UC San Diego
UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

A Phenomenological Study of Nonformal Leaders and Foster Youth Programs in Community Colleges

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5gf31376

Author

Burrell, Sade Renee

Publication Date

2023

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

A Phenomenological Study of Nonformal Leaders and Foster Youth Programs in Community

Colleges

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of
Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Sade Burrell

Committee in charge:

    California State University San Marcos

        Professor Brooke Soles, Chair
        Professor Manuel Vargas
        Professor Christiane Wood

    University of California at San Diego

        Professor Alan Daly

2023

The dissertation of Sade Burrell is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

California State University, San Marcos

2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Pam Fleming, Nanyamka Hill, and Nora Hinsley. I am a direct

result of the love, support and efforts you put into building the first commmunity college

program to serve students who experienced foster care.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to give all honor and glory to God Elohim for allowing me to make it through this educational experience which I will forever cherish. Next, I want to thank and acknowledge my two children, Amarah Nianda and Mulemvo Nianda, Jr. Amarah and Mulemvo thank you so much for being kind, loving, and understanding throughout these past few years. You two inspired me to continue my education and you pushed me to the end. You will always be the reason I strive toward greatness. Always remember you can do and be anyone you want to be. You are limitless in what you can do. Amarah and Mulemvo, I love you with all of my heart. Dr. Theresa Meyerott, I cannot express how thankful I am for your support. Every Sunday for over two years you met with me at 7:00 am to help me through each class. You did it from the kindness of your heart and I cannot thank you enough. I am forever grateful. I look forward to continuing to work with you. To my friends and family, I am forever grateful for your love and support. Thank you for always being my support system. To my committee members, Dr. Brooke Soles (Chair), Dr. Manuel Vargas, Dr. Christiane Wood, and Dr. Alan Daly, thank you for seeing the scholar within me. Cohort 17, thank you for our time together in class. Our class discussions will forever impact how I am as an equity-minded practitioner. You influenced the leader I am and the leader I will become.

VITA

2009   Associate of Arts, Social Work, Cuyamaca Community College

2012   Bachelor of Arts, Social Work, San Diego State University

2015   Master of Social Work, University of Southern California

2023   Doctor of Education, University of California San Diego and California State University, San Marcos

PUBLICATIONS

Burell, S. R. (2018). The opportunity guide: How to embrace levels of opportunity. Sade Burrell & Associates.

Burell, S. R. (2019).What are you reaching for? An inspirational story about prioritizing your purpose while overcoming obstacles. Sade Burrell & Associates.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Phenomenological Study of Nonformal Leaders and Foster Youth Programs in Community
Colleges

by

Sade Burrell

Doctor of Education

University of California San Diego, 2023
California State University, San Marcos, 2023

Professor Brooke Soles, Chair

Foster youth graduate from college at lower rates than their nonfoster youth peers. Only

10% of foster youth graduate with an associate degree, and less than 3% graduate with a

bachelor's degree (Courtney et al., 2011), and there is a significant achievement gap between

foster youth and nonfoster youth students (Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Hussar et al., 2020; Ryan et

al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). Thus, foster youth require leaders to develop sustainable and

supportive programs at community colleges to help them reach their educational goals. Researchers examining foster youth in community colleges have focused primarily on the lack of program evaluation (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010; Miller et al., 2017; Unrau et al., 2017). As such, research on nonformal leaders charged with developing an equity-minded campus-based program is limited.

This phenomenological study employed cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership frameworks as a dual lens to understand the influence nonformal leaders' personal values and campus perceptions have on developing an equity-minded program. After semistructured interviews with 10 nonformal leaders, results indicated that they remained in their roles primarily due to their personal values. They often had negative perceptions of their campus, and nine participants reported a disconnect between their personal values and their campus values. However, they remained at the campus because of their personal values and desire to serve students. Understanding nonformal leaders' perceptions (i.e., ways of thinking) and beliefs (i.e., ideas that inform our perceptions) was essential. The researcher concluded that nonformal leaders' campus perceptions influence the program and its development. Of the 10 participants, two left their college due to their campus perceptions. Moreover, the study revealed that equity exists within the ten foster youth programs, because of the nonformal leaders' personal values, and without their personal values equity would be nonexistent. This was due to a lack of equity existing within the college campus system.

Keywords: leadership, foster youth, campus-based program, nonformal leaders, program coordinator

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2015, California policymakers established the Student Equity Policy, which required all community colleges to develop plans for disproportionately served populations (Felix, 2021), including foster youth. Since the law was passed, community college educators have pushed for more equity-minded programs. Equity-minded programs focus on how postsecondary education is made available to students based on their unique skills, capabilities, and needs. An equity lens involves policy development which includes an examination of existing policies and the creation of new ones. In addition, examining the impact and implementation of environments where under-served and marginalized individuals receive support (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). Equity refers to the fair and just practices that ensure all campus community members can thrive. It acknowledges and addresses structural inequalities that advantage some and disadvantage others (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). The conducted research study results indicated that foster youth require support rooted in equity. Equity existed in the nonformal leader as opposed to the campus. Thus, it is crucial for nonformal leaders who coordinate campus-based programs for students who experienced foster care to be able to lead students to achieve their academic goals and lifelong career aspirations.

Specialized programs for students who have experienced foster care were conceptualized with the expectation that the people who are developing those programs do so viewing equity as a priority, hense an equity lens (Unrau et al., 2017). For this research study, individuals who coordinate campus-based programs are referred to as *nonformal leaders*. A nonformal leader is a term associated with cultural proficiency. Cultural proficiency scholars refer to a nonformal leader as someone without power and authority (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022).

Nonformal leaders who coordinate programs are not often in positions where they have authority over and supervise others.

Research on nonformal leaders who guide foster youth is limited. Researchers on foster youth in community colleges have focused primarily on the lack of program evaluation (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010; Miller et al., 2017). For this reason, campus stakeholders should examine nonformal leaders who coordinate programs for students who have experienced foster care. In this study, nonformal leaders were examined through a phenomenological study to highlight participant voices (Mertler, 2021). Using a semistructured interview, nonformal leaders were asked about their personal values and perceptions of how campus culture can enhance or interfere with developing an equity-minded program.

Researchers have suggested that when individuals understand themselves, they are more likely to apply for jobs at organizations or companies that share similar values. As a result, the individual is more likely to remain in the workplace (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Having nonformal leaders stay in their job is crucial for programs. Foster youth lack stability while in foster care, which impacts their ability to graduate from high school and college (Shin, 2003; Skilbred et al., 2017). Having nonformal leaders stay in their job longer could lead to better hiring practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2017) and a better understanding of the population they are working with (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Throughout this study, the researcher learned about the challenges and hardships encountered by students who experience foster care. The researcher drew on the nonformal leaders' personal values and how they shaped their campus foster youth program. Perceptions of

the campus culture were addressed through an equity-minded lens to understand how nonformal leaders influenced their campused based program for students who experienced foster care.

A student's preparation for higher education is related to the quality of their K–12 education (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). Moreover, there is a correlation between higher adverse childhood experiences and unfavorable outcomes later in life (Felitti et al., 1998). Policymakers in California recognized this, and now through Senate Bill 512, 116 community colleges in California have programs specifically for students who have experienced foster care (California Community Colleges [CCC], 2021; Cal. S.B. 512, 2014. After being accepted into community college, former foster youth may face socioemotional and academic challenges. To enhance their academic success, college leaders need to offer unique services that will increase the likelihood of success for this group of students. Campus-based programs, such as NextUp, Guardian Scholars, or Extended Programs and Services (EOPS), address foster youth's well-documented challenges (Cal. S.B. 512, 2022). However, community colleges offering state-funded programs is just a start (Salazar, 2012). There is a need for intensive support for foster youth in college. Identifying the influences of campus-based leadership and how those influences inform equity-minded campus-based programs is one way to identify the support foster youth need in college.

Researchers have found that almost half of the college students who enter a 4-year postsecondary institution will fail to complete a bachelor's degree within 6 years of entering higher education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). For foster youth, the number of students who complete a bachelor's degree is even lower, with only 3%–11% of foster youth earning an undergraduate degree (Courtney et al., 2011; Emerson & Bassett, 2010). As such, foster youth benefit from on-campus support programs. Support programs for foster youth improve retention, transfer, and completion rates at 4-year institutions (Salazar, 2012). Foster

youth who have experienced out-of-home placements because of abuse or neglect are at a greater risk of experiencing adverse outcomes such as unemployment, homelessness, early parenthood, mental health challenges, criminal behavior, and low educational attainment (Courtney et al., 2005). There are economic benefits to obtaining a college degree, including higher-paying career opportunities, less criminal activity, less involvement with social welfare programs, and a lower probability that their children will enter foster care (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). For these reasons, educational attainment is crucial for foster youth to succeed. Such favorable outcomes can come through higher education, which provides students who experienced foster care an opportunity to become self-sufficient adults and break the cycle of child abuse.

Students who have experienced foster care and participate in campus-based programs in community colleges depend on the leaders who are tasked with developing a program to support their educational aspirations. Consequently, leadership plays a central role in promoting foster youth programs on campuses throughout California. Some researchers contend that institutional educators are aware of foster youths' unique needs (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). Other researchers, however, have argued that although educators are aware of the challenges those students encounter, they are unfamiliar with how to support the unique needs of foster youth (Havlicek et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2017). Most research about programs for students who experience foster care has focused on institutional factors (Burns et al., 2022). In contrast, structural factors (i.e., ways professional roles, responsibilities, relationships, or resources are organized and managed to support equitable education) have received less attention (Seiler & Pfister, 2012). For these reasons, this study aimed to highlight the leadership attributes of nonformal leaders in community colleges.

Purpose of the Study

This study focused on nonformal leaders' personal values and perceptions of campus culture and how those perceptions of campus culture enhance or interfere with developing an equity-minded campus-based program for students who experienced foster care. Institutional stakeholders need to have a deeper understanding of leaders because leaders' personal experiences shape their leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). The experiences of individuals who develop and coordinate community college support programs for students who have experienced foster care have not been explored. If experiences shape leadership, the researcher in this study argued that understanding a person's values and campus perceptions is key to understanding the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

For this study, the researcher did not measure student outcomes; instead, leaders as individuals were studied through an equity-minded-lens. Additionally, *leadership* was defined as the relationship between leaders and their followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). A leader was an individual who was assigned to support students who experienced foster care, and the followers were the students who participated in the campus-based support program.

Research Question

To understand nonformal leaders and their influence on campus-based programs for students who experienced foster care, the following research question was examined: In what ways, if at all, does a nonformal leader's personal values and perceptions of campus culture influence the development of an equity-minded campus-based program?

Methodology

This research study utilized a phenomenological approach. The study focused on nonformal leaders who coordinate programs for students who experienced foster care and their lived experiences within the community college system. The researcher was most interested in uncovering the nonformal leaders' personal values and campus perceptions. To that end, 10 nonformal leaders participated in 60–90 min, one-on-one interviews through the Zoom virtual platform. Of the participants, three were individuals who experienced foster care and now serve as nonformal leaders who develop programs for students who experienced foster care.

This phenomenological study provided insight into the individuals who have developed or previously developed a program in community colleges for students who experienced foster care. Using the lens of exemplary leadership and cultural proficiency, a semistructured interview protocol consisting of questions that focused on personal values, leadership, and equity was used. The interview questions were developed using cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership frameworks. The cultural proficiency framework was used to address healthy and unhealthy practices within the colleges and their connection to equity (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). The exemplary leadership framework allowed the researcher to understand the nonformal leaders' personal values regarding leadership. The researcher utilized Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software, to develop themes and uncover findings from the data.

Significance of the Study

Supporting foster youth in community colleges increases their probability of becoming self-sufficient adults (Jackson et al., 2020). Foster youth continue to have the lowest graduation and retention rates (Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Hussar et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). Once a foster youth's biological parent(s) are identified as being unfit to care for their

child, the state becomes the child's guardian. Because the state has custody of the child, it becomes responsible for ensuring a foster youth's success. According to Dworsky and Perez (2010), there are economic benefits to obtaining a college degree, including higher-paying career opportunities, less criminal activity, less involvement with social welfare programs, and a lower probability of their children entering foster care. Research findings also contribute to other favorable outcomes, including giving students who experienced foster care the opportunity to become self-sufficient adults and break the cycle of child abuse through higher education. This study will support formal and nonformal leaders in identifying how equity can be embedded in their campus culture and within the nonformal leader charged with developing the campus-based program. Currently, no model exists for an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care and enrolled in community colleges. Implications for equity-minded programs would include a positive shift in cultural competence. This allows the campus and the nonformal leaders to be aware of their own cultural beliefs and values and how they may be different from other cultures. Also, the development of a modeled program embedded with equity for students who experienced foster care could result from this study.

Definition of Terms

Nonformal leader: In educational settings, leaders are thought of as "individuals who have a title and official positions where they have a group of individuals, they are responsible for serving as overseers or supervisor" (Lindsey et al., 2018, p. 68). A formal leader is a person who has power and authority. Leaders who coordinate foster youth programs are not often in authoritative positions where they oversee others (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). Using terminology from the cultural proficiency framework, nonformal leaders are the program

coordinators, campus foster youth liaisons, and other professionals who work with students who have experienced foster care.

Foster youth: Foster care is an out-of-home service the state provides for children whose families are deemed unable to care for the child(ren). A social worker and a court-appointed judge often make the decision. Children are often removed due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment. In California, youth can remain in foster care for support until age 21 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020a; Cal. A.B. 12, 2010).

Campus-based program: Throughout this study, the terms campus-based programs and campus-support programs will be used interchangeably. For this study, a campus-based program is a program within the community college setting. The program supports students who identify as foster youth and are enrolled in a qualified campus support program.

Equity: Equity refers to the fair and just practices that ensure all campus community members can thrive. It acknowledges and addresses structural inequalities that advantage some and disadvantage others (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022).

Chapter Summary

Foster youth encounter many challenges as they pursue their education (Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Hussar et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). California policymakers continue to address inequitable practices by passing laws that favor foster youth (Cal. A.B. 12, 2010; Cal. S.B. 1023, 2014; Cal. S.B. 12, 2022,). Through policies and perspectives of nonformal leaders, organizations can develop healthy practices that benefit their most vulnerable populations (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). This research study allowed the researcher to identify how nonformal leaders' personal values and perceptions of campus culture influenced the development of their campus-based program. The researcher further identified

equitable or inequitable practices within the college and the campused base program. Knowledge from this study can provide formal leaders with insight into transforming practices in their institutions. Findings can be used to make recommendations for future research and implications for asset-based programs for foster youth. This will help support the success of foster youth in community college-based programs.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced foster youth and their context. Next, the chapter addressed the needs of individuals who experience foster care and later enroll in college. Foster youth are highlighted in Chapter 1 to understand the importance of examining leaders who develop programs for students who experienced foster care. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the academic achievement of foster youth and the academic gap between nonfoster and foster youth (Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Hussar et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). Chapter 2 then explores components of existing programs and discusses the limited research on leaders who develop campus-based programs. Chapter 2 will conclude with a review of cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership as the conceptual frameworks. The rationale for using the two frameworks is also provided.

Chapter 3 is an overview of the study's methodology. The researcher used a phenomenological design to explore the personal values and perceptions of nonformal leaders regarding the influence of campus culture on the development of an equity-minded program. A review of the research design, which includes the purpose of the study and conceptual frameworks, is provided as a reference to what was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. The data analysis plan is described, and the interview protocol provides an overview of how the research question was answered while addressing any bias.

Chapter 4 presents results from the interviews and salient themes that emerged from the analysis. To conclude the study, Chapter 5 provides an overview of the problem statement, theoretical framework, research question, and methodology. Findings from the study are reviewed in conjunction with an overview of the literature. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of findings and themes, research interpretations, implications for research, recommendations, future research considerations, and a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Students who experience foster care, also referred to as foster youth, are removed from their biological parents' care due to physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, or becoming an orphan. After being removed from their home, foster youth are considered wards of the court. Youth within the foster care system can remain a ward of the court until the court case workers are confident that the youth can return safely to their family or until the youth ages out of the foster care system between the ages of 18–21 (Scherr, 2007; Cal. S.B. 12, 2010). In 2019, it was estimated that 423,997 children were in foster care across the United States and that 248,669 children had exited foster care. In 2021, an estimated 58,789 children were in foster care in California, while in the same year, 1,862 children exited the California foster care system (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020b; Webster et al., 2021). Given these high rates of children entering and exiting foster care each year, leaders could address the challenges of protecting and serving former foster youth once they exit care and adjust to their adult life.

Research related to foster youth and community college campus-based programs is limited as researchers have focused primarily on the negative outcomes associated with low educational attainment for foster youth and the lack of adequate programming and evaluation (Jackson et al., 2020; Kirk & Day, 2011; Miller et al., 2017; Okpych et al., 2019; Salazar, 2012; Unrau et al., 2017). To date, research on the nonformal leaders responsible who develop equity-based campus support programs and the outcomes of such programs that serve students who experience foster care could not be located. Although foster youth encounter many precollege barriers, the programs and individuals charged with developing a program designed to support students should not become another barrier to accomplishing foster youth educational goals once enrolled. To further understand the influence of the nonformal leader who develops, plans, and

organizes services for students who experienced foster care, the following research question was explored: In what ways, if at all, does a nonformal leader's personal values and perceptions of campus culture influence the development of an equity-minded campus-based program?

Two conceptual frameworks were used to understand leadership from an individual and organizational standpoint in this study. Although student outcomes were not measured in this study, researchers have shown that students who experience foster care need leaders who have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs so the leaders can work at their best (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). In addition, leaders need to know how to respond effectively and support people in cross-cultural settings, which reflects the highest level of the cultural proficiency continuum (Lindsey et al., 2018). To understand the importance of the role of leaders who coordinate programs for students who experienced foster care, the foster youth population and the programs in which they participate must be highlighted.

Background

Foster Youth and Academic Achievement

Postsecondary education research on foster youth was limited until Merdinger et al. (2005) began to focus their efforts on foster youth and educational attainment. Before their research, studies on foster youth tended to address adverse outcomes, including lack of academic achievement (Barth, 1990; Count, 2001; Courtney et al., 2001; Festinger, 1983; Piliavin et al., 1993). High school graduation and enrolling in a 4-year university or community college are significant milestones for youth who exit foster care. Compared to nonfoster youth, foster youth drop out of high school at a much higher rate and are less likely to complete their general educational development (Courtney et al., 2005). Blome (1997) found that out of the 167 participants, 37% of foster youth dropped out of high school compared to 16% of nonfoster

youth. In 2019, 6,534 foster youth graduated from high school in California; however, only 24% of foster youth enrolled in a 4-year university or community college (California Department of Education, 2021). These rates have come to the attention of many educational leaders.

To understand the academic achievement of foster youth, researchers have measured a student's academic ability. For example, reading scores are one indicator of the academic success of foster youth. Shin (2003) found that older foster youth experienced lower academic achievement and more educational disruptions (i.e., instability due to foster home displacements) and behavioral challenges that interfered with them completing school tasks. Another method of measuring achievement is through foster home stability. Youth with fewer foster home placements were more likely to demonstrate positive school performance (Zimmerman, 1982). However, research has indicated that obtaining a postsecondary education for foster youth is challenging (Gillum et al., 2016). Postsecondary completion rates of students who experienced foster care indicated that students who experience foster care graduate at lower rates than their nonfoster care peers. The academic gaps between foster youth and nonfoster youth have not improved within the past 25 years despite efforts to develop campus support programs for students who experienced foster care (Merdinger et al., 2005).

Nonfoster youth have surpassed the achievement gap, meaning that nonfoster youth graduation rates have increased while foster youth graduation rates remain the same. Further evidence of this achievement gap comes from the rates of foster youth who hold a bachelor's degree remaining stagnant between 3%–11% (Emerson & Bassett, 2010). In comparison, the average graduation rate of nonfoster youth is 62% (Hussar et al., 2020). As previously stated, high school graduation and enrolling in a 4-year university or community college are two significant milestones for youth who exit foster care. Various researchers (Blome, 1997; Burley

& Halpern, 2001; Collins et al., 2010; Dworsky & Perez, 2010) have used high school achievement to indicate the likelihood of foster youth graduating from college.

Researchers have examined when the academic achievement gap begins to widen. Those who age out of care are more likely to show educational deficits, including lower math and reading test scores. Calvin et al. (2001) concluded that when a foster youth's education was interrupted by changing schools, the student loses up to 4 to 6 months of academic progress. Although some researchers have found that a youth's length in foster care and other placement characteristics do not appear to be related to educational attainment (Burley & Halpern, 2001), other researchers have found that educational interruptions, such as instability in foster homes, lower reading scores, and behavioral challenges, will ultimately increase the probability of a student being placed in special education and of widening the achievement gap (Ryan et al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). Even though these findings appear to conflict, they ultimately have the same overarching conclusion, which is that foster youth continue to be impacted by unaddressed educational adversities (Shin, 2003).

Foster youth understand the value of education. For example, Shin (2003) investigated the perceived value of college to foster youth, which was understood through the lens of youth exiting care.It was concluded that foster youth do value education but do not know how to obtain resources to support their educational desires. Foster youth understood that one of the primary ways to become self-sufficient adults is through college. This may explain why foster youth have used education as one way to develop their identity (Shin, 2003). They may receive compliments about their accomplishments and attending college, and they may develop a sense of stability, thus feeling proud when telling others they attend college. For foster youth, dormitory housing or housing stipends for attending college build stability. Such stability often impacts a foster youth's

ability to graduate high school and possibly college. Once addressed,stable housing can increase the student's probability of achieving their academic goals (Shin, 2003). Nonetheless, despite understanding the importance of college, foster youth still encounter many challenges to reaching their educational goals. For many foster youth, the challenges in college are overwhelming, and they stop pursuing their educational goals. College is often a foreign process for most students who experience foster care. The unfamiliarity of college and its culture, along with the academic deficits experienced by foster youth, is how the achievement gap continues to widen (Tobolowsky et al., 2019).

Although it is hard for foster youth to attain an education, Shin (2003) introduced two qualities that some foster youth have that increase their academic success—motivation and the quality of the foster home. Shin's (2003) study focused on a sense of belonging in foster homes and having values that promote structure in the youth's life. Results indicated that a youth's motivation, effort, and stability contributed to successful outcomes. When focused on foster parents, researchers have highlighted the importance of foster parents treating the youth as their own child. When youth move out of their foster homes, some youth maintain contact with their foster home. Returning to the foster parent's home creates a sense of stability as they transition into adulthood and enroll in college. Skilbred et al. (2017) noted, "Most of the foster parents and foster children in this sample appeared to have created a child-parent-like relationship based on love. Such a relationship forms a safe foundation and promotes children's resilience" (p. 363). In this study, foster parents' commitment to their children was crucial to a child's high school and college success. Foster youth's motivation and a sense of stability within a foster home can increase their probability of accomplishing their academic goals (Skilbred et al., 2017).

Graduation Rates

In America, success is often defined by one's ability to obtain a university degree (Zamudio et al., 2011). Zamudio's (2011) definition of success is even more true regarding finances. Minorities are frequently first-generation students when they begin their educational journey, and graduation is considered a milestone for future opportunities. Despite the high rates of foster youth who aspire to attend college, graduation rates are low (Dworsky & Perez, 2010; McMillen et al., 2003). Researchers have found that 70% of percent of foster youth aspire to attend college (McMillen et al., 2003), yet only 3%–11% of foster youth graduate from college nationwide (Courtney et al., 2011; Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Pecora, 2012; Watt et al, 2018). In addition, various barriers, such as academic preparedness and homelessness, impact their ability to compete at a similar intellectual level as their nonfoster youth peers.

Only a small population of foster youth receive a label of gifted and enroll in a 4-year university immediately upon high school graduation. Scherr (2007) noted that foster youth living out of a home are overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in academically gifted programs. To assess the educational journey of foster youth and further understand their low college graduation rates, Salazar et al., (2016) focuses on supportive resource development to increase graduation rates.

Although various campus support programs have been developed for foster youth, there is little evidence regarding which approach is most effective in improving retention and graduation success (Geiger & Beltran, 2017; Salazar et al., 2016). In 2014, the CCC Chancellor's Office designated funds through Senate Bill 1023 (Cal. S.B. 1023, 2014; Dorr, 2017), which approved $15 million to fund foster youth programs at 10 community colleges in California. In 2017, with the expansion of SB 12, the Board of Governors of the CCC expanded the number of

community college districts that operate NextUp programs. Currently, 45 community colleges participate in the state-funded NextUp program (Dorr, 2017). However, 116 community colleges in California have the option to opt into the NextUp program (Cal. S.B. 512, 2022). NextUp is a community college program that offers foster youth supports and services beyond what EOPS offers, including help with childcare, therapy, transportation, tutoring, food, and emergency housing. Although the research study conducted by the researcher of this phenomenological studyfocuses on programs throughout California, including colleges that do not have a NextUp program, NextUp demonstrates the efforts made by California educators to support students who experienced foster care. Nonetheless, most states do not have state-funded programs (Salazar et al., 2016). Programs not receiving state funds vary in their ability to provide quality leadership by hiring nonformal leaders.

On-Campus Foster Youth Support Programs

In 1993, Texas became the first state to support the educational aspirations of foster youth by offering a tuition fee waiver at any state college. Following the in-state fee waiver, researchers investigating postsecondary achievements of foster youth ages 18–24 in Texas found that "only 1.5% of youth received a bachelor's degree and 2% received an associate degree or certificate, despite the tuition and fee waiver" (Watt et al., 2018, p. 405). Hence, even though foster youth may have a path toward accessible education, without on-campus support programs and guidance specifically for students who experienced foster care, the academic gap between foster youth and their nonfoster counterparts will continue to widen (Watt et al., 2018). Researchers have not found a correlation between the influence of leadership and its effect on programs serving students who experienced foster care. Moreover, leadership has only been mentioned in connection to legislation. Watt et al. (2018) found that states that offered

17

tuition-free waivers had higher rates of postsecondary enrollment for students who identified as foster youth. As noted, having an adult in a foster youth's life increases favorable outcomes (Collins et al., 2010). A nurturing adult who could positively impact a student who experienced foster care could be a person in a leadership role within the campus-based program serving students who experienced foster care.

The academic obstacles of students who experienced foster care have been well-documented (Blome, 1997; Jackson et al., 2020; Piel, 2018; Salazar et al., 2016; Watt et al., 2018). For example, despite being offered a tuition-free education in Texas, the graduation rates of foster youth did not improve, with only their enrollment improving. The absence of improvements in graduation rates is evidence that tuition-free education helps foster youth financially, but it does not impact whether they remain enrolled and graduate. In addition, it is important to support the autonomy of students who experienced foster care and their decision to participate in a supportive campus program (Watt et al., 2018). Researchers have not identified whether the supportive program for foster youth was formally or informally established on the campus. Informal support programs for foster youth generally do not have a budget, assigned staff, or faculty members. Such programs operate on limited resources and are often a personal project for someone who wants to help foster youth. In contrast, formal programs have budgets, staff, and faculty and can sustain and provide resources. This is especially important because formal programs tend to have more accountability for students. Overall, tuition-free waivers support foster youth financially and lessen the chance of them taking out loans to pay for college. However, to increase the graduation rates of foster youth, educational institutions will need to provide campus resources and develop support programs specifically for foster youth (Watt et al., 2018).

In 1998, three former foster youth participated in California State University, Fullerton's first program to serve students who experienced foster care (California State University, Fullerton, 2019). Years later, other institutions developed similar programs to increase accessibility to college and to develop support services for foster youth. Most campus-based support programs that serve students who have experienced foster care have a general model. Such services usually include case management, textbook support, academic counseling, personal counseling, financial aid assistance, and a campus liaison (Rassen et al., 2010). Since colleges and universities started serving foster youth, most programs have been developed from this general model.

Community colleges in California established programs for foster youth in 2005. In 2005, the CCC Chancellor's Office introduced the Foster Youth Success Initiative. The initiative established liaisons in each of the 116 CCC to provide support to prospective foster youth students (Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2021). However, before 2005, foster youth who aspired to attend community college did not receive support once enrolled. After 2005, campus support programs for foster youth were often informal programs developed by student services departments, usually under the umbrella of EOPS. These programs and services were not college- or state-funded, but they provided intangible resources such as priority registration for foster youth. Programs and services offered to foster youth were limited and often viewed as a challenging structural system (Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Jackson et al., 2020; Rassen et al., 2010). After years of attempting to develop a comprehensive plan to serve foster youth, community colleges began to develop programs that met the standards required to be identified as a Guardian Scholars Program.

Foster youth support programs on different college campuses are diverse in structure, services, and resources (Jackson et al., 2020). Each community college is responsible for developing its programs with little oversight. Although this does allow creative freedom, colleges receive little guidance on how to create strong and sustainable programs (Rassen et al., 2010). Notably, no model exists for these programs regarding how they are developed, managed, or evaluated (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). Chapter 5, of this study, addresses the characteristics of an equity-minded program. The absence of a model could lead to low retention rates, stagnant graduation rates, and adults who lack self-sufficiency. Researchers have suggested evaluating the impact of foster youth-focused programs in community colleges. Jackson et al. (2020) argued that higher education institutional officials must increase graduation and retention rates to increase the probability of foster youth becoming self-sufficient adults and decrease the likelihood of them relying on public assistance.

As noted, a straightforward program model is needed for foster youth (Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Jackson et al., 2020; Rassen et al., 2010). When community colleges have access to a modeled program, it alleviates the pressure on faculty members to develop new and innovative programs with little guidance. Having a program model also increases the probability of future stakeholders being interested in funding a structured program to support foster youth in community colleges.

Despite the obstacles foster youth encounter, they are strong and withstand adversity (Hass et al., 2014; Kirk & Day, 2011; Metzger, 2008). Foster youth have many positive qualities. With proper preparation and firm leadership, campus-based programs can begin to shift outcomes for enrolled foster youth. Tobolowsky et al. (2019) conducted qualitative interviews with foster youth who desire to attend college. In an interview, one community service provider

stated, "When they come to us, a lot of the time they say, 'Well, I want to go to college,' and they have no clue as to what is involved in actually getting into college." (Tobolowsky et al., 2019, p. 7). Guidance and effective leadership from formal and nonformal leaders to develop an equity-minded program for foster youth may increase the probability of them reaching their educational goals (Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Jackson et al., 2020; Rassen et al., 2010).

Components of Existing Programs

Community college educators have developed campus-based programs to support students who experienced foster care. Hernandez and Naccarato (2010) studied 12 programs that included general support, program outreach, peer mentoring, financial support, career programs, and program activities. However, programs that support students who identify as foster youth differ across the services they offer. Hence, there has been limited empirical or theoretical research to guide best practices for serving the population. As a result, nonformal leaders are developing programs without measuring outcomes to understand what is and is not effective (Watt et al., 2018).

Regardless, community colleges are essential to foster youths' ability to attain their academic goals (Cantu, 2013; Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010; Watt et al., 2018). Many foster youths do not apply to 4-year colleges immediately after high school but rather use community college as an access point to higher education (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). Community colleges are affordable and provide more access to the resources foster youth need to graduate or transfer to a 4-year college. Thus, researchers have suggested that community colleges are more committed to serving foster youth as compared to 4-year colleges. Community colleges have traditionally been the most affordable way to obtain higher education and transfer to a 4-year institution (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015).

Community college leaders throughout California have continued to develop programs to meet the unique needs of foster youth. Such programs tend to have a standard set of shared services and components (Unrau et al., 2017). Typical services include support with completing financial aid applications, housing, mentorship, case management services, academic counseling, childcare, and emergency grants. All services are offered in addition to the financial aid package provided to foster youth (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). Other researchers have stressed the need to assess the impact of current campus support programs on graduation rates. At the same time, few researchers have investigated the effects of nonformal leaders on the graduation rates of students who experienced foster care (Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Geiger et al., 2016; Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010).

Cantu (2013) provided insight into how three community colleges addressed the needs of foster youth. The researcher highlighted the strengths and challenges of providing services on each campus. Campuses with nonformal leaders, such as case managers, program directors, or mentors, appear to have better outcomes for students who experienced foster care than campuses without this staff (Cantu, 2013). Moreover, students who experience foster care are often unaware of campus support services once they enroll in college (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010; Kirk & Day, 2011; Miller et al., 2017). Ultimately, a lack of full-time staff and faculty members for a program serving students who experienced foster care could impact a foster youth's ability to obtain their academic goals (Cantu, 2013).

The Impact of Leadership on Campus-Based Foster Youth Programs

To date, research on this vulnerable population has focused on the educational challenges of foster youth. However, research on this population has not included a comprehensive investigation into how leaders' personal values and perceptions of the campus culture influence

the development of an equity-minded program. Researchers have had different perspectives on the nature and efficiency of programs serving students who have experienced foster care. Some researchers have focused on assessing the impact of foster youth campus-based programs and graduation rates (Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010; Salazar, 2012). Foster youth participate in campus supportive programs for a variety of reasons. Dworsky and Perez (2010) found that foster youth participate in programs because they believe the program will help them achieve educational goals. Salazar (2012) found that 95% of respondents were extremely or very satisfied with their campus support program. Similar programs have similar responses, according to respondents in other studies (Johnson & Strayhorn, 2019). Neither Salazar (2012) nor Johnson and Strayhorn (2019), however, looked at the perceived value of the campus-based program from a leadership perspective. This is especially important because the services nonformal leaders can offer may be limited. Formal leadership, including department deans and the college president, may not completely support the on-campus program, which could prevent students from receiving beneficial services and resources in the long run. In other words, resources may be distributed more freely when leadership fully supports the campus-based program (Macomber, 2009).

College leaders often lack knowledge of the resources, services, or state and federal laws pertaining to supporting foster youth. Tobolowsky et al. (2019) found that most university staff were unaware of tuition voucher benefits, which delayed the financial aid process and students' ability to pay for tuition, fees, and books. In addition to students being underprepared (e.g., not having course texts), leadership across campus departments was equally as unprepared to support the students once they arrived. Researchers have found that despite some foster youth having access to precollege programs if leaders on campus do not understand how to implement services

that help foster youth succeed, that can influence whether a foster youth maintains enrollment (Macomber, 2009; Tobolowsky et al., 2019). Students who experience foster care encounter many personal deficits as they pursue their educational aspirations. This includes homelesseness, unprepared for self-sufficiency and lack of support from a caring adult. Despite the challenges of foster youth before they enter college, leadership behaviors and actions influence the program. In this study, the extent to which leadership and their personal experiences as nonformal leaders influence organizations were explored.

Leadership Barriers to Serving Foster Youth

Barriers encountered by nonformal leaders can impede the development and sustainability of a campus-based program. A major barrier to developing programs that serve students who experienced foster care is that very limited financial support is available from the college. Colleges have to rely on state funds or private donations to support campus programs, financial aid, and grants to support foster youth (Rassen et al., 2010). Lawrence et al. (2009) discussed the various way that community college stakeholders use their general funds to invest in athletics. On the one hand, if formal and nonformal leaders took similar approaches to support foster youth, on-campus programs could possibly have more success and produce more significant outcomes for those students. Campus-based programs for foster youth are usually funded by donors, grants, or the state, which means that they are often unsustainable. Thus, a crucial responsibility of a nonformal leader should be to advocate for funding. Researchers have found that programs funded by general campus funds, donors, and fundraisers tend to have stronger relationships with the formal leaders who do not directly work with students who experienced foster care (i.e., college presidents and deans; Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Rassen et al., 2010; Sensiper, & Barragan, 2017; Unrau et al., 2017). To that end, it is important to foster youth

outcomes for nonformal leaders to question the motives and intentions of former leaders and to develop sustainable solutions rooted in equity. Hence, nonformal leaders must advocate for more resources and services from their formal campus leadership.

Another critical point is the lack of funding from the main campus officials to support students who experienced foster care. Without funds, campus leaders have less motivation to hire professionals who can properly develop and coordinate programs. The work of program coordinators, who are considered nonformal campus leaders, is often impeded because they work with multiple populations or because they are expected to complete their assigned coordination duties with foster youth despite holding a part-time position. For example, Rassen et al. (2010) examined community colleges in California and found that North San Diego County College has an adjunct professor who oversees their program for high-need foster youth. Many campuses, though, lack foster youth liaisons or staff tasked with developing programs that serve students who identify as foster youth. Many times, individuals supporting foster youth donate their time because they have a passion for supporting students who have experienced foster care. However, this does not lead to sustainable programs or improving graduation rates within the population (Rassen et al., 2010). In the long run, the program's sustainability is limited and is centered around one professional developing, coordinating and providing academic counseling for the entire foster youth program. If the sustainability of a program is low, it can be expected by the foster youth who enters college that the resources and support for foster youth are not vital; this results in foster youth disenrolling or choosing not to remain at school due to lack of support (Lambert, 2020).

<center>**Conceptual Framework**</center>

Understanding the individuals who develop the campus based program for students who experienced foster care and how they support those students is one way to increase the academic achievement of those students. With the lack of research on non formal leaders in community colleges, researchers have not found a correlation between the influence of nonformal leaders' personal values and campus perceptions. College leaders must address the barriers nonformal leaders face regarding the development and sustainability of campus-based programs for foster youth and highlight the nonformal leaders' qualities that contribute to who they are as a person. Two conceptual frameworks, cultural proficiency, and exemplary leadership, are used to further understand this phenomenon.

Cultural Proficiency Conceptual Framework

Culturally proficient nonformal leaders and their influence on campus-based programs are important (Lindsey et al., 2018). Nonformal leaders can make a difference in the lives of each student who experienced foster care by implementing evidence-based recommendations and culturally responsive evidence-based strategies (Cross et al., 1989; ; Lindsey et al., 2018; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011; Welborn et al., 2022). Despite legislative efforts to support the educational aspirations of students who experienced foster care, the reality is that many foster youths will not attend college (McMillen et al., 2003). As noted in Chapter 1, their educational aspirations are often interrupted by unfavorable circumstances. The combination of an unstable educational journey and feeling like colleges do not understand their unique challenges has further contributed to unfavorable outcomes for foster youth.

There has been limited research about nonformal leaders in the community college setting. These nonformal leaders are charged with developing environments for students to

<center>26</center>

flourish while also considering the barriers encountered by a student who experienced foster care. The campus experiences and the values of nonformal leaders must be further studied if one task of campus personnel is to understand how campus-based programs are developed.

Cultural proficiency is a conceptual framework (see Appendix A) that researchers developed to identify and support effective practices while also identifying harmful practices. Culturally proficient people (and organizations) can create meaningful connections with individuals who differ from themselves by using an "inside-out" approach (Nuri-Robins et al., 2011). Cultural proficiency is a conceptual framework for developing oneself and organizations while identifying obstacles within diverse communities and organizations (Nuri-Robins et al., 2011).

Cross et al. (1989) introduced the idea of cultural proficiency in "Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care: A Monograph on Effective Services for Minority Children Who Are Severely Emotionally Disturbed." The monograph included the competence continuum. Cross et al. (1989) developed four tools to address personal and organizational diversity: (a) guiding principles, (b) cultural proficiency continuum, (c) barriers to cultural proficiency, and (d) essential elements of cultural proficiency.

Guiding Principles

The first foundational tool of cultural proficiency is the guiding principles. The guiding principles are the foundation of cultural proficiency. The guiding principles are comprised of eight principles (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). Guiding principles shape a person's values and organizational policies and practices while suggesting that individuals are served to various degrees based on the dominant culture. It recognizes that people have personal identities and group identities. Cultural diversity is essential and without diversity, the ability to provide

competent services within the institution is threatened (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). The guiding principles of cultural proficiency recognize the uniqueness of every group and support culturally-defined needs. A persons family is defined as part of each persons culture and provides the support in education. In organizations, cross-cultural interations are a dynamic that must be acknowledged and adjusted as people work and learn. This practice facilitates meeting the unique needs of cultural groups. The guiding principles shape the intersectionality of culture, self-awareness, and community. Also, the guiding principles inform the family structure. The culture defines the family structure and acts as the primary support system in children's education (Welborn et al., 2022).

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum

The second foundational tool of cultural proficiency is the cultural proficiency continuum, which measures the behaviors of individuals who are responsible for implementing practices and policies within the institutions. The continuum has six points, ranging from the lowest point, cultural destructiveness, to the highest point, cultural proficiency. Cultural destructiveness occurs when policies are enacted that are harmful or try to eliminate group differences, particularly differences that conflict with the dominant group. In contrast, cultural proficiency occurs when a person or organization is willing to learn from differences and does so as a lifelong practice.

The second lowest point on the continuum is cultural incapacity. This is when a leader or organization tolerates differences without accepting the validity of those differences (Kelly, 2017; Lindsey et al., 2018; Nuri-Robins et al., 2011). The third point on the continuum is cultural blindness. Cultural blindness occurs when leaders focus on cultural similarities but do not acknowledge the differences between the cultures and in comparison to the dominant group

(Lindsey et al., 2018). The fourth point on the continuum is cultural precompetence, which occurs when a leader or organization becomes aware of their inability to respond to differences, but they understand the need for change and are committed to developing new skills to respond to them. The fifth point on the continuum is cultural competence, which results when a leader accepts and embraces cultural differences. Leaders continually assess their biases and knowledge of cultures and adapt their beliefs, policies, and practices. As described, individuals and organizations are prepared to reach the final level of the continuum, cultural proficiency. Cultural proficiency is achieved when organizational leaders recognize the differences and similarities between two cultures and are willing to learn from them (Clark-Louque & Latunde, 2019; Lindsey et al., 2018; Nuri-Robins et al., 2011).

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Foster youth have many barriers to obtaining a college degree (Blome, 1997; Jackson et al., 2020; Piel, 2018; Salazar et al., 2016; Watt et al., 2018). Once the student enrolls in college, the student encounters a challenge unbeknownst to the nonformal leader due to some nonformal leaders in community colleges being unaware of the needs of foster youth. This becomes more common when the nonformal leader is unfamiliar with the organization (Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Geiger et al., 2016; Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010). Challenges and barriers could include the campus culture. Lindsey et al. (2018) referred to unawareness of the need to adapt. It is hard to get schools and educators to change because educators may be unaware of how to serve students who have not received an equitable public education (Nuri-Robins et al., 2011). This could be partly due to what Nuri-Robins (2011) called "resistance to change." At the same time, educators have expressed their commitment to cultural proficiency practices. Still, institutions or educators may resist when asked to change or modify their practices to meet students' needs.

One solution is for nonformal leaders to interact with colleagues in personal learning communities, which could result in individuals changing their perceptions and practices. Although resistance to change is a natural human behavior, resistance can become a barrier without being addressed. Leaders who do not acknowledge systemic oppression or the benefits of privilege and entitlement are another barrier to cultural proficiency. As a result, unhealthy practices, such as cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, and cultural blindness, could form. In contrast to unhealthy practices, an organization can form healthy practices, such as cultural precompetence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency. To be culturally proficient, the organization or individual must promote a change process that values diversity, responds to diversity and differences, and creates an inclusive environment. Failure of nonformal leaders to make decisions based on healthy practices could result in foster youth programs having unhealthy cultural practices, which may further impact an already vulnerable population.

Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency

The five essential elements of cultural proficiency serve as a model for individuals to measure their personal and professional behaviors as well as to measure organizational practices and policies. This is accomplished through measuring (a) cultural knowledge, (b) the value placed on diversity, (c) how differences are managed, (d) adaptability to adversity, and (e) institutionalizing cultural knowledge through professional development and advocacy (Welborn et al., 2022). As mentioned, the guiding principles of cultural proficiency inform healthy practices, which, in turn, help people reach the essential elements of competence. The essential elements of cultural proficiency provide the framework for change within a leader and organization to better serve its populations (Lindsey et al., 2018). To achieve this, leaders must

become culturally proficient by using the guiding principles or essential elements to help them develop objectives to achieve the goal (Kelly, 2017; Nuri-Robins et al., 2011)

When applied strategically, cultural proficiency tools can inform nonformal leaders. The tools can also assist with allocating resources while collaborating with formal leaders to deliver professional development. Cultural proficiency is a tool that leaders can use further to address their own beliefs, biases, and differences. Students benefit from leaders who actively address their known or unknown cultural destructiveness or who work toward the highest level of the cultural continuum of cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2018). To understand nonformal leaders and their unique experiences as program coordinators, the coordinator must understand who they are as a person and how their experiences shape a program designed to support students who experienced foster care.

Exemplary Leadership Framework

The exemplary leadership framework illustrates how the practices of leaders and their values influence organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Kouzes and Posner (2011) developed a framework comprised of five exemplary leadership practices: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart (see Appendix B). The framework is used to understand how leaders function at their personal best. The framework was developed based on thousands of case studies of people's personal best leadership experiences. The leadership framework lays the groundwork for organizational success by recommending behaviors and actions that people need to become effective leaders. The model consists of five exemplary leadership practices. According to Kouzes and Posner (2011), effective leadership attributes are trustworthiness, expertise, and dynamism. These attributes are referred to as source credibility. Source credibility is the believability of an

information source; in this case, source credibility refers to the credibility of a nonformal leader who coordinates a campus-based program for students who have experienced foster care. Foster youth have low levels of trust due to their various experiences in the foster care system.

Students who experience foster care must feel they can trust the nonformal leader (Collins et al., 2010; Merdinger et al., 2005). When people assess how believable a person is, they tend to ignore what the individual is saying and attend to what the individual is doing. In other words, credibility is the foundation of leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). If people, especially students who experienced foster care, do not believe in the message, they may not believe the messenger. Trust, connectedness, and credibility are highly important to followers (Collins et al., 2010; Merdinger et al., 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2011).

To that end, a reasonable question is why do people follow certain leaders. Students who experienced foster care could ask this after enrolling in college. Often, foster youth ask this because they do not trust authoritative figures. Students who experience foster care have little trust in adults because of their experiences in foster care (Collins et al., 2010; Merdinger et al., 2005). Once enrolled, students meet with their academic advisor, develop an outline for their educational goals, and join their campus-based program. Within campus-based programs, their academic advisors serve as the program coordinator and assist with academic planning. After meeting the program coordinator, students who experienced foster care may assess the program coordinator's credibility and if they will remain in college (Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Unrau et al., 2017).

Through the exemplary leadership framework, five guiding principles emerged that support how leaders could operate at their personal best. These five guiding principles—model

the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart—will be outlined in the upcoming section.

Model the Way

The first principle for being an effective leader is for the leader to become credible and clear about their values and who they are as a person. Students who experience foster care are often encouraged to share their voices, thoughts, and views with politicians, high-status individuals, and their immediate circle of influence (i.e., group homes, school, and planning meetings; Havlicek et al., 2016). However, for nonformal leaders who work with students who experienced foster care, little to no research has been conducted highlighting the voices or experiences of nonformal leaders who coordinate campus based programs for students who experienced foster care.

Leaders can begin to discover their authentic voice through self-awareness of one's values. Kouzes and Posner (2011) explained how an individual with clear values could assess if the organization's values align with their values: If personal and organizational values align, the person is more likely to remain in the organization. If a person is clear about their values, it may be easier for them to realize when their values do not align with the organization, and they may be more likely to decline the opportunity because it does not align with their values. Thus, clarity about one's values and beliefs can create an environment where the people in the organization can flourish. This could be accomplished through the second guiding principle, which is the ability to inspire a shared vision.

Inspire a Shared Vision

The second principle for being an effective leader is envisioning the future, which includes vision, purpose, mission, legacy, dream, aspiration, calling, personal agenda, or group

vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Exemplary leaders are positive about the future and see areas others cannot see and still communicate a shared vision. The vision should not reflect only the leader's vision. Kouzes and Posner (2021) argued that a shared vision attracts more people, creates sustainable motivation, and creates organizational resilience. Leaders must be able to see what others do not see. This includes mastering two essentials: imagining the possibilities and finding a common purpose (Kouzes & Posner, 2021). To accomplish the two essentials, nonformal leaders will need to challenge the process of how the campus educators choose to serve foster youth.

Challenge the Process

The third principle for being an effective leader is challenging the process. Campus-based programs serving students who experienced foster care need innovative programs to meet the unique needs and circumstances and precollege educational experiences of foster youth (Courtney et al., 2011; Courtney et al., 2005; Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Salazar, 2012). To understand the practice of challenging the process, leaders must first address the unique circumstances of students who identify as foster youth.

Foster youth must be more resilient in terms of graduating from college as compared to their nonfoster counterparts (Merdinger et al., 2005). It is crucial for resiliency to be modeled through challenging the educational system when foster youth pursue their educational goals. Resiliency could be interpreted as self-motivation, but it should not be the only measure of motivation (Merdinger et al., 2005). Foster youth may lack the motivation to attain a postsecondary education, but it does not mean they lack resiliency. Merdinger et al. (2005) emphasized this point by mentioning how foster youth possess internal characteristics such as self-motivation that contribute to their academic success. Other researchers have suggested that

having a sense of autonomy, a supportive adult, and access to a haven contribute to the academic success of foster youth in postsecondary education (Hass et al., 2014).

Researchers have focused much attention on the academic challenges of foster youth, yet rarely have they examined what helps foster youth thrive in college. Merdinger et al. (2005) researched the characteristics of foster youth who completed college after transitioning from high school to a 4-year college. However, these internal characteristics are rarely displayed in foster youth because of their trauma. Morton (2017) argued that most foster youths do not possess these qualities because mental and emotional challenges impact their educational aspirations. When nonformal leaders understand the importance of resilience and how foster youth thrive from the stability of campus-based programs, it could shift the educational attainment of foster youth throughout the United States.

When nonformal leaders challenge the processes inside and outside their institutional settings, they can actively seek ways to improve systems where leaders can innovate, grow, and improve conditions. Researchers have found a correlation between challenge and change (Kouzes & Posner, 2021). There is also a connection between a challenge and being an effective leader. Adversity in leadership enables individuals to understand what they are capable of as leaders. If leaders cannot overcome adversity, it may impact their innovation. Researchers have found a connection between creative thinking and how a leader's effectiveness is viewed. The program benefits when leaders innovate by pushing themselves (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Leaders must have their own sense of resilience if they want to be effective leaders who challenge the process.

Enable Others to Act

The fourth principle for being an effective leader is to enable others to act. A shared sense of creation and responsibility facilitates better performance. Exemplary leaders foster collaboration by creating a climate of trust and by facilitating relationships. Collaboration is critical when working with vulnerable populations. Students who experience foster care benefit from collaborating with professionals, mainly to provide wrap-around services (CCC, 2020). Wrap-around services are provided by organizations and individuals to bridge various resources that help foster youth. Services and resources range from helping students with housing and mental health to job readiness, college preparedness, and even preparing a home-cooked meal. Students receive different wrap-around services depending on what is outlined in the succession plan developed with input from the youth (CCC, 2020). As mentioned, trust is required to collaborate and promote relationships where professionals and students who experienced foster care work together.

Similarly, leaders working with campus-based programs supporting students who experienced foster care will need trust and relationships with formal campus leaders and within the community to create a sense of connectedness between students in the program and the program itself. Sloyan and Ludema (2010) noted that trust predicts organizational, team, and personal performance**.** In a climate of trust, people are happier rather than suspicious. Trust can be earned by the leader giving trust. Building trust is important in connecting to students who participate in the campus-based support program.

The educational success of foster youth is helped by the strength of their social support and their ability to trust others (Collins et al., 2010; Merdinger et al., 2005). When discussing foster youth, it is important to acknowledge their lack of positive relationships and their

difficulty trusting adults. It is also important to recognize that positive relationships can transform their academic journey. Foster youth often have little time to establish supportive relationships with teachers and peers or with their foster families (Tobolowsky et al., 2019). Hence, foster youth attempt to stay connected to their biological families while in care (Collins et al., 2010; Merdinger et al., 2005). Regardless of the relationship between the birth parent(s) and the youth, the youth yearn to connect with their biological family because they trust them. Researchers have studied meaningful relationships among foster youth (Blome, 1997; Collins et al., 2010; Kirk & Day, 2011; Merdinger et al., 2005; Piel, 2018). Results from these studies provide insight into how meaningful relationships can facilitate the academic success of foster youth enrolled in campus-based programs. Tobolowsky et al. (2019) analyzed testimony from a public policy forum and other research and found that a permanent relationship was a critical factor in the educational success of foster youth. Highlighting the importance of mentorship and trust is vital to serving foster youth on campus. Positive relationships with an adult can lead to a better transition into adulthood. Foster youth search for an individual to provide them with social, mental, and emotional support and mentoring; they also seek connections through campus-based support programs (Collins et al., 2010).

In addition, foster youth seem to need trust to feel connected to their college. When a foster youth arrives at college, often their first and, at times, only social support comes from campus-based programs serving students who experienced foster care. For example, in the Midwest Study of Foster Youth, findings showed that over one-third of participants had a social phobia (Courtney et al., 2011). Of the foster youth surveyed in the study, one-half reported experiencing severe feelings of fear and avoiding fearful situations. Foster youth reported being afraid to eat and drink in front of people. They also reported being afraid to talk to others

because they were afraid of saying something foolish*,* public speaking, or going to a party or social outing. Such social phobiasfor foster youth continue on to college campuses and classrooms. As such, programs that serve students who experienced foster care often provide social activities for their participants (Courtney et al., 2005; Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010). The objective is to integrate foster youth into the culture of higher education, so foster youth can achieve their academic goals and build lasting relationships with other foster youth, nonfoster youth, and campus-based leaders who work with them.

The most prevalent mental health challenge for foster youth is posttraumatic stress disorder, and youth may seek harmful coping methods. As such, coping may lead to alcohol abuse, substance abuse, depression, and involvement in the criminal justice system. After engaging in questionable coping mechanisms, foster youth may search for positive, supportive individuals with whom they can connect and relate while on a college campus. This notion of seeking relatable and trustworthy individuals is even more true in unfamiliar territory such as college. When a foster youth enrolls in college, it may help them to be properly greeted and streamlined through the college registration process so they can begin to develop healthy, trustworthy, lasting relationships with other students who experienced foster care and with campus-based leaders who work in campus-based programs designed to support foster youth (Hernandez & Lee, 2020).

Exemplary leaders foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships. Leaders must first extend trust, learn about the individuals they will collaborate with, show concern, listen diligently, and develop competence and confidence in students and their constituents (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). To enable others to act, the need the freedom to make choices. Program coordinators of campus-based support programs for students who experienced

foster care need autonomy to develop a program in which the nonformal leader can demonstrate their understanding of cultural competency and ability to develop a program. In turn, this could reduce nonformal leaders' sense of powerlessness. Researchers noted that the key to leaders working beyond their job descriptions is through giving leaders high levels of latitude and discretion in making choices related to their job (Wu et al., 2015). Nonformal leaders will need the freedom of choice to develop a program where students who experienced foster care can thrive. Nonformal leaders must also be willing to engage in leadership behaviors and seek autonomy. When leaders have choice, latitude, and accountability within their roles, they feel empowered and as though they have more control over their lives. However, this is simply not enough when it comes to community colleges and nonformal leaders who work with students who experienced foster care . As mentioned, within the cultural proficiency framework, confidence comes from competence. Without knowledge and understanding of the population being served, it is challenging to lead a group of marginalized individuals to accomplish their academic goals at any level (Cross et al., 1989).

Encourage the Heart

The fifth principle for being an effective leader is to encourage the heart by recognizing the contributions of others and creating a sense of community. People who work with exemplary leaders want recognition from their supervisors, managers, or other leaders. When leaders connect personally with their teams, it provides their teams with a sense of community and belongingness. Exemplary leaders must understand the importance of connecting with the people around them. When leaders practice the two essentials of encouraging the heart—expecting the best and personal recognition—it uplifts a team's spirit and drives performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2021; Wu et al., 2015). Believing in a person's ability to do extraordinary things and

achieve high-performance levels is how leaders give cues, saying to their others, "I know you can do this." Leaders influence how others perform based on how the leader treats their team members. When a leader profoundly cares for others, they naturally support and encourage others to believe in themselves and the purpose of their role. People recognize if a person cares for them through words, posture, facial expressions, and tone of voice. When leaders believe in their constituents, and it is well-received, students who experience foster care may reap favorable outcomes from campus-based programs.

Leaders must set expectations and understand their constituents so that constituents know what they are supposed to do. Campus-based program coordinators need to establish and communicate goals to the team. This allows all team members to receive what is referred to as the center of the learning process–feedback (Kouzes & Posner, 2021). That is, performance feedback can be measured only after expectations are established. Feedback facilitates learning. Exemplary leaders provide meaningful feedback that encourages team members to reach people inside and do their best. Equally important is encouragement, which is the highest form of feedback. Exemplary leaders use verbal and written communication to encourage their followers; they may also ask those under their leadership how they prefer to receive encouragement.

Chapter Summary

Cultural proficiency is an asset-based design (Welborn et al., 2022). Using an asset-based lens allowed the researcher in this study to understand the influence of an individual's values and perceptions of campus culture. Both cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership have similar guiding principles that supported the researcher in understanding the influence of the nonformal leader on the campus-based program. Research provided in this literature review identified programs and services that support students who experience foster care; however current

research does not exists regarding characteristics of equity-minded programs. Cultural

proficiency tends to focus on the leader, the organization, and how they influence each other,

while exemplary leadership focuses on the individual and the influence of their leadership on

people within the organization. However, the exemplary leadership framework fails to provide

an equity lens to leadership and suggests that leadership "knows no racial or religious bounds, no

ethnic or cultural borders" (Kouzes, & Posner, 2017, p. 12). Despite the absence of an equity

lens, exemplary leadership could provide insights into how the values of the individual influence

the development of campus-based programs. In conjunction, cultural proficiency provides an

equity lens while providing insight into how the individual and organizational structure

influences a person's perception of the organization's culture. Together, both frameworks were

used to analyze the data and answer the research question.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

This chapter discusses the components of the research study, including the methodological design and the tools used to examine data. The phenomenological approach and the purpose of the study, and its connection to the conceptual frameworks are discussed. Then, the research question is discussed in connection with the research design. Participant selection and sampling invitations are discussed, as well as the sample size. Next, the data collection process and data analysis approach are described. The validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of data, as well as ethical issues and the role of the researcher, are also addressed. To conclude, the limitations of the study are outlined.

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to capture the campus perceptions and personal values of nonformal leaders that influence the development of an equity-minded campus-based program. Using a phenomenological study allowed the researcher to understand the meaningful experiences of the participants from their perspective. This method of research involves identifying participants who have experienced or are experiencing the explored phenomenon (Mertler, 2021). The focus of the study was at the individual level, and the researcher did not aim to generalize the population. Moreover, phenomenological studies usually have a small number of participants who participate in interviews lasting up to 90 min (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). This research method aligns with the overarching research question and the cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership frameworks. This approach provides a deeper understanding compared to other research models (Omizo et al., 1997), and both frameworks complement each other with their asset-based designs.

Purpose of the Study

In specialized programs for students who experienced foster care, nonformal leaders, also known as program coordinators or counselors, work to develop a program that is sustainable and accessible and guides students toward their academic goals (Courtney et al., 2011; Dworsky & Perez, 2010; Monaghan & Attewell, 2015; Salazar, 2012). Empirical data on nonformal leaders who guide foster youth in supportive campus-based programs could not be located. A phenomenological study design was used to explain how nonformal leaders' values and perceptions of campus-based culture influence the development of an equity-minded program. Scholars have utilized leadership frameworks to study individual values (Kouzes & Posner, 2017) and used cultural proficiency to understand the culture of organizations (Lindsey et al., 2018). The current study incorporated the two conceptual frameworks.

Conceptual Framework

Welborn et al. (2022) noted that leaders are being called to invest in school improvement. The cultural proficiency framework provided structure for interpretation to address educational gaps among students. It also guides nonformal leaders in addressing inequities and professional self-determination (Block et al., 1995). Thus, cultural proficiency guides personal and organizational change so educators ensure that all groups of students succeed in school (Welborn et al., 2022). Identifying barriers to cultural proficiency helps overcome cultural proficiency barriers through teamwork and understanding how those barriers inform unhealthy and inequitable policies, practices, and behaviors of nonformal leaders. As discussed in Chapter 1, the guiding principles explain how nonformal leaders' beliefs inform healthy policies, practices, and behaviors. The cultural proficiency continuum assists with identifying policies, procedures, and behaviors that create inequities, deny access, and create opportunities to change them.

Finally, the essential elements of cultural proficiency guide nonformal leaders' actions and planning and campus to increase equity, access, and inclusion so students can thrive (Welborn et al., 2022). Cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership have some similarities. Both frameworks consist of a personal journey that ultimately impacts individuals and the organization. Contrary to cultural proficiency, exemplary leadership asserts that leadership has no racial, religious, ethnic, or cultural bounds, and instead, leaders can reside anywhere in an organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2021). In addition, exemplary leadership tends to focus more on the individual's assets.

Exemplary leadership includes five behaviors of an impactful leader: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. The behaviors of exemplary leaders positively affect people's commitment, motivation, and work performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2021). The ability to measure a nonformal leader's commitment, motivation, and work performance through exemplary leadership could provide insight into other explanations for why the educational gaps between students who experienced foster care and nonfoster youth continue to widen (Merdinger et al., 2005)

Research Question

The overarching question guiding this study was: In what ways, if at all, does a nonformal leader's personal values and perceptions of campus culture influence the development of an equity-minded campus-based program?

Study Site

Generally, qualitative researchers gain access to a site through informal social ties (Lareau, 2021). This research study did not require physical access to a college but instead required access to an individual. Therefore, community college nonformal leaders who work in

education were identified through a public listserv. The study consisted of 10 nonformal leaders who worked at 10 different sites. Unknowingly, two participants transitioned to the same college after ending their employment at their previous colleges. The school from which a participant came was protected by using pseudonyms. The researcher chose the college pseudonyms and generalized the name to prevent the study site from being compromised.

Participants

The goal of qualitative research is not to generalize to a larger population but rather to develop an in-depth description of an identified phenomenon (Mertler, 2021). An important distinction between a quantitative and qualitative research approach is the specificity of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2005). Purposeful sampling, specifically homogeneous sampling, was used, followed by the snowball method. The study participants included 10 individuals who worked in community colleges in California and were considered program coordinators, counselors, or foster youth liaisons for the campus-based program. Although all the participants continue to work in the community college system, two study participants shared their experiences as nonformal leaders at prior colleges and compared them to their current colleges. Of the participants, three were individuals who experienced foster care. The three self-identified former foster youth also participated in a campus-based program for students who experienced foster care. Potential participants were emailed a questionnaire that outlined eligibility for participation (see Appendix C). After the researcher reviewed the study qualifications and determined the person met the inclusion criteria, the participant received a follow-up email to schedule a 60–90-min interview. Participant profiles were created using demographic information gathered during the interviews.

Data Collection

Qualitative research consists of words. The data gathered consisted of experiences captured in words from the study participants (Mertler, 2021). The researcher collected data through 10 individual interviews, interview transcripts, and memo notes. Table 1 displays a summary of the data collected.

Table 1

Summary of Data Collection and Instrumentation Methodology

Data collection instrument	Method of collection	Type of data collected
Interview	Semistructured	10 individual interviews
	Voice recorded	Interview transcript
	Zoom video conferencing	Memo notes

The researcher used a public listserv of campus-based programs in California to identify and email nonformal leaders. In the email, the researcher described the study to elicit participant interest. Purposeful homogeneous sampling was used to recruit nine participants. Homogeneous sampling is a technique in which specific sites or individuals are selected for similar traits or characteristics (Mertler, 2021). The snowball method was also used to recruit one participant, who the researcher was directed to based on a colleague's suggestion. The colleague emailed the researcher requesting to participate in the study; this technique is known as snowball sampling (Mertler, 2021). After obtaining informed consent (Appendix D), the researcher collected data through one-on-one interviews. The semistructured interviews were approximately 60–90 min in length. Interview questions were developed according to principles from the exemplary leadership framework and cultural proficiency framework. The exemplary leadership framework primarily captured the personal values and leadership qualities that may or may not have contributed to the development of the campus-based program. Cultural proficiency captured the nonformal leaders' personal culture and its influence on the campus-based program. Campus

culture and perceptions were explored to identify cultural barriers and equitable practices present in the campus culture.

Data were stored in a secure, password-protected computer accessible only by the researcher. After the interviews were conducted, each participant received an email containing their interview transcript to ensure the transcript was accurate and represented what the participants shared.

Interviews

The researcher in this study sought to understand the experiences of 10 nonformal leaders who work with students who experienced foster care at different community colleges. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to capture nonformal leaders' personal values and perceptions of campus culture characteristics that influence them when developing an equity-minded campus-based program. Using a phenomenological study allowed the researcher to understand the meaningful experiences of the participants from their perspective (Mertler, 2021). For this reason, it was most appropriate to conduct in-depth, semistructured interviews. The researcher emailed each participant to ask about availability. The researcher adjusted their schedule to minimize interruptions to the participant's schedule. Each interview ranged from 60–90 min. Participants were interviewed through Zoom virtual conference system. To build rapport, the researcher engaged in informal conversations to gauge a participant's level of comfortability and asked the participant if they had any concerns or requests before conducting the interview. Of the 10 participants, one wanted to meet in person but later decided to interview on Zoom. As part of informed consent, participants were notified that the interview would be recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research allows data to be collected by more than one source and developed into thems. Inductive reasoning allows the researcher flexibility in understanding a phenomenon (Mertler, 2021). For purposes of this study, Zoom was used to record the interviews, and an online transcription system was used to transcribe the 10 interviews. Values coding was used to capture the meaning of the interviews and to capture the participants' beliefs and views. The researcher conducted one semistructured interview with each participant. The researcher started the interview by asking demographic questions to better understand the nonformal leaders. In addition, memo notes were conducted after each interview. Memo notes were not coded but instead were used as a tool to document the researcher's thoughts and wonderings. To address interrater reliability, the researcher and an intercoder reviewed the data multiple times to ensure accuracy. Participants were sent copies of their transcripts for member checking. This prevented researcher bias from influencing findings.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness of Data

There are two common threats to the validity of qualitative conclusions: researcher bias and reactivity (Maxwell, 2012). Researcher bias could include researchers choosing a data collection method that fits their preconceptions. In this study, this was avoided using a public listserv such that the researcher had no control over who responded and asked to participate in the study. In addition, respondent validation, also referred to as member checks (Maxwell, 2012), was conducted. Member checking is a process where study participants review the research report's accuracy. Finally, intercoder reliability was used in the final analysis for consistency and validity.

Regarding reactivity, a researcher's influence on the individuals being studied is challenging in most qualitative studies. When interviewing participants, the researcher can become immersed in the world being researched. Maxwell (2012) refers to it as "an inescapable influence" (p.125). The researcher in this study has worked with nonformal leaders who serve students who experienced foster care. It was important to acknowledge the researcher's positionality at the beginning of each interview. Various instruments, methods, and sources for collecting data were used to lessen the researcher's influence (Mertler, 2021). As previously mentioned, interviews lasted between 60–90 min and provided rich data. Rich data is a strategy used to rule out validity threats and increase the credibility of the findings (Maxwell, 2012). Given the precautions taken by the researcher to ensure accuracy, the researcher felt that the data were trustworthy.

Positionality and Limitations

Role of Researcher

As a nonformal leader at a community college in California, the researcher is connected to other nonformal leaders throughout the state. The researcher has served as a formal leader for 1 year as the acting EOPS director. Within that year, the researcher was formally responsibility for campus-based programs for students who experienced foster care. The researcher is also a former participant in a campus-based program that serves students who experienced foster care. The researcher views their positionality as a strength instead of a hindrance to the study. Lastly, the researcher acknowledged their positionality at the beginning of each interview to reduce their influence during the interview. This provided an opportunity for the participant and researcher to build a stronger rapport before the interview.

Ethical Issues

A research study typically has four ethical issues: (a) protection from harm, (b) voluntary and informed participation in the research, (c) right to privacy, and (d) honesty with professional colleagues (Mertler, 2021). The researcher worked to ensure the participants were not exposed to unnecessary physical or psychological harm. The researcher ensured that participants were comfortable and not embarrassed during or after the study.

<div align="center">

Limitations of the Study Design

</div>

One limitation of the study was the small sample size, which limited the generalizability of findings. The study was also limited to participants at their respective campuses. As such, the results will describe the experiences of nonformal leaders and leadership in a single campus-based program. The individuals interviewed had a plethora of rich experiences that supported the research question. Another limitation was that the interviews were conducted using the virtual Zoom platform; the virtual platform may have impacted participants' candidness. Nonetheless, all participants expressed that online would best accommodate their schedules.

Delimitations of the research were that the researcher chose to interview nonformal leaders who, either currently or within the past 5 years, coordinated a program for students who experienced foster care. The rationale behind interviewing individuals who served as nonformal leaders at other colleges in the state of California was that a nonformal leader who no longer worked at the same college might be more likely to share their authentic experiences. This was true for Leanne and Luisa, two individuals who shared their experiences at their previous colleges.

Although researchers have suggested that program outcomes in foster youth programs can be measured in many ways (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010; Miller et al., 2017; Unrau et al.,

2017), neither students nor program outcomes were measured in this study. Instead of measuring program outcomes, nonformal leaders discussed their personal values, perceptions of campus culture, and to what extent their personal values and perceptions of campus culture have a campus-based program for students who experienced foster care. Another delimitation was that the researcher included only nonformal leaders in California, with 10 nonformal leaders meeting the study's inclusion criteria. These specific delimitations were chosen to limit the scope of the study; however, the researcher recognized this was a delimitation of the study.

Significance of the Study

Most researchers who focus on students who experienced foster care have examined foster youth and their challenges (Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Hussar et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). Few researchers have empirically investigated the influence of nonformal leaders and the campus culture on program development. This study aimed to investigate nonformal leaders' personal values and perceptions of campus culture. Education is instrumental to the success of nonfoster youth, and researchers have suggested that there is an economic benefit to getting an education because higher education could provide students who experienced foster care with an opportunity to become self-sufficient adults and break the cycle of child abuse (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). Equally important, this current study provided insight into how the nonformal leaders influenced program development, and findings can be applied to facilitate the educational outcomes of students who experienced foster care (Jackson et al., 2020).

Chapter Summary

Foster youth are the least likely to graduate with a college degree when compared to nonfoster youth (Merdinger et al., 2005). Although the educational gaps for students who

experienced foster care have been addressed in research through program development (Jackson et al., 2020; Kirk & Day, 2011; Miller et al., 2017; Okpych et al., 2019; Salazar, 2012; Unrau et al., 2017), such gaps have not been investigated through the lens of the nonformal leader charged with developing the campus-based program. For this reason, nonformal leaders' personal values and campus perceptions were explored to identify the influence their personal values and campus perceptions had on the development of an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care. Guided by exemplary leadership and cultural proficiency framework, this phenomenological study explored how nonformal leaders influence program development through their personal values and perceptions of the campus culture. The study's design addressed why one phenomenon might happen at one college and not happen at another college. This approach allowed the researcher to make connections between the nonformal leader, their values, and perceptions of the campus culture. The study methodology provided the researcher with an opportunity to collect rich data that informed suggestions for future research and implications for asset-based approaches.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents themes from the participant interviews. The researcher used a phenomenological approach to interpret research findings regarding nonformal leaders' personal values and perceptions of campus culture. The study was designed to provide insight into how nonformal leaders influence the development of an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care. Foster youth need additional support to become self-sufficient adults (Jackson et al., 2020). Students who experienced foster care are less likely to graduate from high school and college compared to their nonfoster care peers (Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Hussar et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). Although researchers have explored the educational deficits of foster youth (Barth, 1990; Count, 2001; Courtney et al., 2001; Festinger, 1983; Piliavin et al., 1993), little to no research has been directed to other areas that influence foster youth such as nonformal leader. To understand the influence of nonformal leaders and the ways their personal values and campus perceptions influence how they develop a campus-based program, the following research question guided the study: In what ways, if at all, does a nonformal leader's personal values and perceptions of campus culture influence the development of an equity-minded campus-based program?

The researcher in this study wanted to explore the equitable and inequitable practices that nonformal leaders and campus educators knowingly or unknowingly possess. The study allowed the researcher to explore the barriers preventing the development of an equity-minded program. An equity-minded program is one that utilizes fair and just practices to ensure its students can thrive by acknowledging and addressing structural inequalities that provide advantages to some and disadvantages to others. Results described in this chapter provide insight into the ways nonformal leaders influence such program development. Although the researcher's goal was to

discover nonformal leaders' experiences, the researcher tried to avoid interjecting their thoughts or opinions. Therefore, recognizing the researcher's own positionality, the researcher figuratively provided space for the participants to share their experiences; space is a metaphor that reflects a place where individuals have an opportunity to share openly. As participants shared their experiences, themes, and findings emerged.

Chapter Structure

Each participant's journey as a nonformal leader was highlighted to gain an overarching view of their experiences. By using the narrative approach, the study focused on how the participants assign meaning to their experiences. It is through participants' observations that human contact was narrated (Moen, 2006; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

This chapter begins by introducing each participant and their respective campus. The 10 participants, each a leader in their personal and professional lives, shared their experiences as nonformal leaders. Participants and their colleges were assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Participant Profiles

The site for this study was community colleges in California. To maintain anonymity, each participant and college was assigned a pseudonym (see Table 2). Participants had a wide range of work experience, ranging from less than 1 year of working at a college to 18 years of experience. Table 2 describes each participant and their demographic information, including years of experience, age, and ethnicity.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Campus discussed	Current campus	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Years worked with foster youth in community college
Sophia	Camden College	Camden College	Female	40	Hispanic	6 years, 5 months
Nikole[a]	Western College	Western College	Female	29	White/ Filipino	8 months
Josie	Grand Lakes College	Grand Lakes College	Female	37	White	3.5 years
David[a]	Barden College	Barden College	Male	30	White	Check publisher
Beatrice	Blue Mountain College	Blue Mountain College	Female	43	Hispanic	18 years
Paul	Cyprus College	Cyprus College	Male	66	White	13 years
Alex	Mega College	Mega College	Male	35	Hispanic	4 years
Olivia	Rainwater College	Rainwater College	Female	46	Hispanic	6 years
Luisa	Sacred Valley College, Harris College, Middleton College	Middleton College	Female	43	Indigenous Hispanic	7 years
Leanne[a]	Greendale College, Middleton College	Middleton College	Female	28	Hispanic	4 years

[a] Former student who experienced foster care.

Data Collection and Analysis

During this study, nonformal leaders in California shared their experiences in community colleges supporting students who experienced foster care. Each participant engaged in a one-on-one, 60–90 min semistructured interview. During the interview, nonformal leaders were asked

questions that were developed based on the exemplary leadership framework and cultural

proficiency frameworks. Table 3 and Table 4 display how the interview questions align with the

principles of the two frameworks. Both frameworks were used to develop the interview questions

because the exemplary leadership framework is not rooted in equity (Kouzes & Posner, 2021)

and primarily focuses on the individual. In contrast, cultural proficiency focuses on both the

person and the organization, with equity at the center of the framework (Lindsey et al., 2018;

Welborn et al., 2022).

Table 3

Interview Questions and Exemplary Leadership Framework Principles

Interview question	Model the way	Inspire a shared vision	Challenge the process	Enable others to act	Encourage the heart
What personal values do you have that guide you as a nonformal leader/program coordinator?	X	X			
In terms of the future of your program, what is your vision for your program?		X			
What are the current policies and procedures you desire to change or have changed within your program and/ or campus for students who experienced foster care?	X		X		
In what ways, if at all, do you validate students, so they feel important?				X	X
What is the most meaningful recognition you have ever received since being in your role?	X				X

Table 4

Interview Questions and Cultural Proficiency Framework Principles

Interview question	Assess culture	Value diversity	Manage the dynamics of differences	Adapt to diversity	Institutionalize cultural knowledge
In what ways would you describe your own culture?	X	X	X		
In what ways do you recognize diversity in your program?	X	X	X		X
What skills or professional development training do you have to handle conflict?			X		X
Regarding foster youth, in what ways do you inform colleagues on campus about the college's need to adapt to the culture of students who experienced foster care?	X		X	X	
In what ways do you and your colleagues learn about the cultures within your program?	X	X			X

All interviews were transcribed through the transcription software, Rev.com. To ensure accuracy, the researcher listened to each interview and reviewed transcriptions multiple times. The data were coded through the computer-assisted (or aided) qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose. As displayed in Table 5, the first cycle of coding consisted of values coding. Values coding captured the participants' values, beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives or worldviews (Miles et al., 2018; Saldana, 2021). The types and examples of values codes are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Code Example

Value codes	Example
V: Personal values	Alex: "I think a leader is a person who supports their staff, who gives them the tools in order to excel in the role, who gives autonomy to the staff, to the coworkers there in order to bring in their strengths and allowing them all staff members to try out new things."
A: Sense of belonging	David: "In my role with students, because primarily, I work with them, is I allow them to share their thoughts, to share their emotions, allow them to share their experiences. I think having that space for them is huge because they don't tend to have that at home, in the classroom, or among their peers. Having that space there is huge because it allows them to know that they are an individual and that they have emotions and feelings too. As a counselor and as their advisor, I hear them out, and I validate them, and I'm there as a support, have them as a change agent."
B: Harmful practices	Josie: "And they were also kind of trying to put, what is that the basic needs coordinator position on me. And I was like, "I can't really do that and the foster youth because then the foster youth are going to get even less."

During the first coding cycle, the codebook was developed using language from cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership frameworks. Cultural proficiency, when applied strategically, can assist nonformal leaders with tasks such as allocating resources and developing and implementing policies (Welborn et al., 2022). Exemplary leadership was used to understand nonformal leaders. This research provided insight into the participants and how they tended to seek exemplary leadership principles from their formal leaders rather than themselves due to the nature of their roles as nonformal leaders (i.e., having limited authority). Intercoder reliability was used to ensure the consistency and validity of the data. Codes were then categorized into themes to allow the researcher to gain a broader perspective of the phenomenon (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

During the second coding cycle, the guiding frameworks were used to organize and synthesize the coded data to further develop themes. This process allowed the researcher to identify equitable and inequitable practices within the campus culture and to understand the nonformal leader's influence on the campus-based program. Analytic memos were conducted to capture possible themes and findings. The memos contained the researcher's reflections on participants' actions, reactions, and interactions throughout the interview. Memos also reflected what the researcher found intriguing, surprising, or disturbing. The researcher's memos were not coded.

The first and second cycles of coding helped the researcher to thoroughly explore the data and make connections across participants, themes, and frameworks. In the first coding cycle, the researcher generated 37 codes that were developed into themes. In the second coding cycle, the researcher made connections between frameworks. Major themes related to cultural proficiency were (a) identified barriers to cultural proficiency and (b) healthy, productive, and equitable practices and behaviors. Major themes related to exemplary leadership were (a) campus perceptions, (b) program influence, and (c) personal values. Figure 1 visually connects the themes to each framework.

Personal Values

Major Themes and Framework: Exemplary Leadership

Program Influence

37 codes: Cultural Proficiency and Exemplary Leadership

Campus Perceptios

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Major Themes and Framework: Cultural Proficiency

Heathy, Productive, and Equitable Practices and Behaviors
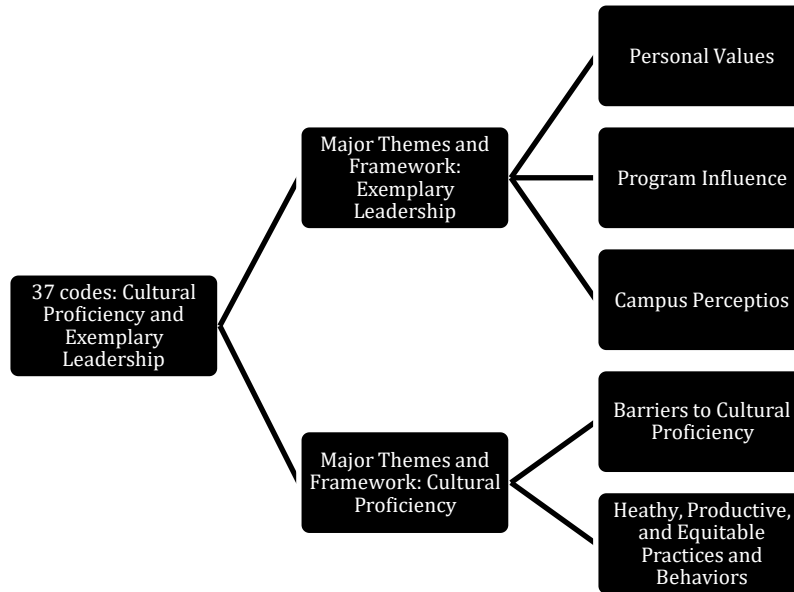
Figure 1

Code and Theme Categories

Additionally, the researcher kept detailed memo notes from each interview. The memo notes helped to clarify data and allowed for cross-analysis to ensure data were interpreted correctly. Data analysis revealed that nonformal leaders influenced how equity-minded programs were developed. The following analysis from the 10 interviews shares the unspoken stories and experiences of the nonformal leaders who influence campus-based programs for students who experienced foster care.

Study Participant Profiles

Sophia

Sophia, a counselor at Camden College, is an endearing person. She is most known for helping students from the beginning to the end of their educational careers. Her love for students who experienced foster care comes from her ability to relate to some of their educational obstacles. Sophia was previously an undocumented migrant and was not allowed to attend college due to her immigration status. Although the experiences of foster youth differ from her

own, having transitioned to an unknown culture, she relates to the sense of loss of family, culture, and environment experienced by foster youth.

In the interview, Sophia mentioned that her personal values and belief in God continue to inspire her despite the barriers she encounters at Camden College. She is a counselor and unofficial coordinator of the Guardian Scholars program and Dreamer's program which serves students who are Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Her ability to connect her personal values of perseverance and spirituality is why she has continued to advocate for and support foster youth. At the time of the interview, Sophia had been working as a nonformal leader with foster youth in a community college for 6.5 years. She came to work with foster youth by chance. After leaving her job at a 4-year institution, a former colleague convinced her that she needed to continue making an impact on students. Sophia hesitated because she had recently given birth to her daughter and wanted to focus on motherhood. However, Sophia could not refuse the opportunity, and she applied for a part-time position at Camden College. She was hired through formal leadership to work with undocumented students (also referred to as Dreamers). On her first day at Camden College, she was told she would work with foster youth and Dreamers. Her supervisor asked her if she had ever worked with foster youth. Sophia's interesting journey began on her first day of work, and her work has continued to surprise her. Her purpose in returning to work was to continue to make an impact on students. Because she also wanted to focus on being a mother, she decided to work part-time. She was surprised to learn that her part-time commitment was not a part-time job.

Sophia expressed concerns about her job title misrepresenting her actual job tasks. Her official title was counselor, but her duties included coordination in addition to academic counseling and teaching. Formal leadership often resisted her when she communicated her

concerns about her title and assigned duties. Throughout the interview, Sophia mentioned her desire to serve students who experienced foster care; however, she was limited by her job title, which only allowed her to provide counseling services. Nonetheless, she was still expected to coordinate. The most significant themes from Sophia's interview were (a) barriers to cultural proficiency and (b) lack of support from formal leadership.

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

> I feel there is no equity in the department because [administrators] have this idea that [foster youth and DACA students] have the same challenges. And they don't. That's why they put it together for me like, 'Oh, yeah. You're just the same Guardian Scholars and Dreamers because they have the same challenges.'

> But again, it's so much that I can't ask because I'm not a tenure track faculty member. I don't feel that I have the same voice as someone that's permanent.

Lack of Support from Formal Leadership

> So, we communicate with each other. Jane has been there for more years. And she has talked to the president of the school because they have a good connection. And nothing has come. There are no changes.

> During the first 2 years, I feel Guardian Scholars, it was there but it was not ... What would be the word? It was not her priority [to the college].

Nikole

Nikole's journey as a foster youth liaison began long before her job at Western College. Nikole was a professional who had experienced foster care. She was passionate about serving current students who experienced foster care because she could relate to the population. Although she did not participate as a student in a campus-based program for students who experienced foster care at a community college, she did participate in such a program at a 4-year college. Nikole tries to bring her experiences from her 4-year college to Western College because she understands what it is like to lack support at a community college. Nikole values being able to share her story and hear students' stories.

Of all the participants, Nikole had the least experience working in community colleges, with only 8 months of experience. Despite her brief work experience, her knowledge of the population and her lived experiences allowed her to connect with students in unique ways. Nikole recognized that she was new to the community college system but used her newness to her advantage by bringing new ideas and fresh perspectives. She was aware of the challenges of her campus and program. In Nikole's case, within the cultural proficiency framework, her thoughts and perspective about her campus and its role are considered to be cultural precompetence. That is, when a person, school, or organization possesses a level of awareness within the systems and recognizes areas of growth, they are considered to have cultural precompetence. Although Nikole's professional experiences were limited, her focus on inequities may help the campus to become culturally proficient (Lindsey et al., 2018). The most significant themes from Nikole's interview were (a) barriers to cultural proficiency and (b) campus perceptions.

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

> So where are these students? Where are these students? To be a Hispanic-Serving Institution, you also must be at a certain percentage, but this is where it gets funny. I recently had a student tell me, who is White passing, that when she fills out forms, she doesn't check the box, White, because she's not going to receive any assistance.

> Well, our director came down to my boss and said, 'Well, you've not considered a program, so we don't have funding for all three of you to go.'

Campus Perceptions

> They want to talk about how they want to help these marginalized communities, but they're not. It's words being said, actions not happening.

> Campus, I feel like they do not support me as an individual. I feel that they do not support my foster youth because of the simple fact that we do not have necessarily a program for them, and that is what my hopes and my goals are. If I'm not able to get them a program, I want to reduce that stigma again on being able to have them

be okay with their identity.

Josie

Josie has been an EOPS counselor at Grand Lakes College for 8 years. Josie has managed to balance the various duties and expectations of a pre-tenure faculty member with the expectation to serve as the foster youth liaison for Grand Lakes College; she has been the liaison for 3 years. Josie mentioned her excitement about traveling and living in El Salvador. Her travels throughout South America afforded her the opportunity to learn about culture, cooking, celebrations, music, and other activities important to her. She uses her personal experiences to develop an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care. She also acknowledged her privilege as a White woman who works with marginalized populations.

Like other participants, Josie expressed concerns about how foster youth are served on campus. Her campus does not have a formal program; instead, a counselor through EOPS is assigned to serve foster youth and conduct their day-to-day responsibilities as a counselor. Josie has had this role for the past few years. Currently, Josie is expected to develop the program without reassigned time. Reassigned time is when a counselor gets dedicated time to complete a task or project outside of their contracted duties. Despite her limited time, Josie managed to create some program structure but also expressed a need to hire a full-time counselor.

Prior to being assigned as the foster youth liaison, Josie's supervisor served as the foster youth liaison. Although Josie's experiences working with foster youth are limited to her role, she challenges herself professionally by managing the on-campus foster youth program that she feels has little support from her campus. Significant themes from Josie's interview were (a) campus perceptions and (b) barriers to cultural proficiency.

And in terms of the foster youth program, I think nobody's pushing for it to get expanded, pushing for funding. And I think the foundation is a band-aid to be able to meet the needs now. But I feel like I would love to see, I feel more supportive would be hiring somebody full-time or paying overload would be more supportive. So, it's like they're supportive if it doesn't impact the budget, kind of.

And they were also kind of trying to put, what is that, the basic needs coordinator position on me. And I was like, 'I can't really do that and the foster youth because then the foster youth are going to get even less.' And so, luckily, we were able to get that push to a different position. But I think that's been a challenge. The fact that there was a nonexistent program here before that the person who was a foster youth liaison before me did good work, but it just was very basic.

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Because I don't really feel like I have anything. Just because our program is so bare-bones, I haven't created a flyer. I have an email that I could send you that I sent to them, but I haven't sent a flyer. We have an intake for EOPS, but it's nothing foster youth-specific. So, yeah, I don't know how to best answer that.

I just was going to conferences, how to create a foster program, and all of those workshops and things like taking notes and trying to come back and super motivated, but then being like, I don't have enough time to put into this. And so, yeah, that's kind of been the biggest challenge, I think.

David

David is passionate about serving students who have experienced foster care. He is an excited, energetic, and dedicated professional at Barden College. His dedication comes from having experienced foster care and having participated in a campus-based program for students who experienced foster care. David is a graduate student earning his Masters to become a counselor. At the beginning of the interview, when asked why he considered himself a leader, he replied by naming his leadership style and stated, "Using that grad school knowledge." When discussing the definition of leadership, David defined a leader as "Someone who thinks of others, who inspires to help others reach their full potential regardless of formal hierarchy." David is fueled by his devotion to serving students who experienced foster care, and he takes initiative

and builds relationships on campus through his participation in shared governance.

His ability to build positive relationships on campus has benefitted the program and his students since he took over the program 5 years earlier. He values strong working relationships and supporting students who experienced foster care while recognizing the intersectionality that shapes their experiences. Before his current role, David questioned his ability to serve as the student programs specialist, stating, "But I didn't hit my first real struggle with feeling like there was a mistake or that I don't really belong until I started my full-time job." Although he has worked in a community college for 11 years, with half of that time as a student worker and the remaining time as the foster youth liaison, he still struggles with imposter syndrome.

At the time of the interview, David was in the second semester of a counseling graduate program with a focus on student development and higher education. Although he did not discuss his postgraduation plans, he could choose to work in higher education in the same capacity. Major themes from David's interview addressed (a) campus perceptions and (b) lived experiences.

Campus Perceptions

And the only reason I'm able to successfully do my job and do it well is because we are a categorical program. And the campus does not really get a whole lot of say in what we do and how we do it, that is all in-house. And so, if we can't, we do talk about that a lot. If the campus isn't willing to do X, Y, and Z for our students, how do we make it happen? How do we go above and beyond? How do we get the students what they need? And I'm so grateful for that because I think it really has instilled a lot of my values as a leader and as a future leader and as a leader in the work. And I was an informal leader.

They love us when it comes time for a feel-good article. It's very performative, but we're not unique in that.

Lived Experiences

But identity-wise, I am very open about my identity as someone with lived experience in care, as a gay man. I really try and just show up and be honest.

66

That's how I really share a lot of my values, is giving advice to students from my own experience.

Beatrice

Beatrice has worked in community colleges for 23 years and has 18 years of experience working with students who experienced foster care. She described a leader as someone who influences others. Blue Mountain College offered an opportunity for faculty members to participate in a leadership academy once a year. Beatrice did not consider herself a leader until she joined the leadership academy and realized that she had a daily influence on students. From there, she identified her other leadership qualities and recognized that she has always been a leader.

Beatrice's family ties to the campus run deep. She is a second-generation nonformal leader at Blue Mountain College and began her career at the campus as a student worker. Beeatrice witnessed her mother retire from Blue Mountain College. Shortly after, Beatrice began her professional career there, and she describes Blue Mountain College as her extended family. Now, her niece, a third-generation Blue Mountain College student, attends classes on campus.

Her ability to connect with students comes from her experiences as a single mother. She had support from her parents as she raised her child and attended college. The support she received made her realize how crucial it is to have support while in college. This realization gave her the drive to support students who experienced foster care. She is guided as a nonformal leader by her faith in God and her values. Of all the participants, she was the only one who expressed a deep love for her campus and clearly tied her personal values to the values of the campus culture. Under her guidance, the program grew to over 130 students. Her greatest challenge was her upcoming transition from being the Guardian Scholars counselor and

coordinator to a tenured track counseling position in general counseling. Beatrice worked in her

full-time, nontenure track position for over a decade. Campus administrators did not offer to

create a permanent position, resulting in her having to find a different position on campus that

was tenure track and offered more stability. Shortly after being hired, NextUp, a state-

categorically funded program, was going to be offered at her campus. That could result in the

program she spent over 10 years developing finally offering a tenure-track position. Significant

themes from Beatrice's interview were (a) healthy, productive, and equitable practices and (b)

job title.

Healthy, Productive, and Equitable Practices

> At Blue Mountain College, how we are open to any student that has been in foster care, that's keeping all students in mind and serving all students. So that's the part with the next step that we want to continue that model and keep that mode.

> Yes. And then we've had in our campus too, we've incorporated a lot of new programs like our Hope, so our student's experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity. We also have our LGTBQT. We have a specific program. We have our counselor. So, we do have a lot of events on campus that are raising awareness to all the different, not only cultures, but sexuality, different lived experiences, and things like that as well.

Job Title

> There are some things that people have asked, like, 'Oh, can you volunteer for this?' But I feel as a nontenure, someone that's tenured should be in that role because they're here. They're here permanently, and I may be gone. You never know. And they're like, 'Oh, I'm sorry you feel that way because you're not tenured.' But it's the truth.

> Well, especially right now, especially that I'm not tenure track, I'm like, Beatrice, you have to be quiet. You have to stay under the radar, right? But it's true. I mean if I'm on somebody's list, they're going to be like, 'I want her gone.' Right? Some of my colleagues are like, 'You should say something. Say your opinion.' I'm like, 'Girl, you're tenure track. Why don't you? You're already tenured, you do it.' They're not going to get rid of you.

Paul

Paul's career has spanned over 14 years in community college, 13 of which were dedicated to serving students who experienced foster care. He devoted his full-time career to Cyprus College. Paul has worked as an adjunct counselor at other colleges, but most of his career has been at Cyprus College, where he is a tenured counselor and NextUp program coordinator. When asked about his leadership style, Paul emphasized that his team is important, and he takes care to include their thoughts, opinions, and ideas when developing the campus-based program for students who experienced foster care.

Paul began his career as an adjunct counselor who worked with students that experienced foster care after a grant became available for students who experienced foster care and were enrolled at Cyprus College. He was approached by his former supervisor, who thought he would be a good fit to work with students who experienced foster care. Paul valued transparency and serving students. He encouraged his team to be as open as possible with him and the students. He shared his values with others by "showing up." His most significant influence on the campus-based program is his ability to bring "more peace and harmony" to the team. As a result of his leadership approach, students and team members feel more included in the program development. The greatest challenge for his program is the resistance to implementing a personal growth class. This challenge was due to his campus administrators. Personal growth is a transferable college course that teaches success strategies to enhance academic and lifelong learning skills. The class was offered previously to students in his campuses-based program; however, for the last 10 years, he has been unable to provide the personal growth. When asked about his campus culture, Paul paused momentarily, leaned back on his screen, and replied, "In a way, that depends on where I look. If I look at the whole campus, fractured."

Paul was one of three male participants. Interestingly, two of the three male participants mentioned hyper-masculinity, which is a topic not often discussed or addressed with male students who experienced foster care. Paul concluded his interview with the following statement, "But hyper-masculinity impacted me growing up. I'm supposed to be a certain way, I'm supposed to be a certain male, I'm supposed to be rough and individualistic and aggressive and all this stuff." After analyzing Paul's interview, significant themes included (a) campus perceptions and (b) advocacy.

Campus Perceptions

> I hear the words Black and brown students, what are we going to do for Black and brown students a lot more. And there is a leader on campus who says a lot of that. That leader sees it as performative and thinks we ought to be doing more.

> There's a lot of friction in there that doesn't get seen. It's like a dysfunctional family that doesn't let it leak out. So, I think particularly coming out of the pandemic, there's some sort of need or something that's hard to meet. It feels like we were in isolation, and we're staying isolated, coming out. We're back on campus and we're still isolated from one another.

Advocacy

> From a certain point of view, some of the advocacy is helping students to advocate for themselves, but helping students also to see they have those strengths that they don't recognize.

> We do try to get what we want to support students. We're very vocal in advocating up the chain, but we keep students out of those roles as much as we can unless they're paid. And we've had student workers who will do things but it's part of the gig and they can always turn it down.

Alex

Alex, the program counselor at Mega College, reported valuing an open-minded approach. He was transparent and shared his values with others on campus. Despite his efforts to align his personal values with the campus culture, Alex stated that his personal values only somewhat align with the campus. Alex expressed that he is not tenured and does not feel that he

can express his concerns to campus administrators. He also stated, though, that when he is

tenured, the "floodgates are going to open up." One way to interpret this statement is that he

believes he needs to wait until he is tenured to express his concerns about the program and

campus. This assumption is based on his follow-up response about the tenure process. When

asked why he felt he could not communicate his concerns about the campus or the program, he

stated, "Because if we're on probation, then if we say a false thing, I mean, it could hurt our

process."

Prior to NextUp, Mega College had an informal program with a counselor who was

assigned to meet with foster youth. Due to negative experiences with past counselors, students

found trusting Alex challenging. Alex confirmed this when he stated, "They thought that I was

just a seat warmer, that I was going to be there a year, a couple of months, and then replaced me

with somebody who knows better." Alex joined the NextUp program as a counselor in 2019.

Shortly after he accepted his tenure-track counselor position, his campus transitioned to being

fully online due to COVID-19. He was able to gain the students' trust by including them in

program-related decisions. Students felt more included when asked for their thoughts on the

program and how to serve students going forward. When asked about his program vision, Alex

was vague:

> Actually, at the end of every school year, I give all the students a survey on stuff
> that they enjoyed and stuff that they did not like, and any stuff that they want to
> see changes in the program and how the program could change and mold to their
> expressions.

His decision to include students when developing the vision for the program was a start. Unlike

other schools, Mega College has a separate center for students who have experienced foster care.

It is located on the outer rim of the campus, and its location is described as, "We're like the

redheaded stepchild who's on the outskirts of it, unfortunately."

Similar to other participants, Alex's job duties and title did not afford him time to be a program coordinator. Alex wanted to develop an equitable program but was limited due to his official title of counselor. His schedule was also limited to academic counseling appointments and left little time for program coordination. His current process puts him at risk for job burnout.

At the time of the interview, Mega College had the largest NextUp program in California. The program's structure was unique. Typically, NextUp is housed in the EOPS office under the EOPS director. Mega College is unique because the program has its own director who oversees the program. Their NextUp program is not connected to EOPS. Each NextUp program coordinator decides what program structure works best for their campus. However, most programs tend to remain connected to EOPS because of the EOPS infrastructure and its longstanding reputation of being an equity-minded program. The lack of connection to an already established equity-minded program could explain why Alex experienced barriers to cultural proficiency. Alex's desire and passion to serve students who experienced foster care are present, but concerns about his limited staff and lack of support from formal leadership caused the program to have inequitable practices. The most prevalent themes in his interview were (a) barriers to cultural proficiency and (b) campus perceptions.

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

> When it comes to schooling, and inequity on campus, it's still an ongoing effect that it has been arising across programs of NextUp, EOPS, DSPS, and veterans. We still struggle to have all the programs be heard and validated and acknowledged by administration. It will be a battle that will take time to be addressed.

> But I think staff just attend those just to check the box off, just to show the college that, hey, I did it, I'm good and I'm being authentic. But when it comes to students, I've witnessed from the interactions that I have seen, there's a small handful of students or staff who are real and authentic with the students directly, but again the colleague or staff to ... I think it's just when it's administrator to staff, there's a wall. However, if it's staff to staff or faculty to faculty, it's more

72

open and transparent and real than a different structure level.

Campus Perceptions

>Perceptions that I have about the campus culture, I don't think they just aligned with what I see. I experience and I see two different things than what has been expressed in emails, in talks from the president, from an administrator, administration. They just paint a picture that everything is going smoothly when there are a lot of programs that are struggling, but yet they don't get known or recognized in students and staff, and students just don't see the support from administration. A perfect example is that I actually ask all of my students is they have you seen on campus an administrator or the president or the cabinet up to board members at all? They're like, 'Well, I don't even know what they looked like.' I'm like, 'Well, typically, it's a person in a suit or nice, dressed up and everything,' but the president, I show them a picture of them and they're like, 'I don't know who the hell that is.' It's a struggle because they see this man with power and they think if they're not being heard, or validated as a college student, how are they going to be heard or validated as an employee in that world? It's bringing that wrong ideology and that perception that there's this divide.

>The campus does help and supports all staff to be authentic and real and transparent with the students. However, I believe from staff to staff or staff to administrator, I don't think it's very authentic and transparent or real. There's always that fine line, do I say too much and get them to bite my tongue, or do I stay quiet and keep to myself? It has been ongoing for quite some time.

Olivia

Olivia is a NextUp counselor coordinator at East California College. She became interested in foster youth during her undergraduate studies. She majored in human services, which required her to complete fieldwork. She reached out to her local court-appointed special advocate youth shelter, where she discovered her passion for working with foster youth. She has worked in community college for 7 years and has worked directly with students who experienced foster care for 6 years.

Her spiritual beliefs guide her values. She identifies as a Christian woman, and she uses her beliefs as a baseline. She shared her values through her actions. Oliva displays what Kouzes and Posner (2021) refer to in the eyes of followers as creditable behaviors. Kouzes and Posner

(2021) noted, "When it comes to deciding whether a leader is believable, people listen to the words, then they watch the action" (p. 43). Although Olivia mentioned that she does not impose her values, views, opinions, or beliefs on others, she still manages to use her values to support her work ethic, being respectful of others, listening to others, and not placing judgment on others. According to Olivia, for the most part, her values align with the campus values. Specifically, both she and campus educators are dedicated to serving students.

Today, Olivia has support (i.e., a team of individuals to help her with the program) in developing the campus-based program for students who experienced foster care. In the past, she did not have support with the program. She was the only individual who worked on behalf of the program, and she was overwhelmed with her duties as a coordinator, counselor, and professor. After support was provided, she could balance her duties and eliminate some stressors.

When asked about the difficulties she encountered as a nonformal leader, she mentioned challenges related to the formal leadership team. Olivia, a nonformal leader, felt disconnected from her administrators and formal leaders because they were unavailable. Thus, she felt that formal leadership was not fully invested.

Despite feeling disconnected, she acknowledged the autonomy given to her by administrators to develop the program. When asked about her vision for the program, Olivia stated that she is focused on retention. She also envisioned the program shifting to focus on why students who experienced foster care are not self-identifying. She communicated this to her team through weekly team meetings.

Olivia's dedication to students who experienced foster care was evident when she spoke about her advocacy. Rainwater College has two programs for students who experienced foster care, NextUp, and Guardian Scholars. Both programs are necessary due to NextUp's age

limitations. Rainwater College's Guardian Scholars program is funded by a grant and is coordinated by an adjunct counselor. Olivia worked collaboratively with the counselor to ensure all students who experience foster care are served regardless of their age. Due to new changes in the NextUp Program (Cal. S.B. 512, 2022), the number of students who qualify for NextUp increased while the Guardian Scholars' program numbers decreased. As such, the grant funders decided to reduce the number of grants awarded. Olivia met with the Guardian Scholar's counselor and her dean to strategize about how to maintain their funding despite the change to the law, which allowed more foster youth to qualify for NextUp. Olivia worked with the Guardian Scholars counselors to remove the program's age limit from 32 to no age limit if the student was enrolled in at least three classes.

Olivia's willingness to address barriers in the Guardian Scholars program was an example of a nonformal leader who sought to eliminate the barriers preventing students from accessing an equity-minded program. She understands the population and its strengths and challenges, which provided her with insight that other nonformal leaders may not have. This line of equity-minded thinking allowed her current counselor intern to qualify for the Guardian Scholars program and transfer to a 4-year college. Now, the student works in the program she once participated in as a student.

After the interview, Olivia sent the researcher a success guide for foster youth that she and the guardian Scholar Counselor created together. The guide begins with a welcome message that invites the student to their NextUp and Guardian Scholars program. It then provides information about the college and program eligibility as well as program specifics and services and contact information with a QR code. Along with student testimonials and a list of on- and off-campus resources, the guide provides an overview of the campus-based programs for

students who experienced foster care. The two main themes from Oliva's interview were (a)

healthy, productive, equity practices and (b) campus perceptions.

Healthy Productive Equity Practices

> We're trying to build that rapport with them where they feel comfortable.

> I just see the best in all of our students, regardless of behaviors, and just being willing to look past a lot of the initial behaviors, because some of the most challenging students that I've gotten the pleasure to work with end up doing absolutely incredible things. That doesn't surprise me, but it's definitely a game of patience, because it takes what it takes, and you continue to show up and not let biases come up.

Campus Perceptions

> …for the most part, our campus is pretty good at allowing us to do what we want to make the program better. I am grateful for that.

> I like to be respectful of my administrators because, at the end of the day, they're the ones that are making the decisions. I respect their position.

Luisa

Luisa is a lively individual who loves to work with college students. She worked in

community colleges for 7 years. She worked at Sacred Valley College and Harris College, which

were the two colleges she spoke candidly about during her interview. She currently works in the

EOPS office at Middleton College, where she serves marginalized populations. She started working

with students who had experienced foster care at a 4-year institution. From the beginning of her

career, she took on a leadership role serving as the person who did case management, planned

field trips, and organized all events and activities. She valued hard work and believed knowledge

of policies and laws was how a person can advocate for students who experienced foster care.

She teaches students how to advocate for themselves. She accomplished this by maximizing her

nonformal leader positions. She was involved with the local, regional, and state governance.

Because of her involvement, she leads in whatever capacity she serves.

Luisa began her journey as an undocumented person in the United States. Her dream job was to work at Sacred Valley College because when she was undocumented, the school allowed her to take classes. She was grateful for their support because it allowed her to pursue a bachelor's and a master's degree. She wanted to work at the college because of her student experiences on campus. However, her professional experiences were the opposite of her student experiences. Luisa described her personal campus experiences as "very egotistical to people, it's not student-centered, it's people-centered who want to move up or power." For this reason, along with many other inequitable practices, she decided to leave the college within 6 months of working there.

Despite the lack of equity, Luisa's ability to navigate through systems benefitted students. Her experiences were of great interest due to her role as an active classified professional. Luisa encountered many inequitable practices at the two colleges she discussed. However, she managed to overcome the challenges by becoming an active classified professional and using her relationships to benefit the program. She was one of two participants who spoke about previous colleges.

Luisa thrives when she has the latitude to participate in shared governance. Having more autonomy is how she worked best as a nonformal leader. When her autonomy and values were not aligned with a campus, she sought opportunities to grow and support students in an equitable manner. For example, she spoke very highly of the practices at Harris College, a college and program that is predominantly online. She stated, "At Harris College, it was a major shift. So, I think by the end, before I left, the whole EOPS team was championed for foster youth programs."

Luisa learned the importance of an equity-minded college at Sacred Valley College.

However, the campus administrators would not allow her to make the necessary changes to develop an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care. Harris College was where she developed an equity-minded program through the willingness of the campus administrators to shift the campus culture. Specifically, she realized the importance of using data to measure program outcomes. Luisa focused her efforts on presenting data to campus administrators because she was a member of the equity committee and knew the importance of using data to shift the campus culture.

Luisa continues her life purpose of supporting students who experienced foster care through her new role at Middleton College. Middleton College has a program specifically for students who experienced foster care; however, Luisa works with foster students through the EOPS program. She loved the Middleton College campus because she had the opportunity to participate in shared governance and because campus administrators focus on equity and improvements. Luisa stated, "And then at Middleton College, the incredible work ethic and commitment to student support, student services. I've never worked at a place like this."

Despite feeling unsettled about working in a college with inequitable practices, when she was program coordinator, she developed a program that uses equitable practices. Her transition to Harris College allowed her to grow and understand shared governance; however, Middleton College was where she reported operating at her best as a nonformal leader. Luisa's two most prevalent themes were (a) advocacy and (b) campus perceptions.

Advocacy

> And there's a lot of advocacy that you have to do daily. If you go a day without advocating for a student, I don't know if you're working for a program like this or working at Middleton College.

> I asked or encouraged one of our students to join the president's committee for basic needs. And so just being involved, and that's how I build advocacy because

you must build advocacy. And a lot of our students are already advocates. They just must learn the landscape. So, I help the landscape we built or help them get into the landscape in my capacity.

Campus Perceptions

Harris College is learning as an institution, as a campus to support. They have the tools. Sacred Valley College, no, that's just the word. No. They need to grow up.

And then, at Sacred Valley College, the challenges were the people I worked for. They all hated each other. And I was caught in the middle, and I had to ... I'm very serious about hated, it's not even funny. So, my boss didn't like the equity person, and the equity person didn't know why. My boss only talked to one vice president and every other vice president, she didn't. And it made it difficult. And I had these discussions with her. And she would tell me that I can't talk to any of them, I must go through her. So, it was these egos that got in the way of serving students and that's why I couldn't stay there.

Leanne

Leanne was a participant who has experienced foster care and has participated in a campus-based program at a 4-year college. She considered herself a leader and used her leadership values to advocate for students who experienced foster care. Her younger brother, who was in foster care for over a decade, benefited from her advocacy skills when she supported him with his transition into a campus-based program for students who experienced foster care.

She began her career as a foster youth liaison at Greendale College. Leanne immediately experienced a change in her Guardian Scholars responsibilities after her supervisor role was split between the program and EOPS. The program was housed in EOPS, but Leanne expressed how EOPS took precedence over Guardian Scholars because of the small population Guardian Scholars served.

Leanne defined a leader as a person who represents the population being served. Her definition of a leader was why she began her career 4 years ago as a representative of the

Guardian Scholars program. Her 4 years of work experience and her personal experiences in foster care guided her as a nonformal leader. She valued students and their ability to be seen, heard, and accurately represented on campus.

The experiences she shared throughout the interview were related to Greendale College. Currently, she serves as a student specialist at Middleton College in their Guardian Scholars program. Her perceptions of Greendale College and Middleton College were vastly different. About Middleton College, she noted, "Middleton, who has a really great foster youth program, a center space, full staff, you could tell, and I could feel it, that they do value their foster youth." She described her experience at Greendale College, saying, "My perception is that they're great at making it seem that they provide the utmost support and are very responsive to students, but experiencing it firsthand, it's quite the contrary." Her perceptions and experiences were impacted by the inability of college administrators to support foster youth. Leanne experienced this firsthand when the college administrators, according to Leanne, attempted to avoid paying her benefits by having her work for most of one semester and then only work half of the following semester. This inconsistency prevented her from serving students properly, and she had to use unpaid personal time to support students. After 3 years, she decided to seek employment at a college that would value her innovative ideas and provide her with a steady work schedule. Leanne's two prevalent themes were (a) campus perceptions and (b) barriers to cultural proficiency.

Campus Perceptions

> But I will say I feel like Middleton College is always willing to try something new and to try to see how we can reach as many people as possible. I mean my supervisor, I mean, my director, he's always telling me, 'Let's see, how can we go beyond Middleton College, how can we support as many fosters as possible?' That's the type of leadership that I admire.

I'm not doing this for power or acknowledgment, I knew I always did it for the students, but I also knew where I was limited within Greendale College. But I'm really excited with my new college that I work for. There's a lot of opportunity to share with outreach support services. We're looking to go to high schools, we're looking to talk to more community-based organizations and group homes and showcase what our program has to offer.

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

And our foster youth program at Greendale College don't have a center space, it's really difficult to represent the program, not me per se. But I feel like for our students to feel that they're accurately represented by the campus because when I was there, while we were housed with other programs such as EOPS CalWORKs, CARE one huge indicator was all of the other programs were on the front door except for Guardian Scholars. And I raised a red flag on that, including my supervisor, who knew very well that was wrong. And it may have taken maybe a year and a half to 2 years that they finally added our name because we pushed for that.

EOPS took more precedence over Guardian Scholars, which was unfortunate because in my views it's like, no matter how small our population is, we still have to make them feel as important as the EOPS students. However, due to the large number, everything's like a numbers game. EOPS just was 'more important' from my experience with them. So, my supervisor predominantly focused on that program.

In conclusion, the study participants had distinct experiences at their respective campuses. A phenomenological approach using semistructured interviews captured their experiences. The researcher highlighted each individual and their most common themes. Table 2 shows how participants varied in age, years of experience, campus, and personal experiences. The range of experiences provided rich data to support significant findings. The study size was small, as with most qualitative research, to preserve the individuality of each analysis (Maxwell, 2012). Finally, findings from participant interviews yielded unanticipated phenomena and generated subfindings.

Significant Findings

Participants' experiences provided rich insight into nonformal leaders who are charged

with developing an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care. Although each interview yielded unique experiences and perceptions, data from the interviews revealed four major findings that influenced the development of an equity-minded program: (a) campus perceptions; (b) healthy, productive, and equitable policies, practices, and behaviors; (c) barriers to cultural proficiency; and (d) advocacy. Other notable findings were feelings of disconnect and lack of support from formal leadership.

Through the lenses of cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership, this study examined the experiences of nonformal leaders in community colleges charged with developing an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care. For this study, cultural proficiency provided an equity lens for the nonformal leader and the campus culture; exemplary leadership served as the lens through which leadership within the campus was examined. The study revealed that nonformal leaders seek exemplary leadership qualities in their formal leadership as opposed to themselves. This is due, in part, to their limited power as nonformal leaders.

Finding # 1: Campus Perceptions

Self-awareness of one's personal values is one way a leader can discover their authentic voice. Self-awareness can also help someone decide if an organization's values align with their personal values. When a leader's personal values align with an organization's values, the person is more likely to remain in the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). This was the case, for example, with Beatrice. Despite her dissatisfaction with her nontenure position, her campus perceptions tended to be more positive as compared to other participants. The values listed on the campus website were not always the values nonformal leaders witnessed in their day-to-day interactions with the campus culture. Instead, their interactions with the campus culture created negative campus perceptions. Apart from Beatrice, nonformal leaders' campus perceptions

82

tended to be more negative and rooted in the inequitable practices they witnessed on campus and

within the program. About her perceptions of the two campuses she previously worked at, she

said,

> So unfortunately, I'm going to be saying it, sometimes, they don't want to help our
> foster youth at the colleges, they don't. It's not enough of them. How are we going
> to support a person? So, they appoint somebody who knows nothing about them
> or doesn't go to the trauma-informed training or healing center training because
> there's not enough to warrant a person.

Nikole's perceptions were similar to Luisa's. Nikole stated:

> Campus, I feel like they [administrators] do not support me as an individual. I feel
> that they do not support my foster youth because of the simple fact that we do not
> have necessarily a program for them, and that is what my hopes and my goals are
> if I'm not able to get them a program, I want to reduce that stigma again on being
> able to have them be okay with their identity.

The researcher was interested in exploring campus perceptions to identify how nonformal

leaders' perceptions influenced their ability to develop an equity-minded campus-based program.

For this reason, understanding nonformal leaders' perceptions (i.e., ways of thinking) and beliefs

(i.e., ideas that inform our perceptions) was essential. The research findings indicated that

nonformal leaders' campus perceptions influenced the program and development. For example,

Josie mentioned, "And in terms of the foster youth program, I think nobody's pushing for it to get

expanded, pushing for funding. And I think the foundation is a band-aid to be able to meet the

needs now." She later stated, "But I feel like I would love to see, I feel more supportive would be

hiring somebody full-time or paying overload would be more supportive. So, it's like they're

supportive if it doesn't impact the budget, kind of." In contrast, Beatrice's perception of her

campus was positive, except for her program not securing a tenure track position. Table 6

presents significant codes from the data analysis. Table 6 also shows that the most significant

themes for Beatrice were healthy, productive, equitable policies, practices, and behaviors.

Table 6

Significant Codes

Participant	BCP	LSFL	CP	D	HPEPPB	A	PV
Beatrice	1	0	12	1	22	11	11
Sophia	19	19	9	11	15	19	13
Paul	8	1	11	4	4	11	7
Olivia	2	4	9	2	14	5	5
Nikole	19	5	18	4	6	3	4
Luisa	12	12	23	4	21	23	17
Leanne	9	8	17	2	3	4	3
Josie	11	3	18	4	10	5	6
David	12	2	22	3	11	8	11
Alex	17	8	16	8	12	9	7
Total	110	62	155	43	118	98	84

Note. BCP = barrier to cultural proficiency; LSFL = lack of support from formal leadership; CP = campus perceptions; D = disconnected; HPEPPB = healthy, productive, and equitable policies, practices, and behaviors; A = advocacy; PV = personal values.

In connection with her more positive campus perceptions, in this specific study, campus perceptions influenced campus-based programs for students who experienced foster care. In addition, personal values worked in conjunction with campus perceptions to influence a nonformal leader's ability to advocate for their program. Luisa is an example of this—she had high advocacy and campus perceptions, but her campus perceptions were based on three different campuses. Working at other campuses besides Sacred Valley College, her advocacy was strong and present throughout the campus. At Sacred Valley College, her personal values did not align with the campus, and her campus perceptions were unfavorable; thus, she did not participate in advocacy. In contrast, once she transitioned to a campus that aligned with her values, her campus perceptions were more positive. She stated, "Middleton College, the exit plan is it didn't need an exit plan." When at Sacred Valley College, where Luisa's personal values did not align with the campus culture and her campus perceptions were not as positive, her response

was, "No. I had an exit plan 6 months in."

A subfinding of Finding #1 was being disconnected. Although the finding of being disconnected was coded under the major theme of campus perceptions, and it was not a significant finding based on the number of times it was coded, it became significant because it was reported by all participants. Disconnection was coded under the description of "the nonformal leader feels disconnected from the campus in terms of their personal values, culture, and believes the campus does not support their program." The study revealed that participants felt disconnected from themselves and the campus. This type of disconnect is not a principle associated with cultural proficiency or exemplary leadership. Cultural proficiency affirms the importance of including cultures (Welborn et al., 2022), and exemplary leadership expresses that a person will remain at an organization or company when their values align. Disconnection caused one participant, Sophia, to question her leadership and ability to develop a program for students who experienced foster care. Sophia stated,

> Me and Jane sometimes go back and forth like, Man, this program should probably be stronger if maybe it will be other people in here. But then we go back and see the retention. And they're like, We're not bad. We're working. And the retention is there, even if just both of us.

Cultural proficiency accounts for policies and practices in an organization or an individual's values and behaviors that enable the person or institution to engage effectively with people and groups who are different from them. When institutions cannot create communities with elements of cultural proficiency, it is referred to as barriers (Lindsey et al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). Based on the interviews, nonformal leaders' encounters with barriers did not seem to impact their willingness to create a sense of belonging for students in their program.

Finding # 2: Healthy, Productive, and Equitable Policies, Practices, and Behaviors

There are nine guiding principles of cultural proficiency: (a) culture is a predominant

85

force in society, (b) people are served in various ways by the dominant culture, (c) people have individual and group identities, (d) diversity with cultures is different and important, (e) each cultural group has unique needs, (f) the best of both worlds improves the capacity of all, (g) family is the primary system of support for children in education, (h) acknowledging marginalized populations creates distinct issues that systems must be equipped to respond to, and (i) cross-cultural interactions have dynamics that must be acknowledged, adapted and accepted (Welborn et al., 2022). These principles inform healthy practices for an organization to achieve cultural proficiency. Healthy practices can then lead to the five essential elements of cultural competence: (a) valuing diversity, (b) conducting self-assessment, (c) managing the dynamics of difference, (d) acquiring and institutionalizing cultural knowledge, and (e) adapting to the diversity and cultural contexts of the communities they serve. These healthy practices are the standard for personal and professional values and behaviors and organizational policies and practices (Lindsey et al., 2018).

In its simplest terms, equity means fairness, impartiality, and justice. In educational settings, equity is an equal opportunity for all students to participate fully in all educational and nonacademic opportunities. Hence, a more preferred definition of educational equity refers to engaging in nondiscriminatory practices and replacing them with inclusive practices that create learning environments where student diversity is valued, and achievement gaps are eliminated through classroom instruction (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016).

Nonformal leaders experienced barriers to cultural proficiency and a lack of support from formal leadership. As such, their campus-based programs tended to have qualities of a program in progress moving toward equity. For example, Olivia, a nonformal leader at Rainwater

College, had two programs for students who experienced foster care. The first program was NextUp, which has age restrictions. The second program was Guardian Scholars. Because Guardian Scholars does not have an age restriction, it provides a pathway to be in a campus based program for students who experienced foster care but did not qualify for NextUp. Despite different barriers, nonformal leaders incorporated equity-minded practices into the program. To illustrate, Paul fostered a sense of belonging with his campus-based program. He found it more beneficial for students when they supported each other in weekly group meetings. Students could freely express themselves and hold each other accountable. This encouraged students to formalize their group into a campus club. Paul described the space as "This is a safe place for them to be able to experiment and feel uncomfortable and to feel embarrassed and all that stuff and come back next week and realize that they're loved." Paul did not seem to realize that he was developing an equity-minded program based on his internal definition of an equity-minded program. Nevertheless, his program had characteristics of an equity-minded program, which could be attributed to Paul's personal values. Paul valued inclusivity and allowed students to express their needs. This is aligned with the guiding principles from the equity-rooted cultural proficiency framework.

In conclusion, programs described by study participants possessed qualities of an equity-minded program that was influenced by their interpretation of equity. The participant data helped the researcher understand how the nonformal leaders influenced their campus-based program to develop healthy, productive, and equitable policies, practices, and behaviors despite the challenges they encountered as nonformal leaders. This finding led the researcher to want to better understand why it was that the more nonformal leaders encountered barriers, the more they increased their program's equity practices and advocacy.

Finding # 3: Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Consistent with barriers to cultural proficiency, nonformal leaders encountered challenges when developing an equity-minded program in an institution where the campus administrators were not supportive of forward-minded equity practices. Findings from this study indicated that barriers to achieving cultural proficiency included organizational change, deficit language, harmful practices, job titles, job security, lack of staffing, resistance to change, and systemic oppression. These barriers were reflected in unhealthy and unproductive behaviors and inequitable policies and practices in both the professional and personal lives of the nonformal leaders and the campus culture (Welborn et al., 2022). These barriers were reflected in policies and practices discussed during participant interviews. Barriers such as funding, job titles, program structure and lack of support from formal leadership was more prominent in Sophia, Nikole, and Alex's interviews. Sophia expressed how her formal leader, a dean, stated, "Oh, my God. I have the feeling of leaving so many times because it's so much. I hate to hear that they have to fight for changes." Sophia was referring to campus administrators' resistance to change. Sophia remains on campus because of her personal values. Her personal values drive her to continue to support students who experienced foster care. Sophia stated that if it had not been for her personal values, she would have left the campus.

It appeared that campus administrators resisted cultivating a new culture and instead embraced deficit language such as, "Well, you're not considered a program." Such deficit language caused three participants to seek employment at other campuses where equity and students who experienced foster care were a priority. Luisa changed employers twice before she found a college where educators shared similar values and embraced practices and policies that she considered equity-focused. Another participant, Leanne, also transitioned to another college.

Although Beatrice did not change her institution, she changed the population of students with whom she worked. She felt that her job title (i.e., nontenure track counselor coordinator for foster youth) devalued her work. Obtaining a tenure track position represented stability. For Beatrice, although her values aligned with the campus, they did not necessarily fit with formal leadership's unwillingness to classify the position as tenure track. In the end, the program was unable to retain one of its most equity-minded individuals who worked to develop an equity-minded program for over a decade. These types of inequitable practices influenced the development of a campus-based program for students who experienced foster care.

A subfinding of Finding #3 was the lack of formal leadership support. This finding fell under the overarching theme of barriers to cultural proficiency. Although lack of formal leadership was less common in participant interviews as compared to other findings, it did influence the development of an equity-minded campus-based program. As addressed in the discussion of barriers to cultural proficiency, participants mentioned hierarchical systems within community colleges and noted that long-standing systems of formal leadership had inequitable practices. Formal leaders are often referred to as gatekeepers. A gatekeeper's primary job is to ensure that the department and program(s) align with the goals and objectives of the college. Participants reported that gatekeepers caused nonformal leaders to feel unsupported and underrepresented within the college system. Referring to a campus-based program in comparison to other campus programs for marginalized populations, Sophia said, "We feel like a foster child, we always call each other. We feel in the department, even at the meetings, they always ask for everyone else and at the end, Guardian Scholars." Alex expressed similar feelings when he said, "But we're like the redheaded stepchild who's on the outskirts of it, unfortunately."

Typically, students who experienced foster care enter community college with limited

resources and support (Jackson et al., 2020). According to participants, their ability to fulfill the needs of students who experienced foster care was impacted by the lack of support from formal leadership. The lack of formal leadership support was also reflected in the amount of funding given to the program. Unless the college had a NextUp program, the campus-based program was usually underfunded and understaffed. Nonformal leaders in the study sought financial support from formal leadership (i.e., through deans and program directors), but their requests would often go unmet. Funding for the program was also provided through grants from community agencies. For example, Nikole sought funding for an opportunity to acknowledge the students who had experienced foster care and who were graduating. However, her program operated without a budget. Instead, the program had to request funding through formal leadership, who decided if the funding request was approved through an equity budget. Going through formal leadership limits program staff from developing or creating equitable practices to influence the program.

Elaborating further, Josie works as a full-time EOPS counselor and does not have an overload. Overload refers to the extra hours that counselors are paid to work to complete additional work-related tasks that they cannot complete during their allotted time. At a conference, Josie learned that leaders at other colleges let counselors request overload to develop a program. This offer was not extended to Josie by forma leadership. Support from formal leadership could come from offering overload to support efforts to develop an equitable foster youth program. Similarly, Alex also reported lacking support from formal leadership. He requested more staff to support the over 130 students in his program. His program has more than $1 million in funding and has two full-time staff members. Alex and his director both work at the program full-time, with his director serving as a formal leader. Alex expressed his frustration

when he stated,

> I have to meet with all 130 plus students on top of my committee meetings, on top of my projects, on top of my other obligations that I have to do. Staffing there has been an issue, and I brought that up to my director, but she's having a hard time acknowledging that.

Findings from this study suggested a need for formal leadership to provide support through equity and inclusion practices. When the cultural proficiency principles of equity and inclusion are absent, the absence influences an organization's policies, practices, and programs, which, in turn, influence the values and behaviors of the individuals within the organization. Failure to engage in these practices further inhibits the person or institution to engage effectively with people and groups who are different from them (Lindsey et al., 2018). Nonformal leaders' personal values and campus perceptions influenced their ability to develop an equitable program due to their limited decision making power. Also, personal values appeared to be why many remained in their role despite the challenges of program development.

Study participants tended to seek exemplary leadership principles from their formal leaders. Although participants may possess exemplary leadership principles, their influence within the community college hierarchy was limited (McNair, 2009). As such, they tended to expect their formal leaders to display exemplary leadership principles. If nonformal leaders and formal leaders embody principles from the exemplary leadership framework, it will allow the campus educators to provide equitable resources, services, and programs.

Finding # 4: Advocacy

Advocacy was another theme that emerged from this research. Advocacy fell under the overarching umbrella of program influence, and it was coded as something that "argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of students who experienced foster care and the foster youth campus-based program." Of all the participants, Luisa's interview had the most

codes for advocacy as her personal values were focused more on who is considered an advocate. She mentioned advocacy frequently throughout her interview. She learned early on in her role that using data was the best method to advocate for foster youth. She emphasized how it was essential for students to learn how to become their own advocates, "So to me, students must be their own advocates as well and learn how to speak the lingo. So, one of our students always … at every college, I always try to get the students on leadership committees."

Through Luisa, it became evident that program visibility increases when a nonformal leader's personal values are more directed toward advocating for the population on campus. Of note, Luisa was the only participant who, regardless of formal leadership, did not allow her position as a nonformal leader to prevent her from creating changes within the campus and the foster youth programs on each campus. To that end, when met with resistance on campus and after recognizing that the campus culture would not change regardless of her efforts, she decided to transition to another campus that was aligned with her personal values. She was the only participant who mentioned being on a campus-wide committee. She served on the financial aid committee, which directly impacted foster youth. The financial aid committee was crucial for student success in the campus-based program because students who experience foster care generally receive more financial aid due to their lower-income status. They are also more likely to have their financial aid discontinued because of incomplete course requirements (Davis, 2006).

Nonformal leaders had a major influence on the campus-based support program for students who experienced foster care. Luisa demonstrated this through her unwavering commitment to sitting on the campus and state-wide committees that directly impact students who have experienced foster care. When nonformal leaders are not involved with the formal

leadership committees that directly impact foster youth, their ability to advocate is limited. However, as mentioned by Sophia, nonformal leaders may be aware of the significance of being involved with campus committees (e.g., financial aid and admissions) or serving as department chair, but their job titles and role expectations limit their time and capacity.

Yet, other tactics besides being a committee member, such as building strong relationships with campus members, could be employed. For example, David built reciprocal relationships with campus members to advocate for students who experienced foster care. He stated:

> But I have the relationship with people on campus that they know if I'm asking for a favor because I don't do it lightly … And I don't know how many students we've been able to keep over the years because of that, but I don't take it lightly.

The ability to create alliances on campus is an informal way to advocate for students who are participants of the campus-based program and experienced foster care. This method could be most beneficial for nonformal leaders with limited time to serve on formal campus committees. Another method some participants used to bring awareness to injustices in their program encounters was advocacy with formal leadership. Sophia often advocated on behalf of her students to her dean. Her relentless advocacy efforts led to her program receiving emergency funds. Moreover, her advocacy efforts rippled to her dean, who began advocating for gift cards for students who experienced foster care. Though not enough to sustain the program, eventually, the program began to receive more funds to support its student populations. Similarly, Beatrice advocated for her students and program by connecting to faculty members through professional development presentations. Beatrice stated that the presentations were an opportunity for campus community members to engage with staff, students, and instructional improvement activities. Thus, advocacy influenced the program and how well program staff could serve their student

population. Advocacy is a skill nonformal leaders will need if they desire to improve educational

outcomes for students who have experienced foster care.

Finding # 5: Personal Values

A value is an enduring belief (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Scholars routinely refer to values

as a personal bottom line. Personal values influence every aspect of a person's life, including

personal and organizational goals, responses to others, and moral judgments. When people are

clear about their values, it is easier to talk about them, and their values set standards and

expectations. In parallel, people must be clear on their personal values if they aspire to create a

vision for themselves or a group of followers. Vision is the long-term value that one aspires to

attain (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The more precise people are with their personal values, the

more likely they are to have and share a clear vision with their constituents.

In this study, personal values came up in several interviews. Luisa's most prominent

values were hard work and competence. She spoke about the importance of her values:

> My value is on hard work and following through, and learning what I'm doing …
> I can't be an advocate for students if I don't know the laws if I don't know the
> policies, and if I don't know the resources.

To summarize Luisa's statement, if nonformal leaders understand their personal values, they are

more likely able to complete job duties. Notwithstanding hardship, Luisa left her former

campuses when her personal values did not align. Still, she ensured the success of the program

before her departure. This could be due to her personal values of hard work and competency.

When Luisa left her two previous colleges, she trained each person, one of whom was a formal

leader, to sustain the program after her departure. She continued to train after her last day at the

campus. Thus, it was not unexpected that Luisa had the most advocacy and personal values

codes compared to other participants. Luisa was clear on her values and how her values guided

her life and everyday work. This thought pattern influenced how she operated as a nonformal leader.

The importance of knowing and understanding one's personal values emerged as a major finding. For example, Leanne too was precise about her personal values. When asked about her personal values, she stated, "My personal value is making sure that students feel seen and heard and that they are accurately represented." She was the only participant who connected her personal values to her job as opposed to connecting her personal values to her everyday values. Notably, she is a professional who experienced foster care, so she has a connection to the population, which may explain why her personal values are tied to her job. To her, it is more than a job. It is a life mission, which could be viewed as her personal values. At the same time, she has worked in her current job for less than 1 year and may still be discovering her personal values both as a person and as a professional. This could be why she had the fewest coded personal values. Similarly, David is also a professional who experienced foster care. He seemed clear about his personal values; however, he had over 5 years of experience working in community colleges. He valued others' potential, which is why he worked hard to advocate for students in his program. His personal values were clear, and he developed program brochures and manuals. Conversely, David mentioned that his campus does not have a succession plan, meaning a plan for key positions in the event that the person leaves. David stated a succession plan is not in place due to being "spread thin" with limited staff members in the EOPS office who could support his efforts to support students who experienced foster care.

Most participants had personal values that related more to students than their everyday life. Sophia, Beatrice, and Olivia were exceptions. They connected their personal values to their job while acknowledging that their personal values are just that—personal values. They did not

95

impose their beliefs on their students or others. Based on Sophia, Beatrice, and Olivia's interviews, it became evident that other participants' personal values did not extend beyond student-related values. Perhaps other nonformal leaders believed in something greater than themselves or their jobs. They also may not have mentioned their personal values or beliefs outside of their job because their personal values were rooted in their standards for students.

As noted, personal values may guide a person's moral compass. Personal values can also be thought of as self-awareness. Self-awareness allows leaders to reflect on the inner voice that encourages them to pay special attention to certain things. It provides leaders with insight into their strengths and areas for improvement. Posner and Kouzes's (1988) research supported the notion of how being clear about personal values makes a significant difference in the workplace. With Alex being the only exception, it appeared that the clearer nonformal leaders were with their personal values, the more likely they were to have influenced their program.

Chapter Summary

In summary, leaders need to develop visions that include the ability to turn challenges into opportunities (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). This includes reimagining a hierarchical system of leadership and replacing it with a leadership system based on equity and inclusion. Community college researchers have called for a new model of leadership (Davis et al., 2015; Martin, 2021; Wyner, 2019) as the current system marginalizes the role of nonformal leaders and disrupts their equity efforts.

As demonstrated throughout this study, nonformal leaders tend to remain in their roles due primarily to their personal values. Equally important, their personal values influenced the development of an equity-minded program and their willingness to provide services despite the challenges of being a nonformal leader. Although for some participants, their personal values

may not have aligned with their campus' values, for participants whose values did align with the campus, they either remained at the campus or continued working with the population. Thus, their personal values are why the nonformal leader continued to work with students who have experienced foster care. Although passion is a crucial component of working with foster youth, as mentioned by Luisa, having a strong passion and caring for students was not enough. Data were necessary when developing an equity-minded program. Further suggestions of how data can be used are presented in Chapter 5. This phenomenon indicated how nonformal leaders influenced the development of an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care through identified components of an equity-minded program. When thinking of nonformal leaders and their connection to exemplary leadership framework, the researcher was drawn toward the five guiding principles. One of which is to inspire a shared vision. Kouzes and Posner (2017) argue that leaders cannot command commitment, they must inspire it. Keeping this in mind, nonformal leaders have limited authority due to their role. Thus, students depend on a nonformal leader's guidance. Using this framework, nonformal leaders can continue to enhance their personal values, vocalize their program vision and advocate with students who experienced foster care to formal leadership. Similarly, cultural proficiency provided insight into the characteristics of an equity-minded leader. Table 7 displays identified characteristics of an equity-mind program and characteristics of equity-minded nonformal leaders. As previously mentioned, equity exists within the program because equity tended to exist within the person. There must be a pivotal shift in the campus's culture if equity is to be a norm amongst the campus.

Table 7

Qualities of a Nonformal Leader and Programs

Qualities of Non-Formal Leaders	Examples
Firm Personal Values	"My value is on hard work and following through, and learning what I'm doing … I can't be an advocate for students if I don't know the laws if I don't know the policies, and if I don't know the resources."
Robust Advocacy Skills	"From a certain point of view, some of the advocacy is helping students to advocate for themselves, but helping students also to see they have those strengths that they don't recognize."

Qualities of an Equity-Minded Program	Examples
Sense of Belonging	"I think having that space for them is huge because they don't tend to have that at home, in the classroom, or among their peers."
Program Inclusivity	"Before it was at age 32 for Guardian Scholars, you no longer qualify. But now we removed that age limit. As long as you are in foster care, you are eligible for Guardian Scholars."
Trust/Autonomy	"I think in order to have trust, to express, to become a leader and not be a boss, as I mentioned, a lot of administrators take ownership when there are positives on programs, but when there's a negative output"

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

In this final chapter, the researcher presents an overview of the statement of the problem, a review of the theoretical frameworks, the research question, and the study's methodology. Findings from the study are reviewed in conjunction with an overview of the literature. Interpretations of findings are how the researcher understands the final results of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of findings and themes, research interpretations, implications for research, recommendations, future research considerations, and a conclusion.

Overview of the Statement of the Problem and Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine nonformal leaders' personal values, perceptions of campus culture, and how those perceptions of campus culture either enhance or interfere with developing an equity-minded campus-based program for students who experienced foster care. Researchers in this area tend to highlight the adversity of foster youth in higher education. In contrast, few researchers have focused on nonformal leaders in the community college setting (Barth, 1990; Count, 2001; Courtney et al., 2001; Festinger, 1983; Piliavin et al., 1993). Nonformal leaders are charged with developing environments that allow students to flourish while also considering the barriers encountered by a student who experienced foster care. The campus experiences and the values of nonformal leaders need to be further examined if campus educators want to understand how nonformal leaders develop equity-minded campus-based programs. Thus, research on nonformal leaders is one way to increase the academic achievement of students who experienced foster care.

Conceptual Framework

The two frameworks of cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership informed this study and provided structure for interpreting study findings (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Lindsey et

99

al., 2018; Welborn et al., 2022). Using two frameworks was necessary to capture characteristics at the individual and college levels. The exemplary leadership framework addresses the individual but does not utilize an equity lens to understand a person or an organization. However, Kouzes and Posner (271) argued there is equity in all forms of leadership within exemplary leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2017), and it provides insight into an individual's values and leadership qualities. In contrast to exemplary leadership, cultural proficiency uses an equity lens and addresses how the individual and the organizational structure influence a person's perception of the organization's culture. Together, the frameworks were used to interpret the data and answer the research question (see Table 8).

Table 8

Connection Between Frameworks

Essential elements of cultural proficiency framework	Five practices of exemplary leadership

Assess culture:
  Identify and learn about the differences among the people in your environment
	Model the way:
	  Identify the values you use to guide choices and decisions.

Value diversity:
  Embrace the differences as contributing to the value of the environment
	Inspire a shared vision:
	  Spend a higher percentage of time focused on the future, imagining the exciting possibilities.

Manage the dynamics of differences:
  Reframe differences so that diversity is not perceived as a problem to be solved.
	Challenge the process:
	  Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and looking outward for innovative ways to improve.

Adapt to diversity:
  Teach and learn about differences and how to respond to them effectively.
	Enable others to act:
	  Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships. Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and competence.

Institutionalize cultural knowledge:
  Change the systems to ensure healthy and effective responses to diversity.
	Encourage the heart:
	  Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individuals. Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

Research Question

Findings from the research question, in what ways, if at all, does a nonformal leader's personal values and perceptions of campus culture influence the development of an equity-minded campus-based program? Informs formal leadership that equity within existing campus-based programs for students who experienced foster care is prevalent due to the personal values of the nonformal leaders. If nonformal leaders with personal values not aligned with equity were to be charged with developing an equity-minded campus-based program for students who experienced foster, the findings conclude, equity would not exist in the program. In order for equity to exist in an equity-minded campus-based program, equity must exist within the campus culture. Cultural proficiency provides guidance on the shifting of organizations' harmful practices (Welborn, 2022). Exemplary leadership provides campuses with an opportunity for nonformal and formal leaders to develop their personal values to align with the organization and if this is not possible, it encourages individuals to seek environments where their personal values do align (Kouzes & Posner, 2017)

Methodology

This study utilized a phenomenological research design to give voice to the participants and their experiences as nonformal leaders in community colleges. The study consisted of 60–90 min, one-on-one, semistructured interviews, and data was interpreted through the dual lens of cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership. Study participants responded to an email inquiry sent to a listserv for nonformal leaders who work with students who experienced foster care in community colleges (see Appendix C). For purposes of accuracy, after the interviews were conducted, each participant was emailed their interview transcript to ensure it represented what the participant shared. Dedoose, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis, was used to code

the data and produce the findings. The first cycle of coding consisted of values coding. Values

coding captured the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives or worldviews (Miles et al.,

2018; Saldana, 2021). After establishing intercoder reliability, codes were placed into 37

categories reflecting themes that helped the researcher to gain a broader perspective of the

phenomenon. Figure 1 shows how each framework was used in the second and final stages of

coding to organize and synthesize the data to further develop themes. Lastly, analytic memos

were conducted to capture possible themes.

Summary of Research Findings and Interpretation

Findings Interpretation: Campus Perceptions

Campus perceptions captured how nonformal leaders' campus perceptions influenced the

development of an equity-minded campus-based program. Campus perceptions tended to reveal

a sense of hopelessness among nonformal leaders regarding their formal leadership and their

campus. All participants but one were dissatisfied with their formal leadership. This

dissatisfaction impacted nonformal leaders' ability to make final decisions on behalf of the

program. In contrast to the other participants, Beatrice did not communicate a sense of

hopelessness or significant dissatisfaction with her campus; instead, she applauded her formal

leadership and spoke highly of her campus and administrators' efforts to create an equitable

program. Beatrice's main challenge was that her position was not tenure track until she recently

transitioned to a tenure track position through a seamless transfer process. Campus

administrators developed a process that encouraged individuals to transfer to other departments if

so desired. However, due to this transfer, she will no longer work on behalf of the foster youth

program on campus. For over 10 years, Beatrice requested that her position working with

students who experienced foster care be tenured. Because her request went unmet, though,

102

Beatrice had to look elsewhere for job security.

Paul's campus perceptions were notable in that they did not reflect a complete sense of hopelessness, but they also did not reflect a sense of hopefulness. He tended to focus on what he could control and spaces for advocacy. Nonetheless, he reported modest campus perceptions based primarily on what he heard from others but did not personally experience. However, besides Beatrice and Paul, participants had strong campus perceptions that generally included thoughts about their formal leadership.

Campus perceptions interfered with the nonformal leaders' ability to influence an equity-minded program. When individuals perceive their formal leadership as credible individuals or teams, they are more likely to feel proud of their organization, have a strong sense of team spirit, see their own personal values as consistent with the organization, feel attached and committed to the organization, and feel a sense of ownership with the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). When asked a question centered around credibility, participants tended to respond with "I think that's the key," "They need to know they can depend on me," and "I think it's very important." The question focused more on the credibility between the student and nonformal leader but can be summarized as a trait most often found in leaders.

Although most of the study participants reported feeling hopelessness regarding their campus perceptions and leadership, it did not prevent them from developing an equity-minded program. Their ability to develop an equity-minded program was impacted by their perceptions. In other words, even though nonformal leaders continued to have ideas about their program, their ideas did not come to fruition due to formal leadership. As previously mentioned, nonformal leaders' authority is limited due to their roles. For example, Nikole had a vision for her campus program, but because of her past interactions with leadership and perceptions of the campus, she

hesitated to present her ideas about developing an equity-minded program. Previously, her ideas were not considered. As a result, she limited her communications and influence on the program because she did not believe that either campus administrators or formal leadership would listen to her ideas. It became more evident when she reported that campus administrators refused to acknowledge the program despite her efforts. Nikole stated:

> They've tried to fight as much as they can with the past deans, with the past vice presidents, with the other presidents, but it all comes down to we don't exist. Nowhere on the website, other than what we have, has anything to do with foster youth. The only reason why there's something for foster youth is that we put it there because we designed it. Nowhere else on the webpage for foster youth, nothing.

In summary, nonformal leaders' campus perceptions were intertwined with a larger system of barriers to cultural proficiency and a lack of support from formal leadership. Yet, nonformal leaders still managed to influence the program with equity-minded policies. The second most relevant finding addressed the policies, practices, and behaviors that influenced the campus-based program.

Findings Interpretation: Healthy, Productive, and Equitable Policies, Practices, and Behaviors

This finding addressed the healthy practices of campus administrators and nonformal leaders that influenced the program. It further addresses the healthy practices of formal leadership and the characteristics of an equity-minded program. Although participants felt a sense of hopelessness, all of them attempted to use their understanding of equity to influence and develop an equity-minded program. Olivia offered two programs to support students who experienced foster care. The first program was NextUp, which has an age limit. The second program was Guardian Scholars, which has fewer barriers. It receives institutional funding as well as funding from a nonprofit community grant for students who did not qualify for NextUp.

The current research study demonstrated that it is rare for colleges (i.e., Rainwater College and Barden College) to offer two programs for the same populations. All the other schools had either a NextUp program or a Guardian Scholars program. Moreover, some schools, such as Mega College and Cyprus College, no longer formally serve students who do not qualify for NextUp. Healthy practices such as offering or a desire to offer two programs became more evident when nonformal leaders expressed their desire to serve students regardless of their age or time in foster care.

Other healthy and equitable practices included enhancing inclusive language on program websites, updating outreach materials, and distancing the program from deceit language (i.e., the language often used to describe students who experienced foster care). Throughout the study, it became evident that most participants had a soft spot, that is, a deep consideration, for students who experienced foster care. Some participants experienced similar life situations to the foster youth, such as being undocumented. These personal interactions shaped and influenced the campus-based program. There tended to be a high correlation between individuals who could directly relate to these students' hardships and their willingness to advocate for them. Although Luisa and Olivia did not experience foster care, they were both previously undocumented and attended community college. When nonformal leaders combined a personal connection with their higher education experience, they tended to advocate for and create equitable programs. This finding is significant because David, Leanne, and Nikole are individuals who experienced foster care and went through a campus-based foster youth program. However, they have less experience working in higher education. With experience and the ability to relate to the population, healthy, productive, and equitable policies, practices, and behaviors were infused into the program. Of note, any equitable changes nonformal leaders made reflected only what

they could implement based on their level of authority. Each participant wanted to influence more practices and changes but felt limited by their roles.

Findings Interpretation: Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

In California, 6,534 foster youth graduated from high school in 2020-2021 (California Department of Education, 2021), when compared to 58,789 children in foster care (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020b; Dworsky & Perez, 2010; McMillen et al., 2003; Webster et al., 2021). It is worthwhile for researchers to capture the experiences and challenges of foster youth to possibly improve their low college admission and graduation rates. Only 3%–11% of foster youth obtain a bachelor's degree (Emerson & Bassett, 2010), as compared to 62% of nonfoster youth (Blome, 1997). Researchers are aware of the academic achievement gap between foster youth and nonfoster youth (Blome, 1997; Jackson et al., 2020; Piel, 2018; Salazar et al., 2016; Watt et al., 2018) and their barriers to success. For this reason, barriers to cultural proficiency were most prevalent in most participants.

Barriers are obstructive conditions created by individuals and organizations. These obstructions may interfere morally and socially with nonformal leaders' ability to develop a program rooted in equitable policies and procedures (Welborn et al., 2022). Many of the barriers that participants reported perpetuated a system in which students who experienced foster care will not be able to thrive if such barriers are not addressed and dismantled.

One barrier to cultural proficiency mentioned by nine of the 10 participants was the lack of staff to support their program. Of the 10 participants, seven of their programs operated without proper staff. Alex had one of the more extensive NextUp programs in California, with 130 students. He was the only full-time counselor and coordinator for the program. As mentioned, foster youth are a unique population, and they require intensive support. John Burton

Advocates for Youth (2023) recommended hiring a minimum of three individuals to develop, support, and sustain a NextUp program. Robust hiring is crucial for the success of an equity-minded program. Although some smaller NextUp programs had at least two full-time staff, Alex had to rely on support from student workers to develop his campus-based program. Alex was distrustful of formal leadership and expressed that he would need formal leadership to "become a leader and not a boss." He emphasized how formal leaders take ownership of the positive outcomes from his program but place blame elsewhere when there are negative outcomes. This type of inequity may continue to perpetuate educational injustices for foster youth, a highly vulnerable population.

Similarly, job titles and positions proved to be a barrier to cultural proficiency. Sophia, Leanne, David, Nikole, and Josie either operated their campus-based program through informal titles or worked outside of their descriptive titles. Sophia was hired part-time to work with Dreamers. On her first day at work, she was informed that she would also work with foster youth and coordinate both programs. After one semester, she was told she had to work full-time for both programs as a counselor. She was also responsible for coordinating both programs, and she expressed concerns about her time restrictions and obligations as a counselor. Both roles limited her ability to coordinate the programs. Her program dean encouraged her to "just pretend" to be the coordinator and act like she always had with both programs. Leanne was forced to take up to 9 weeks off each semester to balance the time she worked. Leanne believed this was due to the college not wanting to pay for health benefits. She expressed how difficult it was to coordinate a program if she had to take up to 9 weeks off in the semester. As a result, she found employment at another college in a similar role where administrators respected her concerns and were willing to support her efforts. Nikole and David were both classified professionals. They were their

program's main contact because they were housed in EOPS, and the program supervisor placed all program responsibilities on Nikole and David. Such rhetoric causes barriers and impedes the nonformal leaders' desire to influence and develop an equity-minded program.

A subfinding of barriers to cultural proficiency was the lack of support from formal leadership and the challenges nonformal leaders encounter from formal leaders. As noted by Sophia, formal leadership openly expressed their unwillingness to have a NextUp program on campus. At a meeting with a colleague, the EOPS director told her, "We do not want NextUp under our umbrella. It's too much work." As mentioned in their positionality statement, the researcher served as an acting EOPS director and attended meetings where similar language was used after California passed Senate Bill 518 (2022), which gave all CCC access to a NextUp program on their campus. Senate Bill 518 (2022) expanded access to NextUp programs and removed barriers to enrollment by expanding participation eligibility (Cal. S.B. 518., 2022). Furthermore, conversations, attitudes, and beliefs about programs that could support students who experienced foster care can be dangerous, particularly if the conversations come from formal leaders. This study highlighted the power imbalances experienced by nonformal leaders. Study participants spoke about their limited authority and ability to make decisions due to the hierarchical systems of community colleges. If formal leadership does not support students who experienced foster care, nonformal leaders may not be able to advocate as strongly. Although advocacy was a theme in this study, lack of advocacy from formal leaders is crucial for developing an equity-minded program.

Barriers to cultural proficiency can come from a lack of trust. Nonformal leaders strongly distrust formal leadership. Nonformal leaders are the individuals who meet, support and learn about students who experienced foster care. Tension between formal and nonformal leader

creates distrust which is a barrier. For example, when Cyprus College administrators refused to let Paul teach a college credit class that is often offered to students who experienced foster care to support them in their first year of college. Instead, he created a support group that was not college-credited and was optional. If such a class was transferable from community college to a four year university, the student could potentially be more willing to enroll and attend. These are barriers that prevented Paul from implementing his vision of an equity-minded program.

Despite her position not being tenured, Beatrice had high levels of support from formal leadership and positive campus perceptions. She had the highest codes for healthy, productive, and equitable policies, practices, and behaviors. Through Beatrice's experience, the researcher assumes that the more positive campus perceptions nonformal leaders have, the greater their healthy, productive, and equitable policies, practices, and behaviors. Nikole and Sophia were coded with high cultural barriers, and both expressed high levels of hopelessness for their campus.

Although EOPS may have been the first program to initiate equity, if formal leaders resist supporting programs such as NextUp, educational retention, completion, and graduation rates for foster youth will remain stagnant and derail their path toward self-sufficiency (Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Hussar et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). Barriers to cultural proficiency highlighted the inequities foster youth encounter while enrolled in programs that are intended to reduce barriers. Until barriers are revealed and openly addressed in programs such as EOPS and within the campus culture, nonformal leaders' influence within the campus-based program for students who experienced foster care will be limited.

Findings Interpretation: Advocacy

This finding addresses how advocacy was a crucial component of an equity-minded

program for students who experienced foster care. Advocacy is grounded in equity. An exemplary leadership framework was used in this study to understand the experiences of nonformal leaders. One of the five practices of exemplary leadership is to challenge the process (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The participants demonstrated their willingness to serve as catalysts for change by challenging conventional processes and convincing others to incorporate new practices to improve program success. State-funded programs such as NextUp would not exist without the support of nonformal leaders such as Sophia, who advocates for a NextUp program on her campus because she understands the benefits and access to resources it provides students. Her battle against her entire formal leadership team was not unique. Luisa and Leanne faced similar battles before transferring to an institution where equity, inclusion, and improvements were not just words or phrases but were backed through action.

California legislators attempted to address the equity gaps for foster youth through Senate Bill 518, which decreased the age foster youth had to be in foster care and provided funding to 116 community colleges (Cal. S.B. 518, 2022). Despite efforts to close equity gaps through funding and resources, nonformal leaders reported a shortage of hiring team members to support the population. Researchers provided evidence that nonformal leaders at one point in time did not understand available resources to foster youth (Macomber, 2009; Tobolowsky et al., 2019). Now that nonformal leaders are aware, formal leaders are unaware or unwilling to understand the state-funded program for students who experienced foster care.

Nonformal leaders are charged with advocating for themselves and their students and teaching students how to advocate for themselves. Advocacy was a principle all participants appeared to value. It was an unspoken value that guided their work on a day-to-day basis. At the same time, nonformal leaders were exhausted from their constant fight for access to resources

that are necessary for students who experienced foster care. Sophia stated that her team felt like the foster youth of all programs on campus, while Alex stated his program felt like the "red-headed stepchild." These feelings of frustration came after years of advocating with little to no results. Consequently, advocacy is a crucial instrument if nonformal leaders desire to influence the development of a campus-based program. Some nonformal leaders, such as Olivia, balance advocacy and placing responsibility on the campus. Such advocacy tactics are ways nonformal leaders use to accomplish their goals of influencing equity-minded programs for students who experienced foster care.

Above all, advocacy was a salient personal value of nonformal leaders in this study. Each participant managed to advocate for their students and programs. Study participants shared that the constant need to advocate exacerbated their feelings of disconnection. The participants communicated their challenges with navigating the campus culture due to their inability to understand the foster youth population. Study participants conducted professional development workshops on campus and found that the workshops benefitted faculty members. However, some stated that their campus administrators have a long way to go in terms of understanding the challenges students who experience foster care encounter in and outside of the classroom.

Findings Interpretation: Personal Values

With regards to the research question, findings from this study indicated that equity existed within each of the participants' campus-based programs because of the nonformal leader's personal values. The nonformal leaders encouraged equity and inclusiveness. Their personal values, and the core of who they were as individuals, were equity-focused. This became more evident when all participants were asked what equity meant to them. Less than half were able to understand the definition of equity, but their actions and program development revealed

111

their personal interpretation of equity, regardless of if they were familiar with the actual definition. Nonformal leaders were guided by their personal values despite most of the foster youth not being at grade level when entering college (Scherr, 2007). Instead, they would provide as many services as possible.

The research study was able to identify the equity that existed within each of the participants' campus-based programs because of the nonformal leader's personal values. This conclusion was based on the lack of support for nonformal leaders from formal leadership in conjunction with their unfavorable perceptions of the campus. Despite their perceptions, their personal values guided how they developed an equity-minded program.

For this reason, their personal values seem to be the main reason why equity existed in the program. The findings revealed that nonformal leaders' personal values are why the 10 campus-based programs could sustain and serve students who experienced foster care. Sophia, Olivia, and Beatrice spoke about their faith in God as a personal value. All three participants also communicate that they do not impose their personal values on others but instead use them to guide their daily lives. Sophia and Beatrice stated that their faith and belief in God are why they continue to work within a college system that provides limited support and operate from job titles that prevent them from conducting meaningful work. In Hebrews 13:16 (New International Version, 1769), Apostle Paul wrote, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." Sophia connected to this verse when she stated, "I feel I'm somehow serving God; I'm serving [God] through my job with foster youth." Beatrice also connected to it when she stated, "To me, I really value faith in God. This is what I'm meant to do, to serve, to do God's work." In contrast, Olivia stated she shares her spiritual beliefs as a Christian woman by being an example to others. The researcher made conclusions about the

influence of personal values from insight into the unfavorable perceptions the participants had about their campus and formal leadership. Sophia, Beatrice and Olivia all expressed dissatisfaction with their campus but remained due to their personal values. The personal values of these three participants guide their decision making and provide guidance when needed.

Another example of how personal values influenced the development of an equity-minded program serving students who experienced foster care was the longevity of the program's existence. Each program either existed before the state provided resources through NextUp or had an individual assigned to work with students who experienced foster care if the program was not formal. Individuals who valued foster youth and their desire for an education sustained the program's existence. Other nonformal leaders stated that once they were tasked with serving students who experienced foster care, they immediately knew students needed more services and guidance than what the previous nonformal leader provided. In response, sometimes, they used their own money and resources to provide services. It is through the experiences and influences nonformal leaders had on developing an equity-minded program that it can be understood how one's personal values and campus perceptions influence a program.

Implications for Social Justice

Many community colleges will need to become committed to creating spaces and access for all students on campus, particularly attending to populations that have historically been marginalized. California legislators heard the voices of nonformal leaders who requested funding to serve special populations such as students who have experienced foster care. Despite funding to support students who experienced foster care in every CCC, college educators continue to underserve and undersupport these youth and perpetuate the narrative that serving these students is challenging. In the California financial budget for 2020–2021, community colleges received an

113

apportionment increase of $52.7 million in one-time funds (Newsom, 2021), as well as funds for NextUp. Nevertheless, campuses have not hired more individuals to support current nonformal leaders when developing an equity-minded program. Foster youth are not thriving in community colleges (Emerson & Bassett, 2010; Hussar et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2007; Zetlin et al., 2004). It is an injustice to students who experience foster care if factors such as individuals charged with the program development are not further examined.

Community colleges will need to be open to equity-minded programs such as NextUp. NextUp is a state-funded program for a specific group of students who experienced foster care (Cal. S.B. 512, 2022). NextUp provides secure funding to campuses to develop and seek resources needed for students who experienced foster care. Despite all community colleges in the state of California having the option to have the program on their campus, formal leaders, according to the research study, have been resistant to accepting the program on their campus. Foster youth will continue to not close the academic achievement gap if formal leaders, in conjunction with nonformal leaders continue to have programs dependent on individuals who possess equity as opposed to a campus culture embedded in equity.

Implications Educational Leadership

Equity is a practice many educational leaders are attempting to instill in their campus leaders. This research study suggests that often the burden falls on equity-minded individuals and students to advocate for equitable treatment and access to educational opportunities. The research study provides further evidence that nonformal leaders are committed to equitable outcomes for students but are susceptible to burnout because they devote a substantial amount of time and resources to enhancing the campus climate.

Social workers are typically the first point of contact when a foster youth enters foster

care. Social workers tirelessly work on behalf of children. They collaborate with the family, the children, and the community to facilitate positive life outcomes for the entire family. However, their efforts to move the child and family forward to prevent a stagnant life often cause burnout (Wilson, 2016). Once in college, nonformal leaders are often the first point of contact for students who experienced foster care and enrolled in community college. Nonformal leaders collaborate with the student's support system, including social workers, and with community members to ensure the student has access to resources outside of the college. Social workers are included due to some students still being in foster care due to Assembly Bill 12 (2014). To prevent nonformal leaders from having the same burnout experienced by social workers in the child welfare system, educational leadership must go beyond formalizing equity statements to actually including foster youth in their equity plans. Community college leaders must also include the voices and experiences of nonformal leaders who support students who experience foster care when enacting policies and procedures that support nonformal leaders and their student population. Inclusion begins before equity plans are written and formalized. Nonformal leaders' experiences with the campus-based program will need to be considered with the understanding that foster youth are unique in their various experiences, including their program size.

Utilizing a cultural proficiency lens, community college leaders should create professional development opportunities based on the cultural proficiency framework. More recently, cultural proficiency has been applied in K–12 educational settings (Welborn et al., 2022). To address the achievement gap between foster and nonfoster youth students, educational leaders can provide leaders with the necessary tools to create an on-campus environment where foster students can thrive. This can begin through campus-wide professional development

training focused on cultural proficiency.

In this study, participants typically sought principles from the exemplary leadership framework of their formal leaders. Nonformal leaders in the study understood that their roles were limited in terms of decision making. Despite their role, their ability to advocate for their immediate formal leaders, such as a dean or even a college president, was a skill possessed by all nonformal leaders in the study. Their ability to communicate their desire to have formal leaders whom they admire and who are honest, competent, inspiring, and forward-looking are all characteristics that people look for in their leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). As discussed in the literature review, there are five practices in exemplary leadership (model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart) that act as an operating system for leaders regardless of position. Although this may be true, it negates the power some leaders may possess. In this case, formal leadership in conjunction with nonformal leadership in community colleges must collaborate to ensure that each leadership practice is implemented to its highest level in their respective positions. As researchers provide more evidence into how leaders behave and address why people work hard, their commitment, pride, and productivity (Kouzes & Posner, 2017), it becomes more preeminent to have component leaders in formal and nonformal leadership roles.

Recommendations for Formal and Nonformal Leaders

This study's findings can be used to create equity-minded campus-based programs in community colleges for students who experienced foster care. The recommendations emerged from findings that were interpreted based on cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership frameworks. Using an exemplary leadership practice lens, the leadership characteristics needed to develop an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care became apparent.

116

To that end, by combining cultural proficiency and exemplary leadership, several practical recommendations can be made. The first recommendation is regarding college campuses. As a campus, community college administrators will need to acknowledge the wider conjuncture of the institutional barriers students who experience foster care encounter and the barriers formal leadership creates for nonformal leaders who are charged with developing an equity-mind campus-based program. Study participants expressed a disconnect between their campus-based program and other programs serving marginalized students, such as EOPS. Foster youth programs in community colleges tend to be small, with few students. As a result, they are not often prioritized. However, foster youth's unique circumstances and their campus needs have been well-documented (Rassen et al., 2010). Thus, formal leadership needs to focus on the unique needs of the population as opposed to their enrollment numbers.

The second recommendation is regarding the use of data. That is, nonformal leaders need to prioritize using program data to show formal leadership the unique needs of the students at their respective campuses. Of the 10 participants in this study, only one spoke of the importance of data and how she uses data to advocate for her students and to provide formal leadership with the necessary evidence to present in leadership meetings. On the other hand, formal and nonformal leaders must work to understand and create equity-focused solutions to benefit the students regardless of the number of program participants. Recommendations for leaders include collaborating with the college campus research department to collect the data needed to create equitable changes on campus and within the program.

The third recommendation has to do with developing a climate of trust between formal leadership and nonformal leaders. This builds and sustains social connections. Trust must be reciprocal and reciprocated. The study participants expressed distrust for their formal leadership

117

team in terms of their comfort in communicating the program's needs to campus decision makers. For example, Sophia expressed her concerns to her dean, relying on information about the importance of having NextUp at Camden College. Additionally, distrust for formal leadership caused the study participants to feel that they could not be authentic. This type of distrust creates a breakdown in teamwork and prevents the ability to produce lasting value (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Distrust causes nonformal leaders to react and conclude that formal leadership does not care. Formal leadership is arguably creating a disconnect between leaders, the program, and students. However, trust can be rebuilt through inclusion. Formal leaders can support the nonformal leaders' visions for program development by understanding how the nonformal leaders' personal values and campus perceptions influence the program. As mentioned, the practice of cultural proficiency and its infusion into community college through professional development opportunities will need to be implemented and practiced throughout the campus.

The fourth recommendation is for community colleges to reconsider their leadership hierarchy system. The current system perpetuates a hierarchical system of leadership where individuals charged with program development do not often have the opportunity to authentically influence the program without approval from formal leadership. Although these systems in community colleges are longstanding, administrators should consider replacing such inequitable systems. Study participant David believed that what makes a leader is "Someone who thinks of others, who inspires to help others reach their full potential regardless of formal hierarchy." As new models of college leadership emerge, it is crucial for community colleges to revisit their systemic structures (Davis et al., 2015; Martin, 2021; Wyner, 2019). To that end, it is recommended that such a system could be possible by including nonformal leaders in formal

leadership meetings, by offering nonformal leaders opportunities to present critical program needs to formal leaders, and by including nonformal leaders in the decision making process.

Finally, the fifth recommendation is for nonformal leaders either to strongly consider formal leadership positions or to become more involved with shared governance while drawing from exemplary leadership practices. Though this recommendation could be time consuming, nonformal leaders could implement it immediately. In this way, nonformal leaders can influence the campus culture and make changes believe will create a culture of equity. Shared governance is one way for faculty, professionals classified, administrators, governing board members, and, sometimes, students and staff to participate in developing policies and making decisions that affect the institution. Luisa spoke candidly about how she encouraged colleagues and students from her program to become more involved with such processes. When her efforts to participate were refused, she transitioned to a campus where she was encouraged to be involved in shared governance. Being involved in shared governance could provide nonformal leaders with the reassurance that their personal values and perceptions of campus culture influence outcomes for students who experienced foster care.

Considerations for Future Research

The study aimed to examine how nonformal leaders' values and perceptions of campus-based culture influenced the development of an equity-minded program. Findings from this study revealed that nonformal leaders encounter many barriers when developing a program. Further research regarding barriers generated by administrators and how those barriers influence foster youth at their respective institutions is important to understanding foster youth continue to have low graduation, retention, and program completion. Researchers have provided insight into the challenges foster youth encounter before they enroll in college and while enrolled in college; yet,

academic outcomes for foster youth have not significantly improved (Havlicek et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2017; Tobolowsky et al., 2019). Like findings from this study, cultural proficiency could be used to guide administrators with personal and organizational change to ensure all groups of students excel (Welborn et al., 2022).

Students who experience foster care possess a tremendous amount of tenacity (Hass et al., 2014; Kirk & Day, 2011; Metzger, 2008). The more researchers continue to explore individuals charged with supporting students who experienced foster care in colleges, the more likely researchers are to understand why, even with support, foster youth are not thriving. Further phenomenological studies into formal leadership and its role in developing equity-minded campuses are crucial. Additionally, a comparative study of formal and nonformal leadership within NextUp programs could provide rich data. The more community colleges prioritize this vulnerable population, the more students who experience foster care will thrive and become productive members of society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provided an in-depth look at the experiences of 10 nonformal leaders to understand their personal values and perceptions of their campus culture. The researcher examined nonformal leaders' influence on the development of an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care. The participants shared their experiences as nonformal leaders and paid special attention to their personal values and campus perceptions. Nonformal leaders expressed their willingness to develop a program for students who experience foster care, but sometimes encounters with formal leadership made the task challenging. Of the 10 participants, three were forced to leave their positions, and two transitioned to different colleges due to a lack of alignment between their personal values and the campus values and
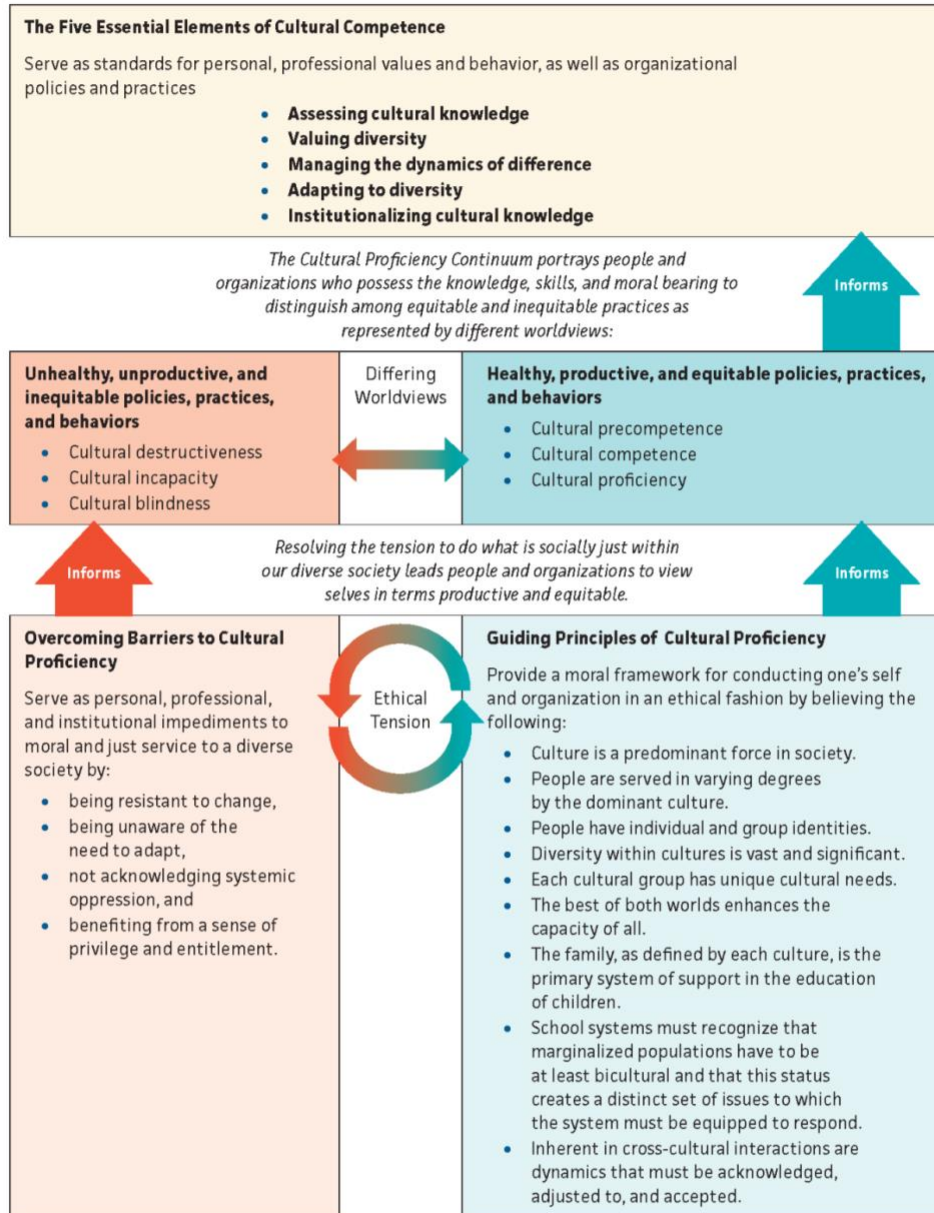
120

strong campus perceptions about the college. Although one leader's personal values aligned with the campus and her campus perceptions overall, she transitioned to another department for job security.

Failure to support individuals charged with developing a program for a student who experienced foster care could result in the academic achievement gap further widening between foster and nonfoster youth. Participants expressed their desire to become their authentic selves but also experienced a disconnect between themselves, formal leadership, and the campus. The study provides future researchers with knowledge about what nonformal leaders believe is necessary to move forward with developing an equity-minded program for students who experienced foster care. The study also illuminated the challenges and highlights of nonformal leaders. As findings indicated, nonformal leaders, like the population they serve, are not provided with the tools or opportunities to move forward with program development. It is essential that community college administrators, more specifically, formal leaders, create and transform their college's culture and be open to addressing the barriers that prevent healthy and equitable policies and practices. Therefore, the recommendations provided serve as a pathway for nonformal and formal leaders to begin to transform current programs for students who experienced foster care into a more equitable space where students can thrive.

Appendix A: Cultural Proficiency Framework

The Five Essential Elements of Cultural Competence

Serve as standards for personal, professional values and behavior, as well as organizational policies and practices

- **Assessing cultural knowledge**
- **Valuing diversity**
- **Managing the dynamics of difference**
- **Adapting to diversity**
- **Institutionalizing cultural knowledge**

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum portrays people and organizations who possess the knowledge, skills, and moral bearing to distinguish among equitable and inequitable practices as represented by different worldviews:

Informs

Unhealthy, unproductive, and inequitable policies, practices, and behaviors

- Cultural destructiveness
- Cultural incapacity
- Cultural blindness

Differing Worldviews

Healthy, productive, and equitable policies, practices, and behaviors

- Cultural precompetence
- Cultural competence
- Cultural proficiency

Resolving the tension to do what is socially just within our diverse society leads people and organizations to view selves in terms productive and equitable.

Informs

Informs

Overcoming Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Serve as personal, professional, and institutional impediments to moral and just service to a diverse society by:

- being resistant to change,
- being unaware of the need to adapt,
- not acknowledging systemic oppression, and
- benefiting from a sense of privilege and entitlement.

Ethical Tension

Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency

Provide a moral framework for conducting one's self and organization in an ethical fashion by believing the following:

- Culture is a predominant force in society.
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- People have individual and group identities.
- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
- Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.
- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.
- The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.
- School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a distinct set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.
- Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to, and accepted.

Appendix B: Exemplary Leadership Framework

TABLE 1.1 THE FIVE PRACTICES AND TEN COMMITMENTS OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP	
Model the Way	1. Clarify values by finding your voice and affirming shared values. 2. Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.
Inspire a Shared Vision	3. Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities. 4. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.
Challenge the Process	5. Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and looking outward for innovative ways to improve. 6. Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.
Enable Others to Act	7. Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships. 8. Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence.
Encourage the Heart	9. Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence. 10. Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

E-Mail Invitation to Participate

Dear (NAME),

My name is Sade Burrell, and I'm a student in the UCSD/CSUSM Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership. I wanted to ask for your assistance with my dissertation study. I am conducting a research study to investigate the personal values and perceptions of campus-based program leaders who coordinate programs for students who experienced foster care. I plan to conduct 60 minutes of individual semi-structured interviews with students who meet the following criteria:

1. Currently working with foster youth in a community college campus-based program or have worked within the past five years with foster youth in community colleges.
2. Currently or previously considered a program coordinator, counselor, or foster youth liaison for a campus-based program in a community college.
3. The campuses-based program is located in the state of California.

All responses are confidential, and no real names will be used in the publication of my dissertation study. If you are interested in participating, please fill out this interest form, and I will contact you personally to provide more information and the following steps:

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you and hope that you will choose to participate in the study. I hope to begin interviews for the study in the fall of 2023. I welcome your response to this email by November 20, 2022. Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at the phone or e-mail address below.

Respectfully,

Sade Burrell, MSW
Doctoral Student
UC San Diego and CSU San Marcos
Sburrell@ucsd.edu

Appendix D: Informed Consent Letter

A Phenomenological Study of Nonformal Leaders and Foster Youth Programs in Community Colleges

Informed Consent

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE:

Dear Participants:

My name is Sade Burrell, and I am a student in the Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at California State University San Marcos. You are invited to participate in a research study of leaders who coordinated or have coordinated programs for students who experienced foster care in a California community college within the past five years. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY:
The following is a summary of this study to help you decide whether to be a part of this Study. The purpose of this study is to explore the personal values and perceptions of the campus culture of leaders who coordinate programs for students who experienced foster care to understand its impact on campus-based programs for students who experienced foster care. You will be asked to complete one 60-minute interview. We expect you to be in this research study for six months between November 2022 and May 2023. The primary risk of participation is boredom, fatigue, or emotional distress while being interviewed. The main indirect benefit is helping the researcher understand the leaders who coordinate programs for students who experienced foster care.

STUDY PURPOSE:
This study aims to explore the personal values and perceptions of campus culture and its impact on campus-based programs for students who experienced foster care. To this end, the following research question will be investigated in this study with semi-structured interviews: In what ways, if at all, does a nonformal leader's personal values and perceptions of campus culture influence the development of an equity-minded campus-based program?

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:
If you agree to participate, you will be one of ten participants participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following:
● Participate in an individual semi-structured interview with the researcher in person or via Zoom (a free, online, video conferencing application).
● The interview will last approximately 60- 90 minutes.
● You will receive a list of potential interview questions to review before your scheduled

interview date so that you may reflect and consider your responses ahead of time.
● You will receive a copy of the written transcript of your interview and have the opportunity to provide feedback to the researcher on accuracy.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:
There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include:
● A potential to experience boredom, fatigue, or emotional distress while being interviewed.

SAFEGUARDS:
To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:
● Participants can skip any questions they feel uncomfortable answering during the interview.
● The interview may be scheduled at a time that is convenient to the participant and at a private place.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Your responses and information will be confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but your name or other personal information will not be used. To maintain confidentiality, no interview responses will become part of this research study until a thorough check of the consent forms has been made and all permissions are present. Data used for the analysis will not be identifiable to specific participants. All data will be contained on the researcher's password-protected laptop in a password-protected file. All hard copies of data will be in a locked cabinet in my home or in my immediate possession. Research records will be kept confidential up to three years after the project is finished. The researcher will dispose of research data by shredding paper records and erasing digital files.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty. Your decision on whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Cal State University San Marcos.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
There are no direct benefits to participation in this study; however, your participation will help The investigator learns more about the values and perceptions of campus cultures from leaders who are charged with developing programs for students who experienced foster care.

PAYMENT OR INCENTIVE:
You will not receive compensation for participation in this study.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
If you have questions about the study, please call me at 619 248-XXXX or e-mail me at burre01@cougars.csusm.edu. You may also contact my research advisor, Brooke Soles, at bsoles@csusm.edu. You will be given a copy of this form for your records. If you have any

Questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at irb@csusm.edu or (760) 750-4029.

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT:
By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the study. Please check the option that applies to you before signing:

☐ I permit my interview to be audio taped.

☐ I do not permit my interview to be audio taped.

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature of the Participant: _____

Date: _____

REFERENCES

Barth, R. S. (1990). *Improving schools from within: Teachers, parents, and principals can make the difference*. Jossey-Bass Inc.

Block J., Everson S., & Guskey T. (1995). *School improvement programs: A handbook for educational leaders*. Scholastic.

Blome, W. W. (1997). What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 14*(1), 41–53.

Burley, M., & Halpern, M. (2001). Educational attainment of foster youth achievement and graduation outcomes for children in state care. Washington State Institute for Public Policy. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED460220.pdf

Burns, D., Espinoza, D., Adams, J., & Ondrasek, N. (2022). California students in foster care: Challenges and promising practices. Learning Policy Institute. https://doi.org/10.54300/118.471

California Community Colleges. (2020). *NextUp legislative report*. www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/Reports/cccco-nextup-report-043021-a11y.pdf?la=en&hash=C86651F0F50089EB083C21E25BAFAEB5E8DA92E1

California Department of Education. (2021). *Foster youth in California schools.* https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sg/fosteryouth.asp#:~:text=Graduation%20%2D%202019&text=In%20the%202018%2D2019%20school,Dashboard%20Technical%20Guide(PDF) [title], Cal. S. B. 1023 (2013–2014), Chapter 771 (Cal. Stat. 2014). https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB1023

California Legislative Information [CLI]. (2021a, October 06). SB-512 Public postsecondary education: support services for foster youth: Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support Program. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB512&showamends=false

California Legislative Information [CLI]. (2021b, April 25). SB-12 Foster youth: postsecondary education: financial aid assistance. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB12

California Legislative Information [CLI]. (2022, August 15). SB-512 Public postsecondary education: support services for foster youth: Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support Program. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB1023

California State University, Fullerton. (2019, October 14). *About the program.* https://www.fullerton.edu/guardianscholars/about

Calvin, E., Fenton, R., Lee, A., Pattison, B., Warner-King, K., & Purbaugh, J. (2001). *Make a difference in a child's life: A manual for helping children and youth get what they need in school.* Casey Family Programs.

Cantú, L. B. (2013). Supporting the dream: How California community colleges are responding to the needs of foster youth on their campuses (Doctoral dissertation, UCLA).

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2020a). *Foster care.* Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/foster-care/

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2020b). *Foster care statistics 2018.* Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/foster.pdf

Choudhary, A. I., Akhtar, S. A., & Zaheer, A. (2013). Impact of transformational and servant leadership on organizational performance: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *116*(2), 433–440.

Clark-Louque, A., & Latunde, Y. C. (2019). Addressing inequities in African American student achievement: Using cultural proficiency and a dual capacity building framework. *Frontiers in Education, 4*, 33. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00033

Collins, M. E., Spencer, R., & Ward, R. (2010). Supporting youth in the transition from foster care: Formal and informal connections. *Child Welfare, 89*(1).

Count, N. K. (2001). *Transition from care: The status and outcomes of youth who have aged out of the foster care system in Clark County, Nevada.*

County of San Diego Health and Human Services. (2021). *Child welfare services monthly dashboard.* https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/hhsa/programs/cs/CWS_dashboard/CWS_Dashboard_Feb2021.pdf

Courtney, M. E., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V. (2011). *Midwest evaluation of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26*. University of Chicago. https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Midwest-Eval-Outcomes-at-Age-26.pdf

Courtney, M. E., Dworsky, A., Ruth, G., Keller, T., Havlicek, J., & Bost, N. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19.* University of Chicago. https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Courtney_Midwest-Evaluation-Adult-Functioning_Report_2005.pdf

Courtney, M. E., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Kaylor, A., & Nesmith, A. (2001). Foster youth transitions to adulthood: A longitudinal view of youth leaving care. *Child Welfare*, *80*(6), 685.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2005). Mixed methods research: Developments, debates, and dilemmas. *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry*, *2*, 315–326.

Cross, T. L., Bazron, B. J., Dennis, K. W., & Isaacs, M. R. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care: A monograph on effective services for minority children who are severely emotionally disturbed*. Georgetown Univerity Teachnical Assistance Center. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED330171

Davis, A. P., Dent, E. B., & Wharf, D. M. (2015). A conceptual model of systems thinking leadership in community colleges. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 28*(4), 333–353. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-015-9340-9

Davis, R. J. (2006). *College access, financial aid, and college success for undergraduates from foster care*. National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NJ1). https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED543361

Dorr, P. M., (2017, November 8). *California Community College Chancellor's Office announces name change of foster youth support program.* California Community College https://www.ccco.edu/About-Us/News-and-Media/Press-Releases/CAFYES-Name-Change

Dworsky, A., & Perez, A. (2010). Helping former foster youth graduate from college through campus support programs. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *32*(2), 255–263. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.09.004

Emerson, J., & Bassett, L. (2010). *Supporting success: Improving higher education outcomes for students from foster care.* Casey Family Programs. https://www.casey.org/media/SupportingSuccess.pdf

Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *14*(4), 245–258. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2019.04.001

Felix, E. R. (2021). Improving racial equity in community college: Developing a plan, implementing the vision. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *43*(3), 419–444. https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737219967

Festinger, T. (1983). *No one ever asked us--A postscript to foster care*. Columbia University Press.

Foundation for California Community Colleges. (2021, April 25). *Foster youth success initiative.* https://foundationccc.org/What-We-Do/Equity/Foster-Youth-Support-Services#:~:text=The%20Foster%20Youth%20Success%20Initiative,or%20prospective%20foster%20youth%20students

Geiger, J. M., & Beltran, S. J. (2017). Readiness, access, preparation, and support for foster care alumni in higher education: A review of the literature. Journal of Public Child Welfare, 11(4-5), 487-515. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2017.1354795

Gilbert, C. K., & Heller, D. E. (2013). Access, equity, and community colleges: The Truman Commission and federal higher education policy from 1947 to 2011. *The Journal of Higher Education, 84*(3), 417–443. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23486834

Gillum, N. L., Lindsay, T., Murray, F. L., & Wells, P. (2016). A review of research on college educational outcomes of students who experienced foster care. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, *10*(3), 291–309. https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2016.1172056

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2004). The seven principles of sustainable leadership. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(7), 8–13.

Hass, M., Allen, Q., & Amoah, M. (2014). Turning points and resilience of academically successful foster youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *44*, 387–392. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.07.008

Havlicek, J. R., Dworsky, A., & Gitlow, E. (2021). *Using research to improve postsecondary education outcomes of community college students in foster care*. University of Chicago. https://www.chapinhall.org/research/foster-youth-not-receiving-needed-supports-from-community-colleges/

Havlicek, J., Lin, C. H., & Braun, M. T. (2016). Cultivating youth voice through participation in a foster youth advisory board: Perspectives of facilitators. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *69*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.07.018

Hernandez, L., & Naccarato, T. (2010). Scholarships and supports available to foster care alumni: A study of 12 programs across the US. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*(5), 758–766. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.01.014

Hernandez, P. M., & Lee, J. (2020). Outcomes of young adults aging out of foster care: A latent class analysis. *Child Welfare*, *98*(3).

Hussar, B., Zhang, J., Hein, S., Wang, K., Roberts, A., Cui, J., ... & Dilig, R. (2020). *The condition of education 2020: NCES 2020–144*. National Center for Education Statistics.

Jackson, M. S., Colvin, A. D., & Bullock, A. N. (2020). Development of a pre-college program for foster youth: Opportunities and challenges of program implementation. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *37*(4), 411–423.

John Burton Advocates for Youth. (2023). *2023 NextUp expansion: Implementation toolkit.* https://jbay.org/resources/nextup-toolkit/

John Burton Advocates for Youth. (2020). *Providing affordable housing and supportive services to youth transitioning from California's foster care and juvenile probation systems.* https://www.jbaforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/THP_AR_final-11-5-20-1.pdf

Johnson, R. M., & Strayhorn, T. L. (2019). Preparing youth in foster care for college through an early outreach program. *Journal of College Student Development*, *60*(5), 612–616.

Kelly, M. E. (2017). The argument for using the cultural proficiency continuum to develop culturally responsive pre-service teacher candidates. *National Teacher Education Journal*, *10*(1).

Kirk, R., & Day, A. (2011). Increasing college access for youth aging out of foster care: Evaluation of a summer camp program for foster youth transitioning from high school to college. *Children & Youth Services Review*, *33*(7), 1173–1180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.02.018

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2011). *Credibility: How leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it* (Vol. 203). John Wiley & Sons.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge* (6th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2021). Everyday people, extraordinary leadership: How to make a difference regardless of your title, role, or authority. John Wiley & Sons.

Lambert, S. (2020). *The implementation of sustainable leadership in general further education colleges*. http://hdl.handle.net/10034/623563

Lareau, A. (2021). *Listening to people: A practical guide to interviewing, participant observation, data analysis, and writing it all up*. University of Chicago Press.

Lawrence, H. J., Mullin, C. M., & Horton, D., Jr. (2009). Considerations for expanding, eliminating, and maintaining community college athletic teams and programs. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 147*, 39–51. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.376

Leithwood, K., Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2010). *How leadership influences student learning: Review of research*. The Wallace Foundation. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED485932

Lindsey, R. B., Nuri-Robins, K., Terrell, R. D., & Lindsey, D. B. (2018). *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders* (4th ed.). Corwin Press.

Luthans, F., Vogelgesang, G. R., & Lester, P. B. (2006). Developing the psychological capital of resiliency. *Human Resource Development Review*, *5*(1), 25–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484305285335

Macomber, J. (2009). *Intentions and results: A look back at the adoption and safe families act*.

Marine, S. B., & Nicolazzo, Z. (2014). Names that matter: Exploring the tensions of campus LGBTQ centers and trans inclusion. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *7*(4), 265. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037990

Martin, Q. (2021). Preparing the next generation of community college leaders: The role of community college leadership programs. *The Community College Enterprise*, *27*(2), 9–19.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2016). *Cultural proficiency: A strategy to address equity gaps in students' achievement and learning experiences*.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Sage Publications.

McMillen, C., Auslander, W., Elze, D., White, T., & Thompson, R. (2003). Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare: Journal of Policy, Practice, and Program, 82*(4), 475–495.

McNair, D. E. (2009). Preparing community college leaders: The AACC Core Competencies for Effective Leadership & Doctoral Education, Community College. *Journal of Research and Practice, 34*(1–2), 199–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668920903388206

Merdinger, J. M., Hines, A. M., Lemon Osterling, K., & Wyatt, P. (2005). Pathways to college for former foster youth: Understanding factors that contribute to educational success. *Child Welfare, 84*(6).

Mertler, C. A. (2021). *Introduction to educational research*. Sage Publications.

Metzger, J. (2008). Resiliency in children and youth in kinship care and family foster care. *Child Welfare*, *87*(6), 115.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage Publications.

Miller, J. J., Benner, K., Kheibari, A., & Washington, E. (2017). Conceptualizing on-campus support programs for collegiate foster youth and alumni: A plan for action. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *83*, 57–67.

Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*(4), 56–69.

Monaghan, D. B., & Attewell, P. (2015). The community college route to the bachelor's degree. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *37*(1), 70–91.

Morton, B. M. (2017). The grip of trauma: How trauma disrupts the academic aspirations of foster youth. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *75*, 73–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.04.02

National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Graduation rates of first time postsecondary students who started as full-time degree/certificate-seeking students, by sex, race/ethnicity, time to completion, and level and control of institution where student started: Selected cohort entry years, 1996 through 2007.* http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_345.asp

Nevarez, C., & Wood, J. L. (2010). *Community college leadership and administration: Theory, practice, and change*. Peter Lang.

Newsom, G. (2021). *Governor's budget report*. State of California Department of Finances. https://ebudget.ca.gov/2021-22/pdf/BudgetSummary/HigherEducation.pdf

Nuri-Robins, K. J., Lindsey, D. B., Lindsey, R. B., & Terrell, R. D. (2011). *Culturally proficient instruction: A guide for people who teach*. Corwin Press.

Nuri-Robins, K. J., Terrell, R. D., & Lindsey, D. B. (2018). *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders* (Vol. 4). Corwin Press.

O'Connor, C., & Joffe, H. (2020). Intercoder reliability in qualitative research: Debates and practical guidelines. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *19*.

Okpych, N. J., Park, S., & Courtney, M. E. (2019). *Memo from CalYOUTH: Early findings on the impact of extended foster care on foster youths' postsecondary education enrollment and persistence.* University of Chicago.

Ollerenshaw, J. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2002). Narrative research: A comparison of two restorying data analysis approaches. *Qualitative inquiry*, *8*(3), 329–347.

Omizo, M. M., Omizo, S. A., & Honda, M. R. (1997). A phenomenological study with youth gang members: Results and implications for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, *1*(1), 39–42.

Paarlberg, L. E., & Lavigna, B. (2010). Transformational leadership and public service motivation: Driving individual and organizational performance. *Public Administration Review*, *70*(5), 710–718.

Patricio, J. N., Calheiros, M. M., & Martins, A. C. (2016). Self-representation questionnaire for youths in residential care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *61*, 317–326. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.01.007

Payne, E. C., & Smith, M. J. (2018). Refusing relevance: School administrator resistance to offering professional development addressing LGBTQ issues in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(2), 183–215. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17723426

Pecora, P. J. (2012). Maximizing educational achievement of youth in foster care and alumni: Factors associated with success. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *34*(6), 1121–1129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.01.044

Pecora, P. J., Kessler, R. C., O'Brien, K., White, C. R., Williams, J., Hiripi, E., ... & Herrick, M. A. (2006a). Educational and employment outcomes of adults formerly placed in foster care: Results from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *28*(12), 1459–1481. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740906000703

Pecora, P. J., Williams, J., Kessler, R. C., Hiripi, E., O'Brien, K., Emerson, J., Torres, D. (2006b). Assessing the educational achievements of adults who were formerly placed in family foster care. *Child & Family Social Work, 11*, 220–231. Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2006.00429.x

Piel, M. H. (2018). Challenges in the Transition to Higher Education for Foster Care Youth. New Directions for Community Colleges, 2018(181), 21-28. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20288

Piccolo, R. F., & Colquitt, J. A. (2006). Transformational leadership and job behaviors: The mediating role of core job characteristics. *Academy of Management Journal*, *49*(2), 327–340. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2006.20786079

Piliavin, I., Sosin, M., Westerfelt, A. H., & Matsueda, R. L. (1993). The duration of homeless careers: An exploratory study. *Social Service Review*, *67*(4), 576–598.

Posner, B. Z., & Kouzes, J. M. (1988). Relating leadership and credibility. *Psychological Reports, 63*(2), 527–530. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1988.63.2.527

Rassen, E., Cooper, D. M., & Mery, P. (2010). Serving special populations: A study of former foster youth at California community colleges. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*, *17*(2), 21–31.

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2014). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Sage Publications.

Ryan, J. P., Hernandez, P. M., & Herz, D. (2007). Developmental trajectories of offending for male adolescents leaving foster care. *Social Work Research*, *31*(2), 83–93.

Salazar, A. M. (2012). Supporting college success in foster care alumni: Salient factors related to post-secondary retention. *Child Welfare, 91*(5), 139–167.

Saldana, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*.

Scherr, T. G. (2007). Educational experiences of children in foster care. *School Psychology International*, *28*(4), 419–436. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034307084133

Schmidt–Davis, J., & Bottoms, G. (2011). *Who's next? Let's stop gambling on school performance and plan for principal succession.* https://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/fileattachments/11v19_principal_succession_planning.pdf

Seiler, S., & Pfister, A. (2012). The influence of structural aspects of a leadership scenario on individual mental evaluation processes. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *6*(2), 48–60. https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21237

Sensiper, S., & Barragan, C. A. (2017). The Guardian Professions Program: Developing an advanced degree mentoring program for California's foster care alumni. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *82*, 329–336. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.09.032

Shields, C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *46*(4), 558–589.

Shin, S. H. (2003). Building evidence to promote educational competence of youth in foster care. *Child Welfare, 82*(5), 615–632.

Skilbred, D. T., Iversen, A. C., & Moldestad, B. (2017). Successful academic achievement among foster children: What did the foster parents do? *Child Care in Practice: Northern Ireland Journal of Multidisciplinary Child Care Practice*, *23*(4), 356–371. https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2016.1188764

Sloyan, R. M., & Ludema, J. D. (2010). That's not how I see it: How trust in the organization, leadership, process, and outcome influence individual responses to organizational change. *Research in Organizational Change and Development*. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0897-3016(2010)0000018011

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

The Legal Center for Foster Care and Education. (April). National factsheet on the educational outcomes of children in foster care. https://fosteringchamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NationalEducationDatasheet2018-2.pdf

Tobolowsky, B. F., Scannapieco, M., Aguiniga, D. M., & Madden, E. E. (2019). Former foster youth experiences with higher education: Opportunities and challenges. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *104*, 104362. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.05.039

Unrau, Y. A., Dawson, A., Hamilton, R. D., & Bennett, J. L. (2017). Perceived value of a campus-based college support program by students who aged out of foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *78*, 64–73. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.05.011

Watt, T. T., Kim, S., & Garrison, K. (2018). The relationship between state support and post-secondary enrollment among youth aging out of foster care: An analysis of the National Youth in Transition Database. *Child Welfare, 96*(3), 1–20.

Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Chambers, J., Hammond, I., Ayat, N., Misirli, E., Hoerl, C., Yee, H., Flamson, T., Gonzalez, A., & Briones, E. (2021). *CCWIP reports*.

Welborn, J. E. (2019). Increasing equity, access, and inclusion through organizational change: A study of implementation and experiences surrounding a school district's journey toward culturally proficient educational practice. *Educational Leadership Review, 20*(1), 167–189.

Welborn, J. E., Casey, T., Myatt, K. T., & Lindsey, R. B. (2022). *Leading change through the lens of cultural proficiency: An equitable approach to race and social class in our schools*. Corwin Press.

Wilson, F. (2016). Identifying, preventing, and addressing job burnout and vicarious burnout for social work professionals. *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work*, *13*(5), 479–483. https://doi.org/10.1080/23761407.2016.1166856

Wu, C. H., Griffin, M. A., & Parker, S. K. (2015). Developing agency through good work: Longitudinal effects of job autonomy and skill utilization on locus of control. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *89*, 102–108.

Wyner, J. S. (2019). *What excellent community colleges do: Preparing all students for success*. Harvard Education Press.

Young, A., Dollarhide, C. T., & Baughman, A. (2015). The voices of school counselors: Essential characteristics of school counselor leaders. *Professional School Counseling, 19(*1), 36–45. https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-19.1.36

Zamudio, M., Russell, C., Rios, F., & Bridgeman, J. L. (2011). *Critical race theory matters: Education and ideology*. Routledge.

Zetlin, A., Weinburg, L., & Kimm, C. (2004). Improving education outcomes for children in foster care: Intervention by an education liaison. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 9*(4), 421–429. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327671espr0904_5

Zimmerman, R. B. (1982). *Foster care in retrospect*. Tulane University.