A SEAT AT THE TABLE: USING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP TO PROVIDE EQUITABLE AND EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS

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APPROVAL OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

This capstone project, A Seat at the Table: Using Culturally Responsive Leadership to Provide Equity and Excellence for All Students, has yet to approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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DEDICATION

Above all, thank you Amanda for your unwavering support, patience, care, and love. Every milestone I reach is because of you. I am blessed and incredibly lucky to call you my wife. I can't wait to spend more time with you, Elijah and Rugby.

I would like to thank my capstone committee of Dr. Michelle Young, Dr. Sandra Mitchell, and Dr. David Eddy Spicer. It has been an honor learning from your expertise and benefiting from your scholarship and teaching. Thank you for your constant encouragement, guidance and support in both my education and professional endeavors. You all truly model what it means to be educational leaders, practitioners, and researchers.

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To the participants of this study, thank you for drive and determination in fighting for what is right for all students. You embody the leadership that every child deserves.

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Lastly, I would be remiss not to dedicate this work to the ancestors who have fought for 400 years to have a seat at the table. I am living your wildest dreams. Wakanda Forever.

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I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

- Langston Hughes

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Executive Summary

Dr. Michelle Young, Co-Chair
Dr. Sandra Mitchell, Co-Chair

As the United States is becoming increasingly diverse, public schools are struggling with meeting the academic needs of all students. According to a U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics Report during the years 2000-2016, population growth was evident across all racial and ethnic groups (de Bray et al., 2017). Specifically, within this time frame, the Hispanic demographic doubled from 9% to 18% of the total U.S. population. According to the report, of children ages 5-17, Hispanics made up 25% of the school aged population in America, which has steadily increased from 16% since the year 2000. Students who identified as two or more races or multiracial also increased, while children who are White, non-Hispanic decreased from 62% to 52% of the total population (de Bray et al., 2017). Across all demographics, the percentage of children who lived in poverty increased from 16% to 21% from the years 2000 to 2014. Of the total students living in poverty, Black and Hispanic students had the highest representation. Their growth rate increased from 31% to 36% and 28% to 31% respectively.

Purpose

The aim of this research was to explore how school-based leaders work to close achievement, equity, and opportunity gaps. Specifically, this study was focused on understanding how the school-based leader can use the positional influence identified in Leithwood and Louis (2012) to lead with a culturally responsive lens.

Ultimately, the school-based leader has the potential to promote an environment that is inclusive for all students thereby having a favorable impact on achievement disparities.

Findings from this study contribute to the literature in a variety of ways. First, findings from this research provide insight into how school-based leaders work to close achievement, equity, and opportunity gaps. Second, insight from this study adds to the current literature surrounding the impact of culturally responsive pedagogy on historically marginalized demographics. Third, findings contribute to a better understanding of what characteristics and practices relative to self-reflection, developing teachers to be more culturally responsive, creating a culturally responsive school environment, and being inclusive of all family voices are essential culturally responsive leadership. Additionally, there are implications for leadership preparation and professional development provided to contemporary school-based leaders who are faced with addressing the many needs of growing diverse student populations.

Methodology

This capstone explored how school-based leaders use their positional influence to enact culturally responsive practices and behaviors within their contexts. An overlap of the Culturally Responsive School Leader (CRSL) and Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) was used for data collection and analysis processes. Data was collected over four months and included interviews of district administrators, three principals, and the teachers at their respective schools. A survey also was completed by teachers and an artifact analysis was conducted of school documents. The data was triangulated to arrive at several findings of the study.

Findings

Significant findings of the study are:

1. Although leaders can come from different cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities they can be coached to become more culturally responsive.

2. School-based leaders develop culturally responsive teachers through yearlong professional development, mentoring, and coaching.

3. Through equity audits, leaders of the study used data to support the need for culturally responsive pedagogy.

4. School-based leaders can build more culturally responsive school environments by including student and parent voice in decision make process.

5. School-based leaders who critically self-reflect on their own culture, biases, and assumptions are positioned to lead culturally responsive schools.

Conclusion and Implications

Based on these findings, the recommendations to Wakanda Public Schools revolve around increasing the support for equity instructional coaches, fostering systematic structures to support all principals in culturally responsive leadership practices, and hiring practices for future administrators. The recommendations to the school district are as follows:

1. Support and fund more Equity Coaches. These individuals were pivotal in the growth and development of each principals CRL practice and implementation.

2. As principals can support teachers in becoming culturally responsive, district administrators can support principals. District administrators should seek to implement CRL behaviors and practices at the district level in order to drive systematic change.

3. Assist districts and schools with conducting structured and researched based equity audits.

4. Support and partner with the Curry School of Education in their current efforts of weaving CRL practices into already existing coursework in order to produce equity minded school leaders.

Keywords: culturally responsive leadership, culturally responsive pedagogy, organizational leadership

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, public schools continue struggling to meet the academic needs of all students. According to a U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics Report, 2000 to 2016 experienced population growth across all racial and ethnic groups (de Bray et al., 2017). Specifically, within this time frame, the Hispanic demographic doubled from 9% to 18% of the total U.S. population. According to the report, of children ages 5-17, Hispanics make up 25% of the school-aged population in America, which steadily increased from 16% since the year 2000. Students who identified as two or more races or multiracial also increased, while children who are White, non-Hispanic decreased from 62% to 52% of the total population (de Bray et al., 2017). Across all demographics, the percentage of children who live in poverty increased from 16% to 21% from the years 2000 to 2014. Of the total students living in poverty, Black and Hispanic students continued to have the highest representation. Their growth rate increased from 31% to 36% and 28% to 31%, respectively.

Further evidence supporting these shifting demographic trends is the increase of Emergent Bilingual (EB) learners. The term EB encompasses student groups commonly referred to as English Language Learners (ELL) and English Learners (ELs) (Garcia et al., 2008). As posited by Kayser (2018) in a case study of a culturally responsive teacher of EB students in the southeastern United States, the term EB is an asset-based approach recognizing bilingualism as a strength rather than a deficit in describing students who are

learning English. Today, nearly 10% of the student population is Emergent Bilingual. This data further supports the fact that schools are becoming increasingly and rapidly more diverse across race, ethnicity, language, culture, and socioeconomics.

The following evidence about student success indicators strengthens the case that educators, specifically classroom teachers and leaders, need experiences and professional development (PD) in serving these increasingly diverse communities (Horton, 2017; Kayser, 2018; Khalifa, 2018).

Gaps in Equity, Opportunity, and Achievement

The well-documented and researched academic achievement gap in America's public education system continues to dominate contemporary policy reform conversations and efforts. Focusing primarily on student outputs, the gap refers to the large disparity in academic performance across race and socioeconomic status (Reis & Smith, 2013). Specifically, the most recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicated that although the achievement gap decreased since 1990, there was still a significant gap between the performance of the country's White students compared to their Black and Hispanic peers. Additionally, across all races, students who are economically advantaged outperform those from poverty. This trend persisted in both math and reading (NAEP Report Cards, 2016).

Within these same demographics, compounding the growing achievement gap are disparities in equitable practices and inequalities in opportunities offered to students. Often used synonymously, it is important to distinguish the two terms "equity gap" and "opportunity gap" in education, as the differences are significant. The equity gap refers to inequalities in the implementation of practices within school while the opportunity gap refers

to inequalities in access to programs of excellence, such as gifted or advanced curriculum courses (Duke, 2011). Collectively, inequitable practices and access contribute to the overall academic achievement gap in student outcomes.

Equity Gaps

The equity gap largely refers to the unequal enforcement of school policies with different demographics of students. A significant portion of the literature surrounding this topic is focused on school discipline. Data indicates Black K-12 students are 3.8 times as likely as their White peers to receive one or more out of school suspensions (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2016). Male students of color and students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds receive suspensions are referred to the office, and are expelled from school at nearly three times the rate of their peers (Skiba et al., 2011). Here, the implications for student achievement is immense as research links increased disciplinary action to students being held back a grade and overall decreased academic performance (Fabelo et al., 2011). Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox (2015) concluded that each suspension increased the probability of high school dropout rates by 20% while Shollenberger (2015) posited that suspended youth had a higher probability of entering of the juvenile justice system.

Equity gap literature also focuses on the over-identification of students of color in remedial and intervention programs. Khalifa (2018) used data collected by the United States Department of Education to demonstrate the overrepresentation of minority students for remedial and intervention programs, disability and special education classes, and programs created to address behavior. Recent studies linked these disparities not only to high school graduation rates, but also to future impacts such as college attendance, employment rates, and the likelihood that the student ends up in prison (Briscoe et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2010;

Jeffers, 2017). Such inequitable practices hold a direct impact on student achievement and contribute to the achievement gap (Gregory et al., 2016).

Opportunity Gaps

Given students from marginalized groups and low socioeconomic status received lower observed scores on tests of academic achievement and experienced inequitable implementation of practices around discipline, their access to opportunities to participate in enrichment and advanced programming was significantly reduced. Access to gifted programs is one example where this gap has appeared. Black and Hispanic students have been disproportionately underrepresented by more than 50% in these educational opportunities (Ford, 2011). Peters and Engerrand (2016) explained how lower test scores resulted in the underrepresentation of students of color and students from impoverished environments in gifted programs compared to their White, Asian, and higher income peers. These programs require certain scores on tests like the Cog-AT for entrance. The Cog-AT, and other such tests, have historically disadvantaged students of color and students from low-income groups. Thus, the use of such norm-referenced tests to determine eligibility excluded many students from accessing gifted education programs (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Nationwide, schools failed to create inclusive processes needed to guarantee equal opportunity to participate in gifted education programs and processes that would ensure that gifted program participation reflected the diversity of each school building and district (Ford, 2011).

Similarly, disparity in opportunity also impacts participation in higher-level rigorous course work. A national study by the US Office for Civil Rights (2012) found that while 55% of secondary schools offered Calculus, only 29% of high schools with the highest enrollment of Black and Hispanic students offered this course. Similarly, Physics offerings were 66%

versus 40% while Algebra II offerings were 82% versus 65%, respectively. Researchers highlight the importance of this gap as it reveals unequal access to coursework needed for selective colleges and future careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2014).

Labaree (2010) argued that these opportunity gaps were the result of broader historical and societal issues that, over time, became the responsibility of the education system to address. Historically, educational opportunities were given primarily to wealthy, Anglo Saxon males. Progressives and reformers systemically fought to make public schooling more accessible to all demographics (Labaree, 2010). Within schools, Fullan (2011) pointed out that much of the responsibility for addressing equity and opportunity gaps falls on the shoulders of school leaders, as they can successfully implement positive changes around equity and social justice. According to Khalifa, Gooden. and Davis (2016), school leaders' support and implementation of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) could serve as a research-based practice to address inequities.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

As student demographics across race, background, culture, nationality, socioeconomic status, and gender continue to diversify, the need for more inclusive pedagogy remains essential (Bondy et al., 2013). Richards et al. (2007) defined culturally responsive pedagogy as consisting of three teaching dimensions: (a) personal reflection, (b) instructional delivery, and (c) institutional structures. It is important to note that culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is more than a set of effective teaching skills to address this growth; research showed that it had the ability to close the achievement gap (Mette et al., 2016). Primarily, CRP is an alternate way of sense-making where the teachers engage in a

thorough self-analysis of their own background, culture, and potential biases (Hammond, 2016). This important first step allows teachers to recognize and reconcile prejudices and negative stereotypes they may have towards specific demographics (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Simultaneously, CRP charges teachers to understand the cultures of the students that comprise their classrooms and use this knowledge to generate lessons that focus on their students' strengths while connecting them to their passions and experiences (Irvine, 2009). CRP capitalizes on learning differences across cultures and necessitates that teachers change their instructional delivery based the cultures of their students.

Nieto (2003) posited the institutional dimension of culturally responsive pedagogy was potentially the most important and influential. It involves the way institutions or schools allocate their resources, what they do to develop cultural awareness of the staff and how they mitigate barriers that propagate gaps in student achievement. Here, school-based leaders play a critical role as they are largely influential in shaping school policy and procedures for developing a more culturally responsive staff and school community. Ultimately, they can increase student achievement by bridging the culture gaps that exist between the home and school and capitalizing on these connections (Richards et al., 2007).

Culturally Responsive School-Based Leader

School systems are comprised of many stakeholders including district and state level leadership, school-based leaders such as principals and assistant principals, parents, community members, teachers, and students. Due to the unique position of school-based leaders, they tend to interact with all stakeholder groups on a consistent basis. Thus, one could argue that school-based leaders serve as the center of the school ecosystem (Leithwood

& Louis, 2012). The school-based leader has the potential and ability to influence, or be influenced by, each of these other stakeholders, create synergy amongst these many stakeholders, and if managed correctly, increase student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Gay (2010) and Hammond (2015) made the argument that although CRP is essential for marginalized students, it cannot have maximum influence without the existence of a culturally responsive leader. Given the system-level role of a school principal, they are in the best position to know what resources are available to the school, propagate the school-level mindset transformation successful CRT implementation requires, and sustain an overall culturally responsive environment (Cooper, 2009; Santamaria, 2014). Through a synthesis of the research and literature around Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL), Khalifa et al. (2016) determined four primary behaviors such leaders need, including the ability to (a) critically self-reflect on leadership behaviors; (b) develop culturally responsive teachers; (c) promote culturally responsive/inclusive school environments; and (d) engage students, parents, and staff in positive community relations.

Problem of Practice

This narrative demonstrates the gaps in achievement, equity, and opportunity between students from minoritized communities and their affluent, often white, peers. Several researchers traced these disparities back to desegregation. Mitchell (2015) argued that since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), schools struggled to meet the cultural needs of minority communities. The structures and systems from this era persist and impact minoritized students today (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Khalifa (2018) defined the term *minoritized* as "individuals from racially oppressed communities that have been marginalized—both legally and discursively—because of their non-dominant race, ethnicity,

religion, language, or citizenship" (p. 18). Further, the term emphasizes the intentional oppression of certain demographics by those in power who possess the authority to create and enact laws and regulations designed to control these communities. Labaree (2010) agreed by stating that schools have become propagators, sometimes unintentionally, of these inequities. Here, schools as an institution have structural inequities predictive of who will be a high achiever and who will be a low achiever along racial and economic lines (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Left unchecked, this becomes the status quo. This literature paved the underlying foundation for my problem of practice. Educational leaders are in a place to challenge and disrupt these systems and change the trajectory of minoritized students within their context by implementing positive changes around social justice and equity (Fullan, 2011). The existing research, however, indicates that even leaders who are implementing Culturally Responsive Practices (CRP) are met with challenges. Currently, a problem exists where leaders are not equipped with the necessary resources to lead in diverse schools. The schools in which our current leaders serve have become increasingly diverse, but the preparation and PD for many administrators within these contexts have not adjusted to meet this shift. For all students to be successful, there must be an intentional focus on giving school-based leaders the tools and strategies to lead in these settings. I argue, echoing Bondy et al. (2013), that given the evidence demonstrating a demographic shift in student population, coupled with gaps in achievement, equity, and opportunity, it is imperative for schools to embrace CRP and overcome these challenges.

Purpose of the Study

This research sought to explore how school-based leaders work to close achievement, equity, and opportunity gaps. Specifically, this study focused on understanding how the

school-based leader can use the positional influence identified in Leithwood and Louis (2012) to lead with a culturally responsive lens.

Ultimately, the school-based leader has the potential to promote an environment inclusive of all students, thereby having a favorable impact on achievement disparities. Findings from this study contribute to the literature in a variety of ways. First, findings from this research provide insight into how school-based leaders work to close achievement, equity, and opportunity gaps. Second, insight from this study adds to the current literature surrounding the impact of culturally responsive pedagogy on historically marginalized demographics. Third, these findings contribute to a better understanding of the characteristics and practices relative to self-reflection, culturally responsive teacher development, creation of a culturally responsive school environment, and the importance of family voice as an essential component of culturally responsive leadership. Additionally, there are implications for leadership preparation and PD provided to contemporary school-based leaders who are faced with addressing the many needs of growing diverse student populations.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study included:

1. What is the nature of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in Wakanda Public Schools (WPS)?
    a) What do study participants in WPS know about culturally responsive leadership?
    b) How do study participants in WPS understand their roles and responsibilities as culturally responsive leaders?

2. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider to be important in providing excellent and equitable opportunities for all students?
    a) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction?
    b) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a culturally responsive school environment for all students?
    c) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a strong community partnership?
3. How do school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors?

The first question sought to gain an overall understanding of how principals and assistant principals in WPS defined CRL, as well as how they understood their responsibility to serve as culturally responsive leaders. Question two identified the practices and behaviors of a culturally responsive leader who influences instruction, the school environment, and community partnerships. Lastly, question three explored the importance of critical self-reflection in each leader's ability to implement culturally responsive practices. By interviewing three culturally responsive leaders and members of their stakeholder communities, this research explored practical examples of how a leader enacts his or her leadership role to plan for and obtain equity for all students. Each of these leaders made significant efforts to engage in culturally responsive PD and transform their leadership practices to meet the needs of all students.

To answer these questions, I conducted a four-part approach, interviewing district leaders in WPS, interviewing each of the three study principals, surveying the teachers in

each leader's school paired with follow-up interviews of select teachers, and analyzing organizational documents. My methodology, which is fully discussed in Chapter three, was guided by my conceptual framework. I drew on concepts from Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) that focuses on the practices and behaviors that school-based leaders enact to influence equitable outcomes for students and families (Khalifa et al, 2016). Additionally, I drew on the Core Leadership Capacities (CLC) named in Leithwood and Louis (2012) Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF). I was interested in how study participants enacted their roles as building level leaders through a culturally responsive lens.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

Existing studies around CRL predominately examined leaders within a majority-minority school context. Generally, the student populations were largely homogeneous in terms of race and socio-economics. Contrastingly, this study attempted to examine the three culturally responsive leaders who served in a diverse school system in regards to student demographics related to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The three schools were from a school division located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. This district made significant efforts in supporting culturally responsive teaching practices by offering robust PD, creating instructional coaching positions focused on equity, and compensating educators for becoming proficient in CRT implementation. Participants for the study were identified partially for their participation in this program. Additionally, the study focused on principals and assistant principals as formal building-level leadership roles and how they enacted cultural responsiveness in their contexts. The participants were not high school

administrators. Further, the participants did not include teacher team leaders, instructional coaches, or district-level leadership.

Limitations

This study produced case studies of specific school leadership beliefs and practices as they unfolded within three school contexts. Although the portraits provided in-depth insight into the culturally responsive school leadership within these three contexts, the findings are not completely applicable or transferable to other settings. Nonetheless, the findings may inform other school-based leaders about culturally responsive practices they can implement in their own buildings.

Study Overview

This capstone sought to understand how three school leaders engaged in CRL practices; how they understood this work; and what behaviors were considered important in reducing opportunity and equity gaps and supported culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction. The study focused primarily on the formal roles of the principal and assistant principal as they were best positioned to establish a culturally responsive school environment. I conducted interviews of three school-based leaders to evaluate their understanding of CRL and their ability to implement it in their settings. Additionally, I gave teachers within each school a survey designed to identify CRL behaviors and practices exhibited by the leader. I then conducted interviews with teachers to gain a rich narrative describing these behaviors and practices. Lastly, I conducted an artifact analysis of each leader's PD plan, school improvement plan, and an essay they each wrote about CRT to determine how CRL was integrated in their work as a principal. Ultimately, the findings informed considerations and recommendations for other school-based leaders on how they

can implement culturally responsive practices, especially those who find themselves in similar contexts.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Broadly, this literature review focuses on the relationship among the school leader, the teachers they influence, and the impact the leader can have on all students, specifically those from marginalized communities. The literature review highlights the connection that certain behaviors of a culturally responsive leader can develop culturally responsive teachers and a culturally responsive school environment. First, the review begins by acknowledging the distinct influence of school-based leaders. It then positions how "culturally responsive practices" and "culturally responsive leaders" can influence student success. The literature on CRL is then discussed in four components: (a) critical self-reflection, (b) instructional leadership, (c) culturally responsive school environments, and (d) community-based leadership. Each of these research veins correspond research questions this capstone sought to answer. Next, the literature review provides an analysis of existing case study literature on culturally responsive leaders. Overall, I sought to utilize a practitioner-focused lens to explore the influence of the school-based leader on student achievement and narrowing the equity and opportunity gap.

Methods Used to Develop the Literature Review

The journal articles, reports, and books used for this case study were found by searching the University of Virginia's (UVA) seven educational databases, EBSCO Information Database, and Google Scholar. Emphasis was placed on specific terms such as "culturally responsive leadership," "culturally responsive pedagogy," "culturally responsive

environment," and "culturally responsive." As I sought to find empirical research on how leaders closed the gap, I intentionally included search terms such as "leader," "school-based leader," "assistant principal," and "principal" in my query. I ruled out the many articles focusing on how classroom teachers work to close the gap as I wanted to narrow my focus to the role of the building-level leader. To capture a definition encompassing a leader serving a diverse community, the focus was on articles providing leadership characteristics transferable to multiple contexts and demographics (Patton, 2012).

Influence of School-Based Leadership

Prior literature-established effective school leadership at the building and district levels can positively influence student achievement (Duke, 2015; Louis et al., 2010). Waters et al. (2004) determined a statistically significant positive impact of educational leadership on student achievement. Specifically, Leithwood and Louis (2012) argued that school leadership was central to the school ecosystem which is comprised of many stakeholders including district and state level leadership, parents, community members, teachers, and students. Hitt and Tucker (2016) added that the leader has the potential and ability to influence or be influenced by each of these stakeholders. An effective leader understands how the synergy among self, the school stakeholders, political implications, and policy implementation can improve student achievement (Sergiovanni, 2007). Ultimately, effective school leaders understand the more students, staff, and the school community are connected, the more opportunities the school community will have in meeting the needs of its members (Gooden, 2012). Overall, school leaders are in the best position to support school-level reforms (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Consequently, unless supported by the principal, cultural responsiveness might be isolated to individual classrooms with varying levels of

implementation (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2016; Khalifa, 2018). This necessitates a better understanding of the specific characteristics and role of CRL to create culturally responsive environments in schools.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Johnson (2006), and later Lindsey et al. (2018), put forth definitions of CRL requiring the need for school leaders to understand their own assumptions, beliefs, and values about people and cultures different from their own to effectively lead in settings with diverse student populations. Johnson and Fuller (2015) added that CRL was supportive of philosophies, practices, and policies that create inclusive environments for students and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Cultural responsiveness cannot simply be limited to discussions of race. Ladson Billings (1995) posited that a cultural responsiveness stance seeks to understand how different experiences impact students, is inclusive of diverse perspectives and backgrounds, and develops connections between the school staff and the communities they serve. Leadership completes this term as several studies demonstrated how culturally responsive practices are more common in schools where principals model and engage in CRL practices (Bustamante et al., 2009; Gay, 2000; Hammond, 2016; Khalifa et al., 2016). Leaders can recruit, retain, and develop culturally responsive teachers and ensure culturally responsive practices are systematically implemented throughout the school environment rather than isolated to a few classrooms (Gay, 2010).

Khalifa et al.'s (2016) seminal work broadened the literature regarding what is known about a culturally responsive leader's behaviors and mannerisms, practices, and policies that influence school climate, structure, and student outcomes. The researchers' synthesis of the

literature categorized these characteristics into four strands. First, the leader used critical self-reflection to be aware of their values and beliefs. This development of what Gooden and Dantley (2012) referred to as a critical conscience is especially significant when serving poor students of color. Second, school leaders must recognize the value of culturally responsive practices and ensure the teachers in their building are provided instructional leadership which develops and maintains a high level of cultural proficiency (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2016). Third, leaders must create systems, practices, and policies within their buildings that promote a culturally responsive context and inclusive learning environment for historically marginalized students (Cooper, 2009; Santamaria, 2014). Finally, leaders must see themselves as advocates of community-based issues and work with families to create a culturally affirming and inclusive context at school (Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa, 2012).

Initially, this review highlights the current research within each of these four strands unpacking school leadership behaviors and practices yielding positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes for students from marginalized communities. But as Khalifa et al. (2016) articulated, the overlap and intersectionality of these CRL strands should not be dismissed. Further research is needed to consider these traits holistically, rather than as individual entities. Additionally, these researchers acknowledged that it would be "improper… to claim these expressions of CRL are exhaustive" and "should only be considered a small fraction" of the emerging literature in this field of educational leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1295).

Many of the empirical studies on CRL were limited to qualitative case studies on determining which CRL characteristics a given leader possesses (English & Ellison, 2017). This review also synthesized these case studies as they provided insight on CRL behaviors in

specific contexts. Although contexts (urban or suburban), level of school (elementary, middle, high, university), and background of the participants (race, gender, ethnicity) differed, the research provided practicing school-based leaders CRL characteristics that could be transferred to their own practice and setting. Moreover, these findings added to and strengthened Khalifa et al.'s (2016) framework.

Critical Self Reflection

First and foremost, it is necessary for culturally responsive leaders to consider their own identity background and experiences to compare them with the community they serve to bridge the gaps between home and school cultures (Theoharis, 2007). Leaders must have a strong understanding of self, others, and the context in which they educate children (Spanierman et al., 2011). Riehl (2000) argued this initial step regarding how leaders define culture and diversity in their schools, coach their staffs to address these histories and experiences, and how educators in a school context begin to advocate for marginalized communities. Khalifa (2018) summarized critical self-reflection for leaders as possessing the ability to: (a) understand the oppressive contexts of their school community, (b) identify and vocalize how they are personally involved or complicit with systems in schools that perpetuate the achievement gap, and (c) influence staff members to be critically reflective in their practice.

Khalifa et al. (2016) maintained that if it is necessary for teachers to develop a critical conscience, then leaders must also engage in this practice. Several researchers identified the teacher engaging in critical self-reflection as the starting point for increasing cultural understanding. Gay and Kirkland (2003) provided an instrument, the Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale (MTCS), as a tool to engage in this process. They argued that to

implement culturally responsive teaching practices, it is necessary for educators to understand their current knowledge regarding the student cultures they serve. Pollack (2012) and Milner (2013) both offered empirical evidence supporting teachers who can recognize how their beliefs and practice affirm their students' cultures, which resulted in positively impacting student achievement. To support teachers in this self-reflection, Spanierman et al. (2011) contended that leaders themselves must acknowledge institutional racism in school structures and practices. With an understanding of the cultural assumptions of their school, leaders can provide spaces for staff members to collectively discuss and address these negative biases and assumptions. White-Clark (2005) stated that teachers who lack cultural awareness will rely on their own experiences and understandings of other cultures when these forums are absent. Unchecked this can lead to biases or well-intended miscommunications and interactions with students and families.

Leaders possess the influence to guide teachers to value the assets of non-dominant cultures. Goldenberg (2014) referred to this as cultural capital and acknowledged that the school principal can establish a culture of asset-based language and tone around minority students and families. Young (2010) interviewed a group of teachers and administrators who were implementing culturally responsive curriculum. Educators in this context found that having a leader who supported their critical awareness and self-reflection encouraged them to challenge inequities in their context. Through critical self-reflection, leaders positioned themselves and their staff to modify instructional practices that seek to be culturally inclusive of all students in their school setting (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Vassallo, 2015).

Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership

Existing research established a clear connection between a school leader's implementation of CRL and a teacher's ability to teach in a culturally responsive manner (Jones & Nichols, 2013; Lindsey et al., 2018). Culturally responsive building-level leaders ensure they hire culturally responsive teachers, encourage teachers to use culturally responsive classroom management strategies, ensure teachers are trained in using these strategies, and hold them accountable to do so (Vogel, 2011).

Recent scholarship looked beyond the traditional roles of the school leader and classroom teacher for implementation of culturally responsive instructional leadership (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). Marshall and Khalifa conducted a six-month study in an Eastern, suburban school district regarding the role of instructional coaches on the potential to serve the school principal in meeting instructional needs of marginalized students. Here, Domina et al.'s (2015) definition of instructional coaches was used by the researchers to describe their role and capacity within districts. Often, instructional coaches are used to develop curriculum and provide ongoing professional development (PD) and mentorship for teachers and leaders. They are generally involved in building educators' capacity to implement district reform and strengthen teaching practices.

To fully support culturally responsive instructional leadership, the literature stated that it is necessary for school leadership to distribute responsibilities across several leadership roles (Spillane, 2001**)**. Marshall and Khalifa's conclusions were based on 90-minute semi-structured interviews from five individuals in equity-related leadership positions, four instructional coaches and one Director of Educational Equity within the same district. Questions elicited information around the participants' backgrounds, their

perceptions of equity within their contexts, how their role addressed equity, and barriers they experienced in carrying out equity-related work. Five themes emerged from this study: (a) equity and culturally responsive policies directed from district-level leaders (i.e., superintendent, deputy superintendent) made it easier for instructional coaches to intentionally support CRP; (b) teachers needed to trust their instructional coaches in order to have authentic equity-based conversations; (c) to maximize effectiveness, instructional coaches had to unlearn traditional beliefs about school that were not culturally responsive; (d) the learning of the coaches was enhanced by participating in PD with cultural and community partners; and (e) the more instructional coaching strategies used by the participants reflected cultural responsiveness, the greater impact the coaches had on teaching practice. Khalifa (2011) argued that leaders must have the cultural capacity and proficiency to mentor and coach teachers who may not understand the necessity of CRP. This later work with instructional coaching offered a solution to systematically support teachers in each building if the coaches themselves possessed cultural proficiency.

Khalifa et al. (2016) argued that if CRP is indeed the vision and priority of the school, then it must be the school leader who provides these opportunities for professional growth. In a case study of six educational leaders in New York City, Genoa (2016) concluded that leaders can develop teachers to be more culturally responsive. The leaders in this study worked with six teachers; over the course of the year, qualitative data gathered through interviews and observations showed growth amongst the group of teachers because of leadership coaching. Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) conducted a yearlong cross case analysis of six White urban principals who had set multiculturalism as a priority for their diverse schools. Unlike the leaders in Genoa's (2016) study, the principals demonstrated

varying levels of comfort in leading teachers to maintain culturally proficient instructional practices. In fact, some simply relied on their teachers to develop other teachers, which resulted in disjointed implementation of CRP. The researchers maintained that to be truly inclusive of all students, such work needed to be guided by the school leadership. Additionally, they noted district-level leadership needed to ensure their school-based leaders had PD themselves to lead in diverse school settings (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006).

School leaders also can influence instruction by providing resources and curriculum for their teachers. Khalifa (2012) conducted a two-year ethnographic study of a Black principal leading an alternative school. The leader facilitated development of a curriculum allowing students who were previously labeled as behavior problems in school to study hip hop in their classes. Supporting Riehl's (2000) conclusion that the principal plays a significant role in creating an inclusionary space for students, this study found that students in this context responded to curriculum that allowed them to embrace their cultures and identities. This resulted in a decrease in student misbehavior and an increase in academic success (Khalifa, 2012). Although targeted towards a specific context (i.e., urban youth in an alternative school), this example of a principal leading culturally responsive curriculum supported earlier studies of leaders who targeted curriculum based on the culture of their student population. Wagstaff and Fusaraelli (1999) were part of a research team who studied high performing schools in Texas with most Hispanic students. In evaluating 24 principals and assistant principals, they found that these school-level leaders effectively provided instructional resources and PD of the current research on educating Latinx students, as well as guided the creation of culturally inclusive curriculum. Frankenberg and Siegal-Hawley (2008) determined that teachers who had leaders that supported culturally responsive

curriculum felt better prepared to engage in lesson planning and teaching in a culturally responsive manner.

Instructional leadership is essential to the work of CRL. Beyond modeling CRP, leaders are responsible for creating professional learning opportunities for their staff (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Per the Ontario Leadership Framework (Leithwood & Louis, 2012), school leaders are responsible for aligning curriculum and teaching resources, providing staff PD, and allocating financial and human capital resources to the vision and priorities of the building. Within that same argument, leadership must ensure their teachers have access to curriculum and resources that are culturally responsive.

Culturally Responsive School Environments

Through self-reflection and building the capacity of their staff to be culturally responsive, leaders can influence overall school climate and environment to be inclusive for all students (Finnigan & Daly, 2011). In their study of principals in urban contexts, Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) added that leaders focused on multiculturalism can foster the meaning of diversity, promote inclusive practices, and build connections between the school and the community. Also studying leaders in urban contexts, Duke (2014) contended that leaders focused on school reform must raise awareness of the community problems to be addressed and the obstacles to overcome, present a plan that gives the necessary focus and direction to guide action with a social justice lens, and possess the competence needed to lead staff in addressing problems of equity.

Richards et al. (2007) urged leaders to view cultural responsiveness through an organizational lens that evaluates how the school operates and responds to diverse populations. Equity audits are one measure to draw awareness to achievement, opportunity,

and equity gaps (Khalifa, 2018). These audits of achievement data and disciplinary trends highlight disparities between demographics and socioeconomic groups (Skiba et al., 2011). This evidence can be used by leaders to intentionally plan for equity and hold school stakeholders accountable for making progress towards closing the gaps (Skrla et al., 2004).

Brown et al. (2011) collected quantitative data through equity audits designed to find and document patterns of equity and inequity in student learning and activities across 24 schools in North Carolina. The schools were divided into small gap (SG) and large gap (LG) schools based on student achievement data. The sites all were within the same geographic region and had similar demographics in regards to percentages of minority students, economically disadvantaged students, and EB students.

Through in-depth interviews and site visits of the schools, researchers concluded that differences in leadership had a significant impact on student achievement. In analysis of qualitative data gained from the interviews, Brown et al. (2009) found leaders in SG schools versus LG schools were much more deliberate in the following actions:

- They set the stage by recognizing, encouraging, and celebrating academic achievement;
- They closely monitor teacher and learning by offering instructional feedback and support; and
- They expect excellence from every student. (p. 6)

Overall, the SG leaders not only ensured there was equity in programs and teacher quality, but they also pushed high academic standards for every student regardless of background. The positive correlation in these strategies and student achievement in the SG schools' points

to the necessity of school leaders to conduct an equity audit of their systems and programs to ensure they are addressing opportunity gaps.

A qualitative study in New Zealand public schools offered further support for the importance of educational leaders setting high expectations for all students resulting in academic growth for minority students. Mugisha (2017) evaluated the impact of three principals serving majority-minority schools in New Zealand and how their "well intentioned, creative and collaborative actions enhanced engagement and achievement of minority-culture students" (p. 15). Leaders in these contexts ensured that all staff members embraced and lifted the voice of the Maori students and families, an indigenous ethnic minority people of New Zealand. Ultimately, by leading and modeling the acceptance of indigenous identities, creating spaces for student voice, and affirming the multiple cultures within a building, leaders can promote culturally responsive school environments (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Khalifa, 2010; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012).

Community-Based Leadership

School leadership plays a role in supporting community goals and improving the lives of students. Steele and Cohn-Vargas (2013) argued that building a strong support network for students and families is essential. Creating a positive school-to-home climate also means students' multiple identities are valued and nurtured, which allows students to feel safer and more connected to their schools. Several researchers examined the role of the principal as a community leader. In a case study of urban school principals, Denhardt and Glaser (1999) asserted that the leader must have a deep understanding of the surrounding neighborhoods being served. Further, they must go out into the community to build trust and legitimacy, specifically with neighborhoods that have historically been marginalized. In Khalifa's 2012

study of a Black male principal at an urban alternative school, the principal conducted school site and home visits. Khalifa shadowed the principal to 23 community-based visits over two academic school years to collect data and understand how the community viewed, accepted, and trusted the principal. Khalifa found the principal's high visibility, personal interactions, and advocacy of community issues gained him trust and credibility of the members of his students' neighborhoods. This resulted in increased parent and community involvement and a greater sense of student belonging in the school. Graduation rates and overall student academic performance increased because of this school community partnership. Qualitative survey and interview data from students supported this trend as they consistently reported a sense of belonging and increased motivation to do well in their academics because of the work of their principal.

Khalifa's (2012) study of a community-based leader is important, because it complemented the work of other researchers who demonstrated the influence the principal could have on the school by supporting community partnerships. Howard (2003) and Kirkland (2008) are examples where leaders supported and encouraged teachers in conducting home visits by providing time and resources to accomplish this task. By providing structures and allocating appropriate resources, leaders can provide opportunities for staff to engage the parents and the community as well.

The literature articulated a compelling case for each of Khalifa et al.'s (2016) strands of CRL. In addition to this evidence, it is important to evaluate existing case study literature that looks at these CRL behaviors holistically. Overall, these case studies added to the scholarship by providing examples of how leaders can exhibit multiple characteristics of a culturally responsive leader. Table 1 represents a sample of such studies and how they

contribute to the overall understanding of what we know about CRL. Moreover, the gaps and limitations of these studies outlined in the table identify potential areas for further research and exploration.

Culturally Responsive Case Studies

Several studies used variations of case study analysis to understand how CRL behaviors are enacted in a school setting. Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) employed a grounded theory methodology to analyze and understand how different events and phenomena within a school setting were understood (Patton, 2012). To answer the question, "how does a culturally responsive leader of a culturally and linguistically diverse school enact her leadership role with teachers, students, and parents?" (p. 181), researchers interviewed an African American female assistant principal in a high school in Central Texas, six of her teachers, and nine parents from her community. In addition to interviews, three days of shadowing the leader, and 18 total classroom observations, researchers also conducted an artifact analysis of institutional documents related to CRL and pedagogy. They analyzed the results of this qualitative study and categorized the data into overall themes that emerged regarding how CRL behaviors were acted out in a school (Glaser, 2010). Six major themes emerged supporting Khalifa et al.'s (2016) four strands of CRL (Table 2).

Using Madhlangobe and Gordon's (2012) six themes of CRL as a framework, Spicer (2016) provided the CRL literature with a phenomenological qualitative case study on the experiences of four African American female high school principals in Texas. Through surveys, interviews, and observations of these leaders, the researchers determined two of the four principals adhered to the traits of a CRL as posited by Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012). The overall influence on school-wide culturally responsive practices of these leaders was

determined to be more impactful on student achievement and creating an inclusive school community than their peers who only demonstrated some of the characteristics of CRL. Additionally, Spicer (2016) attributed the difficulties these leaders experienced in implementing CRL to the fact they were African American females serving in a Texas public school lacking district support for culturally responsive practices. Additionally, the principals felt their passion was not being valued because they were African American women. Although these barriers are specific to race and school context, other case studies also identified the lack of district support as a barrier to systematic implementation of CRL (English & Ellison, 2017; Horton, 2017).

Santamaria (2014) conducted a case study with a broader sample size of six leaders of color who all previously published work in the field of CRL and were practicing culturally responsive leaders. The researcher was specifically interested in exploring how the biases, assumptions, and sense-making of leaders of color in K-20 settings affected their leadership goals and decisions. Additionally, of these practices they wanted to know which were the most effective in having positive outcomes for students of color. The author used Yin's (2011) approach to case study analysis by applying context to a series of events, conditions, and relationships in each study. She used interviews, surveys about each leader's ethnic and racial identity, and observations of the leader as data sources. Themes were synthesized in a comparative analysis across their behaviors and statements. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used as a lens and guiding theory for this study as an aim to provide in-depth culturally responsive profiles of leaders. Santamaria justified this methodology by saying:

> This research, like that of other CRT theorist and scholars, serves to further engage in the elimination of racial oppression, through a scholar of color's commitment to social justice, which is part of a shared goal of addressing prevalent forms of

> oppression in the United States and similar Western societies. (Santamaria, 2014, pp. 352)

Like Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012), the themes that emerged from Santamaria's (2014) study contributed to the literature on CRL and overlapped with Khalifa et al.'s four strands of CRL (Table 2).

English and Ellison (2017) offered a multi-site comparative cross case study analysis of four principals, each in an urban Priority School in a large Southeastern U.S. school district who each attempt to implement CRL as an avenue of school reform. The authors were interested in the common lived experiences (Creswell, 2017) of the participants with implementing CRL and the barriers they needed to overcome to achieve culturally responsive school reform. Additionally, by using a multi-site case study, they sought to contribute to an understanding of how CRL behaviors transferred to different contexts (Gay et al., 2009). Participants in the study differed across gender, race, and educational setting (i.e., elementary, middle, high). The researchers used a series of 90-minute semi-structured interviews to identify what each leader believed around implementing CRL practices within their school. Artifact analysis of the respective schools' mission and vision statements and their school improvement plans determined the extent to which the leader embodied characteristics of CRL based on Jones and Nichols' (2013) Cultural Competence and Leadership Continuum. This study is significant because it added to the existing literature on CRL behaviors and characteristics. Additionally, they added to the developing scholarship on barriers to effectively implement CRL. Specifically, the lack of preparation leaders received to adequately serve in diverse schools and the lack of systematic district support were obstacles leaders had to overcome.

In a multi-site case study of four elementary school principals who lead majority-minority, low socioeconomic student populations in California, Horton (2017) added to the literature on the barriers of implementing CRL. Each principal she interviewed and observed specifically recognized their district did not have any formal structures or systems to help facilitate CRL practices. Some identified the minimal PD for leaders offered by the district were supportive in their practice but identified a desire for more consistent PD (Horton, 2017). Across these sites, the four CRL themes that prevailed, overlapping with Khalifa et al.'s four strands, were effective culturally responsive leaders (a) involved all members of the school community, (b) built inclusive school environments, (c) provided CRT curriculum and instruction, and (d) were self-reflective and examined personal biases and assumptions about communities and families.

The case studies on CRL reviewed were not inclusive of all existing case studies but their methodological approaches, contexts and participants, and contributions to the existing CRL literature represented a viable approach to evaluating CRL for future research. Further, their gaps and limitations identified areas that are ripe for further exploration within this field of study.

Mitchell (2015) called for further study of the characteristics of culturally responsive leaders, in both urban and non-urban settings, to give more insight into the challenges they face. Primarily, most of the current case studies investigated leaders of color serving in predominantly minority-majority schools. English and Ellison (2017) had White participants but their focus was primarily on the barriers these leaders faced rather than effective strategies of CRL that other leaders could transfer to their practice. Therefore, a valuable contribution to this field of study would be a multi-site case study that included participants

of varying background and ethnicity. Further supporting the influence of such a case study would be if these leaders were in the same educational context (e.g., elementary, middle, or high school) to streamline the number of variables when comparing the data. A relative strength of Horton (2017) and Spicer (2017) was that each researcher narrowed their participant pool to specific levels, elementary and high school respectively. This allowed for more concrete cross-site comparison.

Of the studies reviewed, only Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) included the perspectives of teachers and parents to support the rhetoric of the leader interviewed. Despite only having a sample size of one leader, this grounded theory approach was valuable compared to other studies that only interviewed or surveyed the leaders themselves. None of the studies analyzed used student perspective which Santamaria (2014) contended would significantly impact the literature given the goal of CRL is to positively influence the academic achievement and sense of belonging of all students. These gaps in the current literature offered a unique opportunity for the study of my capstone.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODS

This capstone sought to explore how school-based leaders used their positional influence to enact culturally responsive practices and behaviors within their contexts. Therefore, I first unpacked how each individual leader chosen for the study understood CRL and their perceptions of how it could be implemented in their respective schools. I then collected data on their educational philosophies, motivation to work with diverse populations, and perspectives regarding how they, as the leaders, can impact the success of marginalized students in their buildings. Additionally, I collected survey data from teachers and interview data from district leaders on their perspectives of how each leader enacts CRL behaviors. Further, an analysis of organizational documents supplemented this qualitative data. The results from these findings allowed me to situate the data within the CRL conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study involved the intersection of Leithwood and Louis's (2012) instructional leadership framework of linking leadership to learning and culturally responsive leadership. The overlap of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) and CRL are depicted in Figure 1. Here, the positional role of the school-based leader is emphasized as they have influence on multiple stakeholders within the organization. The literature on CRL identified the impact a leader can have on each of those stakeholders as depicted in blue. Khalifa (2018) posited that school-based leaders are often considered

drivers of any type of culturally responsive reform. They are held accountable for growth and practices critical for change. Leaders who are not critically self-aware or knowledgeable about racism and histories of oppression cannot work to reverse the systematic inequalities. Ultimately, the more the leader understands these relationships, the more students, staff, and the school community are connected, the more opportunities the school community has in meeting the needs of its members (Donohoo, 2017; Putnam, 2000).

This study utilized OLF because of its focus on the school leader as the catalyst of change. Leithwood and Louis (2012) demonstrated that school leaders were essential for the development of excellent teaching, school environments, and overall student well-being. Further, school leaders could implement supportive systems and structures for all students. The OLF framework provided leaders with a set of practices for facilitating school wide collaboration focused on student success.

The OLF articulates five Core Leadership Capacities (CLCs) in which effective school leaders engage: (a) setting goals, (b) aligning resources with priorities, (c) promoting collaborative learning cultures, (d) using data, and (e) engaging in courageous conversations. The OLF further supports that leadership influences several domains: (a) student families, (b) teachers, (c) school and classroom conditions, and (d) community stakeholders. CRL adds a new and complimentary dimension to the OLF. When combined, CRL requires the school leader to deeply reflect upon each of the OLF domains of practice, particularly about how those practices and systems impact historically marginalized students. In the following five sub-sections, I explained how these two frameworks, when used together, offers a powerful guide for leadership through equity.

Setting Goals

The school leader is pivotal in setting the goal, mission, and vision of the school. They work with staff to ensure specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) goals are set to ensure effective teaching and learning. The culturally responsive leader sets direction by first modeling culturally responsive teaching practices (Khalifa, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Further, they establish goal-setting meetings with teachers to examine the success of all students in the class, but specifically those from historically marginalized demographics. Intentional focus on these students leads to deep reflective conversations between the leader and staff about how to shift instructional practices towards supporting the students' academic and cultural assets (Hammond, 2016). Overall, the culturally responsive leader promotes a vision for inclusive instructional and behavioral practices (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2007).

Aligning Resources with Priorities

School leaders are responsible for aligning curriculum and teaching resources, providing staff PD, and allocating financial and human capital resources to the vision and priorities of the building. A leader who leads through a culturally responsive lens creates culturally responsive PD opportunities for their teachers (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Voltz et al., 2003). This enables educators in the context of the building to produce novel culturally responsive curriculum for the students they serve (Sleeter, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Khalifa (2018) contended that it is the moral imperative of the school leader not only to continually build the capacity for cultural responsiveness in their staff but to recruit and hire diverse staff that reflect the student population within the school.

Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures

When considering the structure of public-school districts, the school-based leader is best positioned to build a capacity for collective efficacy. They are in contact with district leadership, parents, teachers, students, and community members on a consistent basis. Therefore, a core leadership practice is enabling these different stakeholders to work together with a central focus on student learning and achievement. The culturally responsive leader consistently seeks opportunities where the school and community can work together towards this goal (Cooper, 2009; Ishimaru 2013). Additionally, they seek to build relationships among all stakeholders in an inclusive manner and one representative of all voices and communities (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) maintained that these relationships must be deep and authentic to be truly impactful. Khalifa (2012) added that the school leader must be an advocate for the communities they serve by being an activist for community-based issues. By having deep connections with the community, the leader can help build positive understandings of students and families to avoid deficit thinking and low expectations (Davies, 2003).

Using Data

A core responsibility of leadership is to gather and analyze district, school, and classroom data to identify trends, strengths, and weakness in teaching learning. Effective leaders use data to reach school and classroom goals. Culturally responsive leaders use data to bring awareness to the academic achievement gap (Santamaria, 2014). Additionally, they use data to discover and track disparities in discipline data, access to higher-level courses, and address inequities in the implementation of remedial programs (Skrla et al., 2004;

Theoharis, 2007). The use of this data informs systematic change and specific actions geared toward erasing any gaps in achievement, equity, or opportunity for students.

Engaging in Courageous Conversations

The final capacity of leadership is the leader's ability to engage in conversations that challenge current practice and provide courageous feedback to teachers, in turn leading to improvement in student achievement. The culturally responsive leader first self reflects on his or her own practice and cultural lens (Khalifa, 2018). They are critically aware of their own biases and assumptions and are committed to continuous learning about the cultures of their families, students, and contexts (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). They use this critical consciousness to challenge practices that perpetuate the achievement gap and potentially oppress historically marginalized students (Gooden & Dantley, 2012). Here, leaders are courageous in confronting staff members who continually propagate systems and practices of inequity. Through conversation and modeling, they can develop them into culturally responsive educators (Khalifa, 2013). Further, they are courageous enough to remove and counsel out educators who refuse or are unable to grow as culturally responsive teachers.

Culturally Responsive Leadership and Core Leadership Competencies

This study explored the culturally responsive practices and behaviors school- based leaders applied to the core leadership competencies identified in the OLF. This framework shaped the questions I sought to answer, guided the development of my data analysis, and informed how I organized the information I collected. The next session details my research design and methods.

Study Design

Setting and Participants

This study included three school-based leaders from the same medium-sized district in the Mid-Atlantic United States. To protect the confidentiality of participants, this district is referred to as "Wakanda Public Schools (WPS)." WPS consisted of families and students from rural, suburban, and urban contexts. Like districts across the nation, WPS was experiencing demographic shifts.

Racial and ethnic diversity in WPS has increased in the last seven years. While the percentage of White students decreased from around 70% to 65% of the students during this time, the percentages of Latino, Asian, and multiracial students increased. The fastest growing group was Latino students, increasing from 9% of students in the district in 2012 to nearly 13% in 2018. In fact, 2016 was the first year in which Latino students were the largest ethnic or racial group other than White students in WPS. The trend of increased diversity followed a national trend and promises to continue in Wakanda, as the cohorts of younger students (i.e., elementary age) are more diverse than those of older students (i.e., secondary age).

The percentage of students in WPS who are economically disadvantaged grew from 20% in the 2007-2008 school year to around 30% in the 2017-2018 school year. This is an approximate 52% increase in the population of students who are economically disadvantaged, compared to an overall enrollment growth in the district of about 9%. In other words, the economically disadvantaged population grew at about five times the rate of the overall population during this period. My selection of this district matched the following criteria:

- a district that is linguistically, culturally, ethnically, and social economically diverse;
- a trend in demographics that is shifting towards more diversity;
- a district that did not have a minority-majority student population in a large urban context (a gap in the existing literature is the lack of case studies in contexts where leaders serve heterogeneous student populations); and
- a district struggling to meet the needs of all students.

Upon selection of the district, I chose three school-based leaders to serve as what Hays and Singh (2012) referred to as information-rich cases. The descriptions of the leaders outlined in Table 3 represented a sampling with diversity in background, longevity as an administrator, and student demographics served that will provide insight to the research questions. Each of these leaders fit the following criteria:

- articulated interest in supporting students from marginalized communities;
- participated in Wakanda Public Schools' CRL PD (each of the leaders chosen earned a certification for their leadership in this work); and
- served in schools with equity, opportunity, and/or achievement gaps between student demographics.

Although many leaders within WPS matched this criterion, the final selection was based on the level of participation in the division's CRL certification process. WPS offers a year-long process that provides an opportunity for educators to receive credit and compensation for documenting their learning across three characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy: critical self-reflection, integrating practices into their practice, and successfully engaging families and communities. Participants must include a written essay, a

portfolio of their work, and deliver a 30-minute presentation to a panel of their peers that demonstrates examples of these characteristics and its positive impact on student learning.

Moreover, it was important to have participants from different genders, ethnicities, backgrounds, and experience. This diversity allowed me to draw similarities from their perceptions and leadership behaviors within the CRL conceptual framework to fully address the stated research questions and study outcomes. Again, names of participants and their schools have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

Data Collection Plan and Rationale

This study was conducted in four parts over four months from October 2019 to January 2020. Parts one and two sought to address Research Question 1 by interviewing division leadership and the school-based leader to determine the nature and level of implementation of CRL within WPS. Part three was conducted by a Qualtrics survey sent to teachers in the leaders' buildings. One of the questions on the survey asked teachers if they were interested in a follow-up interview to supply a more detailed narrative. I interviewed two teachers from each school. Lastly, part four included an artifact analysis to identify patterns across leadership practices and behaviors. Table 4 shows an overview and rationale for each of these methods of data collection.

Data Sources

Table 5 outlines the data sources gathered and analyzed to answer the research questions posed in this study. Additionally, Table 5 provides an overview of which data sources were used to inform each of the research questions.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

Semi-Structured Interviews

Parts one and two of the data collection plan involved interviewing district and school-based leaders. I set up an initial meeting with each of the leaders to detail the structure for the case study. The interview portion asked questions about the individual's background and learning history that articulated their own path in education. I gained insight on the person's sense-making and the lens in which they view their leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2014). I then asked about why they entered education. Santamaria (2014) identified that many culturally responsive leaders enter the field to rectify their own experiences in school or to provide opportunities for marginalized students (Research Question 1a, 1b). I also interviewed district-level leadership who helped create and support CRL PD in WPS. This component added to the qualitative narrative necessary to answer Research Question 1 regarding the nature of CRL in Wakanda Public Schools District. Table 6 displays the District Leaders interviewed for this study.

I coded the interview to look specifically for CRL characteristics and how they overlapped with the OLF (Appendix K).

Surveys

I created a Qualtrics survey to be completed by various stakeholders within the leaders' school community, specifically teachers and staff. Analyzing the overlap of this qualitative data helped me explain "what has been described and what is observed" (Patton, 2002, p. 125). Additionally, this process gave voice to the participants and described how they experienced a given phenomenon, in this case the leadership of a school-based leader (Patton, 2002).

Using a nine-point Likert scale, questions designed for the survey sought to unveil the extent to which each participant thought their corresponding leader enacted culturally responsive characteristics. This instrument was modified from an existing survey Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) created to study similar leader case studies in a school district in Texas. Overall, data collection for this research sought to provide insight on how each leader portrayed the characteristics of CRL (Khalifa et al., 2016).

The survey was separated into three sections for analysis purposes. The first section gathered demographic information about the survey participants in regards to their ethnicity and how many years of teaching and/or administration experience they possessed. Section two identified the depth of their knowledge surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy. Here, survey participants could indicate they have at a minimum participated in a PD session on the topic (1 on the scale) to being comfortable enough to teach or lead a PD (5 on the Likert scale). Lastly, section three asked the participants to rate the leader of that school on culturally responsive leadership using a nine-point Likert scale. The questions were derived from available literature on CRL and grounded in the conceptual framework. The data collected from the survey helped build a narrative of each culturally responsive leader (Research Question 2).

Teacher Interviews

The last question of the teacher survey was "would you be interested in a follow up interview regarding this leader*?"* The purpose behind this question was to follow up with teachers who could answer more specific questions about the principal of their school (Appendix K). I used semi-structured interview protocols to elicit the teacher perspective of how the leader supported culturally responsive pedagogy, created a culturally responsive

school environment, and strengthened community relationships. Each interview lasted an hour. Table 7 displays the six teachers who responded to the survey question and were then interviewed for this study.

Artifact Analysis

To fully address Research Question 2, I conducted an artifact analysis of each school. Primarily, I looked at the school improvement plans (SIPs) and other planning documents each administrator used to intentionally plan for equity. These artifacts included family outreach plans, multicultural planning, staff development plans, mission statements, and Principal communication to staff and families. Within each of these documents, I looked for evidence of CRL behaviors and practices (English & Ellison, 2017). I coded each document and then identified themes and trends across them.

Data Analysis

My data analysis process used a deductive approach which was driven by the conceptual framework for this study (Patton, 2014). The following sub-sections detail each step I took in the process of analysis.

Interviews

Each interview was conducted using the Temi App, which recorded and transcribed each participant's responses. To maximize trustworthiness, I used the concept of member checking by reviewing each transcribed interview with the participants to ensure the accuracy of their statements (Hays & Singh, 2011). In the analysis of the interviews I used concept-driven coding derived from the conceptual framework. First, I coded leader and teacher responses using themes created from the CRL framework: "self-reflection," "develops culturally responsive teachers," promotes culturally responsive school," and "creates strong

community partners." I then analyzed each interview using thematic categories generated from the CLC framework: "setting goals," "aligning resources with priorities," "promoting collaborative learning cultures," "using data," and "engaging in courageous conversations." Using MAXQDA qualitative coding software, I reviewed each coded interview through the lens of either the CRL or CLC framework. I also viewed the frameworks together to identify where the two intersected. Overall, I used nine major codes that are explained in Appendix L. Coding in this manner allowed me to compare the three leaders and build a narrative that provided examples for each CRL theme.

Surveys

The surveys were helpful in confirming or challenging the qualitative data from the interviews. I grouped the answers to the Likert scaled questions based on the CRL code list (Appendix L). I provided numerical support for each of the themes by describing them in terms of how many teachers surveyed strongly agreed with each statement. Strongly agreed was quantified by teachers who responded with a 4 or 5 on the Likert scale. Additionally, I used the open-ended questions on the survey to triangulate the responses from the interviews and artifact analysis described in the next subsection.

Artifact Analysis

Analyzing study participants' documents provided support in answering research questions two and three. Each leader provided me with their PD plan for the school year. I matched information presented in the teacher and leader interviews in the actual plans. In each PD plan, I noted instances where culturally responsive pedagogy was a focus and how often each leader included this focus in their yearlong plan.

School Improvement Plans (SIP) helped to further understand the extent to which each leader had culturally responsive or equity related goals for their school. Additionally, it provided insight on who each leader considered to be a part of their leadership team. Finally, it demonstrated how each principal used culturally responsive PD to support the goals for the school year. As I reviewed each document, I followed up with the principals to gain access to specific documents referenced in the PD or SIP plans. For example, in one PD plan, a leader discussed a book study she led for her staff. I reached out to that leader via email and asked for the document that outlined the specifics of that activity.

All three leaders in the study authored a 10-page essay as a part of their CRL certification process. Analysis of this document informed research question three. These documents provided insight to each leader's sense making around equity, leadership, and details of their culturally responsive journey. Additionally, it allowed me to better understand how each leader used self-reflection in their practice. Finally, it provided an opportunity to support leaders' answers in their interviews.

After analyzing all data in the manner described above, I grouped the findings by research question. The results of this process are presented in the next chapter of this capstone.

Researcher Bias

As Hays and Singh (2012) suggested, there is bias present in any research that must be acknowledged and addressed. As articulated in the review of case studies in this work, the author of each study identified their researcher positionality or role. As stated in their writing, they were all educators of color who as a student in public education experienced inequities themselves from the lack of cultural responsiveness and awareness in their classrooms or

schools. They all additionally articulated witnessing and recognizing similar discrimination in their role as teachers and/or administrators of color.

Their personal narratives and rationale for pursuing their study of CRL resonated with me deeply. As an educator of color, I too have experienced and witnessed this unfortunate phenomenon in my own school settings. The feeling of not belonging because you are not part of the dominant culture is a powerful reality that was experienced by these researchers, myself, and students in schools around the nation today. In *Souls of Black Folk,* W.E.B Dubois wrote, "One, ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body…" (Dubois, 1903, p. 3).

Coupled with these sentiments, I also know and have worked with the participants of the study. To reduce researcher bias, I used multiple data points to inform the analysis and results of this study (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). I used a semi-structured interview protocol to establish clear questions. I used advisors and other researchers to review the questions to ensure personal bias was not reflected in the questions. Additionally, I shared my coding transcripts with the participants to confirm accuracy and check for misconceptions in the analysis.

Summary

A mixed-methods study strategy was utilized for this research. While many definitions of the case study exist, the definition articulated by Becker (1968) was used. Becker defined the purpose of a case study as research that seeks to "arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study," and "develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process" (p. 233). In the scope of this

research, I have attempted to strengthen the understanding around the behaviors of culturally responsive leaders and how they enact this leadership within their setting.

Overall, this capstone produced a multi-site case study of culturally responsive leaders in diverse settings to serve as a model for other school-based leaders seeking to provide equitable opportunities for all students.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research questions guiding this study sought to understand how three principals in Wakanda Public Schools supported and implemented culturally responsive leadership practices and behaviors within their buildings. To explore these questions, I used a qualitative approach that included interviews of district leaders, principals, and teachers; a survey administered to teachers; and an artifact analysis of relevant organizational documents. The research questions included:

1. What is the nature of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in Wakanda Public Schools (WPS)?
    a) What do study participants in WPS know about CRL?
    b) How do study participants in WPS understand their role and responsibility as culturally responsive leaders?
2. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider to be important in providing excellent and equitable opportunities for all students?
    a) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction?
    b) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a culturally responsive school environment for all students?

c) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a strong community partnership?

3. How do school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors?

I begin my findings with a descriptive narrative of the nature of culturally responsive leadership in WPS. First, I present a historical overview of how CRL became a division focus, followed by the background, education, and school setting of each study participant. This information is important to provide context for each leader's culturally responsive journey. It allowed me to better unpack answers to Research Question (RQ 1). I used qualitative data from district leader interviews and principal interviews to articulate what study participants know about CRL (RQ 1a). I layered an analysis of organizational documents to further triangulate interview data aimed at understanding how the principals made meaning of their roles and responsibilities as culturally responsive leaders (RQ 1b).

Next, I present an analysis of the CRL practices and behaviors study participants consider most important in providing excellent and equitable opportunities for all students. Specifically, I present the CRL practices and behaviors study participants identify that support culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum and instruction, create a culturally responsive school environment, and create strong community partnership. RQ 2 was answered using data drawn from interviews of the school-based leaders, a teacher survey, and a variety of documents, including school improvement and professional development (PD) plans. The analysis of this data was guided by the conceptual framework of this study. The intent here was to demonstrate how core leadership competencies from the OLF can be enacted through culturally responsive leadership lens.

Lastly, I present the findings related to RQ 3 by detailing the culturally responsive self-reflection practices of each principal. These findings are largely derived from interview data collected from the three school level leaders participating in this study. Specifically, I used data collected from each leader's CRT certification essay to support the narrative from the interview data. Overall, the results are presented in a manner that highlights the themes of CRL behaviors and practices across three building-level leaders in Wakanda Public Schools.

Culturally Responsive Leadership in Wakanda Public Schools:

How it All Started

Growth of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Interviews with three district level leaders in WPS indicated that the focus on CRL in the Wakanda Public Schools was ignited by the work of classroom teachers in the district focused on providing marginalized students with more opportunities and increasing academic achievement. During the 2015-2016 school year, Assistant Superintendent of Community Engagement, Dr. Langston Hughes, and Equity Specialist, Ruby Wade, co-created a CRT certification process designed to reduce the achievement gap through outstanding teaching. Year-long PD and coaching were provided to division teachers. Because it began as an opt-in model, only four teachers decided to participate. Each of them were required to submit a portfolio of their work that demonstrated student academic growth linked to the implementation of CRT practices. Teachers seeking CRT certification also were required to present their findings to a panel of educators across the division. The teachers' reports indicated significant benefits for students, and, thus, Langston and Ruby used the model to advocate for more support from the Wakanda School Board and Superintendent's Cabinet.

After reviewing the results, the School Board decided to allocate resources to the program. As an incentive, they offered $1,000 to any teacher who completed the certification process. Further, they provided a stipend to support a Diversity Resource Teacher (DRT) position at all 26 schools in WPS. These individuals would be responsible for providing CRT workshops and supporting diversity and equity needs at their school. Lastly, the certification was opened to include instructional coaches. Huey Bosh was the first coach to take advantage of this process. Langston, who had been a longtime advocate for equity in Wakanda Schools in his roles as a principal and central office administrator, offered the following comment about the support of the school board:

> Our School Board should be commended for having endorsed funding that provides professional development on culturally responsive teaching for all staff in the division. To have their backing demonstrates this is a division priority and need.

With the new focus, educators in WPS who participated in CRT PD grew from 4 to nearly 60 individuals. For the 2016-2017 school year, these teachers met monthly, supported by Langston, Ruby, and several teachers from the district who co-developed CRT PD modules and resources. Importantly, Ruby, Langston, and the DRTs created these modules and resources in addition to their normal teaching and coaching responsibilities. Langston realized if the program and interest continued to grow, it would be difficult to sustain with this structure. He recognized that teachers needed more formal support to develop their CRT practices, which is why he advocated to the school board to fund additional positions for Equity Specialists. For the 2017- 2018 school year, the school board funded Huey's position as full time. Now, WPS had two full-time Equity Specialists led by Assistant Superintendent,

Langston. The next sub-section discusses how the study participants recognized the importance of culturally responsive practices for school leaders.

Growth of Culturally Responsive Leadership

Prior to the 2017-2018 school year, culturally responsive pedagogy was largely a focus for teachers. The three principals who participated in this study recognized their potential influence in implementing culturally responsive practices school-wide. Maya Rice and Ida Bryant, both assistant principals at the time, along with Principal Stokely Jordan, attended the end-of-the-year equity conference upon request from Langston and Ruby. After viewing the work of the teachers across the division, they became inspired to pursue certification as culturally responsive educators themselves. The literature on CRL identifies this action as a critical step towards school-wide culturally responsive pedagogy implementation. To be a successful school-wide program, CRT must be supported by the building administration (Gay, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Spicer (2016) added that leaders who model culturally responsive practices are effective in developing teachers who implement culturally responsive pedagogy.

Simultaneously, Langston advocated for the position of Equity Specialist to be funded by the School Board. Ruby and Huey were the first two individuals to hold these full-time positions in the district and could then completely focus on providing high quality PD for teachers and administrators. Eventually, their success led to the funding of yet an additional equity specialist position bringing the total to three. Therefore, in just three years, considerable support was created for educators who desired to implement culturally responsive practices in their schools to include the following:

- board funded positions of three equity specialists who worked across the division to support CRT and CRL;
- board-funded stipends of $1,000 for teachers who successfully went through CRT certification;
- a DRT in every school that was also a stipend position; and
- division-wide PD that supported teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators in implementing culturally responsive behaviors and practices.

Overall, the setting was ripe for the three leaders who participated in this study to engage in CRL practices that sought to create excellent and equitable opportunities for all students.

This section was designed to provide a background to CRL in WPS. The following section provides an answer for RQ 1 by exploring what study participants knew and understood about CRL. Further, it provides further insight about how these leaders interpreted this knowledge for use in their roles as school-based leaders.

How Culturally Responsive Leadership is Understood in Wakanda Public Schools

Understanding the nature of culturally responsive leadership as practiced in WPS was central to this research project. This section addresses the following research questions:

- Research Question 1a: What do school-based leaders in WPS know about culturally responsive leadership?
- Research Question 1b: How do school-based leaders in WPS understand their role and responsibility as culturally responsive leaders?

Based on the perceptions of study participants, this section provides answers to Research Question 1 regarding what leaders in WPS knew about CRL and how they

understood their roles as culturally responsive leaders. I begin by introducing the main study participants. I present the background, education, experiences, and school context of each leader separately to provide context regarding how they interpreted CRL in their settings. I then provide a comparative analysis of themes across all leaders to determine the existing nature of CRL in WPS. I explore how participants recognized that their leadership preparation programs lacked a focus on equity and the significance of CRL PD in WPS filling this knowledge gap. Finally, I articulate how the study participants collectively define CRL and how they interpret this knowledge in their role as building-level administrators.

Dr. Stokely Jordan

Stokely identified as an Asian American, the son of an Indian father of Parsi Middle Eastern heritage and an American dairy farm girl of European descent. Because of his lighter skin complexion, he described growing up being perceived as a white male:

> If someone asked me on a day-to-day basis, I'm a white male. But as I reflect on my cultural lens and process problems as an educational leader, I see myself of two distinct cultures. I was well into my 30s before I began to recognize and acknowledge the privilege and opportunities that were afforded to me because of my skin tone.

Stokely grew up in a suburban town about an hour west of Wakanda Public Schools and attended a small private school. He recalled his parents instilling in him a “no excuses” work ethic. His father’s family left extreme poverty in India to settle in the Northeast United States where they worked tirelessly to become economically stable. Likewise, his mother’s family toiled to keep their dairy farm running. Stokely recalled this hardworking mentality coming with the pressure to succeed. He always felt supported by his parents, which is something he later took for granted as he repeatedly encountered students who did not have

the same parent support. As a pupil in a private school, he remembered close relationships between students and staff and could not think of a time he felt discrimination.

It was not until Stokely entered the field of education that he truly recognized his privilege. In 1996, he began teaching high school English in a small rural district just north of WPS. Here, he saw the effect poverty had on student achievement and opportunity. Many of his students worked jobs to support their families limiting the amount of time they could spend on school work or on extracurricular activities. After two years, he moved to a more urban district, also neighboring WPS, where he taught English for seven years and was the assistant principal for four years. At this school, Stokely described the severe disparity between opportunities offered to students based on their race and socio-economic status. Students of color were suspended at higher rates, enrolled in fewer advanced level courses, and had lower overall achievement scores across all tests compared to their white, affluent peers. These experiences directly impacted Stokely's desire to begin researching culturally responsive practices. His next role led him to a large diverse elementary school on the Southside of Wakanda. After two years there, he was appointed as the Principal of Sankofa Elementary.

Stokely credits his experiences working in diverse schools for his understanding of cultural responsiveness. Reflecting on his administration preparation program he could not identify an instance where he was instructed how to lead through an equity lens:

> I don't remember that [equity] ever being a topic of conversation. What did we even talk about? We focused on how to evaluate a teacher? I remember a lot of standards-based assessments and looking at requirements from the Department of Education. We did human resources management, school law, and the typical courses. But I do not remember a time when someone sat down and said, we really need to talk about what it means to be culturally responsive or equitable.

Even in his doctoral coursework in administration and supervision, he could not think of a course that he would say prepared him to lead in a diverse school. Therefore, Stokely is grateful for the opportunities that WPS offers for leaders to collaborate with each other in regards to CRL practices. He contributes this structure to his current success in creating an inclusive school.

Sankofa Elementary

At a superficial glance, Sankofa Elementary School (SES) did not seem to warrant the need for culturally responsive leadership. It served 406 K-5 students in the western part of Wakanda Public Schools. Families traditionally came from rural multi-acre lots, suburban planned communities, or single wide trailers. By traditional measures of diversity, SES was among the least diverse schools not only in the district but also the state. At SES, 91% of the student body identified as white, 4% as Hispanic, 2% as Asian, and 2% as multi-racial. One student identified as Black and approximately 9% of the students were identified as having a disability, while 3% of the students were identified as gifted. Of the 406 students, 10% were economically disadvantaged. Only 1% of the students were English language learners.

As Johnson and Fuller (2015) contended, leaders must be aware of cultural differences beyond race. Diversity presents itself in a very different way at Sankofa according to Stokely, as "the haves and the have-nots." Two geographic areas bring two distinct cultures. In the neighborhoods between Route 919 and Brooks Road, an uber-individualist perspective dominated. Students from these neighborhoods were quick to rank each other in terms of achievement. Being athletic and a winner was prized. Families from this area prospered from generational wealth and access to every opportunity imaginable. Students who lived north of Brooks Road lived on a combination of humble farm cottages

and trailers. Overall, the families from the more affluent areas dominated school culture for years, often leaving minority students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged families behind in terms of academic achievement and access to programs such as gifted services.

Ms. Maya Rice

Maya, a white female, was the daughter of two parents who grew up in what she described as some of the most rural and poorest counties in the state. When asked about her upbringing, she immediately highlighted the work ethic and tenacity of her parents despite their impoverished condition. Both of her parents were among the few individuals in their respective families to go to college, a value they instilled in Maya. She attended both undergraduate and graduate school only a few hours from where she grew up. Maya was also a graduate of Madiba Middle School and Wakanda Public Schools, a fact that would later contribute to her ability to create and maintain strong relationships with her school community.

When Maya graduated college, she had every intention to use her criminal justice major to become a parole and probation officer. After completing her internship as a probation officer, she quickly learned jobs were hard to find as the state was on hiring freeze. Following in the footsteps of her parents, she started in the education field as a teaching assistant at an elementary school in WPS. She described how she quickly fell in love with working with students, so she took the necessary steps to become a teacher. She went on to serve as a middle school language arts and special education teacher, an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) site coordinator, and testing coordinator before being promoted to a middle school assistant principal. After two years, she moved to a high school

assistant principal role, where she stayed for three years before returning to her current school of Madiba Middle School. Prior to her taking the role as principal, Maya was the assistant principal of Madiba for a year. These experiences are critical to understanding Maya's leadership lens:

> I have worked in every feeder pattern in WPS and have exposure with kids from different backgrounds, socioeconomic status, cultural backgrounds, race, and just everything. Each experience has opened my eyes and has given me different perspectives to look through. Each role has given me different exposure and challenges that I have had to work through.

Maya's professional experiences overlapped with her personal ones. When asked to identify experiences that helped her embrace CRL, she discussed her own school experiences and multi-race family. As a student, she felt connected to peers from different backgrounds and ethnicities. She pointed to her involvement in sports and extracurricular activities as reasons to why she interacted with a variety of other students and cultures:

> I was friends with kids from all different cultures, backgrounds and socioeconomic status. And that's kind of how my parents operated too. Like they didn't really have a set group. They were very inclusive and so it didn't matter like how much money you had or didn't have or what your sexual orientation was or what your skin color was. Overall, my friend group was really diverse. That is the norm for me.

In her essay for her culturally responsive teaching certification, Maya articulated how her immediate family has also influenced her push for culturally responsive pedagogy. Her partner Elijah was bi-racial, where his mom was white and dad was Black. Their seven-year-old son is bi-racial and as refers to himself as "tan." Maya also had a 19-year-old Black step-daughter. Maya was proud of her blended family:

> I believe it is because of this beautiful blending that we are able to have open, honest, and deep conversations about race, education, and opportunities that we have either been afforded in life or have missed. I realized that this is an area that I often forget that not all white educators are privy to. I have taken this into consideration when working with teachers in particular.

These experiences were crucial to Maya's understanding of cultural responsiveness. According to her, the administrator preparation program she attended was severely lacking in coursework around diversity or inclusiveness. The curriculum heavily focused on classes such as school law, finance, and schools as systems, but she did not feel it prepared her to lead in a diverse setting like Madiba Middle School. Instead, her own upbringing and on-the-job experiences largely contributed to her desire to view leadership through a culturally responsive lens.

Madiba Middle School

Maya had been at MMS for two years, one as an assistant principal and one as the principal. Families that attend MMS resided in a combination of urban apartments, rural farmhouses, and single-family suburban homes. Of the 655 students who attend the school, 42% were white, 25% were Hispanic/Latinx, 21% were Black, 7% were Multi-Racial, and 5% were Asian (School Quality Report Card). Students who receive free and reduced lunch (FRL) represented 55% of the total population, while students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL) comprised 11% and 26% respectively.

Ms. Ida B. Bryant

Ida B. Bryant identified as a Black female and grew up an hour east of Wakanda Public School District. She was the oldest of eight siblings and recalls her father being hard on her, not only for being the firstborn, but also by instilling in her that, because she was a Black female, she was always going to have to be twice as good as the next person to get opportunities. At the time, she admitted to not fully understanding what he meant, but now believed that it prepared her for obstacles she would have to overcome later in life.

She fondly recalled her time as a student. With the drive of her parents, she remembered getting involved in as many extracurriculars and student organizations as she could. She was in honors-level classes, a part of the student government and Key Club, and played various sports while participating in school musicals. It was her experience as the oldest sibling and positive experiences as a student that originally drew her to education as a profession. Additionally, she was inspired by her husband who was high school basketball coach and student mentor:

> As the oldest of eight I played school with my siblings and have just loved teaching others from early age. Also, I would see my husband come home every being excited about working with students. I wanted to be a part of something like that.

Ida left her job in the corporate world and began teaching in an urban elementary afterschool program. She soon took over as the director and was encouraged to get her teaching degree. It was here she realized that not every student had the same support and opportunities like she did as a child. Her career in education provided her with a multitude of experiences and interactions with a wide range of families and communities. She began her career teaching at an alternative school where she learned to advocate for students and families on whom others had given up. She moved to be the special education resource teacher at Jabari Elementary, where she also held the role of Diversity Resource Teacher. It was specifically in this role that Ida began to see and embrace the power of culturally responsive teaching practices:

> As I began to learn what it meant to be a culturally responsive teacher, it was a no-brainer for me. How could learning about students and their families to the point that I would be able to help them make connections between what they were learning and their own cultures, backgrounds, and experiences *and* have them trust me to teach them *not* be more effective? As I became more interested in the pedagogy and my understanding grew, I became a part of the division wide Diversity Resource leadership team. In that role, I was able to

> grow my understanding even more as I helped develop and facilitate professional development for others.

Before becoming the principal at Jabari Elementary, Ida served as an assistant principal at one of the most diverse schools in WPS. She also worked for an education nonprofit designed to assist in districts in school turnaround. It was through these experiences that she realized the potential influence a school leader could have on culturally responsive practices:

> As I reflect on that work now, I can see that in my first role of this kind I was acting more as a peer support than a leader. Once I actually had a more formal leadership role such as an AP, I saw that I could implement CRT strategies across the school such as connecting it to teacher goal setting meetings.

Ida immediately recognized the influence that she could have on Jabari Elementary as the principal. She also commented that she was grateful for her experiences as an educator, because she did not believe her administrator leadership program prepared her to discuss diversity or lead through a lens of equity.

Jabari Elementary

Jabari Elementary was an elementary school set in the rural eastern section of Wakanda. It served 232 students from families that lived on sprawling farm land, in mobile home parks, or in mountain cabins. The school was built at the turn of the 20th century, and many of the current students had parents and grandparents who attended the school. The majority, or 56%, of the student population identified as white. The next largest demographic groups were 15% Hispanic and 13% Black. Multi-racial students comprised 12% of the population, while 3% identified as Asian. At Jabari, 32% of students were considered economically disadvantaged, 8% were English Language Learners, and 11% of students had disabilities.

Overview of Three Leaders in WPS

The narrative of each leader's personal, professional, and education background helps frame their articulation of their definition of CRL. Table 7 provides an overview of these characteristics, several of which are critical to highlight to better understand CRL in WPS.

Personal Experiences

A comparative discussion of each leader's personal, professional, and education background is helpful in answering RQ 1a. It provides insight to what study participants in WPS know about CRL practices and behaviors. Although they all grew up within an hour of WPS, it is clear the principals had different lived experiences due to their races and socio-economic backgrounds. Stokely had little introduction to diversity growing up. He described his schooling and neighborhood as homogeneous across race and class. Despite his Middle Eastern heritage, Stokely described how his lighter skin made others perceive him as white. Maya's diverse family composition and diverse friend group socialized her to recognize different cultural perspectives than her own. Of the three leaders, Ida was the only one who expressed she personally had experienced explicit inequity. Growing up in a middle-class Black family, she articulated first-hand experience of how society treated her based on her race. Her interview data illustrates her perception that she had to work twice as hard as her non-Black peers to be successful in school and in her profession.

These details around each leader's personal experiences are important to understanding their knowledge of culturally responsive practices. Stokely and Maya, as products of white middle class families, were exposed to cultural differences through socialization with different cultures. As a Black female, Ida might have lived experiences allowing her to access the underpinnings of CRL in a different, perhaps more meaningful

way than the other participants in this study. The assumptions made from leader interview data were supported by teacher survey data. When teachers were asked to rate their leader on their ability to integrate culture and race into instruction, 70% of teachers at Ida's school responded with "strongly agree." Meanwhile, only 16% of teachers at Maya's school and 25% at Stokely's responded with "strongly agree." Authentic integration of the practices examined and ability to integrate CRL practices may be informed by a leader's own experiences.

Professional Experiences

The three leaders had more overlap within their professional experiences. Overall, they all served in culturally and linguistically diverse schools as both teachers and administrators. Here, regardless of their background they all recounted instances where they noticed clear opportunity and equity gaps between their low socioeconomic students, who were often students of color, and their more affluent white peers. More importantly, they described how this bothered them as educators and how they wanted to do more to help marginalized students and families. The following qualitative data from their interviews and certification essays support this statement.

In the interview with Stokely, he acknowledged that he pursued administration in part because of these disparities he saw while acting as an English teacher:

> I just kept seeing these missed opportunities whereas a school we could have been serving students of color, for example, better. It was very noticeable that the level of academic expectation was different for students based on what you looked like or what neighborhood you came from.

From her first job as a teaching assistant in an elementary school, Maya noticed that students of color, specifically Black males, received disciplinary consequences more often. In her interview, she articulated this observation as motivation to pursue a teacher career.

> I was seeing all the Black boys get in trouble for minor infractions. If a white kid or a kid from a more affluent family committed the same offense, then they would just get a warning while the Black students were considered behavior problems and would get sent to the office. I knew if I had my own classroom, I could change that disparity.

These experiences later informed her leadership practice as well. In her certification essay, Maya confirms this belief by describing how as a leader she felt responsibility to advocate for students that teachers saw as behavior problems. She describes how shifting teacher language to being supportive of such students rather than dismissive is important to her.

In her certification essay, Ida explained that regardless of her school context she noticed teachers struggling to meet the needs of students from cultures that were different than their own.

> In each of the schools I had worked, most of the challenges which I felt culturally responsive teaching could address occurred between teachers and the students from different ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds and who had very different experiences.

Ida confirmed this notion in her interview by stating that one of her main goals as a leader was to help teachers "focus on the relationship part and really get them to understand the cultural backgrounds and experiences of the kids."

Leadership Preparation Programs

It was strongly evident the leaders did not feel prepared by their administrator programs to lead in diverse schools. They all responded to the interview question in a comparable manner. Stokely described the focus of both his masters and doctoral programs as "traditional" and "absent of equity minded conversations." Ida remarked her program taught her about leadership practices, but said she wished they "differentiated for leaders in diverse schools." Maya agreed that her program focused primarily on the technical parts of

leadership such as how to manage a budget or how to do a teacher observation. Like Stokely and Ida, she realized her program would have been stronger if it had "folded equity into those classes and conversations." Despite the lack of preparation of their leadership programs, a theme that arose across the interviews was the acknowledgement of the culturally responsive PD opportunities in WPS filling this void of equity minded leadership practices.

Professional Development in WPS

Interviews from the three district leaders provided insight to the PD offered to leaders in WPS. Langston described it as PD that developed from the model originally offered to just teachers in WPS.

> We have created this PD based on characteristics of CRT as defined by Geneva Gay. First, we look at understanding your own culture and understanding who you are. Then we look at how you interact with teachers and help them understand their culture. Lastly, we look at building relationships with families. Our goal is to get principals to understand this from a leadership level.

In her interview, Ruby added that this process with leaders was a partnership between them and each school. Equity specialists worked with each principal as reflective partners and assisted them with building PD plans for their specific schools.

> It really is a mutual negotiation [which] begins where the equity specialist has several meetings with the administration of the school to try to look at what that yearlong PD focus is going to look like.

Huey identified the creation of a book study for administrators as an example of support for leaders. By choice, some principals and assistant principals in WPS, read sections of Culturally Responsive Leadership by Muhammad Khalifa together. Langston, Ruby, and Huey helped organize these meetings but overall the conversations and topics were based on the interests of the principals.

Each of the three principals in the study said this PD led to their knowledge around CRL. They all referenced participation in the book study as support for their ongoing work around equity. In her certification essay, Ida remarked this opportunity allowed her to "bounce ideas off of equity-minded administrators." In her interview, Maya said the partnership Ruby described was beneficial to creating a yearlong PD. An analysis of Maya's PD plan for the year showed how CRT was incorporated into each session. It was also clear of Huey's participation as he was listed as a facilitator for different sessions multiple times. Given the lack of equity-focused content in their leadership preparation programs, this PD in WPS was important to generate knowledge on CRL behaviors and practices for the leaders in this study. It is also important because it provided them common experiences. The next section underscores the importance of the PD in contributing to the similar definitions of CRL that each leader articulated.

Leader Definition of CRL

Despite their different backgrounds, varied professional experiences, and lack of preparation in their administrator programs, the three leaders presented similar definitions of CRL. Based on results from the interviews, it became apparent each building level leader could effectively articulate definitions of CRL. Moreover, they viewed their role as the principal as essential to implementing school wide cultural responsiveness. Dr. Stokely Jordan, principal of Sankofa Elementary, defined CRL as such:

> Being culturally responsive means knowing your own culture and cultural lens. And then I would say before knowing the culture and cultural lenses of your students, knowing the culture and cultural lenses of your staff. I think that's a key element of the leadership component. I think you need to be able to deliver PD in a way that meets the needs of a diverse professional audience. Then you need to be able to work with families of diverse backgrounds and, and work as partners for the student's well-being.

Several components of his statement align with the literature on CRL. Stokely articulated a critical part of CRT work is an understanding of self, the staff you work with, and the families you serve (Theoharis, 2007). Secondly, his mention of being able to deliver high quality PD demonstrates his comprehension of the need to support culturally responsive teachers by providing curriculum resources and training (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2016; Vogel, 2011). Lastly, his use of the word "partners" indicates his understanding that the work of CRL must be a collaboration between teachers, administrators, students and families (Steel & Cohen-Varas, 2010).

Ms. Maya Rice, principal of Madiba Middle School, presented a similar definition to Stokely:

> I think it begins with understanding the background, cultures and the needs of your kids. Along with that it is changing your own mindset through reflection and helping to shift teacher mindset to ensure we as a school are not propagating inequity. To do this, teachers need professional development. Overall, it's really thinking about the kids and using intentional practices to look at the systems and organizational patterns in the school that are inequitable.

Maya described an important part of self-reflection highlighted by Khalifa (2018), which is that leaders must not only be self-reflective, but they must take ownership of any system in the school that may cause inequitable outcomes. Like Stokely, Maya understood PD as an avenue for supporting culturally responsive teaching (Siegal & Howley, 2008). Additionally, while Maya did not directly bring up community partnership when asked to define CRL, she described both practices and behaviors demonstrating an understanding that this is a key component of CRL based on current literature and research. Later sections will detail how she used community voice in her decision-making process.

Ms. Ida B. Bryant, principal of Jabari Elementary, provided an answer that overlapped with Stokely and Maya but also looked more broadly at the role of the principal in supporting CRT:

> For me CRL is being a leader who is intentional about having our school engage in culturally responsive teaching practices. It is making sure that we are intentional about getting to know our kids, building relationships with the community, turning that or leveraging that into, instructional choices for kids and into partnering with family.

Collectively, the three leaders understood CRL to encompass self-reflection, supporting culturally responsive teaching practices, and building a strong community partnership. Each of them alluded to the need to have a school inclusive for all students, an important strand of CRL found in the literature. Even though they did not directly articulate this component in the interview, other evidence was found through the artifact analysis of their PD and school improvement plans. These findings will be presented in future sections which describe the culturally responsive characteristics and behaviors of each leader.

Role and Responsibility of Leader

Overall, each leader confirmed the belief that they are the ones responsible for implementing culturally responsive practices in their buildings. Stokely discussed the indirect impact leaders can have on student outcomes and how the leader has influence over critical decisions within the building:

> I believe the school leader is the strongest force for closing achievement gaps, that even when it seems like you don't have much direct control over student outcomes, the systems you put in place, how you allocate resources, the personnel you bring on, the personnel that you coach, uh, all come back to you.

Maya confirmed the responsibility that principals have for student outcomes as well as recognized the powerful influence school administrators can have by setting the direction:

> The principal sets the tone, the vision, and the goals for the school and helps to not only nurture and support the staff who directly support students, but make sure that things in the school are equitable and the conditions and systems are set up so that kids can be successful.

Ida similarly acknowledged the indirect impact of leaders but recognized the responsibility of the principal is to support work that closes gaps in achievement, opportunity, and equity:

> I feel like ultimately the responsibility lays on me. I'm not the one in the classroom necessarily with all the students where their learning is happening, but I'm the one that sets the expectations for what needs to happen as a school. I'm the one that will have to speak to the data for the school. In closing those gaps, I think my responsibility is just to ensure that that is our focus as a staff.

The overlap among the leaders' understanding of the principal's role and responsibility and their comprehension of culturally responsive leadership was striking.

The use of Culturally Responsive Leadership as a text and opportunities for administrators in WPS to meet and discuss their work led to a common understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy from a leadership lens. However, unique to the study participants was their ability to apply the reading to prior knowledge or experiences. Although, the participants came from different backgrounds they were able connect to CRL. Stokely and Maya identified their experiences working in school communities with diverse populations to support the idea that a different type of leadership was needed to adequately address inequities. As a Black female, Ida experienced first-hand the negative impact a lack of cultural sensitivity could have on student learning.

Results from the interviews of leaders suggested that there is a common understanding of what CRL is. All leaders identified critical self-reflection as a key component of CRL, and they all espoused the idea that leaders must to come to terms with their own biases and assumptions before they could lead culturally responsive work. Secondly, they all realized developing, mentoring, and coaching culturally responsive

teachers was essential work. Maya and Stokely described how this included hiring practices ensuring potential candidates would teach through a culturally responsive lens. Ida put a larger focus on the importance of developing the team you have. Nevertheless, the focus on teachers was a strong theme.

Through their answers and analysis of school artifacts, it was clear each leader was committed to identifying students and families who seemed to not have a voice. Each leader worked to persuade staff to advocate for these families and look at systems in the school that were not inclusive. Lastly, every leader recognized the importance of creating strong community partnerships. They all enacted in various forms of stepping out into the community such as home visits, reading events, and community listening tours. Maya and Ida both engaged in practices that mitigated or removed barriers preventing certain groups of students from attending school events. Overall, they all articulated the notion that student learning was stronger with the presence of authentic family partnerships.

Upon entering their current roles as principals, every leader articulated an understanding it was their responsibility and role to close achievement, equity, and opportunity gaps. They described how the school leader is one of the most influential individuals in the building. Decisions on budget, hiring, curriculum, programming, and school mission in some capacity rested on the shoulders of the principal. This insight into each leader's background and understanding of CR provides evidence for RQ 1 regarding the nature of CRL in WPS. The findings can be summarized as follows:

- Principals from different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds are represented in the leaders chosen in this study who implement CRL.

- Each of the leaders in the study had professional experiences exposing a need for practices that focused on supporting students from marginalized communities.
- The leaders in the study had leadership preparation programs that did not engage them with leadership strategies for the diverse settings they serve in.
- They all were formally introduced to CRL as a direct result of PD opportunities offered by WPS.
- Leaders perceived it was their responsibility as the principal to drive equity work and close gaps.

The next section builds on those above, presenting findings that address Research Question Two (RQ2), beginning with RQ2a which seeks to identify the behaviors and characteristics study participants believe are important for supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction. To support the findings of RQ 2a and subsequent sections detailing RQ 2b, RQ 2c, and RQ 3, I provide two tables that overview the teacher survey data (see Tables 8 and 9). Table 8 provides an average score of teachers' responses while Table 9 shows the percentage of teachers who strongly agree with the statements. Any teacher who responded with a four or five on the Likert scale was one who strongly agreed.

Developing Culturally Responsive Teachers

This section provides my analysis of themes that emerged from my findings related to Research Question (RQ2a):

- What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction?

The evidence for developing culturally responsive teachers is the strongest relative to the proposed CRL strands. Survey results detailed in Table 9 show that teachers at all three

schools believed the two strongest CRL behaviors demonstrated by study participants "were develops and trains culturally responsive teachers and models culturally responsive teaching and mindset." Across the three schools, 100% of the teachers strongly agreed that the leader developed and trained culturally responsive teachers while 80% of teachers strongly believed that the leaders modeled CRT practices. Several common themes contributed to this finding. Each leader used a combination of data utilization to highlight achievement gaps, yearlong PD to support teachers instructionally, and courageous conversations to shift teacher mindset.

Equity Audits

As Skrla et al. (2004) suggested, each leader performed an equity audit to highlight gaps in achievement, equity, or opportunity for the students in their buildings. At Sankofa, Stokely used ArcGiS software to show achievement gaps between students from different neighborhoods, while Maya performed an equity audit on behavior data to expose disparities in disciplinary action amongst student groups at Madiba, and Ida presented gaps in opportunity and achievement for the students at Jabari after going through data with her staff. The details regarding these findings are presented below and are supported by evidence gathered from quotes from teacher interviews, teacher survey data and analyses of school improvement plans (SIP).

Generally, Sankofa Elementary performs very well on end-of-the-year standardized tests. As a principal who wanted to ensure the success of all, Stokely chose to show his teachers the data for students who were not meeting benchmarks. To highlight his assumption that many of these students came from the more rural, lower socio-economic region of his school community he used Geographic Information Software (GIS) to map where students lived that failed their end of year assessment from the previous school year.

He was correct in the sense that every student who failed (except one) lived in the area north of Brooks Road. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, he presented the map to teachers to bring awareness and confirm the need for them to address these gaps. Amanda, a classroom teacher, commented on the impact this equity audit had on the staff:

> Our achievement data was always above the 90% mark across all tests. We almost had a cockiness about it. When Stokely presented the data in the way he did with the map, it shocked us. We then felt guilty that we had seemingly been ignoring these students for years. It humbled us.

Analysis of the SIP showed the school wide goal of raising achievement scores of all students. It stated that "all students will make a minimum of one year's worth of growth in reading and math." Stokely explained that it was necessary for him to include all students. He stated that his focus was not on students passing a test, rather that teachers were monitoring appropriate growth. He said:

> When we say all students, we must mean it. I am not looking for students to pass a test, I'm looking for growth. When a student comes to a classroom in the fall, we should be able to point to measurable and reasonable progress by the end of the year.

Teacher survey data further confirmed Stokely's practice of equity audits. At Sankofa, 75% of teachers strongly agreed that he analyzed data and practices in school to bring awareness to the achievement gap.

At Madiba, Maya articulated understanding and interpreting data should be at the core of the culturally responsive leader. She followed up by saying "students and families are so much more than a number or achievement score," but "data is how we should hold ourselves accountable as a system and ensure we are reducing achievement gaps." Several practices arose through Maya's data collection process. Her steps support what Santamaria

(2014) described as the leader analyzing data and practices in the school to bring awareness to the achievement gap.

One impetus for the use of data was an observation made by Maya. At Madiba if students are disruptive in class, they are sent to a reset room. Here the students are required to think about their actions, determine a goal for improvement, and depending on the extent of their disruptive behavior are sent back to class. The room is staffed by a teaching assistant who has training on social emotional regulation and behavior management. In her routine building walkthroughs with her assistant principal, Maya noticed something about the types of students that were generally present in this room. Leaders who engage in collaborative walkthroughs were more likely to find disparities in equity and opportunity in each school (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012):

> Every time I walk by the room, I see Black boys, Black girls, Special Ed kids, Hispanic boys, the same kids. It got to the point that if I was at room and the door was shut, I could predict who was in there before stepping foot in the space.

Maya attributed this critical consciousness and awareness to her own self-reflection practices. In collaboration with her assistant principal and the equity specialist she began to pull the data of each teacher and how often they were sending students out of the classroom. Together they developed a protocol to follow seeking to identify trends about which teachers were sending the students out of the classroom. Teachers looked at this information individually and as a PLC. I asked teachers if they felt uncomfortable looking at data in this way, and one responded that they actually felt supported, because Maya had built a culture where uncomfortable conversations around race were okay and necessary. Lisa, a classroom teacher, remarked:

> We know that Maya has our back. The data is important to look at because we were unaware that we were only sending out certain types of students. She supports us by providing professional development on implicit bias and works with us on changing our practices. It's hard to accept but we absolutely feel supported.

Evidence of Maya using data to promote equity appeared in the SIP. She used this discipline data to set a school wide goal of "decreasing the number of discipline referrals for Black students." She incorporated regular data meetings in the plan to assess progress towards meeting this goal. Additionally, she included PD from the equity specialists as an action step to support teachers in shifting their mindset around discipline. Teacher survey data also confirmed her use of data, as 85% of her teachers remarked that she used data in a way that brought attention to disparities in achievement or equity.

Ida used data to highlight achievement gaps between students from marginalized communities compared to their peers. With the support of Equity Coach, Ruby, they analyzed achievement data and found that Black students and students with disabilities at Jabari Elementary did not perform well in language arts. Ida used professional learning communities (PLC) as a space to advocate for these students and to ensure teachers were meeting the needs of all students:

> I wanted teachers to have a clear understanding of where kids were at. Starting at the very beginning of the year we tracked data in a way that allowed us to zero in on students who were not doing well. PLCs, which meet weekly, would analyze data to ensure each student was meeting their growth targets. I also provided teachers with a half day to analyze progress four times in the school year.

According to the Jabari SIP these half day meetings would occur quarterly. The SIP also included weekly PLC data conversations around student progress and assessments. Ida asked Ruby, the equity specialist, to attend and provide an extra critical equity lens. Not only did Ida provide high expectations, but she also provided teachers the space and time to have

critical conversations around student learning. Isabel, a classroom teacher at Jabari, identified this support as critical:

> Having Ruby come to our meetings was a bonus. She didn't allow us to make excuses about kids not doing well – we had to own it. Also having the half days gave us the necessary time we needed to actually look at the data and change instruction or continue what had worked because of it.

As Finnegan and Daly (2011) contends, Ida as the leader of the school, persuaded staff to advocate for the academic achievement of marginalized students and groups. According to the teacher survey, 80% of her staff strongly agreed that Ida implemented this CRL practice. Another significant finding from the teacher survey data was that 100% of teachers surveyed at Jabari believed that Ida analyzed data in a manner that brought awareness to the achievement gap.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Professional Development

From interviews of teachers, building leaders, district leaders, and the analysis of PD plans, it became clear that each principal in the study made culturally responsive pedagogy a priority. They used the data to draw attention to equity issues in their school. The way they created and led PD showed a commitment to the adult learning of the staff to change the data and provide excellent and equitable opportunities for all students.

To drive the work of closing this gap, Stokely set a goal for the school year that teachers would develop a deeper cultural lens. To accomplish this, he took significant steps by hiring an assistant principal who brought an expertise of culturally responsive pedagogy and then infusing CRT practices into his yearlong PD plan:

> I hired an assistant principal who's a guru in it [CRT]. I remember meeting her at a division wide leadership meeting and we got paired together. We ended up talking about culturally responsive teaching. I deliberately challenged her a little bit on some things and I liked the way she responded and became

> engaged with what she was talking about. And I knew that this was someone I could learn from and who could push me too.

Stokely commented that his intent was to bring in expertise but to also to diversify his staff as suggested by Lightfoot (2010) and Santamaria (2014) by hiring a Black woman in a leadership role. Together with Equity Specialist, Ruby Wade, they developed a PD plan that would incorporate teacher reflective practices and provided culturally responsive teaching strategies.

A review of the PD plan at Sankofa revealed that the staff meets weekly. Two out of the four weeks in each month were dedicated to CRT practices, where one week had an activity designed to change educator mindset followed by the next week where teachers were given strategies for their instructional toolbox. This structure was confirmed by my interview with Stokely. When I asked him to highlight some of this PD, he discussed the learning around the teachers' cultural lenses. The Equity Specialists, Ruby and Huey, helped create PD designed specifically around the goals of Stokely and his leadership team. Stokely shared the Google Slideshow that detailed this PD. Analysis of this document indicated that the training had four goals:

- I recognize and consider my own cultural influences when creating a classroom community that is welcoming for all learners,
- I recognize and consider the ways in which my cultural influences affect my expectations,
- I recognize and consider the ways in which my cultural influences affect how I teach, and
- I actively cultivate beliefs and mindsets that empower students (asset-based thinking) and actively eliminate beliefs and mindsets.

Following this initial focus on cultural lens, the emphasis was on teachers completing a self-evaluation on their teaching practices. They then had to discussed with a colleague the ways their practices might not be welcoming for all students. Laura, a classroom teacher, at Sankofa confirmed that this practice was a "useful reflective activity" because it helped her ensure that "all students in the class felt welcome."

During his interview, Stokely described his intent for this type of training was to get teachers to identify characteristics about their own culture and background. One component of CRT is an understanding of self and the ability to put that into relation to the culture of your students (Gay, 2010). As educators begin to bridge the gap between the classroom and student home culture, they can identify biases and strive to address them (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The work of this PD is supported by teacher survey data. At Sankofa 67% of teachers strongly agreed that Stokley addressed negative biases teachers may have towards certain groups of students.

To support culturally responsive pedagogy, Maya also helped develop and implement a yearlong PD plan for staff. A review of the Madiba PD plan showed that staff participated in weekly, hour-long CRT focused meetings that were differentiated by the needs of teachers and their students. Staff had the opportunity to choose between three strands, each one with their own mentor text that drove the work. Table 10 includes details about each group that Maya described in her interview.

Further analysis of the PD plan demonstrated that Maya used the strengths of teachers in the building and district-level leadership including the equity specialists to facilitate and lead different sessions. This action was confirmed by interview data where she stated a need to share the leadership and work of CRT implementation to build a capacity. In his interview,

Dr. James, the Assistant Superintendent for Community Engagement, described Maya's PD plan as the most complex, yet intentional, plan to which he has contributed:

> Maya listens to her teachers in regards to the needs of students and families and gets the resources they need. This could be as simple as purchasing books or bringing in speakers who have an expertise in the area. Her plan is flexible so it allows changes as student needs shift but it still stays under the umbrella of the mission of the school.

When I asked teachers how they perceived the support provided with this model of professional learning, the responses were overwhelmingly positive:

> **Lisa:** It's definitely extra work. I don't think a lot of other schools meet as regularly but I feel that it all supports the work we need to do. It's motivating that Maya is in the work with us, leading the PD sessions, and is not just telling us what to do. We are all in it together for sure.
>
> **Sue:** It supports what we already have to do. I don't see it as wasted time and it's actually helpful to have the space to discuss this with colleagues.

Several points are important about the responses of district leadership and teachers. One, existing case study literature on CRL emphasizes the necessity of the leader to model culturally responsive work and to set up structures, such as a PD plan, for staff to engage in the work (Madlangobe, 2012; Spicer 2016). Secondly, Maya clearly allocates time and financial resources to support the mission and culturally responsive oriented goals of the school (Leithwood & Louis, 2013).

Teacher survey data further confirmed the implementation of Maya's PD plan. At Madiba, 100% of teachers surveyed strongly agreed that she developed and trained teachers to be culturally responsive, while 78% strongly agreed that she modeled culturally responsive teaching and mindset.

In her interview, Ida described how she introduced CRT at the beginning of the school year with her first all-staff PD session. She used her DRT and Huey as collaborators

on an activity that was designed for teachers to reflect on some of their own cultural influences and biases and to consider these in relation to working with their students. Ida further described the activity in her CRT certification essay:

> The activity required the teachers to write down terms that are associated with specific facets of their identity. After writing the terms, the teachers were asked to personally discard parts of their identity until they were left with only one. Throughout this process, teachers had to reflect on the different parts of themselves that they had identified and decide which ones they could give up. At the end of the activity, teachers were left to reflect on the one part of themselves that they chose to keep. The crux of the activity comes when teachers reflect on the fact that not everyone chooses to keep the same card and that the card that each of them chose to keep represents how they view themselves and impacts the way they interact with others, including their students. In addition, each student who enters the door of a classroom comes in holding his or her own cards, which may or may not match those of the teacher in that room. The activity served as a conversation starter for many around the topic of CRT and left teachers expressing that they wanted to know more.

Several critical components of CRL appeared within this activity. Primarily, it was a specific example of how a leader models culturally responsive teaching and mindset (Santamaria, 2014; Spicer, 2016). Secondly, it demonstrated that Ida has the capacity to lead teachers through activities that warrant critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive teaching practices (Khalifa, 2011).

Analysis of the PD plan at Jabari revealed further confirmation of the existence of yearlong CRT focused PD. Staff at Jabari met every week and CRT was incorporated into every session. Included were CRT focused topics such as “Building the Learning Pact,” “Intentional Relationships with Families,” and “Creating independent learners.” Ida articulated in her interview that her PD plan was developed from practices from Zaretta Hammond’s *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. Isabel, a classroom teacher at

Jabari, remarked that "CRT was the foundation of our PD" and "it serves as a common thread."

Teacher survey data supported evidence found in the PD plan and articulated in the teacher and leader interviews. At Jabari, 100% of teachers strongly agreed that Maya both developed culturally responsive teachers and modeled CRT as a leader. In her interview Isabel, a classroom teacher, further supported implementation of yearlong PD.

> Jabari is the only school I taught at and Ida is my second administrator. I feel like I have grown tremendously as an educator because of the support she provides. I can bounce ideas off her and she has really supported by CRT journey.

Setting Goals

Stokely, Maya, and Ida all incorporated CRT into their school missions and used it as a foundation for annual "SMART" goal setting meetings they were required to have with each of their teachers. Every teacher in WPS was required to participate in an annual teacher performance review. As a part of this process they must set specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) goals focused on student learning. These meetings occur between the principal and the teacher three times a year: beginning, midyear, and end of year. To align culturally responsive teaching practices with district priorities Maya decided to use this structure to coach teachers towards being more aware of students' culture and background when setting goals and planning instruction. During her interview, Maya stated her intent in these meetings as such:

> I really focused on the relationship part and getting to truly know your students. I wanted teachers to understand them more than just academically, but also their cultural backgrounds and their experiences. Then the goal is for them to think how that plays into the experience kids have at school and then how as educators we can build on those experiences to connect learning for students.

A review of her teacher goal template she provided me revealed that she changed the language of the teacher performance standard to demonstrate her intentional focus on CRT. Her added rhetoric to the district standard is bolded:

> The work of the **culturally responsive** teacher results in acceptable, measurable, and appropriate student academic progress for **all** students. The **culturally responsive** teacher sets high standards for **all** student work and assesses student achievement and monitors learning in the classroom, adjusting instruction accordingly **based on student assets, culture, and strengths**.

Maya added that she had set up these opportunities for her to have individual conversations with teachers regarding the students in their classes but through a culturally responsive lens. Maya further commented her goal was to help teachers reframe teacher student interactions and to look at them not in deficit terms of what they could not do, rather in an asset-based approach of what they can do. Ultimately, she strived to hold educators accountable for high expectations of all students as Ellison and English (2017) suggest. Maya also wanted to tie in the work with a structure teachers already were required to do so it did not seem like additional work. During interviews her teacher interview, Sue recognized this goal and appreciated the following:

> It wasn't extra work on top of all we have to do as teachers. Plus, it shifted the way I looked at my class. It was helpful that she provided examples during our professional development.

Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) contended that effective culturally responsive leaders engaged in reflective conversations with teachers around learning goals for marginalized students. Analysis of Ida's CRT certification essay revealed an intentional focus around this collaborative partnership as she selected four teachers to go in depth with this coaching model. She developed a process, which is delineated in Table 11. It is an

intentional practice to use her influence as the instructional leader of the school to mentor and coach teachers to become more culturally responsive.

Analysis of her coaching model further revealed Ida's significant understanding of supporting teachers to become more culturally responsive. Several data points emerge such as her ability to connect the prior knowledge of her teachers to new culturally responsive material. This was supported by her interview responses as she described how she wanted to "shift teacher practice" not "completely reverse it." Specifically, she was referenced CRT as a lens that teachers could view their previous knowledge through rather than something completely new. Another salient point was the focus on the partnership between Ida and her teachers. By including scheduled follow-up meetings and opportunities for teachers to reflect, she underscored the importance of culturally responsiveness being a journey. She commented on this concept in her interview by stating that "equity work has to be reflective" and that as the leader she welcomed opportunities to engage in these conversations with teachers.

In his interview, Stokely mentioned how he used his goal setting meetings as an opportunity to have courageous conversations with teachers. For example, as a follow up to one training on cultural lens, Stokely met with every teacher. He asked them to reflect on the question, "How would you describe your cultural lenses at this point in time?" He deliberately held individual meetings so staff felt more comfortable with sharing. He had noticed during the whole group PD that many were reluctant to share given the personal nature of the topic. In the interview, he articulated a theme that emerged from these conversations was teachers felt intimidated by the more affluent families in the school community. In response to such pressure, teachers admitted to giving certain students more

attention to appease parents and, on reflection, could see how students from lower socio-economics were not getting the support they deserved. Amanda, a classroom teacher at Sankofa, commented on how she valued these individual goal setting meetings.

> I appreciated how he [Stokely] had the conversation one on one. Personally, I would have not felt comfortable admitting that to my peers. In talking to other teachers, I think we felt heard but also that we need to shift our practices to meet all student needs.

Madhlangobe (2012) discusses how culturally responsive leaders persisted and persuaded teachers and staff to advocate for all students and families. Based on teacher survey data, 50% of teachers at Sankofa strongly agreed that Stokely persuaded teachers to advocate for all students. The other 50% of teachers surveyed stated that they somewhat agreed. Santamaria (2014) added that such a leader must address negative biases towards certain groups of students. According to interviews, the perspective of one teacher, and teacher survey data, Stokely modeled these characteristics in his quest to make Sankofa a more inclusive school environment.

The findings for RQ 2a, regarding what behaviors and characteristics study participants believed were important to supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction, can be summarized as:

- Principals in WPS use equity audits to highlight gaps in achievement, equity and opportunity. The results from these audits are used to persuade and motivate teachers to shift practices to meet the needs of all students.
- Principals implement yearlong PD plans based on CRT to support teachers in their pedagogy.
- Principals use goal setting meetings to coach teachers in CRT strategies and mindset.

The next section will present the findings on RQ 2b that explores how leaders in WPS create culturally responsive school environments.

Creating Culturally Responsive School Environments

This section provides my analysis of themes that emerged from my findings related to Research Question 2b.

- What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a culturally responsive school environment for all students?

Of the CRL behaviors associated with creating a culturally responsive school environment, survey data indicated that teachers in WPS strongly agree that the leaders in this study analyze data and practices to bring awareness to the achievement gap (85%) and promote a culturally responsive school (78%). Teacher responses varied across schools regarding the belief the leaders in the study persist and persuade teachers and staff to advocate for marginalized students and families. At Jabari, 80% of teachers strongly agreed that Ida demonstrated this behavior while only 61% of teachers at Madiba strongly agreed that Maya did the same. Teachers at Sankofa presented mixed results where 50% of teachers strongly agreed Stokely engaged in this behavior. Across all three schools 63% of teachers strongly agreed to this statement. The survey data was supported by artifact analysis of documents each leader presented to me as evidence of creating a culturally responsive school environment. This was further confirmed by information gathered from leader and teacher interview data. Largely, the practices the three principals engaged in can be categorized into (a) including students and parent voice in school affairs, (b) shifting hiring practices to include more diversity, and (c) using equity coaches to support courageous conversations around negative biases and assumptions of certain student groups or families.

Student and Parent Voice in Learning Partnership

Through leader interview data, review of organizational documents, and analysis of his certification essay, it was evident Stokely worked to build capacity for how teams in the building addressed student learning for historically underperforming student groups at Sankofa. One avenue was incorporating the learning pact as detailed in *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain* (Hammond, 2016). In his interview, Stokely explained that the goal was to infuse student voice and ownership into the partnership as much as possible. He described how the pact represented a formal agreement between the teacher and student to work on a learning goal as partners. Along with his assistant principal and the equity specialists, he led workshops with his staff on how to create and develop these alliances. He detailed these alliances in his certification essay.

> Every teacher had to select a student who was not meeting grade level benchmarks. The students had to be ones who were either identified as having a disability, came from an economically disadvantaged home, or were a minority.

Stokely described in his interview how he in collaboration with his grade level team leaders, set up a structure allowing for teachers to document their students' progress and learn from each other. They set up a Google Spreadsheet to hold each other accountable but also to celebrate successes at grade level meetings. Each grade level had its own tab on the spreadsheet. Stokely provided me with access to the Google Spreadsheet. As an example, Table 12 presents how the third grade team documented the learning pact with their students. Analysis of the document showed that students developed a goal, determined the focus of the goal, and identified a timeline to finish it by. An interview with Laura, a classroom teacher at Sankofa, confirmed the significance of this learning pact:

> The learning pact set up a time to conference with each student. Although, we developed a specific goal it was an opportunity to check with the student about other academic needs or just anything that was on their mind. I saw motivation go up and kids looked forward to their individual time with me.

Stokely contributed this structure and intentionality to the academic growth students demonstrated. He detailed the results of midyear testing in his certification essay.

- 84.5% of the students who participated in the learning pacts met their goals.
- Of the 21 students who made up the 15.5% not meeting goals, 16 came from teachers who according to Stokely's walkthrough observations did not fully commit to the details of creating learning pacts.
- At the start of the year, the leadership team identified the 27 students who failed a reading and/or math end of the year test and were included in either the special education or economically disadvantaged membership group. Each of these students were included in the learning pact process. 17 of those students are now on track to either pass the end of year state test.

In his interview, Langston, Assistant Superintendent, recognized Stokely's work as a model for other principals in WPS.

> Stokely is a principal at one of our highest achieving and most economically advantaged schools in our division. When you look at their end of the year formative assessment data historically, there is a high percentage of the students who pass. Stokely was able to find the students that weren't getting these high rates and by building partnerships he was able to move the needle for all students. That's powerful.

Including students and families in goal setting meetings also became an intentional practice at Madiba Middle. As Madhlandgobe (2012) and Spicer (2016) argued, a culturally responsive leader encourages the power of collective efficacy of all stakeholders in raising student achievement. Analysis of Maya's PD plan supported this claim. A focus included in

the PD plan was incorporating student and family voice into the learning partnership. This also was stated in the Madiba SIP as a goal to "focus on goal setting and trust with students and families." In her interview, Maya articulated that Huey helped lead a PD session for teachers on how to build the learning partnership. Figure 2 depicts the development of this focus and the results of each grade level's focus on this CRL practice. The next section describes these partnerships in detail.

From a review of the PD plan, each grade level could take the PD and apply it to transform their current practice. Linked to the PD plan was the planning document for each grade level. Review of this document in addition to teacher and leader interviews provided details on how teachers at Madiba built a strong learning partnership.

In her interview, Sue, a classroom teacher, identified that a core competency they wanted to instill in students was "self-advocacy" and the ability for them to "articulate their learning." Her team developed a framework guiding students to track their data and then explain it to their family members. Sue articulated that it was powerful to watch students share their successes and goal with parents and it was more meaningful coming directly from the children. The 7th grade team decided that based on their student data, they wanted to focus on math. They acknowledged it was difficult for some parents to come to the school for a conference because they didn't have reliable transportation. Maya confirmed this barrier in her leader interview. The team developed a math home visit protocol where they prepped the student at school and helped them explain their learning. Following they would set a date for the teacher to come to the students' homes to have student led conference around math. Lastly, the 6th grade team focused on goal setting meetings requiring students to identify an area in which they needed help. These goals were then sent home to families who signed off

on them with the students. Lisa, a classroom teacher at Madiba, identified a theme to this work in her interview in that teachers felt empowered to engage families in their own way. They appreciated the time and space Maya provided for them to develop each of these protocols.

In the interview with Maya, she described how she worked to ensure the collaborative learning culture at her school included diverse voices. Prior to the school year beginning Maya met with her leadership team to construct the mission and vision of the school. This phenomenon is a common occurrence for most principals planning to meet the variety of challenges of the upcoming school year, but what makes Maya unique is her focus and intent on creating a culturally responsive school environment at Madiba Middle School. At the table were teacher representatives from each grade level and content, her assistant principal, an office associate, and a custodian. In her interview, she stated that these individuals "represented multiple perspectives in regard to teaching and learning as well as operational aspects of the school." An additional layer she added was the inclusion of three parents and an equity specialist, Mr. Huey Bosh. The parents represented different neighborhoods and backgrounds of the school community. As Horton (2017) argued, Maya believed to build an inclusive school environment meant representation from all stakeholders. She stated that she selected these parents because they were not necessarily the ones that showed up to events or were part of more formal organizations such as the parent teacher organization (PTO). Maya involved Mr. Bosh as a part of her leadership team to serve as a reflective partner. In her interview, she said the following:

> He asks questions at our meetings and listens to the language of the staff and teachers. He consistently gives me reflective questions that ensures we are staying the course of mission and helps me look at items systematically. I

> think overall he allows me to facilitate the meetings and might pick on equity items that I may miss.

Embedding Mr. Bosh into the leadership team not only helped Maya carry out intentional equity work, but his presence helped him build trusting relationships with the staff. As Marshall and Khalifa (2018) contended, his consistent interaction with staff led to his acceptance as a member of the school community rather than an outsider who was there to offer advice. Sue, a classroom teacher, stated that "Mr. Bosh is another member of our teaching community. He leads a lot of professional development and I always see him working with people individually or as professional learning community (PLC)."

Two items resulted from the meetings of this leadership team, a community driven school mission statement and the development of a stakeholder SIP. The individuals at the meeting suggested and workshopped several mission statements. Instead of stopping there, Maya sought to include the voices of as many stakeholders as possible. She took the proposed statements and sent them out in the form of a survey to the community. She explained how she worked with the district technology department to ensure the survey was translated into the multiple languages at Madiba and that the survey could be taken on a phone. She also provided paper forms at neighborhood community centers and in the main office of the school. As Leithwood and Louis (2013) suggested, this was her effort to build capacity to move student learning and success forward. Moreover, it set a framework for her to build highly diverse and inclusive decision-making structures (English and Ellison, 2017).

Together the leadership team developed the school improvement plan. In WPS, the SIP is a collaborative document detailing the work of the school year. The principal has autonomy in regards to who is included in this decision-making process. Document analysis of the plan revealed the following goals for the school year:

- increase teacher capacity for instruction by developing the learning partnership between school, students, and families;
- engage in culturally responsive teacher training for all staff to include teacher mindset and bias and elicit instructional strategies that increase achievement of marginalized student populations; and
- engage with stakeholders to build community engagement partnerships.

It is important to note the intentional focus on CRL practices by Maya and her team. Evidence of Khalifa's (2016) Framework for CRL is present, including the following: (a) the focus on teacher mindset around bias and stereotype supports the notion of a leader who strives to be reflective and knowledgeable about the prejudices in their building (English & Ellison, 2017; Horton, 2017), (b) PD and PLC work around building the learning partnership strives to develop a staff that is culturally responsive (Madhlangobe, 2012), and (c) the working towards strengthening community engagement is important for gaining collective efficacy amongst multiple stakeholders (Santamaria, 2014). SIP exist in many schools and districts but Maya sought to implement equitable practices in each of her goals and focus areas. In her interview, she asked simply, "If we are not planning for equity, then what are we even doing?"

Ida supported her professional learning communities with her PD plan. Evidence of her intentional focus on shifting teacher mindset was found in the analysis of her year-long plan. In addition to the support and expectation that teachers met in PLCs to discuss student growth she weaved CRT into her weekly PD plan. At Jabari, teachers gather as a staff once a week. Here, Ida incorporated CRT related material into each meeting. She used it as opportunity to model CRT practices, but also to provide teachers with strategies they could

implement in the classroom (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Spicer, 2016; Tillman, 2005). The primary focus surrounding this PD was to raise awareness to student groups were not succeeding at Jabari. Using trend data and stories about different students, Ida compelled staff to see how poor students of color were not achieving at the rates of their white more affluent peers. Isabel, a veteran teacher commented on the impact this had her:

> I have been at Jabari for 15 years and I have not a leader like Ida that has been able to name the problem but also have a very specific way to address it. Her passion is easy to follow as a teacher.

As described in earlier sections, analysis of the SIP at Jabari supported the focus on shifting teacher practice to address achievement gaps. Like Stokely and Maya, she addressed these gaps by strengthening the learning partnership between students and teachers. In her interview, Ida described one way how she did this:

> I had teachers envision one student who either was their most challenging student or who they felt like the most disconnected from in their class and we came up with specific ways for them to track a positive moments, positive connections with those students. And for some of the teachers it was very eye opening that they thought they were having more positive connections with those students than they actually were. And then I had teachers journal and reflect on their relationships with kids.

Ida had her teachers track these connections in several ways. One was to use rubber bands on their wrist or pennies in their pocket. When they had a positive interaction, the teacher would move the rubber band to the other wrist or the penny to the other pocket. Once Ida felt teachers had built a strong relationship foundation, she guided them to focus on instruction, A review of her PD plan confirmed a focus on the learning partnership between teacher and student. In her interview, she described how Ruby, the equity specialist, help her co-lead PD on how to increase student voice in the alliance between student and teacher.

In the interview with Langston, Assistant Superintendent, he acknowledged that this Ida's intentional practice on student relationships was a reason, Jabari saw increases in student achievement.

> From a division standpoint, we [division leadership] were impressed with the increases in student achievement scores at Jabari. I believe it was because of her foundational leadership. She modeled culturally responsive pedagogy for her staff implemented all sorts of practices that focused on building culturally responsive relationships with students.

Culturally Responsive Hiring Practices

In analysis of leader interviews, principals in the study allocated resources to their priority of equity in their schools. Stokely made a commitment to allocating human resource capital to CRT by rethinking his hiring process. He worked with the WPS human resources team to identify any applicant who was a minority and invited them to an interview. Even if he didn't have an opening, he contacted these individuals so that he could be sure to pass their names and resumes to other principals in the district. Although his student population is not diverse, in his interview, he described the importance of all children having the privilege of being taught by educators from different backgrounds, stating, "From my perspective, our kiddos need to see and realize that anyone from any background can be an authority figure and to respect the voice of anyone from all cultures."

He filled two classroom positions with a Black female and a Filipino female. Nevertheless, he articulated the division and school had ways to go to effectively recruit and retain teachers of color.

Stokely and his assistant principal also transformed the interview questions for any position they hired to assess the candidate's familiarity with culturally responsive teaching. He described this process during his interview. During the on-site interview,

prospective teachers are asked to share how their educational values and philosophy align with the beliefs of culturally responsive teaching. Prior to the interview, candidates are asked to prepare or describe a lesson that demonstrates CRT. They then must present this lesson to the interview panel. Additionally, they are asked to describe a time when they could effectively change their instruction based on learning more about their student's culture or background. He stated the following in his interview:

> The entire lens of hiring was shifted towards being more culturally responsive. I'd hired many teachers before and questions were always geared towards best practices around teaching math or science or why did you start teaching. By designing the questions and process around CRT it gives us a better idea of how the teacher gets to know students and their families.

Stokely articulated a goal was to have a culturally responsive teacher in every classroom. He acknowledged a lot of the work comes from quality PD but recruiting and human resource management is also a significant avenue to get the right individuals in the building.

The interview with Maya also revealed how she shifted her hiring practices to recruit a more diverse staff and to include student and parent voice in her decision making. She worked with WPS Human Resources to identify and attend recruitment fairs targeted towards diverse candidates. She traveled to one fair for students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) who were interested in being teachers. She could hire an African American male social studies teacher from this event. Additionally, she could connect other candidates with other principals in WPS. A total of four hires were made from this trip alone. Although, the number may seem small these efforts demonstrate hiring a diverse staff is highly important to Maya.

Student Voice in Decision Making

Maya also added a portion to her classroom teacher hiring process. She organized a group of students to tour prospective candidates around and have lunch with them. She charged the students with identifying traits about the teacher that showed they could relate and connect with all children. Maya articulated how this process made her change her decision for one teacher. She was on the fence between two candidates for an 8th grade position. After calling references and comparing their strengths she thought she finally had her mind made up. When she debriefed with the student group, they picked the other candidate. Maya ended up changing her decision and hired the teacher the students connected with better. She does not regret her decision as according to her, it turned out to be "one of her best hiring decisions."

Evidence of including student voice in decision making was also found in Stokely's certification essay. He started a student council to provide students with an opportunity to discuss issues that were important to them and to have input on decisions he had to make as the principal. These students which were nominated by their peers and teachers and were provided the opportunity to give feedback on budget items, scheduling of different enrichment periods and programs, and behavior rules for the cafeteria and bus. They also came up with school spirit ideas that would connect the student body. Part of making a school inclusive is to ensure multiple voices and perspectives are at the table when decisions are made (Horton, 2017).

It is clear from these findings each leader strived to shift teacher and staff mindset to provide more or better opportunities for the families at their school. They broadened the impact of their professional learning communities to include student and parent voice and

used it as avenue to persist and persuade staff to advocate for all students. Moreover, they ensured appropriate resources were allocated to their equity priorities.

The findings for RQ 2b, regarding what behaviors and characteristics study participants consider important in creating a culturally responsive school environment for all students, can be summarized as the following:

- Principals in the study strengthened professional learning communities by including Equity Specialists to help drive courageous conversations and shift mindset to advocate for all students;
- Principals set up structures that strengthened the learning partnership between teachers and students;
- Principals included student and parent voice to ensure diverse perspectives were included in decision making processes to include, budget, school events, and hiring decisions; and
- Principals shifted hiring practices to ensure they were recruiting a diverse staff and culturally responsive teachers.

The next section presents the findings on RQ 2c related to what study participants consider important leaders in creating strong community partnerships.

Creating Strong Community Partnerships

This section provides my analysis of themes that emerged from my findings related to Research Question 2c.

- Research Question 2c: What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a strong community partnership?

According to teachers surveyed for this study, 68% strongly agreed principals in the study addressed stereotype threat and negative biases educators may have towards certain groups of students and 65% strongly agreed the leaders engaged with students, parents, and families to develop positive relationships. These averages were supported by analysis of principal and district leader interviews, artifacts, and quotes from teachers.

Connecting School to Home

Stokely believed if he wanted to truly have an inclusive school community, he needed to also shift the mindset of his parent population. In his interview, he described how he decided to launch a quarterly community read series. This data is confirmed by analysis of the read series planning document that he provided. Stokely articulated in the interview, the books for the series were chosen specifically because they take on issues of equity and cultural nuances that as a school, he wanted stakeholders to be mindful of. Ultimately, his goal was to establish a shared background of knowledge and vocabulary that set a foundation for future work around equity and change. Equity Specialist, Huey, acknowledged Stokely's pursuit of community conversations which worked towards equity in his interview:

> Stokely is really doing some interesting things. He is modeling his own growth process but doing it with his parents. He's showing his community that it is ok to be vulnerable in the hope to have more authentic conversations about equity. The connections he's forming are strong.

A review of the planning document revealed the first book they read was *Whistling Vivaldi* (Steele, 2011). Using a small group setting, Stokely hosted community conversations on stereotype threat using *Whistling Vivaldi* as the anchor text. Discussion cards were provided to guide the conversations with questions that included:

- Have you ever tried to unlearn a stereotype about a population? What did you do to unlearn it? How successful do you think you were?

- Can you think of a time when you might have underperformed because of stereotype threat? Were you aware that anything was amiss? If so, did you try to address the problem?
- Have you been in a performance setting where you are a minority? Did you feel any pressure to work harder than other people did to prove yourself? Did you notice any negative effects from your efforts?
- Where have you encountered "colorblindness" as a value? Why might people of color distrust that idea?
- Implicit in Claude Steele's argument, as well as that of Beverly Tatum, is the idea that institutions and people can, often unintentionally, perpetuate stereotypes and inequities. Do either Sankofa Elementary or WPS do this? How?
- What can you do to support people—students, families, staff—who may be under stereotype threat, or not feel a sense of belonging, because aspect(s) of their identity are not part of the dominant Sankofa Elementary culture? What should we do as a school to strive to do to create an inclusive culture?

In his interview, Stokely described the resulting conversations as "respectful and rich." He remarked talking about the issues of equity as "the first step in getting buy in to make systematic changes." Recognizing the first read was more adult focused, he chose a book that could include student voice and participation. He said his assistant principal identified the book *Hidden Figures* (Melfi & Shetterly, 2017) because the book has several editions that are accessible to young readers, upper elementary students, teenagers, and adults. He stated in his interview, "Following the discussion on stereotype threat, Hidden

Figures was a powerful choice as it tells the story of individuals who excelled despite the discrimination and prejudice of being Black Women."

The school hosted a showing of the movie after the reading as a community event. In an interview Amanda, a classroom teacher, confirmed the significance of this seemingly small gesture, saying, "We've done movie nights before. Many schools have. But this was different in the way that it was intentionally set up with an instructional anchor text, had guiding questions, and it had a meaningful purpose."

Stokely also choose a text that directly addressed the kind of competitive culture some of his families were promoting. He noticed the negative impact the pressure of succeeding had on students in terms of anxiety and overall stress. Along with a group of parents and teachers, they chose *Little Soldiers* to drive the dialogue about pushing children through the academic race and the negative effects of doing so (Chu, 2017).

Teacher survey data confirms this CRL practice as 75% of teachers at Sankofa believed Stokely engaged students, parents, and families to develop positive relationships with the school.

As Leithwood and Louise (2013) suggested that the community conversations led by Stokely are a powerful example of a leader engaging in community discussion that challenge current practice. Further, by including community voices and learning it allows for the school to strive for collective efficacy and change systems collectively (Santamaria, 2014).

Culturally Responsive Family Outreach

In her interview Ida described how she allocated her budget towards funding opportunities for the staff of Jabari to connect with the families they served. It was important for her that barriers that existed between the school and home were broken down. This data

was supported by evidence from teacher interviews and analysis of Ida's community outreach planning document. Ida described how for years a common refrain among staff was some families did not want to come to afterschool tutoring. Ida pushed teachers to unpack this statement and to consider many families worked and could not get to school to pick up their students. As she realized transportation was a barrier, Ida worked with WPS Central Office to secure a bus that would take students home after participating in after school tutoring or enrichment clubs. She showed the staff that providing tutoring to only some students was an exclusionary practice (Khalifa, 2011). By mitigating the transportation barrier, she gave access to all students.

Providing transportation was just one way in which Ida strengthened her partnership with families. After a few family-oriented events hosted at the school, she realized students from one of her most diverse neighborhoods were not attending. These were also some of her students who struggled with reading. Ida decided to host a school sponsored reading event in the neighborhood. Analysis of the planning document for this event revealed Ida coordinated it with teacher leaders and the equity specialists. They planned and executed a gathering where families had pizza, participated in a read aloud together, and were provided books to read with their students. They had a DJ play music and brought a bounce house to stir up some excitement about reading. Isabel, a classroom teacher at Jabari, described it not only had a positive impact on families, but also the staff by saying, "Some of the staff had never set foot in this neighborhood. The kids were so excited to see their teachers. It was a great informal way for teachers and parents to connect."

The existence of these connections is further supported in teacher survey data as 60% of teachers strongly agreed that Ida built positive relationships with students, parents, and

families. As Gardiner & Enomoto (2006) and Cooper (2009) suggested, Ida created this event so staff could develop a positive understanding of students and families and see the overlap between school and community.

To further build on this partnership, Ida changed the way she communicated with her families. Based on community feedback she realized many families did not use email as their primary mode of communication. Ida realized this was problematic as most of the messaging coming from the school was via email. Additionally, it was sent out only in English which proved to be a barrier for the growing Spanish-speaking population at Jabari. Ida set a group text for this subdivision and communicated directly with families. Now that families were getting up to date information, Ida noticed an increase in their participation in school events. She also ensured all communication from the school was sent out in both English and Spanish. These measures are indicative of a leader who is committed to ensuring all families are included in school events.

In her interview, Maya also discussed her goal to transform traditional family engagement opportunities schools provide such as open house, back to school night, and parent conferences. Maya led her leadership team through an equity audit of attendance at these events. The results showed only about 30% of the school attended back to school nights and open house. Additionally, generally the students who were in higher level classes and from more affluent neighborhoods attended. As a CRL practitioner, Maya sought to be more inclusive (Horton, 2017). Because she included parents on her leadership team, Maya could directly ask them what the barriers were for attendance. She concluded most families did not have the dates on their calendar and needed a reminder. Historically this reminder came in back to school packets mailed to houses but she learned from one parent that it often got

shuffled in the paper work. Maya decided to take a more personal touch. During the pre-service week prior to opening of school, she had teachers call every family and personally invite them to open house and back to school night. Each teacher had a homeroom of roughly 16-20 students and were responsible for reaching out to those families. It made a measurable difference. Nearly 60% of students came to open house. Not only did it increase attendance but teachers reported it as a valuable professional learning opportunity:

> I had called families prior to school starting before but this was different. We had an hour-long PD prior to calling to discuss how to listen and learn about the families. Plus, the fact that we all called as a school gave us common discussion points. It was cool to see the parking lot so full!

In her interview, equity specialist Ruby, confirmed Maya's ability to model community relationships but also underscored her ability to create opportunities for the rest of her staff to connect with the community.

> She has those deep community-like relationships that she's able to like build alliances with some families and students that another person who is a white, upper-middle-class female could not do. I think that like a large, large part of it is like her background. I also think she's got excellent follow through. She's very intentional about the work that she does with students. I've seen her like develop a lot opportunities for her staff to build relationships. So not only is she like modeling learning partnerships, but she's also creating opportunities for her staff to do that as well through her actions.

The findings for RQ 2c regarding what behaviors and characteristics study participants consider important in creating a strong community partnership can be summarized as the following:

- Principals in the study used data to highlight disparities in family attendance to school events;
- To ensure all families had access to the school, principals removed barriers such as lack of transportation; and

- Principals and their staff ensured they were visible in community spaces.

The next section will present the findings on RQ 3 how school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors.

Critical Self Reflection

This section provides my analysis of themes emerging from my findings related to Research Question 3.

- How do school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors?

Teachers were asked in the survey to rate leaders on how they understand and acknowledge their own cultural biases and how they understand how culture and race can be integrated into instruction. Here, 70% of teachers identified the leaders acknowledged their own cultural biases while only 33% understood how culture and race can be integrated into instruction. Relative to all surveyed CRL behaviors these two aspects were the weakest amongst the three principals. Teacher survey data would suggest the leaders in this study were not critically self-reflective, but from principal interviews and each leader's certification essay provide evidence that this was indeed a practice they engaged in.

The findings for each individual leader varied. At Jabari, 80% of Ida's teachers believed she understood and acknowledged her biases and 70% thought she knew how culture and race could be integrated into instruction. Within the same categories, Stokely's teachers reported 72% and 25%, respectively while 72% and 16% of Maya's teachers strongly agreed. It is possible the findings of the survey may be significantly lower given self-reflection is difficult for someone else to measure. Unlike the other behaviors it may have been difficult for teachers to tangibly see. Interviews with individual leaders and their

certification essays, however, did provide stronger evidence for how leaders in WPS used critical self-reflection practices. Each leader had an equity partner, or an individual that was a colleague or peer who could reflect on issues together. They all used a form of journaling to process their thoughts on equity. Lastly, the research found viewed culturally responsiveness as a journey rather than an end destination.

Equity Reflective Partners

Stokely is a highly educated and accomplished administrator with a wealth of personal and professional experiences. Despite this, thorough reflection and a deep dive into culturally responsive work he came to following realization during his interview:

> I didn't need to be culturally responsive growing up. I went through thirty plus years of my life using my white skin and my white privilege that I didn't need to think about it. No one ever challenged me and no one ever pushed me on it. I didn't really understand how the system didn't work for everyone. But having the push for WPS has caused me to reflect in a way I've had to before.

As an individual who did not have discriminatory experiences growing up, Stokely relies on several people in his professional network to help strengthen his cultural lens. In his certification essay, he described his assistant principal, a Black female, as one of his strongest reflective partners. As someone who is in the work with him every day, knows the families, and understands the mission of the school he relied on her to "keep him in check." Listening and having open conversations about race, class, and socio-economics with her has been in his opinion some of the best PD he has ever had.

Stokely also identified the equity specialist position as an initiative that supports him in reflection: "When the administrative team at Sankofa are faced with a decision, the specialists can provide a fresh perspective and push us to look at through a different cultural lens." Overall, Stokely describes this work as his culturally responsive journey. When I asked him to articulate further, he commented on how his learning will never be done and that it's

important to surround himself with likeminded passionate individuals – "equity work cannot be done in isolation."

Given the size of Jabari Elementary, Ida is the only administrator. Finding a critical reflective partner was important for her because she does not have an assistant principal. She found a partner in equity coach Ruby Wade. Ida articulated in her interview that having Ruby as a partner allowed her to bounce ideas off her whether it be a courageous conversation she had with a teacher, planning for PD, or organizing a community event. Ida also reached out to peer administrators who were also trying to implement CRL in their schools. Although no formal structure exists in WPS, she used her network to create opportunities to reflect. For example, every week she set up a time to simply take a walk with another principal in the division. During this time, they would discuss different PD ideas and problem solve different student and family situations. Ida described this time as important as it allowed her to connect with others who were deep in the work of CRL but also provide an opportunity for her to decompress.

In her interview, Maya articulated how she relied on peer administrators to support her reflective practices:

> When I'm stuck or just need someone to process with I have a core group of other administrators who I reach out to. Two are former principals I worked with as the AP. Another is a friend who is also a middle school principal. Her and I are the same age and have sort of professionally grown up in the division together.

Writing for Reflection

Maya describes herself as a nonverbal processor and someone who likes to reflect privately. Thus, she stated that she likes to journal in regards to thinking about her leadership

practices and behaviors. Although she describes her friend and family group as diverse, she states she is aware of her whiteness:

> When I interact with cultures and backgrounds that are different from my culture, I am careful not to assume or tell them what needs to be done. This is an area of growth for me because as a principal sometimes people look to me for answers. But I know that if I want to truly be responsive, I need to listen and collaborate.

When asked about her leadership style, Maya was quick to describe herself as a servant leader. She viewed her role as principal as one that holds immense responsibility. Teachers who were interviewed confirmed her servanthood by saying she was calm, patient and supportive. “It’s very clear that she cares about us as adults and professionals, but also cares about the kids and their success.” Santamaria (2014) contended that this behavior is a critical component of a culturally responsive leader.

As described in the section that provided the background on CRT in WPS, all three leaders participated in the culturally responsive certification process offered in the district. Each of them identified their gratitude in participating in the certification process to reflect on their leadership practice. In her essay, Maya focused on how equity work is a journey rather than a destination:

> This journey has been intense. I have experienced many levels of emotions ranging from joy, excitement and happiness to frustration, uncertainty and borderline anger. I have doubted myself at times and been confused. There is so much to learn and so much work to be done. The work of becoming a culturally responsive educator and leading for equity is never over and I don’t believe there is ever a finish line. What I can continue to commit to doing is learning, reflecting, and taking one intentional step at a time. I can allow myself to be vulnerable, to grow and to influence those around me. Through my certification work I have done just that in several different ways.

In his essay, Stokely underscored the importance of the process in his reflective practices:

> As a school leader, I went through this process and devoted myself to reflecting on my own cultural lens and understanding the lenses of my staff and students; I also have strived to provide the supports that would allow staff to begin analyzing their own cultural lenses.
>
> Ida confirms this importance in her essay:
>
> My pursuit of a certification in culturally responsive teaching is a documentation of the responsibility I have taken for what matters to me. My work as a culturally responsive educator began when I was a teacher and is ongoing still. This process for me resulted in the creation of a model for leading culturally responsive work. I believe that by guiding teachers through this process and developing them as culturally responsive teachers the result will be greater student achievement.

Opportunities to Reflect in WPS

Stokely added in his interview that having a superintendent who embraces culturally responsive teaching has been powerful for his reflective practice. According to Stokely, the superintendent promoted readings, articles, and brought in speakers to help leaders reflect and learn. He further described how having district level support causes principals in the division to self-reflect on their leadership practices.

In her interview, Maya contributed her self-guided PD and the book study in WPS as primary reflective practices. Two books in particular have shaped her thinking as she strives to model culturally responsive practices. Zaretta Hammond's *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain* is a common read throughout WPS. Maya used it with her own staff for PD. She showed me her copy that was earmarked and highlighted as she is constantly going back to it for reflection. Additionally, she and several other administrators in the district are reading Muhammad Khalifa's *Culturally Responsive Leadership* (2018). She found this cohort helpful because they can look as culturally responsive through the eyes of an administrator and strive to make systematic changes. Although there is currently not a

formal structure for leaders to discuss culturally responsive leadership, Maya states she uses these peers consistently as reflective partners.

In her interview, Ida also participated in the cohort of administrators in WPS who read Culturally Responsive Leadership as a book study. Again, this forum was a space for like-minded individuals to unpack the work of equity in schools. Ida commented it was important the participants of the book study were also administrators because they understood the role and pressures of being a principal while trying to lead equity work. She described the sessions as therapeutic even as the members of the group could empathize and support each other.

The findings for RQ 3, regarding how school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors, can be summarized as the following:

- Principals in the study use critical reflective partners to create, plan and implement CRL practices such as an equity specialist or peer administrator.
- Principals in the study used writing as a reflective process for their equity journey.
- Principals in the study all participated in the WPS book study based on CRL.

Summary

Careful analysis of interview data, survey results, and organizational artifacts yielded the findings described in this chapter. An overview of these findings is compiled in Table 13. While the findings are specific to the leaders and schools in Wakanda Public Schools, recommendations for practice, policy, and research is presented in the next chapter. Additionally, the findings will be situated within the current research on CRL.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND ACTION COMMUNICATION

The purpose of this study was to explore how three school principals enacted CRL behaviors and practices in their school settings. Specifically, the study focused on two elementary school principals and one middle school principal in one school district, Wakanda Public Schools. Through semi-structured interviews of district level leaders, the principals, teachers along with a teacher survey and artifact analysis I collected qualitative data that K-6 administrators and education leader preparation programs can examine. I structured my study around the following research questions.

1. What is the nature of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in Wakanda Public Schools (WPS)?
    a) What do study participants in WPS know about CRL?
    b) How do study participants in WPS understand their role and responsibility as culturally responsive leaders?
2. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider to be important in providing excellent and equitable opportunities for all students?
    a) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction?

b) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a culturally responsive school environment for all students?

c) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a strong community partnership?

3. How do school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors?

The findings support the current literature and add to existing case studies on CRL. Several themes arise from the findings in chapter four concerning CRL in WPS. In the following sub-sections, I share these themes along with relevant research that supports the themes and findings. The themes are discussed through conceptual framework of this study. Each subsection demonstrates how study participants enacted core leadership capacities but through a culturally responsive lens. Table 14 provides an overview of the intersection CRL practices and behaviors identified in this study with the core leadership competencies of the OLF. After sharing these major themes, I share implications for practice, preparation, and future research.

Culturally Responsive Leadership Themes

CRL Theme One: Setting Goals with Equity Instructional Coaches

Leithwood and Reihl (2003) recognized that building vision and setting direction was a core component of successful leadership. Moreover, they argued that providing direction and exercising influence is how leaders mobilize others to work towards a shared goal. Conzemius and O'Neill (2006) added that the more individuals felt personally connected to a goal, the more compelled they were meet it. Equity coaches

played a significant role when study participants developed mission statements and set goals for their schools. In WPS, the coaches served as a compass to enact this leadership practice through a culturally responsive lens. This finding is consistent with Khalifa and Muhammad (2018), who described equity work as immense and needing to be shared. Otherwise, it is easy for administrators to get burdened with organizational and management tasks.

The leaders in WPS relied heavily on equity specialists as reflective partners. Khalifa et al. (2016) contended that critical reflection must precede any leadership action, while Dantley (2005) and Furman (2012) added that the reflection must be ongoing. Each leader articulated the coaches served as their reflective practices in this manner. Leaders in the study discussed mission statements, PD plans, community engagement events with coaches to ensure they were implementing them in culturally responsive ways. As Leithwood and Sun (2009) suggested, the coaches helped leaders build a shared vision and ensure that multiple stakeholders where at the table when making decisions.

CRL Theme Two: Aligning Resources to Priorities: Focus on Culturally Responsive Practices in Professional Development

According to Levacic (2010), effective leadership is linked to the proper alignment of resources to support the organizations goals around teaching and learning. Miles and Frank (2008) added that aligning resources to priorities involves three distinct components:

1. Clearly defining what the school intends to accomplish,
2. Developing an instructional model appropriate to that goal, and
3. Organizing resources in a way that supports the instructional model.

Finally, Grub (2009) clarified that resources does not have to apply to just monetary resources. He argued that complex resources, or ones that are created over time by teachers and leaders, are just as valuable to student learning. Leaders in this study used culturally responsive PD as a foundation to their goals, developed an instructional model that supported the goal, and provided resources to accomplish it.

CRT was threaded through each leader's PD plan. There was not an existing or set curriculum for adult learning, rather each school could develop PD based on the needs of their teachers and student families (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). Essential to this focus was the intentional planning of the three principals. Again, all three leaders relied on the three equity coaches to help construct PD opportunities matching the needs of the school. Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) added that creating a team charged to find new ways for teachers to be culturally responsive is a characteristic of a culturally responsive leader. Based on the data they wanted to focus on, leaders designed plans that would build teacher capacities for CRT (Voltz et al., 2003). For Stokely, it meant shifting how teacher's perceived students from different socio-economic groups at the school. Maya and Ida strived to help teachers unpack their biases around students of color in regards to discipline and academics, respectively. Maya demonstrated CRL characteristics by engaging in collaborative walkthroughs with her leadership team designed to gather observation data on school discipline (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). As Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2000) argued, creating culturally responsive PD opportunities for teachers is a characteristic of an administrator who leads through a multi-cultural and social justice lens. Khalifa (2018) added that it provides a medium of adult learning that can yield more positive student outcomes.

CRL Theme Three: Using Data with Equity Audits

Hamilton et al. (2009) argued that data alone is not evidence of teaching or learning. They argued for the establishment of a data culture where data discussion and gathering is guided by values, goals, and leaders provide an explicit use for the information collected. The presence of equity audits, or using data to highlight achievement, opportunity, or equity gaps were found in each school. Stokely, used GIS software to visually show his teachers the achievement gap between different socio-economic groups at Sankofa. Maya tracked teacher discipline data to highlight inequitable enforcement of behavior rules. And lastly, Ida noticed that only some students were provided the opportunity to participate in after school activities. These findings were consistent with the literature on leadership practice. Earl and Katz (2006) argued that data is a leader's way of diagnosing situations and understanding the root cause of problems. Campbell and Levin (2008) added that data provides the leader an opportunity to provide teachers and staff with honest feedback. Presenting teachers and staff with data is not unique to public education settings. The important concept for this study is to understand how each leader began to problem solve these through a culturally responsive lens. As Skrla et al. (2004) suggested, using equity audits is a critical way to measure student inclusiveness, policy and practice. Khalifa et al. (2016) added that this is essential for a culturally responsive leader who desires to uncover gaps in their buildings data. Each leader provided structures and time to have culturally responsive data driven conversations (Brown et al., 2011; McKenzie & Skrla, 2011). One such formal structure was PLCs. To help guide these conversations, all three leaders used equity coaches and their DRTs to help guide conversations with a keen focus on student growth and ensuring

students from historically marginalized communities were accounted for. Each leader used the audits as a measure to identify areas of growth in their settings and then built capacity to address them (Hernandez & Marshall, 2017). Means et al. (2009) suggested each leader in the study set up supporting conditions to support data conversations. Because each leader enacted their leadership through a culturally responsive lens, these tools were CRT PD, used half days to go over data in depth, and provided equity coaches to support analysis.

CRL Theme Four: Parent and Student Voice as a Collaborative Learning Community

The findings of this study support what Hord and Hirsh (2009) identified as an approach leaders should take to build strong learning communities. Primarily, the concept of sharing authentic power and decision making was present in the leadership of study participants. They also all strived to include parent and student voice as a part of these conversations. Antrop-Gonzalez (2011) and Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) proposed that using student and parent voice in decision making processes is indicative of CRL. Both Stokely and Maya incorporated the use of a "principal's council" where students were provided with opportunities to make decisions on budget, behavior rules, and plan school events. The principals in this study strived to create a welcoming environment for all students and their parents (Theoharis, 2007). Maya embraced this notion significantly by including parents on her leadership team. Including parents as a part of the decision-making process provided her leadership team with an authentic perspective of student experience. Kruse and Louis (2009) believed that the more the leader integrate the different stakeholders and subcultures within a school community, the stronger the

learning culture would be. Fullan (2009) added that strength of an organization relies on how well the leader can mesh the values of the different groups that make up a school community. Ida shifted the way she communicated with parents based on their preferred mode of contact. She also leveraged resources to bring more families to school functions and to allow more students to participate in afterschool clubs and tutoring by coordinating transportation (Ainscow, 2005; Riehl, 2000).

CRL Theme Five: Courageous Conversations

Equity work is difficult in that it requires engaging in uncomfortable conversations. Principals in the study engaged in these conversations to challenge inequities and to coach teachers and staff towards changing the culture of the school. Singleton (2012) contended this was an essential behavior and practice of culturally responsive leaders. Skiba et al. (2002) added that it is necessary for leaders to dismantle the status quo by questioning achievement and equity gaps. The research of Robinson et al. (2009) supported the findings of the study suggesting that leaders must challenge and change well established aspects of teacher culture for student outcomes to change.

The leaders in this study demonstrated they could counsel and mentor teachers towards becoming more culturally responsive (Khalifa, 2013). Another significant theme in the findings was each leader's ability to have conversations based on the trust and relationships they had formed with their staff. The seminal work of Bryk and Schneider (2002) identified the presence of relational trust as essential between leader and teacher. Everyone must be vulnerable and open to learn. The leaders in the study completed culturally responsive training with their teachers and they tried to make their leadership practice transparent to students, teachers, and parents. In doing so they opened their

practice to multiple perspectives and allowed for consensus decision making. City et al. (2009) contended that these leadership practices build the foundation needed to have honest conversations with teachers.

Maya raised awareness among her staff regarding inequitable discipline practices and then guided teachers and PLCs to reflect on which students were considered behavior issues. As evidenced by interviews with teachers, it was apparent that leaders in the study had strong existing relationships with teachers to have these discussions that often revolved around race and socio-economics. It is also important to recognize that these conversations intended to shift mindset also occurred with parents. Stokely challenged the dominant culture of his more affluent parents to establish a school environment that was inclusive of all students.

Summary of Themes

An analysis of district and school-based leader interviews, teacher surveys and follow up interviews, and organizational artifacts resulted in five themes of CRL described in the preceding section:

1. CRL Theme One: Setting Goals with Equity Instructional Coaches
2. Aligning Resources to Priorities: Focus on Culturally Responsive Practices in Professional Development
3. CRL Theme Three: Using Data with Equity Audits
4. CRL Theme Four: Parent and Student Voice as a Collaborative Learning Community
5. CRL Theme Five: Courageous Conversations

Each theme intentionally demonstrates the overlap of CRL characteristics and core leadership competencies of the OLF. These themes are used to inform the recommendations for practice and research in the following section which are outlined in Table 16.

Recommendations for Practice

Fund Equity Coaches

School administrators are often tasked with many managerial and operational tasks taking them away from instructional tasks like developing teachers and leading PD. Equity coaches helped leaders in this study with PD plans, organize community events, partner with teachers, and serve as reflective consults. Currently, WPS has three equity coaches serving 26 schools. Potentially placing one coach in every building would further allow these specialists to integrate into the school community and focus their efforts on one school community rather than being shared across the district. Ideally, they would be a part of the leadership team of every school.

Professional Development for CRL

Although district leadership and the school board both supported culturally responsive pedagogy, few formal structures exist in WPS that empower administrators to be culturally responsive leaders. Monthly leadership meetings should be planned through a lens of CRL. They are spaces where school based leaders could receive training on how to use equity audits, lead CRT PD, and, most importantly, have time to reflect with other leaders in the district. Principals in the study opted in to the certification process and the book study. If equity is to occur on a district level, then these practices cannot be optional. This is especially important given the leaders in this study did not receive equity

focused coursework in their education leadership programs. PD directed and provided by division leadership would be an opportunity to close this knowledge gap and build and collective understanding of CRL as it applies to their context.

Professional Development for Equity Audits

Equity Audits were used as a catalyst to systematic change for the leaders in WPS. The data gathered from this process was used to change instructional practices, reform disciplinary actions, and create better opportunities for family engagement. Leaders did not receive any formal training on how to complete this process. Instead, they used what they knew about equity and data and combined it into practice. Leaders would benefit from district led seminars that looked at data across the division. Protocols that are research based would be useful in ensuring systematic and proper analysis of data (Skrla et al., 2004). Additionally, it would allow leaders in WPS to have reflective conversations with each other about trends that they were seeing across the division. Again, having district led PD and guidance would provide a more formal structure for building leaders to in engage in CRL practices.

Recommendations for Education Leadership Programs

Study participants did not feel their education leadership programs adequately prepared them to lead in diverse settings. Specifically lacking were strategies for authentic community engagement. The common theme was a focus on organization and managerial tasks. To be able to look at these tasks through a CRL lens would be a step towards preparing leaders to serve communities that have cultures different from their own. This does not look like incorporating some classes on multiculturalism. Rather, programs should incorporate CRL characteristics and behaviors through all coursework

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), leaders should be introduced to the concept of culturally responsive leadership through their preparation programs that focus on the critique of social inequities, the incorporation of serving diverse populations, and how to mobility the social capital of a community (Johnson et al., 2011). Ylimaki and Jacobson (2013) added that preparation programs should offer well supervised internships, which allow aspiring principals to engage in leadership experiences under the guidance of a successful culturally responsive administrator. These researchers also recommended the cohort model for leadership programs as it provides social interactions and reflective partners with other social justice minded leaders.

Research provides evidence that principals play a significant role in developing school improvement initiatives (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Duke (2014) argued that they can create the kinds of positive, engaging school climates that increase the likelihood of improved student learning.

Recommendations for Further Research

Longitudinal Studies

Additional research that would add to the field of CRL, but is beyond the scope of this capstone project, are longitudinal, quantitative studies that can connect CRL practices and behaviors to student achievement data. Existing studies examined CRL behaviors and different stakeholder perceptions of how those characteristics were enacted in each setting. Being able to follow a leader who implements these practices over several years and simultaneously track the student achievement of students from marginalized communities would help validate CRL as a means of closing the achievement gap. This has major policy and resource implications spanning from curricula prioritized in

teacher/administrator preparation programs to how a district or state allocates resources to better support CRL/CRT at every school.

District Level CRL

Further, studies that examine specifically the relationship between district leadership and building level leaders would be beneficial to understanding how CRL can be supported from district leaders. Like how principals can develop teachers to be more culturally responsive, practices demonstrating how district leaders accomplish this could lead to more systematic change. This would include looking at districts who have implemented more formal structures in building the equity capacity of their building leaders. Like this study, it would be valuable to look at district level leaders, such as the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent, who are implementing CRL practices and the influence it has on systematic change at the district level.

Parent and Student Perspective

Lastly, as we continue to strive for more excellent and equitable opportunities for all students, it would be beneficial to understand the impact CRL behaviors and practices have directly on them. This would involve an extension of this study to include the perspectives and perceptions of the students served by the leaders at Sankofa, Madiba, and Jabari Schools. The next section presents an action communication for faculty leadership of the Equity Center at the University of Virginia. In this action communication, I present my findings and recommendations for practice and future research of Equity Center staff and faculty.

Summary

The discussion and recommendations presented in this chapter are based on the findings of the study and the existing literature. Further, I outlined an action communication designed to operationalize the recommendations for practice and research of this chapter. May they serve as a guide for educational leaders to create both equitable and excellent opportunities for all students. May it allow for all students to have a seat at the table.

Action Communication One: Briefing Memo to Equity Center Faculty

From: E Benjamin Allen V
Doctoral Candidate
University of Virginia
405 Emmet St. S
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Dear Equity Center Faculty,

I am writing to report the findings and recommendations based on a four-month case study of three principals in one school district, Wakanda Public Schools (WPS). I interviewed each leader, conducted a survey on culturally responsive leadership (CRL) practices with their teachers, conducted follow up interviews with teachers, and performed an artifact analysis on their professional development and school improvement plans.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the nature of CRL in WPS by identifying what CRL behaviors and practices study participants considered important regarding developing culturally responsive teachers, creating a culturally responsive school environment, creating strong community partnership. The study also explored how the three principals used critical self-reflection to implement CRL practices. The findings are not meant to be generalized to all school districts, but rather serve as igniting points for future growth and development related to culturally responsive leadership. As a research center that consults with school districts on improving outcomes for marginalized students, the findings of this study could be both useful for practice and further research of the Equity Center.

Significant findings of the study are:

6. Although leaders can come from different cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities they can be coached to become more culturally responsive.

7. School-based leaders develop culturally responsive teachers through yearlong professional development, mentoring, and coaching.

8. Through equity audits, leaders of the study used data to support the need for culturally responsive pedagogy.

9. School-based leaders can build more culturally responsive school environments by including student and parent voice in decision make process.

10. School-based leaders who critically self-reflect on their own culture, biases, and assumptions are positioned to lead culturally responsive schools.

Based on these findings, I provide the following recommendations for practice when working with district level school leaders.

5. Support and fund more Equity Coaches. These individuals were pivotal in the growth and development of each principals CRL practice and implementation.

6. As principals can support teachers in becoming culturally responsive, district administrators can support principals. District administrators should seek to implement CRL behaviors and practices at the district level in order to drive systematic change.

7. Assist districts and schools with conducting structured and researched based equity audits.

8. Support and partner with the Curry School of Education in their current efforts of weaving CRL practices into already existing coursework in order to produce equity minded school leaders.

Additionally, as a research institution, the Equity Center may be interested in pursuing further research identified by this study to build on the growing literature on CRL. Those recommendations are:

1. Longitudinal study that looks at the influence of culturally responsive leadership on the achievement of students from marginalized communities.

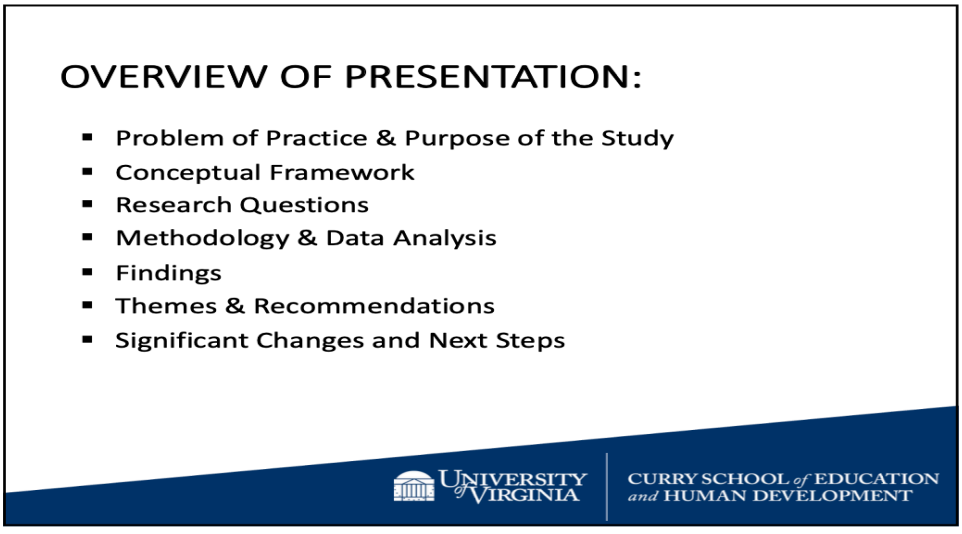
2. A study that looks at the impact of district leaders implementing CRL behaviors and practices and the influence it has on systematic change.

3. A study that can elicit parent and student perspective regarding the influence CRL practices and behaviors have on them and their community.

I invite any questions or further dialogue regarding these findings and recommendations for practice and research. Please feel free to contact me via email at eba5b@virginia.edu.

Respectfully,
Ben Allen

Action Communication Two: CRL PowerPoint Presentation



PROBLEM OF PRACTICE:

The schools in which our current leaders serve have become increasingly diverse, but the preparation and professional development for many administrators within these contexts has not adjusted to meet this shift, resulting in gaps in achievement, equity and opportunity.

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT STUDY:

This study is focused on understanding how the school-based leader enacts the leadership competencies identified in Leithwood and Louis (2012) with the tenants of culturally responsive leadership at the forefront.

PURPOSE OF THIS PRESENTATION:

As a research center that consults with school districts on improving outcomes for marginalized students, the findings of this study could be both useful for practice and further research of the Equity Center.

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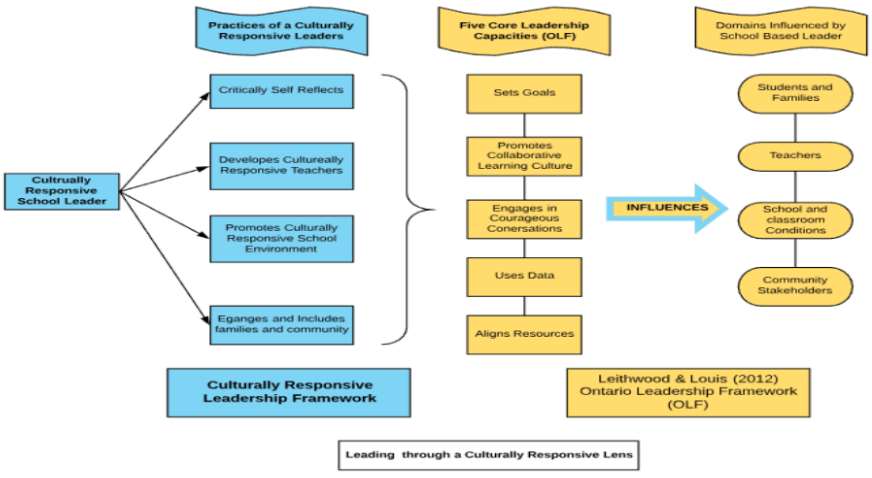
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the nature of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in Wakanda Public Schools (WPS)?
   a. What do school-based leaders in WPS **know about culturally responsive leadership**?
   b. How do school-based leaders in WPS **understand their role and responsibility as culturally responsive leaders**?
2. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider to be important in providing excellent and equitable opportunities for all students?
   a. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction**?
   b. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **creating a culturally responsive school environment for all students?**
   c. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **creating a strong community partnership?**
3. How do school-based leaders in WPS **use critical self-reflectio**n to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors?

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CONTEXT: CHARACTERISTICS

DISTRICT

- a district that is linguistically, culturally, ethnically, and social economically diverse
- a trend in demographics that is shifting towards more diversity
- a district that did not have a minority-majority student population in a large urban context (a gap in the existing literature is the lack of case studies in contexts where leaders serve heterogeneous student populations)
- a district struggling to meet the needs of all students

LEADERS

- articulated interest in supporting students from marginalized communities
- participated in Wakanda Public Schools' CRL Professional Development (each of the leaders chosen earned a certification for their leadership in this work)
- Served in schools with equity, opportunity, and/or achievement gaps between student demographics

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CONTEXT: Wakanda Public Schools

Leader	Role/School	Years in Admin	Population Served	Demographics	Education
Dr. Stokely Jordan	Principal Sankofa Elementary	23	Suburban/ Rural	Multi-Racial Male	Doctoral
Ms. Maya Rice	Principal Madiba Middle School	18	Suburban/ Urban	White Female	Master's
Ms. Ida B. Bryant	Principal Jabari Elementary School	14	Rural	Black Female	Master's

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STUDY DESIGN: METHODS

	Rationale	Implementation	Method	Sample
Part 1: Interviews with district level leadership	Provides insight into organizational and systematic state of culturally responsive leadership professional development in WPS	Open ended questions focusing on the degree of CRL practices in WPS Open ended questions focusing on the current state or nature of CRL in WPS	Find patterns in coded transcriptions that show common themes of CRL implementation in WPS	**1 member from Superintendent's cabinet** **2 Equity Specialist (role designed to lead CRL work in WPS)**
Part 2: Interviews with School Based Leaders	Provides insight to leaders understanding of their role as culturally responsive leaders	Open ended questions focusing on leader's background, philosophy and practices and behaviors they perceive as culturally responsive	Identify patterns in behaviors and practices of leaders based on codes developed from CRL literature	**2 Elementary Principals** **1 Middle School Principal**
Part 3: Teacher Survey/ Interviews	Provides perspective from those in leaders context	survey asking participants to answer Likert scale and open-ended questions on leader	Qualtrics Survey sent to teachers via email	**Jabari : 10 teachers** **Sankofa: 12 teachers** **Madiba: 18 teachers**
Part 4: Artifact Analysis	Provides evidence of leaders' enactment CRL practices within their context Provides evidence of CRL behaviors in practice	Collection of artifacts that shows implementation of CRL practices	Identify patterns across leadership actions	**School Improvement Plan (SIP)** **PD Plan** **CRT Certification Essay** **2 Elementary Principals** **1 Middle School Principal**

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RESEARCH QUESTION 1

1. What is the nature of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in Wakanda Public Schools (WPS)?
   a. What do school-based leaders in WPS **know** about culturally responsive leadership?
   b. How do school-based leaders in WPS **understand** their role and responsibility as culturally responsive leaders?

WHAT LEADERS KNOW	WHAT LEADERS UNDERSTAND
"Being culturally responsive means **knowing your own culture and cultural lens.** And then I would say before knowing the culture and cultural lenses of your students, knowing the culture and cultural lenses of your staff. I think that's a key element of the leadership component. I think you need to be able to **deliver PD** in a way that meets the needs of a diverse professional audience. **Then you need to be able to work with families of diverse backgrounds** and, and **work as partners** for the student's well-being." – Stokely, at Sankofa	"The **principal sets the tone, the vision, and the goals** for the school and helps to not only nurture and support the staff who directly support students, but make sure that things in the school are equitable and the conditions and systems are set up so that kids can be successful." – Maya, at Madiba "I feel like ultimately the **responsibility lays on me.** " – Ida, at Jabari

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

1. What is the nature of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in Wakanda Public Schools (WPS)?
   a. What do school-based leaders in WPS **know** about culturally responsive leadership?
   b. How do school-based leaders in WPS **understand** their role and responsibility as culturally responsive leaders?

WHAT LEADERS KNOW	WHAT LEADERS UNDERSTAND
CRL includes self reflection, developing CRT, creating a culturally responsive school environment, and creating strong community partnerships	Leaders articulate that as principal, it is their responsibility to model and implement culturally responsive practices
Leaders know CRL largely from their experiences and professional development in WPS	Leaders acknowledge it is their role to model CR practices and learn CR with their faculty
Education Leadership programs did not provide knowledge on CRL practices	

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

1. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider to be important in providing excellent and equitable opportunities for all students?
   a. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **supporting culturally responsive pedagogy**, curriculum, and instruction?
   b. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **creating a culturally responsive school environment** for all students?
   c. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **creating a strong community partnership**?

Support of CRT	Culturally Responsive Environment	Strong Community Partnerships
"Our achievement data was always above the 90% mark across all tests. We almost had a cockiness about it. When Stokely **presented the data** in the way he did with the map, it shocked us. We then felt guilty that we had seemingly been ignoring these students for years. It humbled us. " – Teacher at Sankofa	"Having Ruby come to our meetings was a bonus. She didn't allow us to make excuses about kids not doing well – we had to own it. Also having the half days gave us the necessary time we **needed to actually look at the data and change instruction** or continue what had worked because of it." – Teacher at Jabari	"**Based on the community attendance data** we called families who didn't normally show up. I had called families prior to school starting before but this was different. We had an hour-long PD prior to calling to discuss how to listen and learn about the families. Plus, the fact that we all called as a school gave us common discussion points. It was cool to see the parking lot so full!" - Teacher at Madiba

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

1. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider to be important in providing excellent and equitable opportunities for all students?
   a. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **supporting culturally responsive pedagogy**, curriculum, and instruction?
   b. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **creating a culturally responsive school environment** for all students?
   c. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in **creating a strong community partnership**?

Support of CRT	Culturally Responsive Environment	Strong Community Partnerships
Principals use goal setting meetings to coach teachers in CRT strategies and mindset.	Principals in the study strengthened professional learning communities by including Equity Specialists to help drive courageous conversations and shift mindset to advocate for all students.	Used data to highlight disparities in family attendance at school events
Use **equity audits** to persist and persuade teachers to shift instructional practices	Set up structures that allowed for students and families to be a part of decision-making process	Removed barriers that prevented family's access to school
Implement yearlong CRT focused PD plans to support teachers	Shifted hiring practices to ensure they were recruiting CR teachers and staff	Ensured they were present and visible in community spaces

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

3. How do school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors?

Stokely	Maya	Ida
"I didn't need to be culturally responsive growing up. **I went through thirty plus years of my life using my white skin and my white privilege that I didn't need to think about it**. No one ever challenged me and no one ever pushed me on it. I didn't really understand how the system didn't work for everyone. But having the push for WPS has caused me to reflect in a way I've had to before. "	"When I interact with cultures and backgrounds that are different from my culture, I am careful not to assume or tell them what needs to be done. This is an **area of growth** for me because as a principal sometimes people look to me for answers. But I know that if I want to truly be responsive, I need to listen and collaborate with parents, students, coaches, and colleagues."	"I found the sessions **with my peers as therapeutic**. It was a time to discuss equity issues with likeminded educators who understood the work but also the pressure of being a principal."

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RESEARCH QUESTION 3

3. How do school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors?

Self Reflection Practices
Use of reflective partner such as equity coach or peer administrator
Journaling or writing such as the CRT Certification Essay
All use participation in WPS book study group to guide reflective practices

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Major Themes	Recommendations for Practice/ Research
Although leaders can come from different cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities they can be coached to become more culturally responsive.	Support and fund more Equity Coaches. These individuals were pivotal in the growth and development of each principals CRL practice and implementation.
School based leaders develop culturally responsive teachers through yearlong professional development, mentoring, and coaching.	As principals can support teachers in becoming culturally responsive, district administrators can support principals. District administrators should seek to implement CRL behaviors and practices at the district level in order to drive systematic change.
School based leaders who critically self-reflect on their own culture, biases, and assumptions are positioned to lead culturally responsive schools.	
Through equity audits, leaders of the study used data to support the need for culturally responsive pedagogy.	Assist districts and schools with conducting structured and researched based equity audits.
School-based leaders can build more culturally responsive school environments by including student and parent voice in decision make process.	A study that looks at the impact of district leaders implementing CRL behaviors and practices and the influence it has on systematic change.
School-based leaders can build more culturally responsive school environments by including student and parent voice in decision make process.	A study that can elicit parent and student perspective regarding the influence CRL practices and behaviors have on them and their community.

I welcome any questions or feedback.

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Table 1
Culturally Responsive Leadership Case Study Comparisons

Authors	Description of Study	Findings/ Contributions CRL	Context	Gaps/ Limitations
English & Ellison (2017)	Qualitative comparative case study of four leaders and how they implement CRL and mitigate barriers to cultural competence to increase achievement for all students.	• Shows leaders who are white can implement tenets of CRL in an effective manner can have a positive impact on school reform • Academic progress occurred in each of the four schools in some capacity • Identifies barriers to fully implementing CRL • Some student behaviors warrant suspension but admin worked to create supportive structures that kept students in school but other students/ staff physically and emotionally safe • Large gap in the diverse teachers that matched student demographics • Strengthening community partnerships – all articulated the need of more help from the district for this	• Four Diverse Priority Schools with at least 40% minority and 40% FRL • 2 males and 2 females • 3 White and 1 AA Female • 2 high school, 1 middle school, and 1 elementary	• Researcher Role – African American Female with background in school counseling and administration who works in sample district • In a large school district of 150 schools, further research is needed on district level CRL • Comparative analysis is over elementary, middle and high schools • Small sample size and meant for large urban student population • Although academic progress occurred difficult to
Horton (2017)	Multi-Site case study of four elementary school principals who lead majority minority and high SES student populations	• Five themes for CRL • Involves all members of school community and family • Building inclusive school environment involves the entire community • Leader provides CRT curriculum and instruction • Leader is self-reflective and examines biases, assumptions – community relation is personal • Formal structures and systems did not exist for the leaders to carry out CRL	• Four elementary principals in a majority minority, high SES school in California	• Findings are limited to elementary principals who serve in majority minority high poverty schools

Authors	Description of Study	Findings/Contributions CRL	Context	Gaps/Limitations
Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012)	Qualitative case study using grounded theory approach of how one assistant principal enacted her leadership role with teachers and parents	• 6 Themes of CRL • Caring for others • Building relationships • Raise awareness of needs and culture of marginalized students, • Engages in instructional walkthroughs and reflective conversations about students of color, • Models CRT and practices • Develops culturally responsiveness in all staff	• High School in Central Texas of 700 students • Shifting demographics in school with increase of Hispanic and Black students and decrease of white students • Majority white student population • African American Female Leader	• Sample size of one school leader • Does not address the leadership behaviors of the principal or other assistant principal • Does not directly address student perception of leader • Researcher Bias – Males of color with strong emotions in favor of CRL
Santamaria (2014)	Qualitative case study using critical race theory of how six leaders of color in K-20 education viewed how their biases, assumptions, and sense making affected their leadership goals and decisions.	• 9 Themes of Culturally Relevant/ Responsive Leadership • Engagement in critical conversations • Analyzing school data through a Critical Race Theory lens that seeks perspectives from marginalized voices • Strives for group consensus • Addresses stereotype threat and negative biases of teachers • Implements diverse curriculum • Engages all stakeholders • Leads by example and models CRT • Establishes organizational trust • Servant Leader that advocates for community issues.	• Six leaders of color (Mexican, Native American, Black, Arab, Japanese, Chinese) • 1 Elementary Principal, 1 6-12 principal, a district psychologist, 3 in Higher Ed (HE) • 2 Male, 3 Female, 1 Transgender • All leaders have previous work either published or for a dissertation that is about CRSL	• Study is comparing leaders within different settings and contexts lessening the strength of conclusions and findings • Does not address perspective of other staff members, teachers, or students that work with leaders • Researcher Bias - Researcher personally knows and has worked with or for each of the participants

Authors	Description of Study	Findings/Contributions CRL	Context	Gaps/Limitations
Spicer (2016)	Phenomenological qualitative case study on the experiences, perspectives of AA Female High School Principals	• Challenges of being an AA American Female Principal • Builds off Madhlangobe and Gordon by providing two case study examples of leaders that adhere to their 6 characteristics of a CRL: building relationship, persistence and persuasiveness, modeling CRT, being present and communicating, and fostering CR environment, and caring for others • Other two leaders of the 4-total had 4 out of 6 characteristics • Correlate with the literature • Negative schooling experiences led them to be advocates for students of color	• 76 AA Female HS Principals in Texas during 2015- 2016 SY surveyed with open ended questions (17 responded) • From survey 4 were selected who represented CRL for further interview	• Researcher is 1 of 78 AA Females in Texas and states she has a bias as women of color in leadership • Powerful to focus on AA leaders in high school but is limiting that it does not provide for Caucasian leaders specifically male who make up majority of administrators • Does not consider teachers or parents' perspective of leader

Table 2
Overlap of Culturally Responsive Leadership Behaviors as Seen in Case Studies

Research	Self-Reflection	Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers	Promotes CR School Environment	Community and Stakeholder Relationships
Khalifa et al. (2016)	Critically and constantly reflects on leadership behaviors	Develops culturally responsive teachers	Promotes culturally responsive/ inclusive school environments	Engages students, parents, and indigenous contexts to develop meaningful, positive relationships with community
Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) **Spicer (2016)**	Caring for others to include all members of the school community. Addresses social emotional needs of student and adults	Conducts collaborative walkthroughs with teachers and has reflective conversations about what they saw amongst marginalized students Models culturally responsive teaching and mindset	Persists and Persuades teachers and staff to advocate for marginalized students and families	Builds relationships between all stakeholders Encourages power of collective efficacy of stakeholders in raising student achievement
Santamaria (2014)	Is a servant leader by caring for others and taking care of the community	Analyze data and practices in school to bring awareness to achievement gap Leads by example and models CRT	Engagement in critical conversations around inclusion Addresses stereotype threat and negative biases teachers may have towards certain groups of students	Strives for group consensus around collective efficacy Engages all community members and stakeholders
Horton (2017)	Leader is self-reflective and examines biases, assumptions – community relation is personal	Leader provides CRT curriculum and instruction	Building inclusive school environment involves the entire community	Involves all members of school community and family

Research	Self-Reflection	Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers	Promotes CR School Environments	Community and Stakeholder Relationships
English and Ellison (2017)	Leader is knowledgeable of self in regard to personal racial and ethnic bias	Holds educators accountable for high expectations for all students	Leader fosters student focused, highly diverse and inclusive decision-making structures	Creates an interdependent and relationship-based system Understands institutional and community history relative to issues of race and ethnicity

Table 3
Descriptive Information about Leaders in Wakanda Public School District

Leader	Role/School	Years in Admin	Population Served	Demographics
Dr. Stokely Jordan	Principal Sankofa Elementary	23	Suburban/ Rural	Multi-Racial Male
Ms. Maya Rice	Principal Madiba Middle School	18	Suburban/ Urban	White Female
Ms. Ida B. Bryant	Principal Jabari Elementary School	14	Rural	Black Female

Table 4
Overview of Research Methodology

	Rationale	Implementation	Method	Sample
Part 1: Interviews with district level leadership	Provides insight into organizational and systematic state of culturally responsive leadership professional development in WPS	Open ended questions focusing on the degree of CRL practices in WPS Open ended questions focusing on the current state or nature of CRL in WPS	Find patterns in coded transcriptions that show common themes of CRL implementation in WPS	1 member from Superintendent's cabinet 1 Equity Specialist (role designed to lead CRL work in WPS)
Part 2: Interviews with School-based Leaders	Provides insight to leaders understanding of their role as culturally responsive leaders	Open ended questions focusing on leader's background, philosophy and practices and behaviors they perceive as culturally responsive	Identify patterns in behaviors and practices of leaders based on codes developed from CRL literature	2 Elementary Principals 1 Middle School Principal
Part 3: Teacher Survey and Interviews	Provides perspective from those in leaders' context	Qualtrics survey asking teachers to answer Likert scale and open ended questions on leader	Qualtrics Survey sent to teachers via email Follow up interview with select teachers	Survey/ Interview Jabari: 10 teachers/ 2 Sankofa: 12 teachers/ 2 Madiba: 18 teachers/ 2
Part 4: Artifact Analysis	Provides evidence of leaders enactment CRL practices within their context Provides evidence of CRL behaviors in practice	Collection of artifacts that shows implementation of CRL practices	Identify patterns across leadership actions	School Improvement Plan (SIP) PD Plan CRT Certification Essay 2 Elementary Principals 1 Middle School Principal

Table 5
Summary of Research Questions and Data Collection Plan

Research Question	Data Sources
1. What is the nature of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in Wakanda Public Schools (WPS)? a) What do school-based leaders in WPS know about culturally responsive leadership? b) How do school-based leaders in WPS understand their role and responsibility as culturally responsive leaders?	• Interviews with district leaders, administrators, and teachers
2. What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider to be important in providing excellent and equitable opportunities for all students? a) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction? b) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a culturally responsive school environment for all students? c) What CRL practices and behaviors do study participants consider important in creating a strong community partnership?	• Answers to interview questions with administrators • Survey result answers with teachers • Interviews with teachers • Artifact analysis
3. How do school-based leaders in WPS use critical self-reflection to implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors?	• CRL Essay • Interviews with leaders

Table 6
Descriptive Information about District Leaders in Wakanda Public School District

Leader	Role	Years in Education	Demographics
Dr. Langston James	Assistant Superintendent for Community Engagement	27	Black Male
Ms. Ruby Wade	Instructional Coach for Equity	16	Multi Race Female
Mr. Huey Bosh	Instructional Coach for Equity	16	White Male

Table 7
Descriptive Information about Teachers in Wakanda Public School District

Teacher	School	Years in Teaching	Current Role	Demographics
Amanda	Sankofa Elementary	6	Classroom Teacher	White Female
Laura	Sankofa Elementary	22	Classroom Teacher	White Female
Lisa	Madiba Middle	8	English Teacher	White Female
Sue	Madiba Middle	10	Math Teacher	White Female
Isabel	Jabari Elementary	15	Classroom Teacher	White Female
Ann	Jabari Elementary	4	Classroom Teacher	White Female

Table 8
Overview of Personal, Professional, and Education Background of Leaders

Site	Personal Background	Professional Background	Education Preparation
Sankofa Elementary **Dr. Stokely Jordan**	• Currently identifies as an Asian American Male but grew up recognizing his privilege for having lighter skin • Grew up in suburban town in middle income hard working family • Private school student who had a good experience	• High school teacher in small rural district with high levels of poverty • Urban HS teacher and principal in school with large disparities in opportunities across race and socio economics • AP in large culturally and linguistically diverse elementary school in WPS	• Doctorate in Administration and Supervision from • Very little discussion in administrator coursework in regards to diversity, equity, and/ or inclusion • "I don't remember that ever being a topic of conversation"
Madiba Middle School **Ms. Maya Rice**	• Identifies as a white female and the daughter of two hardworking parents who grew up in one of the most rural and poorest counties in the state • Grew up in WPS and was a student at Madiba • Had a very diverse friend group growing up • Bi Racial Family	• Similar to parents worked her way up as she started out as an elementary school teaching assistant • Middle school language arts and special education teacher • Middle School AVID site coordinator at Madiba • AP in diverse high school in WPS	• Master's in Administration and Supervision • Very little discussion in administrator coursework in regards to diversity, equity, and/ or inclusion • Curriculum focused on school law, finance, and school as systems
Jabari Elementary **Ms. Ida B. Bryant**	• Identifies as Black Female • Grew up hour east of WPS in middle class hardworking Black family • Felt she had to work twice as hard in school and professional career • Despite had good school experience	• Started out in corporate world but entered teaching after inspiration from her husband who was a coach and mentor • Worked in urban elementary afterschool program • special education teacher at Jabari where she served as the DRT • AP in large culturally and linguistically diverse elementary school in WPS	• Master's in Administration and Supervision • Very little discussion in administrator coursework in regards to diversity, equity, and/ or inclusion

Table 9
Average Score of Teacher Responses on CRL Behaviors

CRL Domain	Culturally Responsive Leader Behavior	Ida Bryant	Maya Rice	Stokely Jordan	Average
Sample Size		10	18	12	40
Critical Self Reflection	Understands and acknowledges their own cultural biases.	4.1	4.3	4.1	4.2
	Understands how culture and race can be integrated into instruction.	3.9	2.6	3	3.2
Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers	Develops and trains culturally responsive teachers	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.6
	Models culturally responsive teaching and mindset.	4.4	4.0	4.1	4.1
Promotes Culturally Responsive School	Analyze data and practices in school to bring awareness to achievement gap.	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.3
	Promotes a culturally responsive school.	4.5	4.0	4.2	4.2
	Persists and persuades teachers and staff to advocate for marginalized students and families.	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.9
Creates Strong Community Partnerships	Addresses stereotypes threat and negative biases teachers may have towards certain groups of students	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.0
	Engages students, parents, and families to develop positive relationships within school community.	3.7	3.9	4.2	4.0

Table 10
Percentage of Teachers Who Strongly Agree (4 or 5 on Scale) with Statements

CRL Domain	Culturally Responsive Leader Behavior	Ida Bryant	Maya Rice	Stokely Jordan	Average
Sample Size		10	18	12	40
Critical Self Reflection	Understands and acknowledges their own cultural biases.	80%	72%	58%	70%
	Understands how culture and race can be integrated into instruction.	70%	16%	25%	33%
Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers	Develops and trains culturally responsive teachers	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Models culturally responsive teaching and mindset.	100%	78%	67%	80%
Promotes Culturally Responsive School	Analyze data and practices in school to bring awareness to achievement gap.	100%	83%	75%	85%
	Promotes a culturally responsive school.	100%	67%	75%	78%
	Persists and persuades teachers and staff to advocate for marginalized students and families.	80%	61%	50%	63%
Creates Strong Community Partnerships	Addresses stereotypes threat and negative biases teachers may have towards certain groups of students	70%	67%	67%	68%
	Engages students, parents, and families to develop positive relationships within school community.	60%	61%	75%	65%

Table 11
Professional Development Strands at Madiba Middle School

Facilitator	Book Study	Focus
Maya	Differentiation in Middle and High School (Hockett & Doubet, 2015)	Asset and skill based flexible grouping of students
Assistant Principal	Trauma Sensitive Classroom (Jennings, 2018)	Social emotional needs of students
Diversity Resource Teacher	Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain (Hammond, 2016)	Support of teachers going for WPS culturally responsive certification

Table 12
Ida Bryant's Leadership Coaching Model

Step	Term	Ida's Description
1	Ignition	The "ignite" stage is where one gets the brain's attention. I accomplished this step during my first session with teachers at the beginning of the year. It was when I engaged teachers in the activity centered on teacher cultural lens.
2	Connection	In this step of my process, I worked to connect CRT to the existing funds of knowledge that our teachers had. The first was Responsive Classroom and the second was the teacher performance goal setting. I created crosswalks for each with CRT so that teachers could see how it fit with what they were already doing.
3	Research	The book study group served as my avenue for sharing research that supports CRT as a practice. In addition to the book, I was able to share some relevant additional resources due to having access to Zaretta Hammond's online book study resource guide.
4	Self-Assessment	One key step to moving teachers forward in their own learning was to have them assess themselves about their own understanding and practices related to CRT. Based on their personal survey results, each of the 4 teachers working with me chose one characteristic in which to work on improving. 2 of the teachers chose characteristic number two, 1 chose characteristic number one, and 1 teacher chose characteristic number 3. From there, the teachers each chose 1 indicator under each characteristic with which to begin their work.
5	Non-threatening experimentation	Throughout this process, I had been personally working on getting to know each of these teachers in such a way as to have them trust me with creating a learning partnership. I worked to build rapport with the teachers and create alliances that would allow them to share their thinking and learning moves with me as related to CRT, the same as I desired for them to do with students
6	Scheduled Follow-up	As I began building this process, I realized that I could not maintain it without being deliberate about the time spent on the process. For this reason, I began to schedule weekly check-ins with the teachers in order to ensure that they were continuing their learning and that I was available to encourage and coach them when needed.

Step	Term	Ida's Description
7	Reflection/Coaching/Analysis	This step was a result of the cognitive insight I gained from the partnerships I had with the teachers. By having them share their thinking and learning moves with me, they were able to openly reflect on what they were doing and I was able to encourage, coach, and push them to their next steps.

Table 13
Learning Pact Structure in Sankofa Elementary School

Student Name	*Teacher*	*Content Area*	*What does the student think is getting in the way for him/ her around a specific learning target*	*What is the learning target*	*What is the deadline for mastering the goal?*	*What benchmarks will you use to monitor progress?*	*What type of ritual will you use to mark the occasion?*	*What other agreements have you and the student created?*
Student 1	Teacher 1	Word Study	Because I feel like word study helps me read, so I need to work on it.	Increase to WW12	5/30/20	Biweekly spelling check ins	Fist Bump	We'll each do our part
Student 2	Teacher 1	Word Study	It's something I'm not good at	Increase score to WW18	5/30/20	Biweekly spelling check ins	Kitty High Five	We'll each do our part
Student 3	Teacher 2	Math	I want to grow in fractions and division facts	Get 90% on multiples of 4, 7, and 8	5/30/20	Math Fluency Quizzes Every week	Fist Bump	We'll each do our part
Student 4	Teacher 2	Math	I forget my math facts	Get 90% on multiples of 4,7, and 8	5/30/20	Math Fluency Quizzes	Secret Handshake	We'll each do our part

Table 14
Overview of Study Findings (Part One)

RQ 1: Nature of CRL in WPS	RQ 2a: Supporting CRT	RQ 2b: Creating CR School Environment	RQ 2c: Creating Strong Community Partnership	RQ 3: Critical Self Reflection
• Principals from different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds are represented in the leaders chosen in this study who implement CRL. • Each of the leaders in the study had professional experiences that exposed a need for practices that focused on supporting students from marginalized communities. • The leaders in the study had leadership preparation programs that did not engage them with leadership strategies for the diverse settings they serve in.	• Principals in WPS use equity audits to highlight gaps in achievement, equity and opportunity. The results from these audits are used to persuade and motivate teachers to shift practices to meet the needs of all students. • Principals implement yearlong professional development plans based on CRT to support teachers in their pedagogy. • Principals use goal setting meetings to coach teachers in CRT strategies and mindset.	• Principals in the study strengthened professional learning communities by including Equity Specialists to help drive courageous conversations and shift mindset to advocate for all students. • Principals set up structures that allowed for students and families to be a part of the student learning process. • Principals included student and parent voice in order to ensure diverse perspectives were included in decision making processes to include, budget, school events, and hiring decisions.	• Principals in the study used data to highlight disparities in family attendance to school events. • In order to ensure all families had access to the school, principals removed barriers such as lack of transportation. • Principals and their staff ensured they were visible in community spaces.	• Principals in the study use critical reflective partners to create, plan and implement CRL practices such as an equity specialist or peer administrator. • Principals in the study engage used writing as a reflective process in for their equity journey. • Principals in the study all participate in the WPS book study based on CRL.

RQ 1: Nature of CRL in WPS	RQ 2a: Supporting CRT	RQ 2b: Creating CR School Environment	RQ 2c: Creating Strong Community Partnership	RQ 3: Critical Self Reflection
• They all were formally introduced to CRL as a direct result of professional development opportunities offered by WPS.		• Principals shifted hiring practices to ensure they were recruiting a diverse staff and culturally responsive teachers.		

Table 15
Overview of Study Findings (Part Two)

Site	Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers	Promotes CR School Environment	Community and Stakeholder Relationships
Sankofa Elementary **Dr. Stokely Jordan**	*Uses data* (GIS) to perform equity audit and bring awareness to achievement gap between socio-economic groups *Aligns resources* by implementing yearlong PD plan on CRT. Has *courageous conversations* with teachers to hold them accountable for high expectations for all students *Sets goals* by modeling CRT work and mindset. Includes CRT in School Improvement plan	*Promotes collaborative learning cultures* by using learning pact to promote student centered decision making process *Aligns resources* by hiring CR and minority Assistant Principal; transforms interview questions in teacher hiring process based solely on CRT Has *courageous conversations* to address negative biases and assumptions teachers have about certain groups	*Engages in courageous conversations* through community conversation book study around shifting practice and instruction for students Strives for group consensus and realizes the importance of all stakeholders
Madiba Middle School **Ms. Maya Rice**	*Uses data* to perform equity audit on school discipline and shift teacher mindset about which students are being disciplined vs. not. *Promotes collaborative learning culture* by conducting collaborative walkthroughs with teachers to observe CRT practices *Aligns resources* by implementing yearlong differentiated PD plan on CRT.	*Sets goals* by making mission of the school based on CR practices Includes parents and equity specialists on formal leadership team to empower multiple voices *Promotes collaborative learning culture* by working with multiple teams of parents, students and teachers to advocate for marginalized students	*Promotes collaborative learning culture* by involving all members of community through listening tour *Uses data* to highlight only certain families show up to events. Successfully establishes outreach to those who have not always shown up *Sets goals* by including parents and families in mission of the school through home visits and learning partnership
Site	**Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers**	**Promotes CR School Environment**	**Community and Stakeholder Relationships**

Jabari Elementary **Ms. Ida B. Iverson**	*Sets goals* by aligning teacher performance goals to CRT Goals *Aligns resources to priorities* by implementing yearlong PD on teacher mindset *Promotes collaborative learning* culture by providing yearlong CRT instructional leader coaching	*Uses data* to persuade staff to advocate for achievement of all students *Aligns resources* by funding transportation for students to afterschool events	*Promotes collaborative learning culture* by showing staff overlap of community and school neighborhood reading event *Promotes collaborative learning culture* by developing positive relationships with community through strengthening communication

Table 16
Major Themes and Recommendations

Major Themes	***Recommendations for Practice/ Research***
Although leaders can come from different cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities they can be coached to become more culturally responsive.	Practice: Support and fund more Equity Coaches. These individuals were pivotal in the growth and development of each principals CRL practice and implementation.
School based leaders develop culturally responsive teachers through yearlong professional development, mentoring, and coaching.	Practice: As principals can support teachers in becoming culturally responsive, district administrators can support principals. District administrators should seek to implement CRL behaviors and practices at the district level in order to drive systematic change.
School based leaders who critically self-reflect on their own culture, biases, and assumptions are positioned to lead culturally responsive schools.	
Through equity audits, leaders of the study used data to support the need for culturally responsive pedagogy.	Practice: Assist districts and schools with conducting structured and researched based equity audits.
School-based leaders can build more culturally responsive school environments by including student and parent voice in decision make process.	Research: A study that looks at the impact of district leaders implementing CRL behaviors and practices and the influence it has on systematic change.
School-based leaders can build more culturally responsive school environments by including student and parent voice in decision make process.	Reacher: A study that can elicit parent and student perspective regarding the influence CRL practices and behaviors have on them and their community.

Figure 1

Linking Leadership to Learning through the Lens of a Culturally Responsive Leader

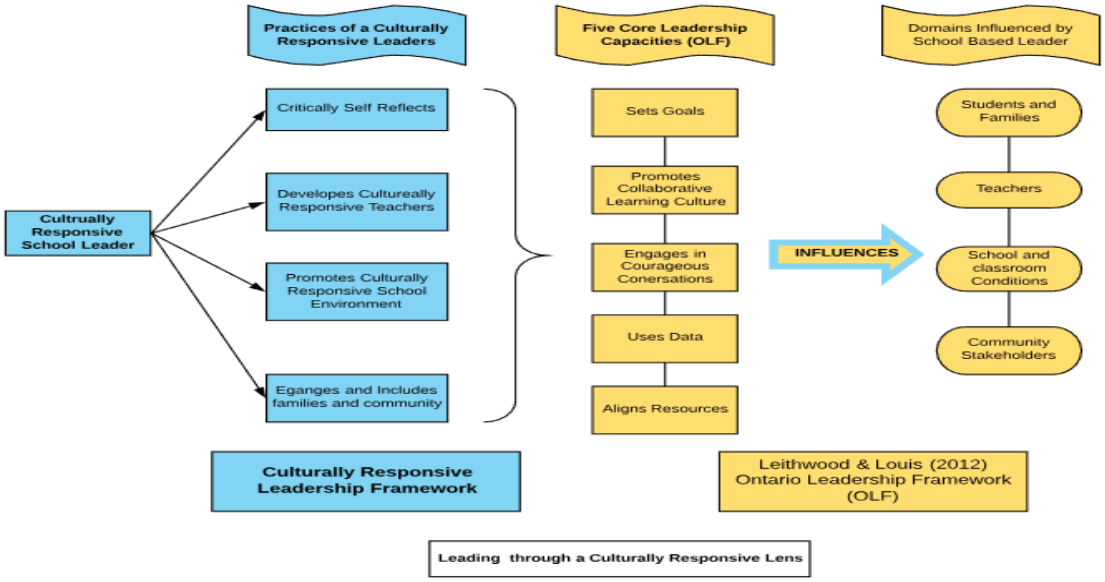
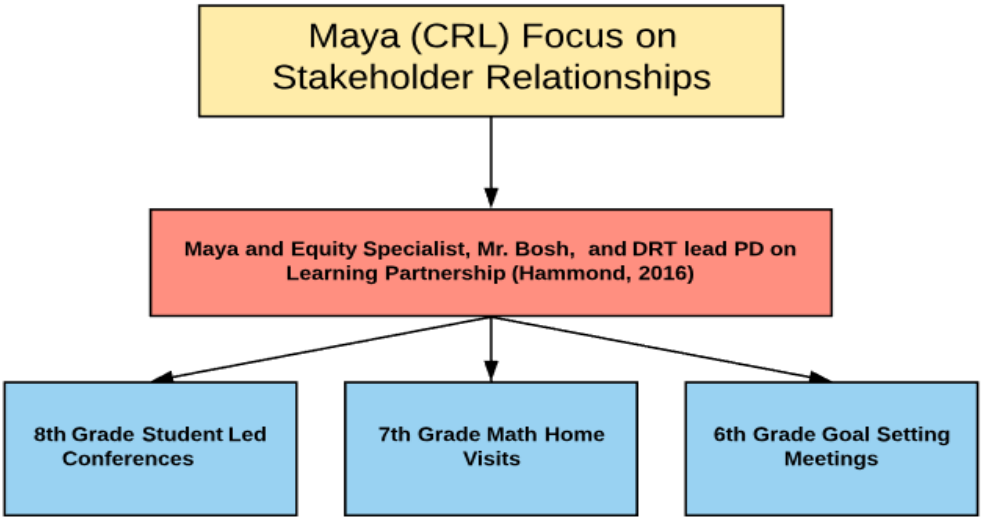


Figure 2

Focus on Learning Partnership Results at Madiba



APPENDIX A: INITIAL ELECTRONIC CORRESPONDENCE TO DISTRICT LEADERS

District Leaders Leader's Name:

My name is Ben Allen and I am a graduate student in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. For my culminating Capstone project, I am researching school based leaders and their implantation of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in the schools they serve. As a district level leader involved with planning, creating, and executing professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy I am inviting you to participate in an interview about the importance of your work and the impact it has on culturally responsive school leadership in your district.

I anticipate the interview lasting a maximum of an hour and thirty minutes and I will schedule at your convenience. There is no compensation for participating nor is there any known risk. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any given questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time. I will use a recording device to document your responses and then transcribe them. All of your answers will be presented using a pseudonym for you and the district you work in. At the end of the study I will share a summary of my results with you. The findings of this study will be beneficial to guide professional development work within the district and help school-based leaders understand the importance of this form of leadership. Additionally, it will add to literature on culturally responsive leadership by demonstrating how leaders in one diverse district is implementing CRL practices.

This study has been approved by the University of Virginia International Review Board (IRB) Virginia for Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). If you have questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D., Chair, IRB-SBS, One Morton Dr. Suite 500, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392, Charlottesville, VA, 22908-0392, (434) 924-5999, irbsbshelp@virginia.edu, IRB Approval # 2749.

If you agree to participate, please provide a times in the next few weeks that work for you schedule to meet. At that time you will be asked to sign a consent form. I greatly appreciate your participation and involvement in equity focused work.

Respectfully,
Ben Allen

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT FOR DISTRICT LEADER INTERVIEWS

District Leadership Informed Consent Agreement

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Consent Form Key Information: Below is a list of the key requirements of this study:

- Participate in a study about culturally responsive leadership practices and behaviors
- Complete a 90 minute interview with the researcher

Purpose of the research study: The aim of this research is to explore the how school-based leaders work to close achievement, equity and opportunity gaps. Specifically, this study is focused on understanding how the school-based leader can use the positional influence identified in Leithwood and Louis (2012) to lead with a culturally responsive lens. This research can help improve professional development on how school based leaders can be culturally responsive towards the needs of all students. Additionally, it will add to the growing case study literature on culturally responsive leadership by provided a multi-site case study analysis.

What you will do in the study: If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in an interview about how culturally responsive leadership is enacted in the school district of study. To complete the study, the researcher plans to speak to school leaders and teachers in the district as well. Your interview will be recorded. You may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering.

Time required: The study will require about 90 minutes of your time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us understand how school based leaders implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors in their schools.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a code number/ pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name and the name your school and/ or district will be given a pseudonym in any report. Audio of your interview will be destroyed after the interview has been transcribed and analyzed.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Refusing to participate will have no effect on your employment.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw any audio file containing your interview will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study:
If you want to withdraw from the study there is no penalty for withdrawing.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have questions about the study, contact:
Primary Investigator (Researcher): Ben Allen
Department of Leadership Foundations and Policy
Bavaro Hall Room 222D
PO Box 400265
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22904.
Telephone: (434) 962-4070
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To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
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Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs
Website for Research Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants
Agreement:
I agree to participate in the research study described above.
Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

APPENDIX C: SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

Question	Probes	RQ
Background and Beliefs of Leaders		
What is your current position and how many years have you been in: • Administration • Teaching • Other		RQ 1
Why did you enter into education?	Motivation Experiences	
How would you describe your own cultural and ethnic background?	Why is your own personal background important to working with students?	RQ 1
How do you understand CRL? What makes it different from other forms of leadership?	Draw on experiences (self or educator)	RQ 1
Describe your role in implementing culturally responsive leadership in WPS?	Methods and scope of the leadership in WPS	RQ 1
What do you see as the school-based leader's role in closing the opportunity gap?	Unique position of the leader (OLF)	RQ 1.2
What professional development is provided for school-based leaders in regards to CRL?	How many would you say practice the behaviors?	RQ1
What do school-based leaders do well with in WPS in regards to: • interacting with students • interacting with teachers • interacting with parents	Relationships Communication and community outreach Developing CRT	RQ 1.1
What areas do school-based leaders in WPS need grown in regards to the following? • interacting with students • interacting with teachers • interacting with parents	Relationships Communication and community outreach Developing CRT	RQ 1.1
Describe a culturally responsive leader in WPS. What behaviors and characteristics define them?	How they reflect How they change instruction What they do for families How they build CR Schools	RQ 1
What systems or structures exist that allow for CRL to be implemented in WPS?	PD structures Budget allocation Mission/ vision Using Data	RQ 1
What systems or structures exist that create barriers for CRL to be implemented in WPS?	PD structures Budget allocation Mission/ vision Using Data	RQ 1
Is there anything else that you would like to share that I did not directly ask you?		

APPENDIX D: INITIAL EMAIL CORRESPONDANCE TO SCHOOL LEADERS

School Based Leader's Name:

My name is Ben Allen and I am a graduate student in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. For my culminating Capstone project, I am researching school based leaders and their implantation of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in the schools they serve. As a school based leader who is actively and effectively implementing practices and behaviors of CRL, I am inviting you to participate in a study that will look how you lead through a CRL lens.

The study will involve your participation in an interview, a survey sent out to your teachers, and an artifact analysis of your school improvement plan, professional development and other documents that may demonstrate your implementation of CRL. I anticipate the interview lasting a maximum of an hour and thirty minutes and I will schedule it at your convenience. There is no compensation for participating nor is there any known risk. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time. I will use a recording device to document your responses and then transcribe them. All of your answers will be presented using a pseudonym for you and the school you work in. At the end of the study I will share a summary of my results with you. The findings of this study will be beneficial to guide professional development work within the district and help other school based leaders understand the importance of this form of leadership. Additionally, it will add to literature on culturally responsive leadership by demonstrating how leaders in one diverse district are implementing CRL practices effectively.

This study has been approved by the University of Virginia International Review Board (IRB) Virginia for Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). If you have questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D., Chair, IRB-SBS, One Morton Dr. Suite 500, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392, Charlottesville, VA, 22908-0392, (434) 924-5999, irbsbshelp@virginia.edu, IRB Approval # 2749.

If you agree to participate, please provide a times in the next few weeks that work for you schedule to meet. At that time you will be asked to sign a consent form and provide in greater detail the contents and requirements of your participation I greatly appreciate your participation and involvement in equity focused work.

Respectfully,
Ben Allen

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADER INTERVIEWS

School Based Leader Informed Consent Agreement

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Consent Form Key Information: Below is a list of the key requirements of this study:

- Participate in a study about culturally responsive leadership practices and behaviors
- Complete a 90 minute interview with the researcher
- Provide documents to researcher to be analyzed. The documents include School Improvement Plan, the School Website, PD Plans, SMART Goals, sample communication to families, and CRL certification Essay from the leader.

Purpose of the research study: The aim of this research is to explore the how school-based leaders work to close achievement, equity and opportunity gaps. Specifically, this study is focused on understanding how the school-based leader can use the positional influence identified in Leithwood and Louis (2012) to lead with a culturally responsive lens. This research can help improve professional development on how school based leaders can be culturally responsive towards the needs of all students. Additionally, it will add to the growing case study literature on culturally responsive leadership by provided a multi-site case study analysis.

What you will do in the study: If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in an interview about how culturally responsive leadership is enacted in your school. To complete the study, the researcher plans to speak to district leaders and teachers at your school. Your interview will be recorded. You may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. Additionally, you will be asked to provide documents to the researcher to be analyzed.

Time required: The study will require about 3 hours of your time. 90 minutes will be the interview. Any additional time will be what is needed to collect documents and send them to the researcher for artifact analysis.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us understand how school based leaders implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors in their schools.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a code number/ pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name and the name your school and/ or district will be given a pseudonym in any report. Audio of your interview will be destroyed after the interview has been transcribed and analyzed.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Refusing to participate will have no effect on your employment.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw any audio file containing your interview will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study:
If you want to withdraw from the study there is no penalty for withdrawing.
Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have questions about the study, contact:
Primary Investigator (Researcher): Ben Allen
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Bavaro Hall Room 222D
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Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu

Website: https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs
Website for Research Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants
Agreement:
I agree to participate in the research study described above.
Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

APPENDIX F: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR LEADERS

Question	Probes	RQ
Background and Beliefs of Leaders		
What is your current position and how many years have you been in: • Administration • Teaching • Other		RQ 1
Why did you enter into education?	Motivation Experiences	
How would you describe your own cultural and ethnic background?	Why is your own personal background important to working with students?	RQ 1
Describe your current school in regards to its cultural, socio economic diversity.	Other backgrounds that are important to context	RQ 1
In what ways do you believe your educational leadership program prepared you to lead in diverse schools?	In what ways did it not?	RQ 1
How do you as a leader understand CRL. What makes it different from other forms of leadership?	Draw on experiences (self or educator)	RQ 1.2
What do you see as the leader's role in closing the opportunity gap?		RQ 1.2
What opportunities exist for you as a leader to learn about how to be a culturally responsive leadership in WPS?	District Support PD Collaboration with other leaders in WPS	RQ 1.1
Support of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Pedagogy		
Describe how you helping to make the school more responsive to diverse cultural groups. • Professional development • Curriculum changes • Student grouping • Assessments • Homework	Providing resources and PD opportunities Modeling CRT Critical conversations	RQ 2.1
When doing walk troughs or observations, what are some items you looking for in a teacher's classroom?	Teacher relationships what students What students are being engaged	RQ 2.1
Culturally Responsive School Environment		
How do you use school data to discover and track disparities in academic and disciplinary trends?	Systems How teachers use data What do you specifically track Equity Audits	RQ 2.2
Describe how you promote/ model cultural responsiveness when: • interacting with students • interacting with teachers • interacting with parents	Discipline Opportunities provided for students Using student voice Hiring retention of diverse candidates Communication/ home visits	RQ 2.2

	Promote a vision of inclusivity	
Community and Parent Relationships		
In what ways do you involve parents/ family in school matters	Curriculum and Instruction Policy and Rules Events Parent Community/ Voice	RQ 2.3
Describe your relationship with your community.	Communication and presence in the community.	
What barriers exist in your school community in regards to parent involvement. What do you do to remove those barriers?		RQ 2.3
Open Ended Questions		
In your opinion, what are the greatest factors that contribute to the equity, opportunity, or achievement gaps?		Any
Is there anything that I not ask that you would like to share?		Any

APPENDIX G: INITIAL EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE TO TEACHERS

Dear Teachers of _____ School:

My name is Ben Allen and I am a graduate student in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. For my culminating Capstone project, I am researching school based leaders and their implantation of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) in the schools they serve. The principal at your school has been identified as a school based leader who is actively implementing practices and behaviors of CRL, I am inviting you to participate in a study that will help describe how your principal leads through a culturally responsive lens.

The study will involve your participation in a survey. I anticipate the survey taking approximately 15-20 minutes. There is no compensation for participating nor is there any known risk. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time. All of your answers will be presented using a pseudonym for you and the school you work in. The findings of this study will be beneficial to guide professional development work within the district, provide valuable feedback for your leader, and help other school based leaders understand the importance of this form of leadership. Additionally, it will add to literature on culturally responsive leadership by demonstrating how leaders in one diverse district are implementing CRL practices effectively.

This study has been approved by the University of Virginia International Review Board (IRB) Virginia for Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). If you have questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D., Chair, IRB-SBS, One Morton Dr. Suite 500, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392, Charlottesville, VA, 22908-0392, (434) 924-5999, irbsbshelp@virginia.edu, IRB Approval # 2749.

If you choose to participate, please click on the survey link below and provide me with your feedback no later than (date). You will indicate your informed consent by clicking on the appropriate box at the start of the electronic survey. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me by e-mail or by calling 434-962-4070. I greatly appreciate your participation and involvement in equity focused work.

APPENDIX H: INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT FOR TEACHER SURVEY

Teacher Informed Consent Agreement

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Consent Form Key Information: Below is a list of the key requirements of this study:

- Participate in a study about culturally responsive leadership practices and behaviors
- Complete a 15- 20 minute survey about the culturally responsive leadership practices and behaviors of your principal.

Purpose of the research study: The aim of this research is to explore the how school-based leaders work to close achievement, equity and opportunity gaps. Specifically, this study is focused on understanding how the school-based leader can use the positional influence identified in Leithwood and Louis (2012) to lead with a culturally responsive lens. This research can help improve professional development on how school based leaders can be culturally responsive towards the needs of all students. Additionally, it will add to the growing case study literature on culturally responsive leadership by provided a multi-site case study analysis.

What you will do in the study: If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a 15-20 minute online survey the culturally responsive leadership practices and behaviors of your principal. To complete the study, the researcher plans to speak to district leaders and the principal at your school. You may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering.

Time required: The study will require about 15-20 minutes of your time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us understand how school based leaders implement culturally responsive practices and behaviors in their schools.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a code number/ pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name and the name your school and/ or district will be given a pseudonym in any report

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Refusing to participate will have no effect on your employment.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw any audio file containing your interview will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study:

If you want to withdraw from the study there is no penalty for withdrawing.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Primary Investigator (Researcher): Ben Allen
Department of Leadership Foundations and Policy
Bavaro Hall Room 222D
PO Box 400265
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22904.
Telephone: (434) 962-4070
Email address: eba5b@virginia.edu
Faculty Advisor: Michelle D. Young, Ph.D.
Department of Leadership Foundations and Policy
Bavaro Hall Room 222D
PO Box 400265
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mdy8n@virginia.edu

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:

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Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
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Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs
Website for Research Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants

Agreement:

I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

APPENDIX I: SURVEY INSTRUMENT FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF

Section 1: Demographics
Ethnicity

- Black/ African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- White/ Caucasian
- Multi-Race
- Asian
- Other

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other

Years as a teacher _____
Years in Admin _____

Section 2: Familiarity with Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
The following questions will assess your understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy

1. To what extent do you comprehend culturally responsive pedagogy?

Mark only one option

I have participated in PD on the topic	1	2	3	4	5	I could teach/ lead PD on the topic

Section 3: Rating Section
Please rate the leader based on the following culturally responsive characteristics with 1 being weak to 5 being strong.

1. Understands and acknowledges their own cultural biases.
2. Understands how culture and race can be integrated into instruction.
3. Analyze data and practices in school to bring awareness to achievement gap.
4. Promotes a culturally responsive school.
5. Persists and persuades teachers and staff to advocate for marginalized students and families.
6. Addresses stereotypes threat and negative biases teachers may have towards certain groups of students.
7. Develops and trains culturally responsive teachers
8. Models culturally responsive teaching and mindset.
9. Engages students, parents, and families to develop positive relationships within school community.

Section 4: Open Ended Questions (optional)

1. Why do you believe this leader is culturally responsive?

2. Is there anything else that you would like me know about this leader that I did not ask?
3. Would you be interested in a follow up interview regarding this leader? (Appendix E)

APPENDIX J: FOLLOW UP TEACHER INTERVIEW

Question	Probes	RQ
Background and Beliefs of Teachers		
What is your current position and how many years have you been in: • Administration • Teaching • Other		
Why did you enter into education?	Motivation Experiences	
How would you describe your own cultural and ethnic background?	Why is your own personal background important to working with students?	
Describe your current school in regards to its cultural, socio economic diversity.	Other backgrounds that are important to context	
Leader Beliefs and Actions		
Describe the philosophy or leadership style of the leader I am studying.	What do they say/ do?	RQ 2.1
Why would you consider this leader to be culturally responsive?		
Support for Culturally Responsive Teaching and School Environment		
Describe how the leader makes the school more responsive to diverse cultural groups. • Professional development • Curriculum changes • Student grouping • Assessments • Homework policy	Systems How teachers use data What do you specifically track Equity Audits Other school wide efforts or reforms	RQ 2.1
How does the leader model cultural responsiveness? • When interacting with students • When interacting with teachers/ staff members • When interacting with parents		RQ 2.2
How does the leader support you as a culturally responsive teacher?		RQ 2.1
Community and Parent Relationships		
Describe the leader's relationship with the school community.	Curriculum and Instruction Policy and Rules Events Parent Community/ Voice	RQ 2.3
What barriers exist in your school community in regards to parent involvement. What do believe the leader does to remove these barriers?		RQ 2.3
Open Ended Questions		
Is there anything that I did not ask that you would like to share about this leader?		Any

APPENDIX K: CODE LIST FOR INTERVIEWS

Each code is derived from the literature on CRSL and the OLF. The purpose of the data collected will be able to look at the overlap of these two frameworks.

Research	**Self-Reflection**	**Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers**	**Promotes CR School Environment**	**Community and Stakeholder Relationships**
Code	CRSL - SR	CRSL - CRT	CRSL - CRE	CRSL - CSR
Khalifa et al (2016)	Critically and constantly reflects on leadership behaviors	Develops culturally responsive teachers	Promotes culturally responsive/ inclusive school environments	Engages students, parents, and indigenous contexts to develop meaningful, positive relationships with community
Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) **And** **Spicer (2016)**	Caring for others to include all members of the school community. Addresses social emotional needs of student and adults	Conducts collaborative walkthroughs with teachers and has reflective conversations about what they saw amongst marginalized students Models culturally responsive teaching and mindset	Persists and Persuades teachers and staff to advocate for marginalized students and families	Builds relationships between all stakeholders Encourages power of collective efficacy of stakeholders in raising student achievement
Santamaria (2014)	Is a servant leader by caring for others and taking care of the community	Analyze data and practices in school to bring awareness to achievement gap Leads by example and models CRT	Engagement in critical conversations around inclusion Addresses stereotype threat and negative biases teachers may have towards certain groups of students	Strives for group consensus around collective efficacy Engages all community members and stakeholders
Horton (2017)	Leader is self-reflective and examines biases, assumptions – community relation is personal	Leader provides CRT curriculum and instruction	Building inclusive school environment involves the entire community	Involves all members of school community and family

Research	Self-Reflection	Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers	Promotes CR School Environment	Community and Stakeholder Relationships
Code	CRSL - SR	CRSL - CRT	CRSL - CRE	CRSL - CSR
English and Ellison (2017)	Leader is knowledgeable of self in regard to personal racial and ethnic bias	Holds educators accountable for high expectations for all students	Leader fosters student focused, highly diverse and inclusive decision-making structures	Creates an interdependent and relationship-based system Understands institutional and community history relative to issues of race and ethnicity

Five Core Capacities of Leadership (CLC) Leithwood & Louis, 2013)	Code	Definition
Setting Goals	CLC: SG	May include how the school leader is pivotal in sets the mission, and vision of the school how they work with staff to ensure specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) goals are set to ensure effective teaching and learning. They work on goal setting meetings with teachers and collaborate around student learning.
Aligning Resources with Priorities	CLC: AR	May include how the school leader aligns curriculum and teaching resources, implements staff professional development (PD), and allocating financial and human capital resources to the vision and priorities of the building. This will include the support or initiation of new programs at the school.
Promoting collaborative learning cultures	CLC: PLC	May include how the leader gets multiple stakeholders to work together with a central focus on student learning and achievement. This may include district leadership, parents, teachers, and community members. Also any reference to how the leader works with different teams in the building and builds capacity to move student learning and success forward.
Using Data	CLC: UD	May include how the leader gathers and analyzes district, school and classroom data to identify trends strengths and weakness in teaching and learning. Effective leaders use data to reach school and classroom goals. Any reference to equity audits, or systems/ protocols that looks at data.

Five Core Capacities of Leadership (CLC) Leithwood & Louis, 2013)	Code	Definition
Engaging in Courageous Conversations	CLC: CC	May include how the leader engages in conversations that challenge current practice and provide courageous feedback to teachers that leads to improvement in student achievement. This may involve but is not limited to conversations or philosophies around discipline and school rules and policies.