning systems in his school on a specific vision for academic improvement. He

recalled telling district leaders that he did not need them at their school: "Well, they see that as not being a team player and what I try to share is, 'No, we have this hyper focus on what we're trying to put together, so give us some time.'" Teachers appreciated this, but it required political navigations for him and often raised tensions with his direct supervisors and district officials.

Josie. More than any other leader in our study, Principal Josie most explicitly connected her school experiences to her leadership vision. She repeated many times how moments in school affected her core values: "I want kids to remember me by that kindness and then the other piece, you want to be sure that kids in your school don't ever go through what you went through." Josie described her vision "that every child needs to be loved, kindness. Every child has potential regardless. Every child does." This deep centering on student capabilities and strengths countered both deficit perspectives she faced growing up, as well as deficit-oriented comments she heard from other educators.

Josie described a staff meeting in her first year as a principal where she directly addressed deficit-oriented comments she had overheard:

> I said, "thank you, it's been a great start but let me tell you a little bit about my philosophy." And I said, "I believe that teachers need to be given freedom to teach. I believe that we need to believe in our teachers and I believe that I need to support you and that's my job. But, the one thing I never want to hear you do is scream at a child and humiliate them. Because if you do, then you and I are going to have a problem."

When asked how staff reacted, she said, "they were quiet and I could see some of them [. . .] felt the same way and so nobody ever said that to them."

Josie was particularly concerned with how deficit perspectives were manifested in teacher practice, and saw her evaluations of teachers as critical to addressing inequities. She described having to take on veteran teachers who she saw were not holding all children to the same standards. She recalled being methodical with her evaluations by using data to inform feedback, coaching them as much as possible, being willing to have difficult conversations with the teachers, and sometimes taking on the union and seniority rules to have a teacher removed. Josie felt it was part of her duty as a principal "to take on that battle."

Although Josie was a strong advocate for equity and culturally responsive education, she often felt excluded from broader district conversations on equity and diversity, and that her leadership style was not valued by district

leaders. As described in the introduction, Josie saw that her district reified a certain type of principal who looked or sounded "good." She believed that one of her leadership strengths was her ability to build relationships with staff, children, and families. At the same time, she acknowledged that her culturally responsive leadership "for the whole, not the I" (as mentioned in the introduction) was not recognized by the all-White, mostly male district leadership at the time. She described that her district had "a certain prototype" that everyone talked about as having "all this potential and leadership" that tended to be "a White man, a White woman, a White very articulate woman" wearing business suits. Nevertheless, Josie emphasized, "just because you can talk well and present well to your superior, doesn't mean you have that capacity in here [the school] and that's what a lot of people struggle with," especially working with students of color and immigrant families.

Despite her success in closing achievement gaps and even winning an award of distinction from the state, Josie felt that she did not have a major influence on district conversations related to equity, because of her leadership style and racial identity:

> You know what a big challenge is? Is, you don't want to be that angry Latina person that nobody takes seriously either, championing every cause and, 'okay, here she goes again.' You can fall into that stereotype, [. . .] then you're not effective either. It's a balance.

Josie was acutely aware of the political optics of addressing equity issues at the district level, wishing to not come across as "that angry Latina person" and not be taken seriously.

Discussion

The counternarratives of the four Latinx administrators in our study reveal critical insights into how Latinx leaders' personal, educational, and professional experiences affect their understanding of equity and leadership practices. The leaders in our study were acutely aware of their cultural, linguistic, and racial differences to the majority White administrators and teachers in their districts. They also appeared to see their differences as strengths in serving families in their schools, particularly Spanish-speaking Latinx students and families of color. Similar to other studies documenting the contributions and culturally responsive leadership approaches (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016) of Latinx leaders, we found that the four Latinx administrators in our study sought to counter deficit perspectives about students and families of color (Hernandez et al., 2014; Martinez et al, 2016; Murakami et al. 2016),

and were committed to equity and culturally responsive education (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). At the same time, each of the four Latinx principals described visions of equity that differed from their school districts' initiatives to serve "all students." Indeed, they clearly articulated how their beliefs about education conflicted with so-called equity programs or policies in their districts, or how they felt specifically undermined in their advocacy work.

Many equity conversations in their districts at the time tended to focus on poverty and appear to avoid direct discussions of race, language, culture, among other social justice issues. In another study in Pacific Northwest, Kruse, Rodela, and Huggins (2018) found that superintendents avoided discussions of race and racism, instead focusing on a more generalized discussion of equity "for all." Although in both Oregon and Washington state policies tend to swing more progressive and Democratic, in the suburban and rural districts our research participants worked, there appeared to be an erasing of racial terms or "colormuting" (Pollock, 2004) when discussing how equity could be addressed. District leadership appeared to focus on a more generalized notion of "equity for all" rather than the more culturally responsive ways the four Latinx leaders in our study engaged in their schools. At times, this could lead to conflicts with district staff as in the case of Roger, or disagreements on equity philosophy like with Gregorio. Other times, as in the cases of Teresa and Josie, being a Latina meant they had to be "very intentional" around how they approached equity issues because of the racialized politics of administration in their districts.

Community Cultural Wealth Informing Equity Leadership

We conclude this article by considering our central research question: How do Latinx administrators in the Pacific Northwest draw on their Community Cultural Wealth to inform their leadership in schools? In Table 3, we apply Yosso's (2005) framework to the counterstories of the four Latinx administrators in our study. We recognize that the specific counterstories shared in this article do not capture the whole of their educational or professional journeys. We describe some of these pathways in other published work (Rodela et al., 2019). Our intention in this article is to illustrate how the Community Cultural Wealth the four Latinx administrators in our study developed as children and students of color informed their equity leadership as administrators.

All four leaders exhibited aspirational capital as they sought to obtain their degrees and credentials, with most of their families supported them along the way, even if their parents might not have known how best to support them through U.S. school systems. All four employed their linguistic capital as

Table 3. Connecting Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Framework to the Counterstories of Gregorio, Josie, Roger, and Teresa.

Community Cultural Wealth	Examples from Latinx Leader Counterstories
Aspirational capital: "Ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77).	*All four leaders*: Their focus on obtaining education, graduating high school, and attending college, despite economic hardships and racism in schools
Familial capital: "Cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition" (p. 79).	*Gregorio*: Working alongside family and learning the value of hard work *Teresa*: Deep motivation as mother to get her education and support her children *Josie*: Role of family (especially grandmother) in supporting her and connecting her to her roots
Social capital: "Networks of people and community resources" (p. 79).	*Gregorio*: Connections to school officials (particularly on his pathway toward becoming a teacher; see Rodela, Rodriguez-Mojica, & Cochrun, 2019) *Roger*: Relationships with cousin in school to focus on academics and sports (though done so as way to cope with racism and deficit perspectives faced in school)
Linguistic capital: "Intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (p. 78).	*All four leaders*: Used their bilingualism to connect with Spanish-speaking families and build strong relationships across cultures
Resistant capital: "Knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80).	*Teresa*: Sense of *coraje* (rage) when confronted with deficit comments in high school, deep persistence to complete college degree, continued to advocate for equity despite racism faced *Josie*: Bucking cultural norm to attend college, confronting deficit perspectives among staff members, continued to advocate for equity despite racism faced *Roger*: Learned Spanish despite pull of assimilation, confronts deficit perspectives among staff, pushes against initiatives not aligned with equity school vision
Navigational capital: "Skills of maneuvering through social institutions" particularly ones creating for White, English-speaking, middle class persons (p. 80).	*All four leaders*: Successfully graduated high school, college, earned Master's degrees, and principal certifications in schools with limited support for bilingual, Students of Color *Teresa*: Earned scholarships through Teachers of Color program *Josie*: Found a way to fund her living expenses through work-study and loans

bilingual English-Spanish speakers to connect with Spanish-speaking families and children in their schools. And, all four have deep navigational capital skills to sustain themselves through systems of schooling not set up for them as bilingual and bicultural children growing up in the Pacific Northwest from the 1970s to 1990s.

In their counterstories, we see the unique ways the leaders' familial, social, and resistant capital inform their leadership. All the leaders viewed their strong familial connections as strengths; this was most evident in Gregorio's description working with his parents and siblings in the fields to financially support their family. At the same time, Josie and Teresa had to show resistant capital in the face of strong cultural gender norms in their families. They understood why their parents believed what they did, but they also had to push against their parents' beliefs in order to fulfill their educational aspirations. Social capital also was critical to them, though less evident across their counterstories. Roger described relying on his cousin in school to support him as he tried to be the "whitest brown kid on campus." He recognized in our interview this was destructive and unjust, but he saw it as a survival tactic in the face of the deep oppressive pull of assimilation. Across the counterstories, it is evident that as people of color, the four Latinx leaders in our study relied on their Community Cultural Wealth to help them along their pathway (Hernandez et al., 2014; Horak & Valle, 2016; Martinez et al., 2016; Murakami et al., 2013) and to inform how they approached their work to promote equity as administrators (Martinez et al., 2016; Murakami et al., 2013, 2016; Niño et al., 2017).

Latinx Equity Leadership in White Dominant Spaces

When asked about the critical issues in their districts, they described deficit perspectives about families of color, as well as a need for equity-focused school systems and instructional programs. Gregorio highlighted the need for more culturally responsive relationships, systems, and leadership, which he saw lacking in his district. He talked about being only one of a few Latinx leaders and concerned with a focus on "supplies" over systems. Roger described how district leadership would "spend hundreds of thousands of dollars" on technology, but their decisions were often not connected to broader improvement plans or systemic visions. Because of this, he was seen as not being "a team player." Teresa recalled asking what she felt were research-informed questions about curriculum, and being rebuffed for being "too direct" with White colleagues. Josie was recognized for her culturally responsive, equity-focused leadership, but was not invited to the table when the district sought to work on broader equity initiatives.

In many ways, the four Latinx administrators in our study saw strong equity-focused, aligned school visions (Murphy & Torre, 2015) as essential to combating deficit ideologies and inequities in achievement and opportunity for students of color and low-income students. But, in other ways, how they could enact their equity visions was constrained by White dominant administrative spaces, which often failed to address systemic barriers faced by students of color and low-income families, or "did not value the [Community Cultural Wealth] they carried into their" schools (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018, p. 11). They all described how ideas of equity swirled in their districts, but often appeared to focus on broader ideas of "all students" (Kruse et al., 2018) and were not focused on systemic injustices, deficit ideologies about low-income students and families of color, or core practices of instructional leadership or relationship building.

We recognize that they face similar challenges to other Latina/o/x leaders in the United States, but we also argue that there is a particular White dominant administrative space in their districts in the Pacific Northwest. Across Washington and Oregon, "equity" is an accepted term and focus of many school districts; however, there is a particular brand of colorblind equity that seems prevalent in suburban and rural settings in these states. While poverty is certainly a critical issue affecting diverse students and communities, many superintendents and district leaders in suburban and rural areas tend to ignore or avoid explicitly addressing issues of racism, xenophobia, heteronormativity, transphobia, and other social justice issues. This stands in contrast to explicit racial equity policies found in urban areas such as Seattle, Portland, or Tacoma. Being one of the only Latinx leaders and leaders of color in their districts meant they had to consider how their racial identities affected their equity leadership and advocacy. Our research participants knew they had to find a balance, but also be willing to "take on that battle," as Josie underscored.

Conclusion

Our findings and discussion raise serious questions to the field about how we understand equity leadership, and how we support current and aspiring leaders of color who seek to promote equity and social justice in their work. Our findings suggest that Latinx leaders, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, have to navigate complex White dominant administrative spaces in their equity advocacy efforts. Similar to other work on leaders of color advancing social justice (Buckmiller, 2015; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Liang & Peter-Hawkins, 2017; Peterson & Vergara, 2016; Santamaría, 2014;

Santamaría & Jean-Marie, 2014), the leaders in our study were acutely aware of the role their racial, gender, and language identities played in how they could or could not lead for equity in particular spaces. They saw their equity leadership as deeply informed by their childhoods and experiences of schooling as students of color.

This work adds to the growing scholarship on the potential equity and culturally responsive leadership contributions of Latinx administrators and other leaders of color. This work is vital to the field's understanding of how leaders' own sociocultural positionalities (Camicia, 2015) and educational histories can inform how they engage in social justice leadership, as well as affect the barriers and forms of resistance they face in this work (Santamaría, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Our analysis brought forth a particular geographical region as a key in influencing our research participants' experiences. More empirical work is needed around the relationship between regional, district contexts, and the leadership practices of all equity-oriented leaders, particularly leaders from marginalized communities (e.g., people of color, LGBTQ persons).

As a field, we need to consider the practical, on-the-ground support provided to in-practice and in-preparation leaders of color (Jean-Marie, Norman, & Brooks, 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008; Rodela et al., 2019). School administrators in the United States are disproportionately White. How are we preparing future principals of color to encounter the racialized politics of administration in their jobs? How do we support them in drawing on their rich forms of Community Cultural Wealth to support marginalized students in schools and "work for the whole, not the I?" How do we—as researchers and professors of future teachers and leaders of color—ensure that our students are ready to confront the deep challenge Josie put forth that "kids in your school don't ever go through what you went through?" More work is needed to recruit, support, and sustain, leaders of color and Latinx leaders like those in this study, as they seek to combat injustices in their schools for students facing some of the same educational inequities they faced themselves as students of color in U.S. schools.

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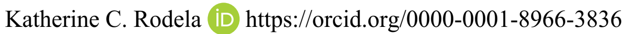
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Notes

1. All names of persons are pseudonyms to protect research participants' identities.
2. We employ "Latinx" as a gender-expansive term, which includes immigrants or persons with ancestral ties to Latin America. We apply "Latinx" when referring to the broader Latinx community or groups in general to purposefully disrupt the gender binary conveyed with "Latina/o" and forefront the inclusion of gender nonbinary persons in this community (Vidal-Ortiz & Martínez, 2018). At the same time, as our article focuses primarily on the experiences of cisgender Latina/o leaders, we also use Latina/o aligned with our research participants' gender identities (Sampson, 2019).
3. In the existing literature, the terms counter-narrative (counternarrative), counter-story, and counterstory have been used interchangeably. We use the term "counterstory" in our article, as we draw primarily from Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) and Pérez Huber's (2008) frameworks.

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