

DISSERTATION

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CISGENDER OPENLY GAY LATINO MALES AS MID-
LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SOUTHWEST REGION
OF THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CISGENDER OPENLY GAY LATINO MALES AS MID-LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SOUTHWEST REGION OF THE UNITED STATES

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to explore the stories and experiences of openly gay Latino males who serve as mid-level administrators in higher education. This study focused on narrative stories of personal and historical context of the participants' intersecting identities that have implications for their daily interactions in an institutional environment. This study is significant in four ways. First, In the United States, gay Latinos have been subject to social oppression, invisibility, and misrepresentation throughout history. This lack of recognition and support stifles gay Latinos the ability to develop a sense of belonging. Narrative inquiry was used to increase awareness of the lived experiences of gay Latinos as administrators in higher education and gives them an opportunity to share their experiences. The key findings from the participants' narratives were the influences of family expectations, support systems, fear of discrimination or homophobia, and lack of representation in higher education. The struggles and achievements from these stories are valuable and can raise visibility for more inclusive leadership practices, mentorship, and equitable policies in higher education.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom and dad. Ever since I came into this world, I was welcomed by your love, hope, and inspiration. You sacrificed so much so Christina and I could have a sense of privilege. You always told us to never forget from where we came and look at us now! We are both working to give voices to our communities. Thank you for showing me the capabilities of arduous work and how dreams are achieved through this process. Through your wisdom and honesty, I can navigate and face any challenge that comes my way because I know you are by my side. You knew from the beginning I had a vivacious personality and showed me how to use it as a talent. Thank you, mom and dad, for your unconditional love, acceptance, and support! You make this world a better place.

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strength. Because of this, we cheer each other on, and I will forever be grateful for all the texts, calls, and all social media posts. Those words of wisdom and gestures of love all have a special place in my heart. Those moments gave me hope through the best and hardest times. I also want to give a huge shout out to the Familia Garcia and the Bishops! Words cannot be expressed of how thankful and grateful I am for each of you! You took the extra time to always check up on me and push me when needed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Higher education was founded around the mission to serve society and promote democracy (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Thelin, 2011). Despite this mission, higher education in the United States began as an institution that excluded individuals based upon social class, gender, and race (Ahmed, 2012; Stich & Freie, 2015; Thelin, 2011). Regardless of the progressive movements over the past 50 years, colleges remain largely heteronormative and racist (Bazarsky, Morrow, & Javier 2015; Vaccaro, 2012). Colleges continue to struggle to create safe and supportive campuses for all faculty, staff, and students. Discrimination and the feeling of being unwelcomed permeate an unwholesome college dynamic and reinforce traditional heterogender institution values for several identities (Preston & Hoffman, 2015). In the United States, Latino, gay men have been subject to social oppression, invisibility, and misrepresentation throughout history (Excelencia in Education, 2015). Historically, the Latino community has lagged their Black and White peers in higher education degree attainment (Excelencia in Education, 2015; Krogstad, 2015).

In 2020, the Latino community was the largest ethnic and racial minority group in the U.S. (Ahmed, 2012). The total population of the United States in the 2018 U.S. Census (2018) was 327 million people. Out of these 327 million people, 58 million were Latino (U.S. Census, 2018). Hispanic origin, aged 18 years and over, were surveyed regarding educational attainment (Human Rights Campaign, 2021). Of those surveyed in 2018 census, 63.2% indicated they had no education beyond high school graduation, compared to 41.6% of Whites and 49.2% of Black (U.S. Census, 2018). A large discrepancy regarding the educational attainment of individuals of

Hispanic origin is clearly visible (Human Rights Campaign, 2021). In addition, only 0.9% of the Latino community surveyed completed an undergraduate degree (U.S. Census, 2018).

Despite lower educational attainment from the Latino community, Krogstad (2015) found some promising trends in the education of Latino students. First, dropout rates for Latino students had dropped dramatically, dropping from 32% in 2000 to 14% in 2013 among those ages 18 to 24 years old (Excelencia in Education, 2015; Krogstad, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Second, college enrollment of Latino students has increased significantly (Human Rights Campaign, 2021). In 1993, 728,000 Latino students were enrolled in college (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). By 2013, enrollment increased 201% to 2.2 million Latino students enrolled in college (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Today, Latino students have the greatest increase in college enrollment and are the largest minority group on U.S. college campuses (Human Rights Campaign, 2021). However, only 13.1% of U.S. Latino graduated with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2013 (U.S. Census, 2013).

Data show the Latino college student population is growing, but this growth is slow because of the disparities that remain for the Latino community and, specifically, for Latino men (Excelencia in Education, 2015). Research shows Latino men are more likely to drop out of high school and join the workforce rather than attend college due to oppression and the lack of resources to be resilient (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006).

Women outnumber males in higher education and this gap is even more pronounced in Black and Latino populations (Saenz, Garcia-Louis., Drake, & Guida, 2018). This distribution has gained national attention for the past decade because of the efforts of former President Obama's initiative, My Brother's Keeper (Saenz et al., 2018). The initiative addressed the poor

educational attainment of young men of color in higher education (Saenz et al., 2018). Latino men continue to fall behind their women peers in college participation and degree attainment.

Despite the growing focus and research for the Latino community, little research exists on the various subsets of the Latino population in higher education. For example, there is little research on work climate in higher education for Latino individuals (Camacho, 2016). Current research primarily focuses on Latino students or faculty in higher education (Camacho, 2016). More specifically, many professional staff members with multiple sexual and racial minority identities are silenced and the intersectionality of their identities is not widely known in higher education (Camacho, 2016). While more are researching people of color as administrators in higher education institutions (Camacho, 2016), scholarly inquiry is occurring pertaining to the experiences of those identifying as LGBTQ (Croteau & Lark, 2009). There is limited literature for gay Latino male administrators in higher education; literature on sexuality and sexual orientation also lacks (Croteau & Lark, 2009).

Gay Latino faculty, staff, and students are challenged with heterosexism, homophobia, and heteronormative oppression specifically within higher education (Camacho, 2016). Gay Latinos who work at colleges are scrutinized on many levels by stakeholders and their scrutiny is related to their personal lives and identities in which they share with the public (Bullard, 2013). Many people would assume higher education institutions are progressive employers of the LGBTQ community, but, organizationally and culturally, institutions of higher education remain conservative (Bullard, 2013). Oppression in higher education comes in the forms of inequality, discrimination, and marginalization (Garcia, 2015). The lavender ceiling, a term used to “describe the kinds of systemic barriers which prevent recruitment, retention, and promotion of openly gay and lesbian people” (Swan, 1995, p. 52) is often an invariable threat (Bullard, 2013).

These invariable threats cause an absence of affirming policies, rules, role models, mentors, internship programs, recruitment, and advancement for staff administrators in higher education (Bullard, 2013). Nevertheless, heterosexism, homophobia, and heteronormative oppression continues, and many professional staff members fear discrimination in the workplace (Day & Schoenrade, 1997). Additionally, Garcia (2015) mentioned literature on racism, homophobia, and support structures (or lack of) for gay Latino men within higher education is most often lacking their personal narrative accounts.

These determined dominant discourses perpetuate the invisibility of marginalized identity perspectives (Day & Schoenrade, 1997). According to the Project MALES Research Institute at the University of Texas at Austin, gay Latino males in higher education seek gay-affirming communities, avoid, or modify gay adverse spaces and shift their focus of sexual orientation in exclusive settings (Lu, Rodriguez, & Bukoski, 2020). Because the experiences of Latino and LGBTQ higher education professionals are extensive topics to cover, this research was narrowed to highlight the lived experiences of cisgender, openly gay Latino men who are mid-level professional administrators in higher education in the Southwest region of the United States. The southwest region includes the states of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the stories and experiences of openly gay Latino males who serve as mid-level administrators in higher education. This study focused on narrative stories of personal and historical context of the participants' intersecting identities that have implications for their daily interactions in an institutional environment (Labor, 2017). The

struggles and achievements from these stories are valuable and can raise visibility for more inclusive leadership practices, mentorship, and equitable policies in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

The overarching paradigm chosen for this study was the constructivist paradigm. The constructivist's paradigm considers reality is based upon constructed and shared experiences and research results are created through consensus of an individual construction, including the constructions of the investigator (Creswell, 2002). The constructivist paradigm was ideal for this study because constructivist researchers seek detailed context of the place where participants live or work and the interactions that take place (Creswell, 2002).

This study used a qualitative strategy within a constructivist paradigm to identify the detailed experiences and perceptions of gay cisgender Latino males in higher education as mid-level administrators. Qualitative research is used to gain a complex understanding of an issue (Creswell, 2002).

Phenomenology was chosen for this qualitative strategy because phenomenology examines individuals through their experiences, beliefs, and values due to their social influences (Bullard, 2013). A phenomenological research method is best suited when it is important to understand the shared experiences of several individuals, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon itself (Creswell, 2002).

Narrative inquiry was used as an approach of phenomenology which attempts to understand a phenomenon and shared through storytelling (Kim, 2015). Stories can create a place where society can begin to understand or make sense of the world through memorable experiences (Peralta, 2010). This method not only focused on the inner development but also the

complexity and conflicts of human experience which then leads to personal growth and maturation (Kim, 2015).

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality Theory was used as a lens to assess goals, develop research questions, identify threats to validity and to justify a rationale for this research and its conclusions (Maxwell, 2012). Intersectionality is defined as the “interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (Davis, 2008, p. 68). Intersectionality focuses on diversity and differences as the center focus (Kim, 2015). This study used an intersectionality framework to illuminate the complex experiences of gay Latino males in higher education. The term intersectionality was created by Crenshaw (1991) who argued Black women were discriminated against because of the intersection of their gender and race. “Intersectionality has since emerged as a criticism of feminism for ignoring differences based on multiple and simultaneous oppressions leading to advancing the contribution of feminist theory” (Clark & Saleh, 2019, p. 161). Intersectionality recognizes how multiple identities overlap one another to impact how a person’s overall identity is formed. These multiple identities are “defined in terms of relative sociocultural power and privilege and that shape one’s identity and experiences” (Parent, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2013, p. 640). Crenshaw (1991) stated researchers and readers need to examine the “way power has clustered around certain categories and is exercised against others” or “the ways those values [attached to categories] foster and create social hierarchies” (p. 1297).

Using intersectionality as the framework for this study, I illuminated the complexities of prominent social identities (race, gender, sexuality, etc.) in different environments within a

context of systemic power, privilege, and oppression based on these identities (Crenshaw, 1991). I investigated the identities and lived experiences of the participants as interdependent social identities within their relevant social context, both contemporary and historical (Labor, 2017). Environments and the complex relationship of interactions of a person and the environment are essential to understanding the lived experiences on gay Latino male mid-level administrators (Labor, 2017). Critical Race Theory was not chosen for this study because I illuminated all identities as a whole and not just the experience of race as the sum of all parts (Crenshaw, 1991).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the life stories of openly gay Latino males who currently work in higher education as mid-level administrators for in the Southwest region of the United States?
2. What types of support systems are reported by gay Latino men in their higher education setting?
3. What are the challenges that exist for gay Latino men in their higher education setting?
4. How does intersectionality affect the lived experiences of gay Latino males as mid-level administrator positions at higher education institutions in the Southwest Region of the United States?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions of terms are provided:

- **Campus Climate:** The current perceptions and attitudes of faculty, staff, and students regarding issues of diversity on a campus (Rankin, Weber, Blemenfield, & Frazer, 2010).
- **Chicano:** Chicano is defined as Mexican Americans residing in the United States (Ruiz, 1990).

- Closeted: A gay person keeps the fact that they are a gay a secret from other people (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).
- Cisgender: denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).
- Gay: a homosexual male (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).
- Heteronormative: Heteronormative means that masculine men routinely pair with feminine women (Dilley, 2013).
- Latino: The term Latino refers to individuals of Latin American and Mexican origin who currently reside in the United States (Diaz-Strong & Meiners, 2007).
- Heterosexism: heterosexism is the assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and more desirable than homosexuality (Dilley, 2013).
- Mid-level Administrator: The mid-level administrator occupies the space between entry-level professionals and senior administrator/officers (Croteau & Lark, 2009). A mid-level administrator reports to a senior administrator/officer.
- Openly Gay or Openly Lesbian: Describes people who self-identify as lesbian or gay in their personal, public and/or professional lives (We Are Family, 2019).
- “Out”: sometimes referenced as “coming out” or “coming out of the closet”, to be “out” is a reference for people’s disclosure of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Hill & Lynch, 1983).
- People of Color (POC): Refers to racial and ethnic minority groups. The term “people of color” is—however it is viewed—a political term, but it is also a term that allows for a more complex set of identity for the individual—a relational one that is in constant flux. (Dilley, 2013).

- Senior Administrator/Officer: Refers to the individual in charge of all units of students within a given institution. This term is often synonymous with Senior Officers (SO), Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA), or Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs (Beavers, 2016).
- Sexual Orientation: An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people (Human Rights Campaign, 2021).
- Storytelling: The art of literally “telling a story.” Storytelling makes use of the oral communication and language (Long, 2012).
- Questioning: A person unwilling or not yet able to say what your gender identity or sexual orientation is (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of the study include the participation of self-identify openly gay Latino, cisgender males who are current mid-level administrators in higher education. The participant must currently work at an institution within these seven states: Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. This study only included administrators who work at a four-year public or non-profit private institution. This study excluded community colleges, for-profit institutions, and trade schools. This study also excluded individuals from the lesbian, closeted, bisexual, transgender, and questioning community. The participants must report to a senior administrator/officer within higher education.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this include the fact some mid-level administrators were unwilling to share deeper personal stories or challenges related to their current professional position. Given the nature of the methodology as a narrative that focuses on a select group of Latino, self-identified

gay men who are administrators within college and universities within the Southwestern U.S., this study cannot generalize beyond the participants of this study.

Significance of Study

This study is significant in four ways. First, In the United States, gay Latinos have been subject to social oppression, invisibility, and misrepresentation throughout history. This lack of recognition and supports stifles gay Latinos the ability to develop a sense of love and belonging. Narrative inquiry was used to increase awareness of the lived experiences of gay Latinos as administrators in higher education and gives them an opportunity to share their experiences.

Second, this study contributes to the literature by using a unique theoretical framework of narrative inquiry to the higher education literature and illuminating the coping and emotional regulation experiences of seven gay Latino men.

Third, this study contributes to lack of existing LGBTQ and Latino research specifically in the Southwest region of the United States. Several studies have been completed on singular identities in other regions of the United States but not in the Southwestern region (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006).

Fourth, this study achieves greater understanding of intersectionality and of multiple identity formation processes, Participants shared how they experienced identity development in a Latino culture and in gay identity formation.

Researcher Perspective and Assumptions

This topic has become a passion of mine and has a deep personal connection to my personal life and career. I am an openly gay Latino male currently working as a mid-level administrator in higher education. I have worked in higher education for over 16 years at a large public research institution.

I remember when I was eighteen, an undergrad at the largest flagship university in Texas and did not see other gay Latino male leaders that looked like me. I questioned my educational future as a gay male. I would ask myself if I belonged in college, where do I fit in and where do I go to find people like me at the institution. I was scared to be “out” as a gay male, and I did not feel safe talking about my sexual orientation with other people. I also struggled to find a place or environment, where I could feel comfortable with being both gay and Latino. I usually had to choose one identity over the other and silence the other for a while.

When I decided to work in higher education, I still saw a lack of peer/mentorship support opportunities for gay Latino males. On top of that, I still did not see many gay or Latino leaders in higher education. I joined different professional identity associations on campus, but I felt again like I had to choose one identity at that time. For example, I would attend higher education national conferences and out of thousands of attendees, I would be in a room with only 50-100 participants with that one identity. During those gatherings, the conversation was always ongoing on how there was a lack of marginalized leadership identity representation across higher education field. Then, the gathering would shift to brainstorming ideas and opportunities for more identity representation in higher education.

I have questioned at times if I should leave higher education but what keeps me in higher education are the “aha moments.” These “aha moments” are when I understand I am at the right place at the right time. For example, students come up to me often and say they are glad that they see someone on the college campus that looks like them. This is how I know I am supposed to be where I am at, and this is where my topic of interest began. I want to seek participants who look like me and to share their stories. I want others to know their experiences.

Now being the researcher, I identified my own personal prejudices, assumptions, and biases before and during this study. I have considered not all experiences are like mine as a gay Latino male. Keeping a journal helped me to reflect my own judgments and processing with my peers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A brief overview of empirical literature for gay Latinos in higher education is provided in this chapter. Current literature states gay Latinos are challenged with navigating oppression in the form of racism, heterosexism, and heteronormativity daily. Current literature also states there is a lack of narrative detail from gay Latino males in education (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, & Villegas, 2009). The Latino community face many forms of resistance and disparities in the educational pipeline due to the dominant white privilege values instilled into the American society and the Latino community has been silenced (Ruiz, 1990). Therefore, there is lack of empirical literature regarding Latinos' experiences in higher education to the extent that practitioners are limited in understanding Latinos in the context of Latinos and other racial ethnic minorities (Gloria et al., 2009).

Identity Development

The Latino community is made of many different traditions, beliefs, customs, languages, countries, cultures, and ethnicities (Long, 2012). Therefore, it is difficult to clearly identify the Latino identity because the identity is so diverse and expands over such a large geographical location (Long, 2012). It is imperative to explore the experiences unique to Latinos as a way of understanding identity development and ethnic identity formation (Gautier, 2016). It is also important to understand ethnic identity develops and changes in response to environmental and developmental factors (Ruiz, 1990). Ethnic identity models like Latino Identity Development (Ruiz, 1990) are discussed in this chapter to explain the process and impact of ethnic status as well as the inherent differences of Latino culture on the development of self-concept (Gautier, 2016).

Identity Development and Formation Theory

Latino and ethnic identity theories were built off to two main theories of identity development; Erickson's (1968) Identity Formation Theory and Tajfel's (1981) Social Identity Theory. Erickson (1968) believed identity formation occurred as a developmental process and that development did not stop at adolescence. Erickson's (1968) theory primarily focused on the exploration and commitment of identity while being affected by socio, cultural, and historical contexts. Erickson's (1968) theory helped define human development and he was one of the first theorists to introduce identity formation beyond adolescence.

Social identity theory was developed by Tajfel (1981), and his theory was the first step to understanding ethnic identity development (Gautier, 2016). The focus on intergroup relations and self-categorization refocused the way in which social psychologists were studying human development (Gautier, 2016). Social identity theory evaluates individuals' development based on their perceptions of in-group and out-group characteristics (Tajfel, 1981). These two characteristics greatly influenced the development of early ethnic identity theories and expansion of Latino Identity Development (Gautier, 2016).

Latino Identity Development

Ruiz (1990) developed a five-stage model for Latino Identity Development. Their model illuminated the experiences of Mexican American, Chicano, and other Latino individuals based on what his participants shared during their therapy sessions. Ruiz (1990) noticed there was a gap in the ethnic identity model and that previous models failed to capture the experiences specific to Mexican American, Chicano, and other Latino clients. The term Chicano was a widely politicized label that was used during the 1960s and 1970s during the Chicano Movement (Ruiz, 1990).

Ruiz' ethnic identity model (1990) has four foundational pillars that describe the identity formation among Latinos:

- (1) marginalization is associated with the inability to adjust to social and cultural demands
- (2) assimilation and marginalization can potentially lead to damaging outcomes
- (3) prideful attitudes toward one's ethnic self-concept can optimize the quality of mental health
- (4) the minority individual obtains more autonomy during the acculturation process when one develops positive and prideful attitudes toward their ethnic self-concept

Elements of Latino Culture

Traditional elements and values that describe cultural aspects from the Latino culture and explain the enculturation process and identity development for Latino men in the United States. Undocumented children and children of immigrants born in the United States undergo a process by which they learn and absorb cultural information about their country of origin (Gautier, 2016). This process is called enculturation (Gautier, 2016). Enculturation involves "individuals [that] are socialized to indigenous cultural norms, that is, values, behaviors, attitudes, or worldviews" (Alamilla, Kim, & Lam., 2010, p. 57). Ethnic socialization is passed on largely from parents to children (Hughes, 2003). During the enculturation process, Latinos learn gender roles and attitudes towards those roles because of machismo expectations (Gautier, 2016). They also learn the value of family and respect (Gautier, 2016) and religious/spiritual beliefs (Calvillo & Bailey, 2015).

Machismo and Caballerismo

Traditional gender roles are expected from the Latino community and especially for

Latino males (Garcia, 2015). As part of the enculturation process for Latinos, gender role attitudes set the expectations specific to gender that are developed through family and cultural demands (Hill & Lynch, 1983). Previous studies have shown Latinos are expected to adhere to traditional gender roles more than any other ethnic group (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Castillo Perez, Castillo, & Ghosheh, 2010). More specifically, Latino men are generally expected to adhere to roles defined by cultural expectations of being machismo, and caballerismo (Gautier, 2016).

The machismo term is a socially constructed set of behaviors that reinforces male gender roles in the Latino culture and impacts the identity development and behaviors of Latino males (Sanchez, Whittaker, Hamilton, & Arango, 2017). Machismo is defined as “Latino men’s independence, dominance over women, and hypermasculinity” (Sanchez et al., 2017, p. 336). Latino males are expected to meet these hypermasculine roles and expectations. If these roles and expectations are not met, the male is deemed as not masculine and prejudice actions or homophobia then occurs. Sanchez, Whittaker, Hamilton, & Arango (2017) reported higher levels of machismo attributes were positively correlated with prejudice toward lesbians and gay men in the Latino community. In addition, machismo attributes have been correlated with internalized homophobia and this, in turn, has been linked to mental health issues and suicidal ideation (Sanchez et al., 2017).

Caballerismo is about Latino men’s “responsibility to provide for, protect, and defend his family” (Laird & Green, 1996, p. 274) as well as to emotionally connect with others (Sanchez et al., 2017). Traditional Latino families expect the males of the household to work and provide financial support versus going to college (Gloria et al., 2009). These expectations and roles

inform literature on how Latino men develop a sense of self and navigate relationships with others.

Family and Respect

Latino family values are significant not only to the immediate family but also the extended family. Family is the fundamental source of social support and identification with the Latino community (Laird & Green, 1996; Piña-Watson, Ojeda, Castellon, & Dornhecker, 2013). Extended family members are just as involved and incorporated within the Latino family support system (Gautier, 2016). “It is also important to note that elderly individuals or persons of authority maintain a greater sense of power and hierarchy within the Latino family unit” (Gautier, 2016, p. 331).

Respect and family are both integral parts of the Latino culture. Respect values are defined as the obligation to exhibit a sense of honor, appreciation, and worthiness toward others (Laird & Green, 1996). As a demonstration of respect, Latinos may submit or give in to persons of authority or elderly (Gautier, 2016). Given the importance of family, a Latino must consider the impact of his decisions on the family while working within the parameters of respect (Gautier, 2016).

Religion

Religion acts as a “major organizing tool of cultural practice, meaning-making, and development” (Etengoff & Daiute, 2014, p. 33) which informs a sense of morality, values, and behaviors (Gautier, 2016). Spirituality involves “an individual relationship with or connection to a higher power or intrinsic belief” (Wright & Stern, 2016, p. 71). Both religion and spirituality serve as significant practices of daily life, connectedness, and community among Latinos (Gautier, 2016).

Over half of adults in the U.S. identify with some religious affiliation and most maintain a belief in God (García, Gray-Stanley, & Ramirez-Valles, 2008). As an aspect of identity formation, religion acts as a vehicle that disseminates ethnic customs by using language, cultural symbols and practices (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000). More specifically, Catholicism has served as a prominent influence of culture and identity for hundreds of years as evidenced by its establishment across nations in Latin America (Gautier, 2016). Despite the growing trend toward Protestantism, Catholicism still maintains its hegemonic influence among Latin America and Latinos residing in the United States (Hunt, 1998). Given the strong relationship between Catholicism and Latino culture, it is affirmed that a separation from Catholicism would represent a rejection of traditional culture (Calvillo & Bailey, 2015).

Colorism

To this day, Latinos use language that suggests understanding of the racial hierarchy and continue to implement strategies to deny and justify the role of racism (Chavez-Duenas, Adames, & Organista, 2014). Some Latinos discriminate against other Latinos based upon appearance, skin color and phenotype (Chavez-Duenas et al., 2014). Comments such as those below are common in the Latino culture:

- Hay que mejorar la raza o cástate con un blanco! [We need to better the race by marrying a White individual]. (Chavez-Duenas et al., 2014).
- Ahi que bonita es suniña, es tan güerita/blanquita! [Oh! How pretty your daughter is, she's so beautifully White!]. (Chavez-Duenas et al., 2014).

In the U.S., “social stratification has served to maintain a color gradient with European descendants at the top of the hierarchy and non-Whites at the bottom” (Chavez-Duenas et al, 2014, p. 43). Colorism goes back to the 1500s during colonization, slavery, and assimilation of

indigenous and African people into a white culturally homogeneous society (Chavez-Duenas et al., 2014). The direct descendants of the Spanish conquistadors or White leaders believed that with time blending and mixing of races would lead to the disappearance of indigenous and African cultures from the Latino civilization (Soler Castillo & Pardo Abril, 2009). Assimilation was further accomplished by the blending and mixing of races supported by the government or what were known as “whitening policies” in America and South America (Castellanos Guerrero, Gomez Izquierdo, & Pineda, 2009; Gates, 2011; Soler Castillo & Pardo Abril, 2009).

First-Generation Latino College Student

Latino males who are first-generation college students face significant cultural and gender norms that are challenging for them to navigate in higher education and in their professional careers (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Being first generation and Latino comes with many obstacles. Latino students struggle with navigating matters that come with privilege through access and must try and succeed at the same time (Garcia, 2015). Literature states many Latino students who enter selective public research universities encounter racial and socioeconomic diversity that diverges widely from their racial/ethnic composition of their communities of origin (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). This includes their high schools and neighborhoods and where they grew up (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

First-generation Latino college males’ struggle with academic success and educational attainment but this is not a direct representation of their academic ability (Saenz, Garcia-Louis, Drake, & Guida, 2018). The fault lies on the inability of educational institutions to understand and react to the obstacles/cultural expectations Latino males encounter and to help them succeed (Saenz, Garcia-Louis, Drake, & Guida, 2018). Strayhorn (2010) found social and cultural capital largely influenced the academic achievement of Latino males in college.

Undocumented Latinos

Undocumented Latinos face numerous legal, social, and financial barriers (Lyon, 2015). Undocumented Latinos in higher education face more psychosocial stressors and face limited career options and social rejection (Lyon, 2015). Researchers note the “psychosocial development that occur as students transition to an adult identity, yet little research has been done on how undocumented Latino college students navigate barriers to their identity develop and attempt to define their purpose as not only college students, but members of U.S. Society” (Lyon, 2015, p. 4).

In April 2001, the Development, Relief, and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was introduced in the United States Senate by two U.S. senators (Galindo, 2007). Under the DREAM Act, undocumented minors enroll in publicly funded institutions of higher education, they can enlist in the military and obtain permanent residency (Galindo, 2007). While the DREAM Act has not passed at the “federal level, many states have passed versions of their own that allowed undocumented students to pay in-state tuition” (Galindo, 2007). The National Immigration Law Center (2016) indicates there are currently 20 states that have tuition equity policies in place that would allow students who meet certain criteria, regardless of immigration status, to have access to higher education.

Gay Identity Development

Gay identity is characterized by the combination of homosexual tendencies (e.g., thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) as the individual’s self-concept (Gautier, 2016). Gay identity models discuss the formation of gay identity and the process by which an individual comes to embody their identification as gay (Gautier, 2016). Gay identity models assist mental health professionals because the models provide an understanding of forming and navigating a

marginalized identity (Gautier, 2016). Gay identity models also work to normalize the experiences of gay individuals as well as identify the coming out process within appropriate developmental life phases which informs therapeutic work (Gautier, 2016).

Cass's (1979) gay identity model is a six-stage model that describes the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of the self in relation to a person's gay identity. Cass's (1979) model assumes two generalizations: "(a) that identity is acquired through a developmental process; and (b) that locus for stability of, and change in, behavior lies in the interaction process that occurs between individuals and their environments" (p. 219).

Cass's (1979) model was based on the interpersonal congruency theory which follows three basic assumptions: "(1) the individual's perception of some personal characteristic is ascribed to the self; (2) the individual's personal characteristic is a product of the individual's perception of their behavior; and (3) the individual's perception is based on others' perspectives of the individual's personal characteristics" (p, 220).

Queer Theory

Queer theory also plays a critical role in analyzing the meaning of identity and focuses on intersections of identities and "resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender" (Jagose, 1996; Watson, 2005). Jagose (1996) stated queer theory is not a singular or systematic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements between sex, gender, and sexuality.

Queer theory (Jagose, 1996; Watson, 2005) illuminates the complexity of gay peoples' identities. Queer theory was built upon the post structural theories of Foucault (1978), Derrida (1978), and Lyotard (1984). Sullivan (2007) stated queer theorist believes that "there are no objective and universal truths, but that particular forms of knowledge, and the ways of being that

they engender, become “naturalized” in culturally and historically specific ways” (p. 39). Queer theorists then apply these ideas to gender and sexuality to suggest they are socially constructed (Butler, 1990).

Queer theory drifted from language and literary studies to education, “a highly conservative and often reactionary field” (Pinar, 1998, p. 2). In the education system, “queer theorists seek to disrupt normalizing discourses” (Tierney & Dilley, 1998, p. 61). Renn (2010) stated that, “among education researchers, LGBTQ, queer, and queer theory are contested terms, and the prevalence and quality of LGBTQ/queer scholarship varies across fields within education research” (p. 132).

Queer theory stems from feminist theory and aims to understand the nature of gender inequality (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). Tierney & Dilley (1998) stated, “Queer theory builds both upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is part of the essential self and upon gay and lesbian studies’ close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities” (p. 28).

Elements of Gay Culture

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is a social construct that views heterosexuality as the “correct” societal norm. This social construct then encourages individuals to conform to traditional gender and sexuality norms promoted by society. Heterosexual men and women do not have to disclose or announce their sexual orientation because society assumes all individuals are heterosexual until proven otherwise (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018). This then causes LGBTQ individuals to possibly hide their sexual orientation or gender identity (Röndahl, 2011). Others

decide to come out but know that this decision can come with discrimination, stigma, and rejection (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018).

Many factors can influence an individual's decision to reveal their sexual orientation. Some factors include: personal history and motivation for coming out, current and traditional cultural and religious influences, personal connection to the LGBT community, and family and societal perceptions (Diaz-Strong & Meiners, 2007). Individuals typically have the choice to disclose their own sexuality and information. Sometimes individuals are outed as a form of discrimination and retaliation (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018).

Familial Relations with Gay Individuals

Research indicates familial relationships can influence the health, well-being, and identity development of gay individuals (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018). Research also indicates family acceptance is significantly related to greater self-esteem, social support, and general health, while also protecting against depression, substance use, and suicidal ideation (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, & Sanchez, 2009). Some parents and families react with emotional responses such as shock, denial, anger, and anxiety, sometimes blaming themselves for their child's sexual orientation (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, & Sanchez, 2009). While other families accept the individual and continue to love unconditionally

Intersectionality for Gay Latinos

Sexual identity development and family acceptance can differ for Latinos as they navigate the traditional Latino cultural factors and sexual orientation expectations. When considering whether to disclose sexual orientation, Latino cultural norms such as conservative religious beliefs, unyielding gender roles, traditional family values, and homophobia are all components of this decision and disclosure (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, & Sanchez, 2000). Not all

Latino families follow traditional norms. For some, the process of coming out can be easier because some Latinos may not face the obstacles of stigma, homophobia, discrimination, or rejection (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018).

Unfortunately, beyond the family and their values and beliefs, college campuses are also not safe or immune from the traditional expected gender norms and homophobia (Garcia, 2015). Gay Latino s also struggle with their intersecting identities in higher education due to higher educations expected cultural norms (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018). Participants from Bullard’s (2013) study reported experiencing gender stereotypes and discrimination because of their feminine characteristics and sexual orientation. Gay Latino s face many challenges due to heterosexism and homonegativity (Jamil, Harper, & Fernandez, 2009; Nakamura & Zea, 2010).

Selective Identity

Gay Latino s find themselves navigating from one identity or the other resulting in a process of selective identity (Garcia, 2015). Gay Latino males understand their identity in a multidimensional manner and with an understanding of how these multiple identities compete and intersect (Garcia, 2015). Ultimately, gay Latino males make decisions about their personal safe-supportive spaces based on how they identified and with the identity that matched the most at that time. Garcia (2015) mentioned that certain spaces such as LGBTQ resources do not meet their multidimensional needs. Garcia (2015) also shared gay Latino males found support and comfort with one or more campus resources on college campuses from which they could identify as Latinos. They struggled to find resources for being both Latino and gay (Garcia, 2015).

Gender Inequality and Discrimination

Progress for inclusivity has occurred over the past two decades in the legal landscape and in the evolution of social opinions and attitudes towards an individual’s sexuality, gender

identity, and gender expression (Gender Quality Law, 2015). Nonetheless, members of the LGBTQ community and women still suffer obvious gender bias in all areas of public and private life (Gender Equality Law Center, 2015). These obstacles include access to housing, employment, opportunities in academic environments, and in the opportunities to participate meaningfully in our society's decision-making processes (Gender Equality Law Center, 2015). Women of color and LGBTQ people experience higher levels of poverty, unemployment, and other economic hardships (Gender Equality Law Center, 2015). Gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace contribute significantly to the persistent economic divides (Gender Equality Law Center, 2015).

There are a growing number of laws around the country being enacted due to religious values, and due to these values, some laws are eliminating the rights of LGBTQ people (Gender Equality Law Center, 2015). Furthermore, homophobia and discomfort with individuals who do not conform to antiquated stereotypes of sex and gender often manifests into discrimination against these individuals (Gender Equality Law Center, 2015). Nearly 41% of gay and lesbian adults face some form of hostility or harassment on the job, including being fired or forced to quit because of their sexual orientation (Gender Equality Law Center, 2015).

Higher Education & Campus Climate for Gay Latinos

A healthy campus climate is the fundamental part of a college experience for not only the students but for the faculty and staff (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, & Sanchez, 2009). Numerous studies have concluded that campus environments influence both the learning and developmental outcomes, and discriminatory environments have a negative effect on learning and development (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, & Sanchez, 2009). Research also supports the value of diversity within its student body and faculty, staff. The value of diversity enhances learning outcomes and overall

experience (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, & Sanchez, 2009). These environments aim to be free of the negativity of discrimination and where inclusion and respect for diversity is highly welcomed (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, & Sanchez, 2009).

Campus Climate for Gay Staff in Higher Education

Current literature advocates for the needs of college students and faculty in higher education but advocacy continuously gets left out professional staff members (Pryor, 2017). Pryor's (2017) study explored the lived experiences of higher education professional staff administrators who advocated for LGBTQ equity at two different college institutions. In Pryor's (2017) study, the participants primarily advocated for the needs of college students, but as professional staff members, they were advocating for themselves and their gay colleagues as well. The participants from Pryor's (2017) study mentioned they needed ally support and motivation from non-gay faculty and staff to make substantial and equitable policy changes on their campuses. The gay participants mentioned that "finding ally support among their peers required participants to be engaged and purposeful in interrupting heterogenderism attitudes and practices on campus" (Pryor, 2017, p. 163). Thus, fostering ally support is an important consideration for future queer research. His study demonstrated a need for continued exploration of LGBTQ student affairs staff support and their experiences (Pryor, 2017).

To establish an inclusive environment for faculty and staff, Pryor's (2017) study also reflected on the importance of using the student voice and power. Students can be a useful tool when professional staff members need to engage with upper-level administrators to solicit buy-in on inclusivity (Pryor, 2017). Students have the power on a college campus and can provide headways to more inclusive practices and policies if staff and students unite (Pryor, 2017).

Dealing with Campus Climate in Higher Education

Colleges are still rooted in a heteronormative and patriarchal context and in some regions more than others (Englert, 2018). Englert's (2018) study was a multi-case qualitative study that explored the lives of nine openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents in the United States. The professional staff members shared their fears of discrimination and said they were scared of being "out" about their sexuality (Englert, 2018). The participants also stated they were committed to being "out" in higher education and shared their stories on how the coming out process impacted and guided their personal experiences (Englert, 2018). This process of "coming out was consistently connected to incorporating the presidents' sexuality into their careers and lives with the understanding that coming out may impede or present opportunities" (Englert, 2018, p. 119). The participants felt the message of being out, shows others there is nothing to hide and signals other underrepresented groups that there is support for them on campus, as well (Englert, 2018). Englert's (2018) participants also mentioned some regions and areas are not safe to be out but being out sends a strong message. More work needs to be done for a more inclusive college campuses and climates (Englert, 2018).

Resilience strategies are also needed on college campuses and need to be implemented for gay mid-level administrators of color (Labor, 2017). These strategies can provide multiple sources and degrees of support needed to supplement, buffer, and counter the discrimination experiences within higher education environments (Labor, 2017). Labor's (2017) study aimed to bring visibility to the lived experiences of mid-level student affair professionals and focused on the participants' sexual and racial identities. Labor's (2017) participants mentioned that layers of bureaucracy can be difficult to navigate for mid-level professionals and policy-making decision Makers. Labor (2017) suggested senior-level administrators learn how to best support mid-level

administrators reporting to them by the use of storytelling and further indicated sharing stories between senior-level and mid-level administrators can serve as a bridge to understanding one another's identities and values in their respective roles.

Gay people of color must learn how to navigate distinct spaces within their campuses and seek resources (Labor, 2017). This is not an easy process. Not all spaces are safe or easy to navigate when intersecting identities are involved. People are judged and perceived based on their race, gender, and sexuality in higher education and the corresponding interactions of colleagues across campus (Labor, 2017). Labor (2017) also noted mid-level professional staff members may not have the decision-making authority on their campuses. This affects their professional choices, and some staff members may decide to remain silent, so they feel safe on campus and do not face discrimination (Labor, 2017). This then affects the retention of these staff members but what is needed are good leaders and mentors to help retain the staff (Labor, 2017).

Shifting Higher Education to Being More Equitable and Inclusive

Research on issues related to mid-level administrator experiences has steadily increased since the 1990s (Fey & Carpenter, 1996). However, less research is available regarding issues impacting professionals of color in higher education settings, as researchers have predominantly focused on faculty of color and not on professional staff (Fey & Carpenter, 1996). There is difficulty because there are layers of bureaucracy that can be difficult to navigate for mid-level professionals and policy-making decisions (Labor, 2017). Senior-level administrators learn how to best support mid-level administrators reporting to them using storytelling (Labor, 2017). Labor (2017) mentioned sharing stories between senior-level and mid-level administrators can serve as a bridge to understanding one another's identities and values in their respective roles.

Out in the Workplace

More applicant candidates in higher education are now comfortable in sharing their life stories in their interviews and the applicants do this to test out the campus climate (Englert, 2018). In Englert's (2018) and Bullard's (2013) study, all presidential candidates disclosed their sexuality when applying to their positions. The disclosure from the participants acted as a means of testing the campus climate as well as ensuring that each campus was prepared and able to accept an out president (Englert, 2018). Being out in the search process ensured that their sexuality aligned with the values and mission of the institution but also provided a story to their identity (Englert, 2018). Representing all their identities during the search process also ensured no larger issues would arise with the board of trustees or donors at a later point (Englert 2018). They indicate this is a safety mechanism and to ensure all around positive well-being for the individual (Englert, 2018).

Croteau and Lark (2009) also found "lesbian, gay, and bisexual professionals who were more open about their sexual orientation reported more discrimination in job searches" (p. 382). Their study surveyed lesbian, gay, and bisexual student affairs professionals about work experiences related to their sexual orientation (Croteau & Lark, 2009). Its primary purpose was to provide the stories about the participants job experiences. Additionally, their study extended examination of the relationship between discrimination and a person's openness about sexual orientation to actual employment (Croteau & Lark, 2019). Discrimination for gay people of color in higher education were reported in two categories: (a) employment decisions and personnel policies, and (b) regular work activities (Croteau & Lark, 2019). Professional staff members reported discrimination on performance evaluations, salary increases, and promotion considerations (Croteau & Lark, 2019). Discriminatory policies also negatively impacted those

with same-sex partners for live-in campus positions and benefits, specifically housing operations (Croteau & Lark, 2019).

Connections are made to previously discussed literature regarding career pathways and difficulties for gay people of color as mid-level administrators to advance professionally. Given the multiple incidents of discrimination at the policy level and individual level regarding employment decisions, promotions, and evaluations, one can assume gay people of color in entry and mid-level administrators experience difficult and obstructed career pathways (Croteau & Lark, 2009).

New hiring practices are also being evaluated for gay people of color. The weight is on “institutional hiring committees to effectively outreach to gay people of color through professional communities and eliminate barriers within the selection and hiring process to retain prospective employees at each stage” (Labor, 2017, p. 324). Some staff members with multiple identities may decide to not share their identities while others see it as the process of coming out (Labor, 2017). Gay staff members may feel like hiding their sexuality would be worse and sends a message to other LGBTQ people that the risk of coming out is greater than being authentic (Labor, 2017). Labor explained being out to students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and the greater community allows professional staff members to challenge stereotypes and bias based on sexual orientation (Englert, 2018).

Support Systems for LGBTQ Staff of Color

Higher education professionals can receive support from various professional and personal resources. Professional associations are one primary sources of support in the field of higher education. In the field of higher education, there are two large national professional associations for administrators: ACPA College Educators International (ACPA) and the National

Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). There are other numerous local, state, and regional organizations. Additionally, individual institutions can cultivate environments of support for gay people of color as mid-level administrators (Labor, 2017). Support from mentors, administrators, and professional association communities are all important sources of support for mid-level administrators of color (Masse, Miller, Kerr, & Ortiz, 2007). “Areas of support for mid-level administrators of color include career mapping, developing professional supportive networks, attention to multiple dimensions of identity, and mentoring entry level professionals” (Masse et al., 2007, p. 155). Storytelling is also essential in support systems because the stories highlight the experiences of the individual (Labor, 2017). Labor’s (2017) participants shared how they had pride in the intersectional communities they were a part of and shared this pride through storytelling.

Support is such a common practice and phrase that is used repeatedly at colleges in their missions. However, support systems that promote inclusion and acceptance for gay Latino males are limited in higher education (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). The struggles of identity, race, gender, and sexuality for gay Latino males are difficult and multi-layered. Garcia’s (2015) study mentioned not only did the multiple minority identities play out negatively in Latinos college lives but in their personal lives, as well.

Identity-based, Caucus, or Affinity Spaces on Campus

Another common theme for higher education shifting in a positive direction is the availability and endorsement of identity-based, caucus, or affinity spaces on campus (Labor, 2017). These new spaces and community groups hold promise for building communities of support for gay people of color mid-level administrators (Labor, 2017). These community spaces provide consistent avenues for affinity and validation (Labor, 2017). These groups also provide

an opportunity for potential tight-knit relationships and opportunities to connect professionals to broader institutions (Labor, 2017). By combining efforts of “recruitment of people of color mid-level administrators into campus identity centers, as well as support and engagement opportunities provided through identity-based spaces can help to recruit and retain these professionals in their respective institutions and in the field of higher education” (Labor, 2017, p. 10).

Mentorship in Higher Education

Mentorship is key component in professional development and provides a sense of belonging (Labor, 2017). Good supervisors helped professional staff members find their intersectional identities and that provided growth and development personally and professionally. Englert’s (2018) indicates mentors are needed, regardless of a person’s sexuality, race, or gender. Mentors provide support to professional staff members through difficult situations and personal and professional choices (Englert, 2018). Good mentors challenge their peers in developing their leadership skills and abilities (Englert, 2018). Numerous examples of specific colleagues who delivered difficult feedback from a place of care and concern as a means of professional development (Englert, 2018). This feedback allowed a sense of support and feeling of well-balanced route (Englert, 2018). This support allowed the staff members to grow and learn through their new boundaries in higher education (Englert, 2018).

Mentorship in the early stages or entry-level positions are vital for retention of higher education professionals (Labor, 2017). Labor (2017) mentioned how keeping in touch with previous supervisors played such a vital role in people’s successful careers in higher education. These lifelong practices of mentorship and holistic supervision greatly impacted the style of leadership and supervision of professional staff members and became integrated into their

everyday practice and values (Labor, 2017). Mid-level administrators then need to pass this mentorship opportunity down and model this good behavior with their own teams and students (Labor, 2017). Latino males that have a good role model is of great importance for their success in higher education (Saenz et al., 2018). This aspect of professional development, too, has not yet been expanded in empirical literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY & METHODS

A research methodology provides all the of details of *who, what, when, where, and how* the research study was conducted and how the data collected and analyzed (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015). This chapter provides an overview of this study's research design.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The overarching paradigm chosen for this study was the constructivist paradigm. Constructivist researchers seek the importance of understanding from the point of view of the participants who have lived experiences within a social reality (Kim, 2015).

This study used a qualitative strategy to identify the experiences and perceptions of gay cisgender Latino males in higher education as mid-level administrators in higher education. To gain a better understanding through qualitative research, researchers interview people directly and this allows “them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature” (Creswell, 2002, p. 40).

Phenomenology was chosen for this qualitative strategy because phenomenology examines individuals through their experiences, beliefs, and values due to their social influences (Van Manen, 1997). A phenomenological research method is best suited when it is important to understand the shared experiences of several individuals, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon itself (Creswell, 2002).

Narrative inquiry is an approach of phenomenology that attempts to understand a phenomenon and is shared through storytelling (Kim, 2015). Storytelling has the “ability to relay morality, judgment, history, life lessons, or cultural memories” (Peralta, 2010, p. 28). The teller takes the author, readers and listeners to a particular place and time. As the researcher, I used a

biographical narrative inquiry method called Bildungsroman (Kim, 2015). This is a pedagogical method of storytelling that projects a human beings' resilience and persistence as well as his vulnerability (Kim, 2015). Kim's (2015) method not only focuses on the inner development but also the complexity and conflicts of human experience which then leads to personal growth and maturation.

The research questions for this study are:

1. What are the life stories of openly gay Latino males who currently work in higher education as mid-level administrators for in the Southwest region of the United States?
2. What types of support systems are reported by gay Latino men in their higher education setting?
3. What are the challenges that exist for gay Latino men in their higher education setting?
4. How does the intersectionality affect the lived experiences gay Latino males as mid-level administrator positions at higher education institutions in the Southwest Region of the United States?

Participants & Site Selection

The goal of the narrative inquiry method for this study was to share the stories and voices of the participants. The topic lent itself to reach out to openly gay Latino mid-level administrators to engage their voices and stories. The study captured the lived experiences of seven participants. The criterion for participant selection were: (a) self-identified as a cisgender gay male, (b) held a mid-level administrator position at a 4-year public or non-profit private institution in higher education, (c) the institution was in the Southwest region of the United States, (d) participants self-identified as Latino/x, and (e) participants reported to a senior administrator/officer in higher education.

Data-Collection Methods

Once the site and participants were selected, I could then turn my attention to collecting data. Interviews and field notes are key data sources for qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Maxwell, 2012; Patton, 2014). I provided details next on how participants were selected and the interview process.

Recruitment

For this phenomenological study, two semi-structured interviews were used as a method of data collection. The data gathered from these interviews reflected this topic and the research questions. The seven individuals were selected through a purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2002). This technique involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2002). I disseminated information about the study to the two higher education association memberships that I am a member of: ACPA College Educators International (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). As the researcher, I worked with NASPA and ACPA to acquire lists of members by state/region within the Southwest region of my criteria. The disseminated marketing material explained that the study was not directly tied to NASPA or ACPA and was completely voluntary for participants. Upon hearing my study, the potential participants reached out to me via email.

Through this initial contact, I then sent out an email and asked about the participants' willingness to participate in this study (Appendix A). An Information Demographic Questionnaire/Pre-Screening Survey was sent by email (Appendix B). This questionnaire/pre-screening was used to ensure that the participants met the study's criteria and an introduction to this study. The questionnaire/pre-screening assisted the researcher by asking the potential

participants to explain their past or current positions in higher education and their responsibilities.

If I did receive many individuals willing to participate, I was ready to use a criterion to narrow down the potential participants. I would have screened attributes of the participants by: (a) making sure the locations of the institutions were spread across the seven states chosen as the Southwest region, (b) the potential participants were evenly divided up by working at a four-year public or non-profit private institution, (c) would have considered the duration and years of service working in higher education, (d) would have sought out diversity across the Latino self-identifications- Hispanic, Chicano, Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean etc. and (e) the quality of answers the potential participants provided on the survey. I did not need to use this criterion, for I had enough participants and closed the study. Seven participants were chosen for this study, and all met the criterion. The demographic information of each of the participants chosen for this study can be found on page 46.

As the researcher, I used an information demographic questionnaire/pre-screening because the questionnaire/pre-screen asked the potential participants about their connections to the gay and Latino community. I asked the potential participants how they wish to be addressed through these two intersecting identities. For example, a Latino participant may consider themselves not Latino but Chicano or Hispanic. I needed to understand and know their self-identified identities. I sought trust and an open environment, so participants were comfortable in expressing themselves and their self-identifying identities in the interviews. I asked participants to create their own pseudonyms on the questionnaire/pre-screening. The pseudonyms would only be asked on the questionnaire/pre-screening. The pseudonyms are stored on my password-protected personal laptop to which only the researcher had access.

Two Interviews

Once the participants were chosen, they scheduled two 90-minute interviews with me through Doodle scheduling software. The interviews were scheduled with a week or two gap between the first and second interview. Appendix C contains the guiding interview questions for both sets of interviews. The interviews were split into two narrative inquiry style phases: narration phase and conversation phase (Kim, 2015). The narrative inquiry style of interviews allowed new ideas and concepts to be discussed and raised by the participants. The first interview was the narration phase and was an open-ended interview. I asked for a certain timeline of narration of events and experiences from the participants own life and perspective dealing with higher education during this first interview. During this first phase/interview, my role was to be that of an active listener and observer (Kim, 2015).

The second interview was a semi-structured interview, and the second component of narrative inquiry called the conversational phase (Kim, 2015). This phase was an in-depth questioning and clarification on the issues and experiences presented in the first interview.

Before the interviews were performed through Zoom, a consent form (Appendix D) was sent to the participants by email. Participants signed and returned the form to me before any interviews were conducted. Once these steps were complete, the interviews were scheduled according to both persons availability. I also obtained verbal consent prior to the interviews being conducted.

The safety, travel restrictions, and face-to-face CDC guidelines became an issue and were eventually why all interviews were completed virtually. Many higher education institutions and businesses have all been using Zoom during the pandemic and was not a new concept of technology to the participants.

Once the Zoom interviews occurred, interviews were stored on my encrypted Zoom server. Zoom protects data confidentiality through a combination of encryption, strong access control, and other protection methods. To secure the data, I used my personal laptop. My laptop has a password protected encryption and I am the only person who knew this password. Then, I sent out the Zoom interviews to Rev for audio transcription. All files from Rev are private and protected from unauthorized access. All digital files (Zoom, Rev, etc.) were saved on my personal laptop. I agreed to destroy all electronic files and shred all paper files per the IRB guidelines. This ensured confidentiality of information related to any participant.

As the researcher, I ensured the consistency of the questions asked to all participants for it was important to ensure the same information was collected for data analysis. At the end of the interviews, participants were asked “Are there other topics or experiences we should had explored but have not been asked or discussed?” This allowed the participants to collaborate more and elaborate on previous questions that were asked. Participants may have thought about the previously answered questions and some shared more experiences that were not talked about before.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process by which a researcher makes sense of all the data (Patton, 2002). Data analysis is a process during which the creation of groups and themes of words can be assembled, sub-clustered, or broken into segments that allow the researcher to compare, contrast, and bestow patterns upon them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). While there is much guidance available to researchers for transforming data into findings, there are few universally accepted ground rules or steps for drawing conclusions or determining the significance of those conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Patton, 2014). Yet, there

are a few steps in which qualitative researchers can demonstrate the rigor of their analytical thought processes. The steps are described below.

Transcription

As mentioned above, the interviews were transcribed using Rev transcribing services. The files were submitted in digital form to the company using the pseudonyms of the participants. Rev does not share any of the transcribed files and agrees to confidentiality. A copy of confidentiality was kept by me, the researcher from Rev. I let the participants know their identity was protected using their pseudonyms.

Phenomenological Reduction

As the researcher, I used phenomenological reduction to analyze the data collected during the interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). I also did a reflective analysis which is the process of moving back and forth in a kind of dialectic between experience and awareness; between studying the parts (Finlay, 2005). My goal was to understand the authentic reality of the lived experiences. By completing these methods, I was able to expand on the themes that emerged.

As the researcher, I used a method called bracketing to ensure they did not let their past experiences or knowledge guide or lead this study. This helped me to avoid major biases and to remain as neutral as possible. I focused on a phenomenological epoche' (Ihde, 1971), and this helped suspend what was real and most real. Phenomenological epoche' suspends the thoughts until all evidence is present (Ihde, 1971). I used all these methods to complete data analysis and did it in several steps.

Steps of Data Analysis

As the researcher, I completed four steps during the data analysis process.

1. Narrative Smoothing
2. Method horizontalization
3. Imaginative variation
4. Intuitive integration

Step one, Narrative inquiry requires narrative smoothing. This is a method researchers use to make use of the participant's story so that the story is coherent, engaging, and interesting to the reader (Kim, 2015). This method omits data that may be unclear to the researcher or is not relevant to the data analysis process. As the researcher, I immersed myself in the data by rereading and listening to the transcripts and recordings repeatedly. I used an approach called interpretation of faith (Kim, 2015). This perspective is based upon the belief that what the participants tell the researcher is true and meaningful to their sense of their subjective experiences or stories (Kim, 2015).

I ensured all transcriptions were transcribed correctly. Participants may have said some terms or phrases in Spanish or Spanish jargon, and I made sure the words were transcribed correctly and translated properly. By rereading and listening to the transcripts repeatedly, this allowed myself to dwell in the data and interrogate it so that there is an active and sustained reflection (Finlay, 2005). After rereading the transcripts multiple times, I highlighted and identified key sentences and quotes that had been repeated. I defined these themes and coded them. These significant items were extracted and set aside into common groups.

Step two, I used a method horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994) and interpretation of suspicion (Kim, 2015). Method horizontalization is a method of identifying and looking at the deeper meaning of the common themes (Moustakas, 1994). The interpretation of suspicion approach helps decode or demystify the implicit meaning that might go unnoticed in the

interpretation of faith approach (Kim, 2015). These two approaches helped to ensure all data collection elements were treated equally. The clusters of common meanings allowed me to identify key understandings of the phenomenon and to have a way to look back at the literature review to see connections to themes matched or if new items emerged. Also, while reviewing the literature review, I added new terminology that had emerged.

Step three, I looked at the new key words within those themes. These words provided more depth into the descriptions and actions used within those words. This allowed me to subtheme within the larger umbrella themes. This process helped me to better define what was experienced and how it was experienced. This process is called imaginative variation and will help with the textual structure of the phenomenon (Moustakes, 1994).

In the final step, I used intuitive integration (Moustakes, 1994) and narrative mode of analysis (Kim, 2015). The intuitive integration method provided the order and textual descriptions that were needed to focus on the common themes. The narrative mode of analysis helped me in sharing the why and how things happened in the way they did, why, and how participants acted the way they did (Kim, 2015). This final component was necessary in the phenomenological analysis.

When using phenomenological reduction, saturation occurs. Saturation was determined when there are no longer any new themes or common trends that contributed to the essence of this study. It was a natural way of revisiting the transcripts repeatedly and seeing if anymore themes stood out and possibly if new limitations for future research.

Trustworthiness & Authenticity

One important factor to all research is the examination of trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness is crucial to the credibility of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba,

1986). Member checking is the most integral and important part of establishing an opportunity where participants can evaluate the notion of accuracy of their transcripts and findings. Member checking provided the opportunity for the participants to evaluate the soundness of the data and confirm the data record that was transcribed (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I completed member checking to ensure all data was accurate and portrayed the correct story of the participants' experiences.

Another way I ensured credibility was by keeping a reflective journal. I chose this topic due to the close passion and personal connection they have to these identities. I did have common experiences with the participants and needed to remain neutral. I used a journal to reflect on their own personal projections of their feelings during the study. The journal assisted with identifying personal feelings and being aware of the effects it could have on potential data collection and analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). The journal served as a place of reflection during the process and the researcher was able to see the connections between theory and practice (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). It helped me in recognizing the meanings attached to past experiences and research.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are the important part of data collection and was considered when conducting my research. This topic was sensitive to many participants and the personal experiences they were to share. As the researcher, I knew that it was important to remember that the interviews needed to remain confidential and with all respect towards the participants.

Confidentiality. The participants signed and went over the informed-consent form. The steps and procedures for this study were outlined during the interview. All dates, times, places, names, any other identifiers were not to be used during the interview and removed.

Use of Interviews. For the safety of all participants, I followed all items listed recommended by IRB. If at any point during the interview the researcher noticed a participant becoming distraught or did not seem to be emotionally able to handle the interview, the researcher would have stopped the interview. I asked the participants whether they wished to continue forward with the interview or stop completely. If they did not, all recordings would be deleted, and all other items would be removed and destroyed. None of the interviews were stopped.

Accuracy and Reliability. My goal as the researcher was to capture the experiences of the participants. It is essential that the researcher captures and retells the accounts as analytical descriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I did so by providing copies of transcripts to the participants to ensure they were properly telling the participants story, reviewing the confidentiality information, and ensuring the questions were analyzed. I restated the answer to the participants if needed, to ensure the proper response was being recorded and that it was recorded correctly.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the lived experiences of gay Latinos in higher education as mid-level administrators. The lens of intersectionality framed the qualitative analysis of narratives to illuminate the findings. Overall, the findings of this study were to answer the research questions. Seven participants completed two semi-structured interviews each. The fourteen interview transcriptions were then used to construct individual narrative profiles for each of the participants. The data were coded as one source to illuminate the emerging themes. The remainder of this chapter details the narratives of each of the participants, the emerging themes, and responses to the research questions.

Narrative Profiles

Narrative inquiry uses stories to understand how people experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The following narrative profiles represent the storied lives of the participants at the time this study was conducted.

Table 1

Descriptors of Participants

Pseudonym	Position Title	State	Type of Institution	Approx. Age	Years in Mid-Level Job	Latino Identity	First Gen?	Lawful Permanent Resident?	Speaks Spanish?	Was Religious? If so which.
Kevin	Coordinator	AZ	4-year Public Research	Mid 20s	1	Mexican	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, Catholic
Jay	Interim Director	CO	4-year Public Research	Early 30s	1	Latinx/ Mexican	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, Catholic
Patrick	Director	NM	4-year Public Research	Late 50s	27	Mexican	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, Catholic
Daniel	Director	NM	4-year Public Research	Early 30s	7	Mexican	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, Catholic & Christian
Alex	Director	TX	4-year Public Research	Early 40s	18	Mexican American	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, Catholic
Manuel	Director	TX	4-year Public Research	Late 30s	7	Mexican	No	Yes	No	Yes, Catholic & Pentecostal
Izan	Director	TX	4-year Public Research	Early 40s	11	Tejano/Chicano	No	Yes	No	Yes, Catholic

Kevin

Kevin works for a large four-year public research university in central Arizona. He has been a mid-level higher education administrator for one year. He self-identifies as gay and Mexican American. He was born and raised in a predominantly white neighborhood in southern California. He is third generation American, and his grandparents were from Mexico. Kevin does not speak Spanish.

Kevin was raised in a single parent household, and he was raised by his mother. His parents separated when he was younger, and his parents lived in two different states. His mother raised his sister and him. Kevin said he was raised around strong women and he knew he was different growing up. He portrayed more feminine characteristics and qualities than other males. He remembers being bullied a lot in middle school and high school because he was not as masculine as the males. To avoid being bullied, Kevin began to hide characteristics of being gay and tried to act more masculine. Since he was the oldest male of the household, he took on the machismo expectation of being “the man of the house.” He was trying to meet the machismo expectations, and this brought on toxic masculinity aspects in his daily life. The toxic masculinity in his life was correlated to increased psychological problems with signs of depression and stress. He stated during this period of his life, he grew his self-identity, self-awareness, and matured faster.

Kevin was raised Roman Catholic and up until high school went to church every Sunday with his mother and sister. Kevin felt the Catholic church was outdated and too traditional. The Catholic church also went against his gay identity and values. He grew anger towards his spirituality because the Catholic church was advocating for traditional heteronormative values and was being told his gay lifestyle was not okay. He would often cry and wonder “why do I

have these thoughts and why am I thinking them?” He stated he dealt with this anger and pain internally for many years.

Kevin knew growing up college was a main goal his mother wanted him to achieve. His mother at the time had not attended or graduated from college. She pushed Kevin towards going to college every day because she wanted him to have more opportunities than she had. Kevin decided he wanted to go to college to not only accomplish this goal for him but for his mother, as well.

Kevin went off to college in Arizona where he felt connected to the large Hispanic population. For once he felt like he had a community. Kevin was a student worker in higher education and saw all the unique sides of this field. His senior year of college, he decided he wanted to pursue a job in higher education. Kevin felt accepted in higher education and didn't feel like it was a taboo to be anything he wanted to be. He stated that acceptance is the reason he continues to work in higher education.

Kevin had another big life moment his senior year of college. Kevin came out to his sister. She was extremely supportive and comfortable. Kevin then came out told his mother. She was also very supportive. The father was not supportive and blamed his mother. The father felt Kevin hung around his mother and sister too much and all that time made him feminine and wanting to like men. Kevin explained to his father this was not the case. Kevin still does not have a close relationship with his father.

Jay

Jay works for a large four-year public research university in Northern Colorado. He has also been a mid-level higher education administrator for one year. Jay self-identifies as Mexican/Latinx and gay. He was born and raised in northern Mexico. When he was in his mid-

teens, he moved to the U.S. with this family. His family came here to the U.S. to work temporary and never went back to Mexico. This is how he became undocumented.

Jay was raised with very traditional machismo expectations and religious Catholic household. He was told at a young age he needed to be masculine, or he was going to hell. He was also told that anything that deviated from the church was bad and was told that people who didn't follow the Lord would suffer. He stated that these values were enforced into him that he needed to be a man of faith. He also stated he has masculine appearing traits and knows this provided him with heteronormative privilege. He is tall, light skinned, colored eyes and dresses like a masculine cowboy.

Since Jay is undocumented, he stated he felt alone and silenced growing up with this invisible identity until DACA occurred. On June 15, 2012, the secretary of Homeland Security announced certain people who came to the U.S. as children and met several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action (National Immigration Law Center, 2016). Jay would now be eligible for work authorization. He stated every day up to this point was a strategic choice to ensure his safety and not being deported. DACA helped Jay to achieve an education and get a job. Jay went to college and found a place where he felt safe.

Jay also mentioned going to college was a strategic choice but completing his Ph.D. was a larger necessity. Jay stated immigration officers will see his Ph.D. as an asset and can be beneficial when he applies for an immigration status in a few years. The immigration office will review his application and he may be granted citizenship due his scholastic achievements.

In higher education, Jay feels people understand and are more open-minded to different identities. Jay got his full-time job after graduating from college in higher education and got health insurance for the first time. This allowed him to attend more counseling sessions and find

healing within himself. He stays working in higher education because of the students, people, and mentors.

Jay shared his story about “coming out” but does not like the phrase “coming out.” He feels heterosexual people do not have to come out as straight so why do gays? Jay did not express his sexuality until he was in graduate school. For decades Jay said he prayed and dedicated his life to God in hopes those feelings and emotions would go away. The emotions and feelings did not change or go away. Jay was invited to his first counseling session in graduate school and this was the first time he expressed his feelings with his sexuality. Jay said he had to dig deep internally and talk about feelings he had avoided for years. He said he was still scared because his faith told him he was going to hell for this lifestyle. After this first session, Jay thought it would be best to tell his parents at some point in his life. Jay told his parents about his sexuality shortly after this counseling session and they chose to avoid the topic. His parents and family continue to not invite him to some family gatherings because they are afraid that he may not filter his gay lifestyle. Jay says he also stays away from his family out of respect for his parents. Jay says he may not be close to his family, but he is lucky to have his close friends and co-workers. These people are his “chosen family.”

Patrick

Patrick worked for a large four-year public research university in central New Mexico. He retired during the time of this study and worked as a mid-level administrator for 27 years. Patrick self-identifies as Mexican American and gay. He was born and raised in a small town near the border of Texas and New Mexico. He was raised Catholic and went to church as a kid every Sunday. Patrick is not first generation American; his parents grew up in this same Texas/New Mexico border town. This town is very rural and grew up with lots of farming

around him. Patrick also stated he grew up around a gang environment. The gang environment was machismo and enforced traditional Mexican values. He mentioned his father and grandfather were also machismo and expected Patrick to be the breadwinner of the family. Patrick remembers his father and grandfather working in the yard or fixing the cars, but Patrick was not keen on these activities. They would hassle him because he was not participating in masculine identifying activities. His grandfather worked at the racetracks and his father for the post office. Patrick also remembers Spanish being spoken everywhere as a child and was this was his first language.

Patrick has a younger brother and a twin brother. Patrick really didn't know his younger brother because he was only a few years old when Patrick and twin brother left for college. Patrick and his twin brother were very close. Patrick's twin brother passed away a few years ago.

Patrick's parents did not attend college but instilled a college dream into Patrick and his twin brother. Patrick's parents believed if they attended college, they would make more money and have better opportunities in their professional career. Patrick and his twin brother moved to central New Mexico to attend a university after they graduated high school. This is the same university where Patrick retired. Patrick said they were exposed to so much in this larger city and met so many people from different background.

Patrick said he knew he was gay since the fifth grade but did not want to say anything to anyone. The AIDS epidemic was so prevalent during the 1980s and being gay was tied immediately with having AIDS and dying. Patrick did not come out till his late 20s because he did not want his name or his family's name to be tarnished for being gay. He also did not want them thinking he had AIDS. Patrick's twin brother was also gay and another reason why they were so close. They had each other to navigate and talk about this identity together.

Patrick stayed with the university after graduating college and he was working with the undocumented population. He was the first individual on that campus to support these undocumented students and making sure that they had the same opportunities that everyone else did. He was inspired by this work and was helping students financially, socially, and personally.

After Patrick began working in higher education. He was diagnosed with cancer. Patrick was given a 40% chance of survival. Patrick was young and knew he wanted to beat cancer but with a special purpose. He went through the entire chemotherapy process and was motivated to make good change in this world. Patrick felt he now had a bigger purpose in life and was given a second chance at making a difference for Latinos in higher education. He wanted to represent Latinos and become a successful one.

Daniel

Daniel works for a large four-year public research university in central New Mexico. He has been a mid-level higher education administrator for seven years. Manuel self-identifies as Mexican and gay. He was born and raised in Northern Mexico with his grandparents and mother. His mom and dad split up when his mother was pregnant with him. His grandparents owned a cattle ranch. His was raised in a conservative machismo household. His grandma was a devout Catholic and his grandfather was a faithful Christian. Daniel said religion shaped his identity and development through his adulthood. His mother was the oldest of her siblings, so Daniel felt like he was just so close to his tios (uncles) and tias (aunts) because they were not too far from him in age. He was extremely close to his grandmother and grandfather growing up.

In fourth grade, Daniel's life changed. His mother took Daniel to the U.S. in hopes of a better life and college degree. No official paperwork was completed, and Daniel and his mother were now undocumented in New Mexico. Daniel missed his grandparents so much. Daniel's dad

would come visit from time to time but stayed in Mexico. Shortly after Daniel moved to the U.S., his dad passed away. Daniel couldn't go back to Mexico for the funeral because he would not be able to get back to the U.S. This was very hard time for Daniel.

Daniel said he needed to adjust to his new life in the U.S. Spanish was his first language and remembers being registered at his new elementary school and no one in the school spoke Spanish except for one teacher. The one teacher was bilingual. There also stated that there were no English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) programs at this elementary school. He had to learn English fast and became a bookworm. On top of learning English, Daniel was bullied a lot in school for acting feminine, not being masculine enough, and for not having a girlfriend. The elementary school and middle schools he attended had a large Hispanic population. In high school, Daniel switched high schools because his mom got a new job and rented a home in a new area that was in a predominantly white school district. Now Daniel was no longer being made fun of for being feminine, but because he spoke Spanish, had a low social economic status, accent, and because his mom cleaned houses, he was still bullied. Daniel was now more scared of his new high school peers finding out he was undocumented and possibly having him deported. He did not share this undocumented secret with anyone. In this high school, Daniel made friends with five other students who were from Latin American countries. There were only five people of color in the entire high school. This was a big change compared to his elementary and middle school where the schools were minority majority.

In his junior year in high school, Daniel began to question his sexuality. His grandparents and mother never made any negative comments about gay people, but the rest of the family did through chisme (gossip). Daniel had girlfriends off and on up through college but always had an internal resistance to dating men. Daniel started to come out in college to close friends and

cousins. He stated they were all supportive but one. One was very conservative with her Catholic faith and did not support his lifestyle. Daniel has not told his grandparents to this day about his sexuality, but he feels they are aware. The grandparents make comments to other family and friends that show they care for him and do not care he is still single and does not have a girlfriend. Daniel waited to tell his mother he was gay until the day after he graduated from college. Daniel wanted to be financially stable and feared what she would say or do. He came out to his mother and her response was “I love you but what will the family think.” She was more worried about the family and not fully supportive. This is what he feared.

Daniel felt he had a second mom/mentor during his undergraduate college experience. His mentor was a campus resource for many students, and she would let all the students hang out, sleep, and have meetings in her office. Daniel’s said his mentor cared for students and helped them develop. He was inspired by his mentor, and she told him to apply for a higher education job after he graduated. To this day he works for that center and at that same university because of this mentor. He wants to give back just as much as she provided and supported him.

Alex

Alex works for a large four-year public research university in south central Texas. He has been a mid-level higher education administrator for 18 years. Alex self-identifies as gay and Mexican American. He was born in raised in south Central Texas in a large Mexican population city. Alex's parents divorced when he was very young toddler. He did not grow up in a typical mother/father dynamic, but he did have a stepfather who also raised him. He grew up in a school district that was of lower social economic status. Alex has three brothers and one sister. He grew up in a bilingual home and his family speaks a lot of Tex-Mex language. His father was in the military and his stepfather was a truck driver. He grew up in a very machismo household. Alex’s

mother was a stay-at-home mom and said she had one of the hardest jobs of raising the family. Alex is very light skinned and had blond hair when he was younger. Alex struggled with his Latino identity for a long time because he was different and looked different compared to his family. He is very proud of his Latino identity now.

College was never discussed in Alex's family nor a consideration for Alex for part of his life. Alex was told at a young age he needed additional special support services and was retained from a grade in elementary. He got the help he needed and did well academically. As Alex got older, the conversations were now framed towards "what are you going to do for work and how are you going to earn a living." No one ever mentioned anything about college.

It was not until his best friend in high school mentioned she wanted to go far away to college with Alex. So, Alex applied to that school and 36 others. He knew being first generation and low income meant he needed to pick a college that offered him the best financial aid package. He selected a college that was 2000 miles away from home. He left to college and said loved the experience. He also stated he found his voice. Then, his undergrad classmates started talking about graduate school. Alex did not even know what graduate school was but decided to apply to graduate school because everyone else was applying. He got into graduate school and moved back to Texas.

While completing his graduate degree, Alex was working at a nonprofit helping students in efforts to give back to the community. He stated he felt the passion for the students and learned that he loved working with this demographic. Soon after he completed his graduate degree, he became aware of a job opening at a local university. He applied and got the job at this university. He has never left this university and enjoys making good change not only for students but for all identities.

Alex came out to family later in life. He was already out to his friends since his undergraduate education. He felt like his family always knew but none of them said anything to each other. Alex was already living with his longtime partner and Alex felt it was the right time to chat with his parents. Alex came out to his parents in his late 20s and they were very supportive. He remains very close with his family.

Manuel

Manuel works for a large four-year public research university in Central Texas. He has been a mid-level higher education administrator for seven years. Manuel self-identifies as gay and Mexican. He was born and raised in a small rural town in South Texas with a population of around 2,000 people. Manuel stated his family has lived in south Texas for several generations and when the border came across his family's land, his family's land did not cross the border. His parents attended a segregated high school in Texas only for people of color. Manuel does not speak Spanish. Manuel grew in a machismo household. Manuel's dad was a high school football all-star and came from a long line of athletes. Manuel was often told by his father and family "Boys don't cry" and "Be a man." Manuel's father expected him to play football as he grew up.

Manuel's upbringing was surrounded by religion. Manuel was raised Catholic until the third grade. In third grade, he started attending a Pentecostal church with his parents and was a part of two types of religious communities: Catholic and Pentecostal. That year his family then decided to become only Pentecostal. Manuel considers his parents to be conservative but once they joined the Pentecostal church the level of conservatism increased. Manuel attended church services Mondays, Wednesdays and twice on Sundays. Manuel was not allowed to listen to anything but Christian music growing up.

Manuel is not a first-generation college student. His mother completed her college degree, but his father did not. Manuel's mother taught as a teacher for forty years and recently retired. Manuel has one sister, and he is the oldest of the two siblings. Manuel feels there is an unspoken rule or a greater expectation that is demanded of him due to his mother having multiple miscarriages and him being the first born. Manuel felt pressure growing up and considers himself to be a high achiever, especially in his academic life. Manuel stated since his mother was a teacher, she pushed for greater expectation of education. Manuel felt he always had to try and be better, study more, and work harder. Manuel never had a summer off from school. His mother would make his sister and him do worksheets or flashcards for new subjects for the upcoming school year. Manuel always knew the expectation of attending college and the question was more of "where are you going to go to college rather than are you going to college?"

Manuel went to a large four-year, public institution for his undergraduate education. He was still devoted to his faith and was a bible study leader throughout college. He remembers preaching to other college students about finding themselves and following the Lord, but he felt he did not have his life together. The reason was because he was hiding, he was gay. Manuel remembers being attracted to the male body figure since middle school but due to his religious beliefs, he would pray and hope those feelings would just go away over time. Manuel did not have anyone to talk about his sexuality with; his family did not have a positive relationship with sex or talking about sex.

Manuel stated he was living a double life for a long time. He was out with his friend group but not to his family. Manuel came out to his sister first and she was supportive. He said then just one day out of nowhere, he was sitting down with his parents and just told them he was gay. He expected them to quote Bible verses and ask questions, but they did not. The mom cried

and said I love you and then his dad followed with the same three words. He was in shock and not expecting this. He said he felt relief in his life authentically and his double life was over.

Manuel didn't know what he wanted to do after he graduated from college. He was an admissions tour guide during his undergraduate education. He said he felt safe in higher education because people were more accepting and open minded. Manuel considered working for one year after he graduated from college and then become a missionary for the church. A mentor then told him about a job in admissions that was opening soon after graduation and so he applied. He got the job and has never left higher education. He said he enjoys working with students and people. He enjoys assisting prospective students in building their futures and making decisions for their next steps in life.

Izan

Izan works for a large four-year public research university in central Texas. Izan has been a mid-level administrator in higher education for 11 years. Izan self-identifies as Tejano/Chicano and gay. He was born and raised in Northern Texas in a predominant white metropolitan city. Izan is fourth generation American. Izan was raised in a traditional machismo household. His father grew up in a large Texas city where the Hispanic population was the majority. His father was a well-known high school and college athlete. His mother grew up in a small Texas town where her family was one of the only Latino families in that area. Izan considers his mother to more reserved, rational, and a good balance to his father's outgoing personality. Izan's parents are both college graduates; his father works in finance and his mother was a teacher a long time before becoming a senior administrator in education.

Izan's upbringing was structured. His family went to church every Sunday and was a devout Catholic family. Izan's parents were a part of the Chicano Movement. His parents felt the

pressure of Americanization that was occurring and wanted to ensure a better living not only for themselves but for their future children. Izan's parents speak Spanish but did not teach Izan or his little sister. They felt this was the best decision not to teach them Spanish because it would help their children avoid discrimination. He said they also assumed by not teaching them Spanish, his sister and him would have more opportunities if they were Americanized into the dominant culture.

Izan has a distinct memory of attending elementary school and noticed there were not a lot of Latino families in that neighborhood. It was not until middle school and high school where he got his first introduction into the Tejano culture. He remembers the guys in middle school and high school wearing saggy pants and the girls had dark lipliner and their hair gelled back. Izan's parents tried to keep him and his sister away from that Latino environment so they would not be influenced. Izan began to question who he was as a Latino because he did not look, act, or dress like other Latinos. His parents dressed him preppy and always wanted him to appear "proper." Izan said his parents raised him with an Americanized standard of the dominant culture.

A college degree was pushed heavily by Izan's maternal side. Izan's grandmother was also a teacher and Izan considers her the largest influence of going into higher education. Izan went to college and enjoyed the university setting. He connected with a group of men and joined a multicultural Latino fraternity.

Izan did not come out until his early 20s. Izan's began to question his sexual identity when he was in middle school. He did whatever he could to conceal his feelings and emotions of being gay. He waited until he graduated with his undergrad degree. He was scared. He always remembered the homophobic statements mentioned by his family when he was growing up. He was scared they would cut him off or abandon him if he came out too early in life. He waited

until he got his undergrad degree. Izan then shared how he felt independent after graduating from college and could manage life on his own if his family were to have cut him off financially.

Izan told his sister first and she was easy and supportive. He had to be more prepared for his parents' reaction. He told his mother and he said she had no problem. The father did not take it well and thought maybe this was just a phase. Izan would send his parents resources to help them understand the gay culture and slowly time did help. His parents are more accepting now.

After college, Izan went to work for his fraternity on the national level. This was his first job in a higher education setting. He represented his fraternity and would travel to different college campuses to meet with the different chapters. This job was surrounded by a machismo male dominated culture and Izan would correct a lot of microaggressions that he would come across. Since he was cisgender masculine appearing, he had to navigate a lot of conversations assuming he was a straight male. He constantly would have to out himself or correct statements like “where is your girlfriend or wife?” and other small talk.

Izan then moved on to working for the large public research institute in Texas a which he currently works. He said this job attracted him because he saw students come into a university and witnessed their transformation over time. He enjoys helping students develop and grow into their professional selves.

Themes

The narrative profiles above were constructed using an initial questionnaire, two individual interviews, and written follow-up questions. These data sources were analyzed to identify themes. Once the analysis was complete, themes surfaced that were supported by the data. The following themes are family expectations, support systems, fear of discrimination and

homophobia, and lack of representation in higher education. Subthemes are also listed below for each of the four themes.

Family Expectations

All the participants mentioned themes of family expectations. They are broken down into subthemes: machismo expectation, college expectations, and Americanized expectations

Machismo Expectations

Machismo expectations was a strong theme with all the participants. Each of the participants indicated their relationship to a father or male figure in their lives. They also shared how their families dictated how males should act and portray themselves. Jay's story exemplifies this:

My father told me you know you're a man and you don't cry. You need to get married and have a wife and kids. You also have to be a man of faith. These expectations were verbal and nonverbal. These are things I still struggle with when it comes to who I am because I feel like I was literally conditioned to not say my feelings. Gender roles were also set, and my sister's job was to clean the house. I was told you are a man and need to go into welding. You are not a woman, they told me, and don't need to be doing chores inside the house.

Kevin's story had similar machismo expectations and explained how he was told to be the man of the house and not to show emotion. He stated:

Machismo expectations were very much pushed upon me. I was told you are the man of the house. You take care of your mom and your sister. They told me to act masculine and strong and to never show weakness or emotion. They said boys don't cry you and need to tough it out. They expected our last name to be passed down for generations. It was

promoted in a different way, like it was very much like you find a wife and you have kids for me, I saw it differently, in my head I said, what if I don't have a wife or a husband?

Alex mentioned in his story about masculinity expectations and how these expectations caused him identity confusion. Alex shared:

I used to tell people that I lived a double life... because I did not know who I needed to be and when I needed to be that person. Growing up, I had to be so many different people. I had to be what my military father and then what my macho stepfather wanted me to be. So, you know, this is what men are expected to do and be, and this is what men aren't type of thing.

Alex also shared a story about an encounter with his aunt and how he felt about masculinity and gender roles. He stated this:

Gosh I was like five or six. I was a little, little boy, and I had a lot of girl cousins. I was not necessarily keen with playing with the boy cousins because they we're into roughhousing with my brothers and I didn't always want to be around that. I remember my Tia (aunt) came inside the house and saw me playing with barbies with my girl cousins. She's like mijo, you can't be playing with that barbie because that is Kimmy's and if you play with barbies your wewe (penis) is going to fall off... I don't even know what she meant at the time but yes, she said basically my wewe was going to fall off and I'm thinking about this 40 years later. Oh my God this woman told her nephew that he can't play with dolls, and I needed to go outside with the boys and if not, mutilation is in my future.

While each participant told a unique story, all seven of them were clear that their families had machismo expectations and stated how their families were defining their masculine identity. In addition to machismo expectations, college expectations played a role in the participant's lives.

College Expectations

As families shared their expectations for masculinity, they also shared their expectations of college. The narratives illustrate all participants' families expected the participants to go to college but one. Daniel shared a story about how he received support from not only his mother but grandparents and uncle. Daniel shared this story:

My mom moved from Mexico to the U.S. to learn English well and to go to college. My family and especially my grandparents were supportive of college. One of uncles made a comment about wanting to be in school and not wanting to work. He reminded me that the family works hard on the ranch every day and that I should go to school because this ranch life is dying profession. He told me to make a living another way and do it through education.

Alex's mentioned that his family did not see the value in college. He stated he was also first generation and everything about college was new to his family. Alex shared this story:

College was a foreign idea to my family. My siblings barely graduated high school. They told me I was going to have to pay for it if I went.... it was \$25,000 to go to school and they told me what is college going to do for me? How would I ever pay that back or for it? They didn't have that kind of money and I knew that.

Family support for college expectations was a large theme for this study. The next theme details how mentors provided support in the subsequent circle of influence.

Americanized Expectations

Four participants shared similar stories of Americanization and the expectations that family and society pushed onto the Latino culture. Patrick said, “My family was looked down upon by white Americans, so my family started to become Americanized. White washing occurred in my family and my culture.” Patrick also mentioned he “I was taught it's better to associate closer to whiteness.”

Manuel shared how he grew up and his parents did not teach him Spanish because of the discrimination they faced. He said:

My parents came from the age where they got in trouble for speaking Spanish in school. They had all these different prejudices that were put against them because they were Brown. They spoke Spanish but they didn't want that for me and my sister. So English was the only language that we learned.”

Izan said: “Spanish was hardly spoken in our household unless my parents were speaking to relatives.” He also mentioned how people view him differently since he does not speak Spanish. He said:

People don't see me as 100% Latino or Hispanic or Latinx because I don't know my native language. I find people in my generation don't know Spanish and it's kind of comforting. Many of us grew up in this unique generation where it was bad to learn Spanish and expected to be more American. I guess you can say we're Americanized because of what happened to our parents.

Support Systems

Another theme all the participants shared were stories about support systems. The participants mentioned how these support systems helped them navigate life and college. The

participants also shared how support systems led them to working in higher education. The subthemes of support systems are: mentors, female mentors, professional organizations, and university affinity groups.

Mentors

All the participants shared stories of support from mentors. Each participant provided a story of mentor support and how it helped them achieve their academic success. Daniel mentioned how he connected with a Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) and an Assistant Vice President (AVP) during his undergraduate education. Daniel mentioned that these mentors did a lot for the undocumented students, and he felt connected to the university. Daniel also mentioned this:

I had several mentors, and I will mention two male figures that were a big role model for me. One was a VPSA, and he was a Tejano/Mexicano. I was able to learn directly from a VPSA and see all his responsibilities. I learned so much about student affairs from him. The other was an AVP. The AVP leaned to the conservative side but had a very strong work ethic and expected hard work. He showed me a lot and how to value my work and the value of my contributions. He told me I was underselling my talents and it was time for me to move up. He forced me to apply myself. Both mentorship experiences were strictly professional. We never had personal conversations and only work-related conversations. I did not share sexuality and didn't know it was ever going to come up or ever the right moment.

Female Mentors

Another common theme was female mentors. Participants shared how they felt a more nurturing type of feeling from female mentors and felt more open about sharing their personal

endeavors and sexuality rather than with a male mentor.

Manuel talked about a female mentor and stated how “she is a lesbian and woman of color and lived in Texas.” She told him he needed to get a master's degree.” Manuel didn’t want to apply for a master's degree, but this mentor pushed him. “She was always really encouraging and said many times you can do this; you can graduate, you can pursue this as a career.” Manuel stated, “she helped me to figure out life and she was actually one of the very first people that I came out to.” He asked her, “hey, if I liked boys, would you be okay with that? She said yeah, of course.” He stated, “this bridged their professional and personal relationship.” He also mentioned that he had other professional mentors who have helped him that were Hispanic. He stated, “they helped me to understand the importance of being brown and to see how there aren't that many brown folks in higher education.” He shared:

...they really helped me to understand my role as a person of color because I grew up in a town where there were tons of people of color and to come to an institution that's a predominantly white institution and that I had the chance to represent an underrepresented community.

Daniel talked about a director at a center who was his “motherly” mentor during his undergraduate education and how she helped him with his identity development. Daniel stated:

At school, I hung out at the center and the director was like the mom. Students studied, hung out, slept in between classes and meetings. Kids lived far away and commuted to campus. That mentor (director) knew me very well and saw me upset one day. She called me into her office, and I couldn’t hide anything from her. She had like Mexican mom instinct, and she knew everything. I never came out to her, and she accepted me for all my identities. Matter of fact, I felt more accepted at the university because of her. She is

also, a reason why I work in higher education. I didn't know where I belonged at the time, and she opened many doors for me. The LGBT center was getting established at the university, but it was run by your typical white gay boys, and I didn't feel comfortable with them. Plus, they didn't help pass a resolution for undocumented folks and they said that it was out of their scope and not their issue. How was I going to connect with someone who wasn't even going to help me? I didn't feel safe with them.

Patrick also shared a similar story about his experience with female leadership. He stated, "I had several mentors who I looked up to but none of them were gay. They were primarily women. I gravitated towards women leaders and still do."

Professional Organizations

Four of the participants mentioned university support groups and national professional organizations like The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA). Izan talked about how he attended NASPA in 1994 and what the organization was like back then. Izan stated:

At NASPA in 1994 there weren't very many Latino males or females in the organization, they used to have these interest groups which are now the knowledge communities. So, I went looking for the Latino interest group but there wasn't one. It was called a Multicultural Interest Group. They lumped all minorities together at that time. Now it is different and have a large Latinx and LGBTQ knowledge community.

Jay talked about both NASPA and ACPA as well:

I like NASPA and ACPA. The knowledge communities are great. The knowledge communities are actively involved in the community and great for networking. I attend their webinars during the academic year and I'm part of the Facebook groups. I wish we

met more than just once a year at the annual conferences because oh my gosh you have to wait like a whole year to be able to be around some of these people who look like you and want the same changes.

Daniel stated he was involved with NASPA since his undergraduate education. He also mentioned this was one of the reasons why he became interested in higher education as a career.

Daniel stated:

I was involved in NASPA, and I was a NUFP (National Undergraduate Fellow Program) mentee. My mentor from my school told me about NASPA and said I should think about joining the organization. I did and liked it a lot. I was super into the NUFP program because of it I changed my major and did Spanish and became an orientation advisor. It opened my eyes to working in higher education and being around people like me. I am currently apart of the Latinx and LGBTQ knowledge communities and active on their listservs, but I just haven't attended due to budgets being cut by COVID.

Patrick offered some great advice about the professional organizations. He said:

If you make an effort to put something into it then you're going to get something out of it, if not, then you're not. These knowledge communities within NASPA are good and making good change. More people should join them and the ones at ACPA. They are making good change.

University Resource Groups

Patrick shared how NASPA and ACPA only meet in-person annually but also mentioned how the universities have resources on campuses as well-known. These resources are known as University Resource Groups or Affinity Groups. These participants stated some University Resource Groups have a stronger presence on campus than other identity groups. Alex said:

I entered college almost 25 years ago and so much change has happened. I mean there are organizations on campus that support staff. I am a active member of the Raza Faculty and Staff Organization and a part of the Pride Faculty and Staff Organization. It is great to connect with people on campus who look and resemble me. Also, great to see those numbers growing in higher education so students see people who look like them.

Kevin mentioned how more university groups are stronger for some identities than others. He stated “Our LGBTQ student organizations and staff organizations don't have the support to have a presence on campus, whereas I feel like the Latinx ones do. More needs to be done for our LGBTQ community to be present in the larger community of the university.”

Izan mentioned that even in these university resource groups it's not always safe. He stated:

Even a lot of Latinx spaces or groups on campus you can deal with homophobia. Even Spanish discrimination. I mean so it's not it's not necessarily good on one side versus the other. The LGBT spaces are mostly you know, for like white gay men only.

Fear of Discrimination

This leads into the next theme. The participants shared stories of fear of discrimination towards gay Latinos in higher education. Fear of discrimination theme is broken down into these subthemes: racism and homophobia, safety, and tokenization.

Fear of Discrimination and Homophobia

Patrick shares his story of racism and how this led to his career in student affairs. He stated:

My twin brother and I struggled with racism. My brother and I lived together in the dorms during our undergrad. One day, we came back to our room, and it was filled with

water. The room had water everywhere and there was a sign and it said, "Go home wet back." Since that day, both my brother and I were like this shouldn't be like this. This isn't right. This shouldn't be happening to college students. We both knew that we needed to do something for students to feel welcomed and for students to be successful, because it could have been very easy for us to say we're going home we don't want to be here anymore. This is why my brother, and I chose to work in higher education.

Patrick said he always had to prove himself. He said:

It was a challenge, because I had to prove myself, not only for being young, for being Hispanic, for being gay for being first generation for being someone from the south part of the state. You know that I had to dress a certain way or act a certain way, to be taken seriously.

Alex was given advice from a mentor to sometimes not show all your identities at work and to not bring your personal gay life to work. The mentor said not all identities will be liked.

Alex stated this about his mentor:

She (mentor) told me to make sure that you are cautious with your worlds colliding. She meant like don't always bring in your gay life into the profession because that could create a recipe for some mess and stress that you don't want.

Alex shared a story about someone who he thought was a mentor but then found out he was gay and stopped talking to him.

This mentor of this college organization said he would take care of me through college and told my parents your son is in good hands. He found he out I was gay, and the relationship changed completely. I was no longer apart of his circle. On graduation day as I walked the stage. I went in for a handshake to be the bigger person and the person

turned around and gave him his back in front of 40,000 people to not shake his hand. Not all people are good there are bad people in the world. Was it just because you don't like gay people? This is still in the back of my mind.

Patrick said his experience was similar. He mentioned, "It was pretty much don't ask don't tell mentality at my university. Because again there was no support systems for us students and professionals and no protection when items occur. It was a bit intimidating and caused some fear."

Safety

Fear was brought up by three participants and Manuel stated, "even though I work in higher education, I know I may not be totally safe." He mentioned the fear of a student who is Latino and scared of "having bleach balloons thrown at her and fear during "wetback" roundup". Manuel mentioned that this is where white fraternities on this campus find and hunt "wetbacks" and terrorize them at the frat house. Manuel explained how both incidents happened at his university. He also mentioned that even at pride festivals his "university is involved in the festivities but then you see the Swat team surrounding the premises." He mentioned "this is celebration, but you are still really cognizant that somebody could plow a truck right through the crowd, throw a bomb or just come and start shooting."

Manuel mentioned two stories dealing with discrimination and harassment. The first incident is a story where he shared that in higher education, he "deals with prospective students and their families and they're not happy when their child is not admitted into the university. They are not polite." He shared a story about prospective parents telling his Latino "Staff members that they can go back to Mexico. Also, that they are not listening to them anymore and they don't know what you're talking about so they should go back to the fields." After a campus tour a

prospective student reached out and said, “that their experience on campus tour really reduced their interest in the campus community.” Manuel asked why and the prospective student said, “because as a white male I don't know that my identities would be celebrated in the same way as your diverse groups at your university.”

The second incident involves a dean of the university. He stated “I was at a college fair. I got sent to it because I could somewhat speak Spanish, but I still had to ask for an interpreter because I was not 100% fluid. The university sent this Dean from one of the colleges and he was there to represent because he was known for his experience and working with Hispanic students, migrant students and helping them to plan a path. He asked me “why do you have an interpreter?” I said, “I can't speak Spanish fluently 100%.” He said, “did your parents not teach you?” I said, “I can understand Spanish, and I can try to speak it, but you know in this professional setting, I'd like to make sure that what I'm telling the families is the correct stuff.” He then said “there are three types of Mexicans in this world. there's monolingual, there is bilingual and there is confused. Then he said, “You are confused.” Manuel mentioned “I did not know how to respond, and he would see me on several occasions across campus and mention my confused identity.” Manuel said” I know that is harassment and micro aggressions all in one.”

Daniel mentioned how you need to be aware of surroundings and what is happening on campus. “Some meetings on campus are not safe. You will not find me at a conservative republican meeting. Those are not safe for me. Other than those conservative groups on campus, things are well managed. Safety all depends on administrators and faculty who are running it and the offices. Colleges overall are safe or welcoming.”

Manuel shared a story about him driving into deep East Texas for admissions work event. He said “I was scared for the first time. I was scared to be brown. I was scared to be gay. The

GPS was taking me through weird routes and through small town. I was like if something happens out here like what do I do? I'm gay and I'm brown. I was scared in my hotel room. I even moved the chair and the bed, so they were blocking the front door. Outside my hotel room were men drinking and smoking. You can tell were very conservative well rough looking men. I was like they know that I'm like gay and I'm Brown and I'm traveling alone, and nobody really knows where I'm at. I was so scared that night.”

Tokenization

Daniel said his story with tokenization discrimination. He said there are:

Dangers when applying for jobs in higher education. Institutes are looking for the token identities. They hire you and they give you seat at table to only fill an underrepresented identity but then you have no voice. I was once given a seat on a planning committee for the university. They wanted a Hispanic and LGBTQ voice. They took none of my feedback on the committee and I was just a checkmark to say they had diversity on a planning committee.

Manuel told a story about an incident with tokenization. Manuel was asked to find Hispanic students for a celebration of excellence press release that was going to go out later that month. The photographer also mentioned that needed some “brown” people to take pictures of. Manuel was not comfortable with this request of seeking “brown” students but did what he was told. The photoshoot took place with the photographer and the students raised concern about one of the photos taken. The picture was of the three Hispanic women in front of an American and Texas flag. Manuel had to go explain to the photographer that this photo was problematic. He explained the problem was due to political racist items that were occurring nationally and regionally. Manuel explained to the photographer DACA being revoked by current legislatures,

women's abortion rights being taken away in Texas and that the American flag has been bastardized to represent a very conservative political group. He also explained how this was tokenization paints the narrative that the university is an inclusive environment when that was not the case. Manuel stated, “the university has very racist undertones.” The picture was removed from the draft of the press release.

Alex shared his views on tokenization and how he benefits from being tokenized. He stated “Some people don't like to be tokenized. And I feel like I've been tokenized many times. I mean it does bothers me, but I'll do it. Are you going to give me a scholarship or job, your boy needs money?”

Lack of Representation

The final theme that all the participants shared was a lack of representation of gay Latinos at the senior or midlevel administrators positions in higher education. All mentioned how the representation of gay Latinos can be found at the entry level and some midlevel but not senior leadership.

Manuel mentioned “there needs to be more gay Latino men in higher education.” He stated, “when you don't have representation on all levels, then stories get lost, and identities get whitewashed as you go further up.”

Jay shared how we need more people of color and representation starts from the top down. He shared:

We need to get some more people of color in higher ed. We need to get a translator and we need interpreters. We need to be cautious though and protect people of color and gay folks because then they super tokenized... Like systemically that's what I would love to

see in the future for higher ed and I think it starts from the top down. That is where representation matters to the people.

Patrick talked about role models and how people are not representing their identities and telling their personal story. He said:

There must be more role models in higher education, but I think that there also has to be a sense of courage from our older professionals to say I'm gay. I think that there's a lot of older administrators who are not sharing their true authentic personal story. They might be in a gay relationship, but they're not open about it, but they don't talk about it.

Kevin shared his thoughts and why gay Latinos are not in executive level positions.

He said:

Homophobia and racism prevent people like me to move up in executive level positions. I don't see anyone like me who represents those minority identities and at least in an executive senior level position. It's all white men or heterosexual women. I think systemically there are still barriers that exist and prevent upward mobility. This discourages me from even thinking it's possible in my current institution, because I don't see anyone like me.

Daniel talked about how higher education was made for cisgender white people and offered some advice for hiring. Daniel said:

No senior leadership look like me. Structures of power in higher education were made for cisgender hetero white men and women. Academia was not made for us. Not for people of color or queer administrators. Representation matters. Universities should strive to higher admins and tenured faculty for any identity that is underrepresented. Wouldn't it be interesting to see an open queer Latino VP?

Kevin and Patrick also shared the same sentiment. Kevin stated:

I see more Mexican identifying people on campus that are entry level positions but none on the mid-level or above... I would say that my institution leadership is predominantly white and heterosexual. I would also say the gay identity is not super visible for the administrators. Like the gay administrator community is almost nonexistent. All you have are white heterosexual individuals choosing other white heterosexual individuals. They are not giving everyone an equal opportunity to apply for that next level or a senior level position.

Patrick stated:

Entry level people resemble us gay Latinos. I do not see it in the midlevel. I do not see gay Vice Presidents or Associate VPs or Latino males. We say that we are a diverse Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) but we're really, not. That is an issue. There are not very many people in the pipeline. To take over those type of roles

Findings to Answer Research Questions

The participants narratives and themes constructed from their stories answer the research questions. To simplify the findings, I have chosen to provide distinct responses to each of the questions below.

RQ1. What are the life stories of openly gay Latino males who currently work in higher education as mid-level administrators for in the Southwest region of the U.S.?

All participants shared their personal narrative stories and how it led them to their careers in higher education. One of the first points that all the participants disclosed was their upbringing with their families and their identities. All the participants shared the inner conflict that exists for gay Latinos with gender role expectations and gay identity. All participants shared their

experiences related to either hiding or silencing their emotions, trying to uphold machismo values, or adhering to traditional male roles. Five out of seven participants discussed feelings of weakness and doubt due to their gay or Latino identity.

Religion was a big part of the lived experiences of the participants. All the participants shared their participation in the Catholic or Pentecostal church while remaining faithful to their gay identity. When the participants mentioned anti-gay rhetoric through scripture and sermons, five out of seven participants alluded to compartmentalizing, ignoring, or pulled away from perspectives that did not align with their gay identities. Four participants discussed either hiding their sexuality or developed a personal spiritual relationship that supports their sexual orientation.

The participants also reflected on the lived experiences of gender expectations (caballerismo) centered around providing for and protecting their loved ones and family members. Of the participants, two out of seven assumed financial responsibility for their families and provided emotional support for their loved ones. It is important to note that one participant felt disconnected from taking on this caballerismo role with his own family due to experiencing himself as an “outsider” and embraced this role within his new “chosen family”.

RQ2 What types of support systems are reported by gay Latino men in their higher education setting?

The participants mentioned in several ways how they were guided into their careers in higher education by support systems. For the participants, support was the key factor in helping the participants achieve their college degrees and enter a careers in higher education. Support systems varied in different forms and functions.

For six participants, support was encouraged by family to attend college. The participants families reminded the participants that life would be more difficult without a college education. Majority of the participants mentioned unconditional acceptance and love from their families. For those participants who didn't have the full unconditional love and support, they sought out friends who would then become their "chosen family." All the participants mentioned this support and love from their families and friend groups was the foundation of their identity development and success in higher education.

Mentor support from professionals in higher education was also prevalent. All participants mentioned having support from their mentors during their undergraduate education. All participants mentioned how this was vital for their success in achieving their degree but also opening the possibility to a career in higher education. Many of the stories shared how these mentors were like a second parent. Majority of the participants also shared how they felt with being around their mentors and felt they could be themselves in the gay and Latino identity. Five of the participants mentioned feeling fully accepted and their identities were welcomed. The participants shared details of mentors in higher education sharing advice, holding them accountable for their actions, personal story telling and pushing the participants in reaching their endeavors.

Female mentors who were professionals in higher education was also prevalent as a support system. Four participants mentioned how they felt more comfortable sharing their gay identity with a woman versus a man. Those four participants also shared they did not have the same relationship with male mentors because the male mentors kept their relationship to only business and goal setting conversations. The participants mentioned they were more afraid to share their gay identity with other males and especially if those male mentors were masculine

acting. The participants shared that they felt more nurtured with female mentors because the female mentors acted like their “second mom” and did not care if they were gay. They shared how these female mentors would nurture the participants by making sure they ate, were safe and would check in on their boyfriends. Four participants shared how these strong personal relationships helped the participants to know what authentic mentorship truly was and how the participants could provide this mentorship to others.

The participants mentioned how they have maintained support systems once they entered their careers in higher education. Majority of the participants mentioned how they keep in contact with their mentors from their undergraduate education. The other participants said they have found new support systems since most of their mentors have retired and moved on from higher education. Majority of the participants mentioned how they joined professional organizations and university affinity groups. Four of the participants mentioned two large higher education professional associations: The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA). The participants mentioned how these two professional organizations provided not only career development but also allowed the participants to join knowledge communities that celebrated their personal different identities.

The participants mentioned the professional organizations/associations are not free, and the participants then searched for free support systems at their universities. Half of the participants mentioned finding support through the university affinity groups. The participants mentioned both good and not so great experiences with these affinity groups. Most of the participants shared how they enjoyed being a part of an identity affinity group that resembles them. Other participants shared they felt uncomfortable because maybe they did not speak

Spanish or did not dress more masculine and were judged. Even though there was fear present in the stories, some of the participants found support within these affinity groups.

RQ3 What are the challenges that exist for gay Latino men in their higher education setting?

All participants shared challenges that exist for gay Latinos in higher education. The challenge that was most prevalent were families disowning the participants for being gay and causing emotional trauma. Five of the participants shared how they lived double lives through their young adulthood and disclosed how they had to hide their gay identity. The participants shared how they needed to maintain financial support with their families through their undergraduate education. Once the participants completed their college degree, they shared how they felt independent and could support themselves. Three participants shared how this changed their identity and how they could now fully live an out gay life. Five of participants shared after their undergraduate degree graduation, they disclosed their sexuality to close friends and family for they could support themselves. While loving and supportive relationships from family remained intact for some of the participants, most participant indicated experiencing relationship strains with family members. One participant discussed experiencing a disconnect with his entire family once he disclosed his sexuality. He shared how he became detached and was treated differently from his family.

The participants mentioned a lack of Latino and gay identity representation in mid to senior level roles in careers in higher education. All participants said they can see the Latino identity on entry and mid-level roles but not senior level roles in higher education. All stated that they see white heterosexual male or female in senior administrator roles in higher education. Four participants shared that they do not see gay senior level administrators at all. All

participants mentioned how this lack of representation causes them fear for their future and upward mobility. One participant mentioned he knew there must be out, senior, gay administrators. The participant also mentioned these gay, senior administrators were possibly not sharing their authentic story and not connecting with the faculty, staff, or students. The participant stated they are hiding this identity. One participant stated that homophobia and racism prevent people like him from moving up into executive level roles.

All participants shared their fear of discrimination from racism and homophobia in higher education. Two participants questioned the hiring process for senior level administrators and racism of homophobia are occurring. Five of the participants shared how they need to first access a new environment of meeting at work to judge the safety of their voice and career.

The majority of the participants shared they felt they could proudly be Latino but must be cautious in how they disclosed their gay identity. Three of the participants shared how their professional relationships changed or dissolved after the participants shared, they were gay.

The participants shared the challenge of the presentation of their gender and sexuality to establish interpersonal connections. All the participants shared that, being gay men, they are aware and conscious of how their gender expression/sexuality impacts their relationships with others. Five participants described themselves as possessing traditionally masculine traits which was considered a positive attribute. Two participants shared how they feared to show any feminine traits, or they would not be taken seriously or silenced by other colleagues. Three of the participants disclosed how they had mixed feelings about connecting/interacting with heterosexual men and/or experienced some form of social rejection.

Another challenge discussed by the participants was Tokenization. All participants shared how they have witnessed or been a part of tokenization. Two of the seven participants shared

how they were only invited to meetings or tables because their intersecting identities. One participant disclosed how he was invited and offered suggestions and advice and none of his feedback was taken into consideration. Three participants said they have only been a part of tokenization because they needed someone of color or from LGBTQ to meet the standards of diversity for that group that was created. One participant shared how he knows tokenization is a game and plays the game to move up or become better known at the university.

RQ4 How does the intersectionality affect the lived experiences of gay Latino males in mid-level administrator position at higher education institutions in Southwest Region of the U.S.?

All the participants shared how they navigated and managed the conflicts that arose over time involving the intersection of their dual identities. Five out of seven participants discussed selective identity. Those five participants shared how they silenced one aspect of themselves to foster another identity and vice versa. Five participants indicated efforts to either seek out Latino queer communities on campus or in professional associations to explore the integration of their dual identities. Of those five, only one found an intersectionality group that was for both dual identities. All participants shared how their Latino identity was salient in most cases or scenarios in their jobs versus their gay identity. All participants mentioned appearance and silencing as a factor of how they are treated and respected.

All the participants shared how they needed to be aware of safety because of their intersecting identities. The participants shared how they could be at a gay pride event or one Latino festival and someone could conduct a hate crime against them. The participants also shared how they need to be aware of surroundings and who is attending meetings at work. All

participants said they feel safe in higher education as well and feel that higher education professional accept their dual identities.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This narrative inquiry study illuminated the lives of seven gay Latinos who served as professionals in higher education and overcame various challenges related to the intersection of their Latino and gay identity. This study enhanced current literature for Garcia (2015) mentioned there is a lack of personal narrative accounts of gay Latino men and their stories of racism, homophobia, and support systems in higher education. In this chapter, I discuss the meanings and implications of the findings of this study. I conclude this chapter with recommendations for future research.

The findings presented in chapter four led to the discussion of themes for gay Latino male professionals in higher education. Findings included cultural influences, identity development, fear of retaliation, support systems, and professional organizations & affinity groups in higher education.

Identity Development

The participants' narratives highlighted several areas of Latino culture and traditional expectations and how these cultural aspects impacted their identity development. The participants shared how they dealt with machismo, caballerismo, family, and religion. Several studies in the literature review explored the Latino and gay identity development (Jamil et al., 2009; Nakamura & Zea, 2010) and the narratives from the participants support the current literature.

Cultural Influences

The literature regarding the history of Latinos in the United States and their success in the educational pipeline, is characterized by practices and policies of inequity that exist in the lives of Latinos (Nakamura & Zea, 2010). These practices of traditional expected norms began through the participants families and upbringing. Traditional gender roles were expected from

the Latino community and especially for Latino males from a young age (Garcia, 2015). The participants were told by their parents or families how to act, dress, behave, and appear. At the same time, the participants had to navigate their gay identity development. Many of the participants shared they did not come out with their sexual identity until they were older. This was largely reported from their stories as a fear of denial and being disowned. The participants feared their family would be in shock or would respond with denial, anger, and/or anxiety. Some participants were fortunate enough to have accepting families and unconditional love and did not have to face these emotional responses.

Current literature states, “familial relationships can influence the health, well-being, and identity development of gay Latino individuals” (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018, p. 742). Through the narratives, participants who had unconditional love and acceptance appeared to have had better self-esteem, social support, and generally good health (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, & Sanchez, 2009). This study supported the current literature (Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018).

Respect and family were also both integral parts of the participants’ narratives and reflected the Latino culture. This study illuminated the traditional Latino respect values and the ways in which participants exhibited a sense of appreciation toward others (Laird & Green, 1996). Current literature described how Latinos submit or give in to persons of authority (Gautier, 2016). The narratives provided a sense of respect from the participants for higher educational leaders, mentors, and senior administrators. This study and the participants’ narratives support the finding of the current literature (Gautier, 2016).

Religion was another influential cultural topic for all participants. Current literature states Catholicism still maintains its hegemonic influence among Latin America and Latinos residing in

the United States (Hunt, 1998, Calvillo & Bailey, 2015), and this was evident in participants' narratives. The participants discussed being raised in the church and the fear of any separation from Catholicism or the church would represent a rejection of traditional Latino culture.

Machismo and caballerismo was another influential topic all participants discussed. The participants shared how masculine expectations influenced their identity development and behaviors as Latino males. Current literature indicated how these expectations defined their independence, dominance over women, and hypermasculinity (Sanchez et al., 2017). All participants explained when these expectations were not met or achieved, they were deemed as less masculine and prejudice or homophobic discrimination occurred. The participants also shared how traditional Latino families expected the males of the household to work and provide financial support versus going to college. This study supports current literature on Machismo and caballerismo expectations (Gloria et al., 2009; Sanchez et al., 2017).

Fear of Retaliation

According to past studies, gay Latinos face many challenges due to heterosexism and homonegativity (Jamil et al., 2009; Nakamura & Zea, 2010). The participants shared stories of fear of retaliation in forms of racism and homophobic actions (Jamil et al., 2009; Nakamura & Zea, 2010). This study's participants stories supported the current literature.

Earlier studies report college campuses were not safe or immune from the traditional expected gender norms and homophobia (Garcia, 2015). Some participants shared their fear of being out at work or coming out to senior leadership. Other participants shared they were comfortable being out at work with their sexual identity. This comfort allowed them to share their identities and feel more connected with other faculty, staff, and students.

The participants shared similar experiences related to discrimination of gender stereotypes as reflected in current literature (Bullard, 2013). Participants shared stories of experiencing gender stereotypes and discrimination because of their feminine characteristics. Many of the participants shared how feminine qualities were deemed unprofessional or unliked in a professional setting typically by other men. They explained how other men would become uncomfortable or act differently around more feminine acting men. On the other hand, participants noted women did not treat them differently. This study enhances existing literature regarding the way men are treated by other men and women based upon their masculine or feminine characteristics (Garcia, 2015).

Support Systems within Higher Education

Latinos struggle with navigating matters that come with privilege through access and must find ways to succeed and be resilient (Garcia, 2015). The participants shared how they used support systems to succeed. All participants mentioned support through mentorship. Mentorship has been found to be a key component in professional's development and provides a sense of belonging (Labor, 2017). Mentors provide support to professional staff members through difficult situations and personal and professional choices (Labor, 2017). Inspirational mentors can challenge their peers in developing their leadership skills and abilities (Labor, 2017; Englert, 2018). According to the participants, inspirational mentors helped them find their intersectional identities that provided growth and development personally and professionally. This study supports current research because past research mentioned mentors are needed regardless of a person's sexual orientation, race, or gender (Labor, 2017; Englert, 2018).

Current literature states mentorship occurring while in entry level and mid-level positions are vital for retention of higher education professionals (Labor, 2017). Many participants shared

that coaching through mentorship while in their entry level positions helped them to advance into mid-level roles. Other participants shared stories of entering their mid-level roles and were no longer coached by senior level administrators. Participants mentioned they often needed to seek out their own developmental opportunities to build their professional skills. The finding of this study support current literature (Labor, 2017).

Professional Organizations & Affinity Groups in Higher Education

Gay people of color must learn how to navigate distinct spaces within their campuses and seek their own resources to succeed (Labor, 2017). All participants shared stories of the difficult process of having to seek out accepting resources on their own. Not all spaces are safe or easy to navigate when intersecting identities are involved. People are judged and perceived based on their race, gender, and sexual orientation in higher education and the corresponding interactions of colleagues across campus (Labor, 2017).

All the participants mentioned American College Educators International (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) as being primary sources of professional support systems for them. These professional association communities provided consistent avenues for affinity and validation. The participants from this study shared that association community groups also provide an opportunity for potential networking opportunities to connect with other colleagues from other campuses. They also mentioned other professional associations that are more specific to their work in higher education and are also providing mentoring for people of color and gay identities.

The participants also mentioned affinity groups on their college campuses. They shared how associations meet annually at a conference but needed another support system that meets regularly. Participants said they sought out these resources that were local and on their campuses.

All the participants shared how their campuses have a Latinx or Hispanic staff association and a Pride or LGBTQ association. Many are a part of both but shared how they do not collaborate with events or resources together.

Current literature also mentions that support and engagement provided through affinity communities can help with recruitment and retention of mid-level administrators in their respective institutions and in the field of higher education (Labor, 2017). The participants' narratives support current literature on how professional associations are primary sources of support in the field of higher education.

Implications for Practice

This section discusses recommendations on implications for practice based on the participants' narratives.

Aiding Lack of Representation

All participants from this study mentioned the lack of representation of gay Latino administrators in mid- to senior-level roles in higher education. Participants mentioned they often seek others who share their identities. The participants shared the visibility of gay Latinos is seen typically at the entry level but becomes less visible at higher levels in the hierarchy. They mentioned there is lack of voice and support from senior leadership and this affects the implementation of inclusive policies or procedures and voice to concerns. They also mentioned the inclusive policies and procedures can be influenced by presence of diverse identities or by others who sympathize and know the needs of marginalized identities.

Tactics such as coaching and diverse hiring recruitment can improve the retention of gay Latino mid-level staff members in higher education. This approach can enhance the lack of

representation in administrative roles. This approach can also help with eligibility for promotions and career advancement into senior level positions.

Support Systems in Higher Education

Identity-based organizations, programs, and offices serve as strong support systems for gay Latino staff members at college institutions and professional organizations (Camacho, 2016). All participants in this study shared how they wished they had opportunities to attend events or meetings that were co-sponsored by both gay and Latino identity-based communities, organizations, or offices. A collaboration of communities can help staff explore their identities, feel connected, and find assistance with learning how to navigate higher education (Camacho, 2016). Examples participants provided were socials, happy hours, or other educational programs focused on gay Latinos. Even if staff do not utilize these resources or attend these events, the presence and visibility of the fliers and invitations sends a strong message that being both gay and Latino and that gay Latinos are welcome at these campus events and professional organizations (Camacho, 2016).

These types of collaborative events and/or creation of community groups are important as they will help to combat selective identity. Selective identity was described as a person trying to navigate from one identity or the other at a particular time to feel a sense of safety (Camacho, 2016). Selective identity can be alleviated if staff community groups can be welcoming to a broader spectrum of staff groups and enact their social identities rather than a narrowly focused (Camacho, 2016).

Labor (2017) mentioned how there has been a positive shift in the availability and endorsement of identity-based, caucus, or affinity spaces on campuses and within professional associations. Though there has been an influx of new affinity groups or communities,

institutions, and professional associations, the participants suggested cross collaboration among groups can create a sense of belonging (Labor, 2017). This study enhances literature acknowledging ways of creating a sense of belonging through new affinity groups or communities, institutions, and professional associations.

According to a study, the fault of unsuccessful Latinos in higher education lies on the inability of educational institutions to understand and react to the obstacles/cultural expectations that Latino males encounter and fail to help them succeed (Saenz et al., 2018). Organizations and affinity groups can assist with the lack of understanding by providing new opportunities or trainings for skill building and identifying opportunities for career advancement. Many participants mentioned the lack of training or skill building opportunities needed for promotions.

I recommend institutions expand strategies for professional development through career mapping and coaching for mid-level administrators to aid the lack of representation and retention of gay Latinos. Current literature mentions that areas of support are needed for mid-level administrators of color include career mapping, developing professional supportive networks, attention to multiple dimensions of identity, and mentoring entry level professionals (Masse et al., 2007). Coaching through mentorship can help with career mapping and development. This study enhances existing literature by providing resources for mentoring (Labor, 2017). Coaching also needs to be provided from mentors that understand marginalized identities and are sensitive to their lifestyles.

Authentic Personal Storytelling

All participants of this study shared how they felt a sense of belonging and acceptance within higher education. They also shared the feeling of being welcomed at their current respective campuses in the Southwest region of the United States. Many participants worked at

Hispanic Serving Institutions and understood this played a factor into their feeling of acceptance. Many participants shared their sense of comfort when sharing their Latino identity but were hesitant to share their gay identity due to fear of discrimination. Participants mentioned storytelling created a sense of belonging and an acceptance feeling. This study supports current literature on storytelling and sharing personal stories of identities (Labor, 2017).

Storytelling is essential in support systems and retention efforts because the stories highlight the experiences of the individuals on a deeper personal level (Labor, 2017). Labor's (2017) participants shared how they had pride in the intersectional communities of which they were a part and shared that pride through storytelling.

The participants of this study mentioned if more senior level administrators were to share their authentic personal stories, then other staff members would be inclined to share their stories and identities. Labor (2017) suggested senior-level administrators learn how to best support mid-level administrators reporting to them by using storytelling. He further indicated sharing stories between senior-level and mid-level administrators can serve as a bridge to understanding one another's identities and values in their respective roles (Labor, 2017).

This study supports Englert's (2018) study in which all participants were committed to being "out" in higher education and shared their stories on how the coming out process impacted and guided their personal and professional experiences. Englert's (2018) participants felt the message of being out, showed others there is nothing to hide, and signals other underrepresented groups there is support for them on campus, as well. Both Englert's (2018) study and this study bring awareness that conservative Southern regions of the United States are not safe places in which to be out. Yet, being 'out and proud' sends a strong message of support to others.

I recommend mid-level administrators in higher education share their authentic personal stories. In Englert's (2018) and Bullard's (2013) study, all presidential candidates and participants disclosed their sexual orientation when applying for their positions. The disclosure from the study's participants acted as a means of testing the campus climate as well as ensuring that each campus was prepared and able to accept an out president (Englert, 2018). Being out in the search process ensured their sexual orientation aligned with the values and mission of the institution but also provided a story to their identity.

This study enhances existing literature, for now we are seeing a shift in higher education where individuals can now be more comfortable in sharing their personal life stories and identities beyond just interview and in their daily work lives in higher education.

Future Research

Currently, few studies have been conducted to explore the intersection of gay Latino male administrators in higher education. Future research can be expanded in several ways. First, I recommend a larger sample size of participants. A larger sample size of participants will increase the varied perspectives of gay Latinos.

Future research should also include a larger geographic location. This study was restricted to seven U.S. states. The research would be enhanced by expanding the geographical location for a more diverse sample. The Latino community is made of many different traditions, beliefs, customs, languages, countries, cultures, and ethnicities across a large geographical location of the U.S. (Long, 2012). Additional research needs to be completed on the experiences beyond the Southwest region of the United States. This study primarily focused on Southwest region with a large population of Mexican, Tejano, and Chicano identities. I was also unable to locate participants from Oklahoma and Utah.

This study excluded lesbian, closeted, bisexual, transgender, and questioning communities. These communities and their stories would enhance existing research and storytelling.

Community college and private universities were also not a part of this study. I would recommend a study that includes both community colleges and private universities to include the perspectives of those staff members.

Another area for future research is to investigate and explore changes that occur at each developmental stage of Latino identity development while considering its interaction with sexual identity development. Additional research is needed on dual identity development and how development evolves overtime (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1979). Such research would enhance the connection to Queer theory (Jagose, 1996; Watson, 2005) and illuminate complexities of gay peoples' intersecting identities.

I also recommend additional research on social identity theory and the perceptions of in-group and out-group characteristics of intersecting identities (Tajfel, 1981). Narratives on the experiences of participants dealing with in and out group characteristics would add to literature and fill gaps in current knowledge.

Two participants in this study shared their struggles with their undocumented status. Undocumented gay Latinos face numerous legal, social, and financial barriers (Lyon, 2015) and these issues were identified by the two participants' narratives in this study. Research can be expanded on undocumented communities and their stories. Current research states little research has been done on how undocumented Latinos navigate barriers to their identity develop and attempt to define their purpose as not only college students, but members of U.S. Society and beyond (Lyon, 2015).

There is also a possibility of some non-openly gay Latino mid-level administrators were hesitant or scared to participate in this study due to personal reasons and challenges related to their current professional position. Their stories could enhance the findings of future research.

This study enhanced and supported existing literature by illuminating the experiences of gay Latino males serving as mid-level administrators in higher education. This study enhances literature by offering recommendations of better mentoring and coaching which will provide new skills to enable promotions. This study also enhances literature for past studies have focused on the needs of marginalized students but not the needs of the staff with multifaceted identities in higher education (Labor, 2017). This study will help with the creation of more inclusive policies and aids the lack of representation for gay Latino males in higher education.

Postscript

It is a long voyage writing a Ph.D. dissertation, and certainly a relief to reach the final submission. Writing this dissertation was an emotional, personal, and reflective journey due to my related intersecting identities to this study. I felt a strong connection to my participants and their stories due to our common experiences. I can truly say this journey has changed my life in a positive way.

After I heard the stories of my participants, I realized I had to process my own life and unbury experiences I had tried to forget as a gay Latino. I did not realize the magnitude of emotions and layers from my upbringing that I had never shared with anyone. For the longest time I felt alone but my participants' stories released that feeling. Through my personal time of processing, I feel as if I gained strength in my own voice and can now see a stronger value for culture. I also realize that I was not sharing my true authentic story. I was only sharing what I thought others expected only to hear about my life. Then I realized, "If I am doing this, then I

believe many others are too and not sharing more of themselves.” I am now more inclined to tell my life story and motivate others to do the same. By now sharing my authentic story, many new connections and bonds have been created personally and professionally. I still have to consider my environment and safety, for there is time and place to share a story and when not too.

After I completed my dissertation defense, many colleagues at The University of Texas at Austin reached out to me to discuss upcoming projects and strategic planning methods for the university. My colleagues were curious about my findings and techniques I used to gather information. Shortly after, I was appointed to the University Diversity Strategic Planning and Implementation Committee. I have enjoyed being part of this committee for my research and findings are being used to create a strategic plan that is more authentic, diverse, and inclusive. Other colleagues have reached out to me seeking ways in which they can enhance their mentor programs and connections for mentors to talk to other mentors who have mentees.

As I look back, the motivation for my research was not only a professional quest but a personal one to help me answer questions of my life. I now hope that I can pay it forward and become a stronger mentor, storyteller, and person. I hope gay Latinos and all other identities can connect with this dissertation, as well.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Email and Posting Message

Subject Line:

Seeking participants for The Lived Experiences of Cisgender Openly Gay Latino Males who are Mid-level Professional Administrators in Higher Education in the Southwest Region of the United States research study.

Email Text:

Hello! My name is Robert Anthony Valdez. I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at Colorado State University. With the guidance of my doctoral chair, Dr. Linda Kuk, I am conducting my research dissertation study called: The Lived Experiences of Cisgender Openly Gay Latino Males who are Mid-level Professional Administrators in Higher Education in the Southwest Region of the United States.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the stories and experiences of openly gay Latino males who serve as mid-level administrators in higher education. This study will focus on stories of personal and historical context of the participants intersecting identities that have implications for their daily interactions in an institutional environment (Labor, 2017). The struggles and achievements from these stories are valuable and can raise visibility for more inclusive leadership practices, mentorship, and equitable policies in higher education.

If you agree to participate in my research, please sign/scan and email the Informed Consent document to me. Then, I will conduct two interviews with you remotely via Zoom at a time of your choice. The interview will involve questions about your experiences in higher education as a gay Latino male. The two interviews will last up to 90 minutes.

The following criteria for participants in the study includes:

- a. self-identity cis gender gay male;
- b. currently holding a mid-level administrator position at a private or public 4-year higher education institution;
- c. institution located in the Southwest region of the United States;
- d. self-identity as Latino/x;
- e. reports to a senior administrator in higher education; and
- f. you are interested in participating.

If you are interested in participating in this study and feel you meet the criteria, please contact Robert Valdez at ravaldez@colostate.edu. Upon receiving your interest, I will email you a google link to the Demographic Participant Information questionnaire form for you to complete. For those that are selected to participate in the study, you will receive a confirmation email letting you know next steps. For those that are not selected, you will receive an email extending my appreciation for showing interest.

Sincerely,

Robert Anthony Valdez
Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education Leadership Program
School of Education
Colorado State University

APPENDIX B

Information Demographic Questionnaire/ Screening Survey

The Lived Experiences of Cisgender Openly Gay Latino Males who are Mid-level Professional Administrators in Higher Education in the Southwest Region of the United States

Name (First and Last Name): _____

Chosen Pseudonym Name (To protect your identity, please select a first name that would not fully disclose your identity in this study): _____

Preferred Email Address: _____

Current Position Title: _____

Location/State of Current Employment of Higher Education Institution (TX, OK, NM, etc.):

Name of the Higher Education Institution Currently Employed at:

Total Years of Service as Mid-level Administrator in Higher Education: _____

Previous Titles or Roles While Working in Higher Education and Years Within Those Roles
(Example, Hall Coordinator 2009-2011):

Type of Institution Currently Employed At (4-year Public or Non-private): _____

Do you Report to a Senior Administrator/Officer in higher education? (Yes or No): _____

What is the Senior Administrator's Title?

Which identity label do you use to describe your Latini identity (Latinx, Mexican, Chicano, Hispanic, Puerto Rican, Central American, Guatemalan, Caribbean, etc.)?

Do you identify as an Openly Gay Cisgender Male? (Yes or No): _____

Which identity label do you use to describe your sexual orientation (gay, queer, etc.)?

Thank you for expressing interest in this study. If selected for participation, the researcher will contact you. Please contact Robert Valdez at ravaldez@colostate.edu or Dr. Linda Kuk, Committee Advisor, Linda.Kuk@ColoState.edu with questions or concerns about the study.

OFFICE USE ONLY

Meets criteria **Yes** **No**
Accepted to study **Yes** **No**
Pseudonym Chosen: _____

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol #1- Narration Phase

Introduction

(Introduction to study, remind the participants that this interview will be up to 90 minutes, explain the life story narrative inquiry focus, recap focus of the study on gay Latino mid-level administrators in Southwest region, remind the participants that the interview will be recorded. Lastly, do you have any questions before we begin?)

Growing Up

1. Can you tell me about what it was like growing up as a gay Latino male? (Q1) Prompt: opportunities (mentors, influential experiences, significant decisions, opportunities, historical events, life events, neighborhood experiences) (Q1)
2. What were some traditional Latino expectations that were expected of you? (Q1)
 - a. Prompt: traditional Latino expectations (males stay home instead of attending college to provide for the financially, males were told to act and be a certain way) (Q1)
3. Can you share with me briefly your coming out story or experience as coming out as gay? (Q4)

Mid-level Administrator Experiences

1. Can you please tell me about your professional and personal experiences that have led up to this point as a mid-level administrator in higher education? (Q1)
 - a. Prompt: personal life (family, friends, hobbies, etc.) (Q1)
 - b. Prompt: professional life (position, duration, institution, professional associations, professional development) (Q1)
 - i. Follow-up: Can you also share how these experiences are connected to your gay and/or Latino identities? (Q1)
2. Can you please tell me about your educational and career pathway leading up to your current position as a mid-level administrator in higher education? (Q1)
 - a. Prompt: educational pathway (K-12 schooling, undergrad and grad school and employment or assistantship job in higher education) (Q1)
 - b. Prompt: career pathway (positions you previously held, institutions you worked at, duration at that institution, etc.) (Q1)
3. Why and how did you decide to go into higher education field? (Q1)
 - a. Follow-up: Can you please provide an example or examples of the impact or impacts of your identities in higher education? (Q4)
4. What are the opportunities and benefits of being a mid-level administrator? (Q2)
 - a. Follow-up: What do you feel are the unique opportunities or benefits of being a gay Latino male administrator? (Q2)
5. What do you feel are the unique challenges or disadvantages of being a mid-level administrator? (Q3)

- a. Follow-up: What do you feel are the unique challenges or disadvantages of being a gay Latino male administrator? (Q3)
6. Is there anything additional you would like to share about your professional experience we haven't yet discussed? (Q4)

Wrapping Up

1. Is there any other information or stories about your experiences that you would like to share? (Q1)

Thank you for your time. I will be emailing you soon to set up the 2nd interview within the next two week. Let me know if you have any questions or concerns

Interview Protocol #2- Conversation Phase

Introduction

(Introduction text: thank you for meeting with me again through zoom, the interview will last up to 90 minutes like the last interview, the interview will be recorded as discussed in first interview. Do you have any questions before we begin?)

1. What has come up or items you wish to share pertaining to this study since our first interview? (Q1)

Growing Up

1. What family or cultural celebrations, traditions, or rituals were important to you growing up? (Q4)
2. Where did you receive personal support growing up? (Q2)
 - a. Prompt: support systems: (from a parent, guardian, mentor, peers) (Q2)
 - i. Follow-up: are they still important in your life today and why? (Q4)
3. Did you ever experience any backlash for not upholding the traditional expectations of the Latino culture? (Q3)
 - a. Prompt: traditional expectations (colorism, gender expression, gender identity)? (Q3)

Mid-level Administrator Experiences

1. In your online survey, you indicated you identify as ____ and _____. Can you describe how you experience and understand these identities simultaneously and/or independently? (Q4)
 - a. Follow-up: What about in higher education as a mid-level professional? (Q4)
2. At what point in your higher education career did you come out as gay? (Q1)

3. Follow-up: How did your Latino identity influence your coming out experience, if at all? (Q4)
4. How has your sexual orientation and racial identity impacted your experiences as a mid-level administrator, if at all? (Q2 and Q3)
5. How would you describe the campus climate toward gay and Latino members at your current institution in the Southwest region of the United States? (Q2 and Q3)
6. Where do you receive professional support in your higher education career, if any? (Q2 and Q3)
7. Prompt: professional life (institutional support, professional associations, colleagues, and in the profession) (Q2 and Q3)
8. What skills or strategies do you use to overcome adversity or challenges in your professional life? (Q2 and Q3)
9. Follow-up: Are there similarities and differences between those used in your professional and personal life? (Q2 and Q3)

Future Envisions

1. What advice would you give to a new gay Latino male mid-level administrator in higher education? (Q4)
2. If you had endless resources available to enhance the support for gay Latino mid-level administrators, what would you change or add, if any? (Q4)
3. What do you think is helpful in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for gay Latino males in higher education? (Q2 and Q3)

Wrapping Up

1. As we are wrapping up our interviews, are there things you would like to add? (Q1)

Thank you for your time! I will be sending the remaining timeline of my data analysis and the process for you to review both transcripts. You can indicate which areas to omit from the study, provide clarifications and revisions.

Thank you again!

APPENDIX D

Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: The Lived Experiences of Cisgender Openly Gay Latino Males who are Mid-level Professional Administrators in Higher Education in the Southwest Region of the United States

Introduction and Purpose

My name is Robert Valdez. I am a PhD Candidate at Colorado State University in the Higher Education Leadership program. In conjunction with my committee chair, Dr. Linda Kuk in the School of Education. I am inviting you to take part in my research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the stories and experiences of openly gay Latino males who serve as mid-level administrators in higher education. This study will focus on stories of personal and historical context of the participants intersecting identities that have implications for their daily interactions in an institutional environment (Labor, 2017). The struggles and achievements from these stories are valuable and can raise visibility for more inclusive leadership practices, mentorship, and equitable policies in higher education.

The research questions of my study are as follows:

1. What are the life stories of openly gay Latino males who currently work in higher education as mid-level administrators for in the Southwest region of the United States?
2. What types of support systems are reported by gay Latino men in their higher education setting?
3. What are the challenges that exist for gay Latino men in their higher education setting?
4. How does the intersectionality affect the lived experiences gay Latino males as mid-level administrator positions at higher education institutions in the Southwest Region of the United States?

Procedures

Participating in this study requires the following:

1. You must be available for two 90-minute Zoom video recorded interviews.
2. You will be asked to engage in reviewing personal transcripts to ensure authenticity and trustworthy reports of data collected.

With your permission, I will video record the interviews.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. I hope my research will build on a topic that is not heavily discussed in the higher education field and in the literature.

Risks/Discomforts

Some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to answer or to stop the pre and post interview at any time. Additionally, I will always be available for individual check-ins shall those be needed throughout our time together.

Confidentiality

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, the research will do the following:

1. Each participant will choose a pseudonym that will become their identification associated with the study.
2. The pseudonym will be used throughout the data collection, transcription, and analysis process.
3. All audio, video files will be stored on an external hard drive that only I have access to.
4. I will work with the transcription service provider to ensure they return all files to me, the researcher at the end of the study.
5. Finally, the results of this study may be published in peer-reviewed journals, professional publications, or educational presentations: however, no participant or university will be identified. Additionally, we may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes.

Zoom recordings will be sent to the transcription service provider immediately following your individual interview. Transcriptions will be sent to each participant asking for them to review and provide feedback to what they shared. All recordings will be kept on my external hard drive. When the research is completed, I will save the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research done by myself or others. I will retain these records for up to *five* years after the study is over. We may be asked to share the research files with the sponsor or the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Rights

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at (210) 683-3617 or ravaldez@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: 970-491-1381, or e-mail RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu.

CONSENT

Do you consent for the two recorded video interviews through Zoom?

Yes

No

Do you agree to have your pseudonym and other identifying information to be included in all final reports, publications, and or presentations resulting from this research?

Yes

No

Do you wish to participate in this study given the study in its entirety? You will be emailed a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

Yes

No

APPENDIX E

Confirmation Email to Selected Participants

Hello [PLACEHOLDER FOR NAME]

Thank you so much for expressing willingness to participate in my research study, The Lived Experiences of Cisgender Openly Gay Latino Males who are Mid-level Professional Administrators in Higher Education in the Southwest Region of the United States. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study.

This research study is a time commitment and will take a time commitment, but I can assure you, your voice and stories related to being gay Latino males as mid-level professional administrators in higher education will be told with truthfulness and veracity.

If you agree to participate in my research, please sign/scan and email the attached Informed Consent document to me. Upon receiving your informed consent form with your authorized signature, I will email you a link to sign up for your 90-minute interview. Once we complete the first interview, we will schedule a second interview 2 weeks later.

Thank you again, for agreeing to participate in this important study. If you have any questions, please email me or call me.

Sincerely,

Robert Anthony Valdez
Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education Leadership Program
School of Education
Colorado State University

APPENDIX F

Communication Email to Non-Selected Participants

Hello [PLACEHOLDER FOR NAME]

Thank you so much for expressing interest in The Lived Experiences of Cisgender Openly Gay Latino Males who are Mid-level Professional Administrators in Higher Education in the Southwest Region of the United States research study. I have reached the number of participants needed for my study and you were not selected. This doesn't mean our journey ends here, I would like to keep in touch with you and your stories need to be told, and your experiences need to be heard!

Keep doing amazing things and I truly appreciate your interest!

Sincerely,

Robert Anthony Valdez
Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education Leadership Program
School of Education
Colorado State University