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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, EXPLORING ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' PREPAREDNESS TO LEAD DIVERSE SCHOOLS AS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT, by CATANA L. HARRIS, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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EXPLORING ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' PREPAREDNESS TO LEAD DIVERSE
SCHOOLS AS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL
DISTRICT

By

CATANA L. HARRIS

Under the Direction of Yinying Wang, Ed.D.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Historically, serving in the position of Assistant Principal has been thought to be an adequate training experience that prepares these administrators for school leadership. However, due to role ambiguity and limited professional development specifically focused on their needs, this group of leaders may lack the necessary abilities and sensibilities to meet the needs of a more diverse student population. The purpose of this study explores whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development opportunities afforded to assistant principals have prepared them for leadership in diverse schools. Furthermore, this study explored assistant principals' perceptions of their preparedness through the lens of culturally responsive school leadership. **Research Methods:** Following a qualitative case study design, this dissertation

focused on the construct of culturally responsive school leadership theory. Six assistant principals, one school principal, and one district leader, served as the participants for this research. Data were gleaned from interviews, document review, and researcher field notes. This study provides insight into the perceptions of preparedness of assistant principals to lead in diverse contexts and identifies professional development needs and some salient practices of culturally responsive school leaders. Data analysis followed the three-phase method defined by Strauss and Corbin (1994). **Findings:** Results indicated that the roles, responsibilities, and professional development provided to assistant principals have not fully prepared them for leadership in diverse schools. These findings also indicated a belief that lived experiences have helped with assistant principals' preparation. **Implications:** This study illuminates the importance of providing assistant principals with ongoing, targeted professional development to meet their specific needs while providing some salient practices through the utilization of the Culturally Responsive School Leadership framework at the university, school district, and local school levels.

INDEX WORDS: Assistant Principal, Culturally Responsive School Leadership, Leadership Development

EXPLORING ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' PREPAREDNESS TO LEAD AS CULTURALLY
RESPONSIVE LEADERS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

CATANA L. HARRIS

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Degree of

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in

Leadership

in

Educational Policy Studies

in

the College of Education and Human Development

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA
2020

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DEDICATION

Jeremiah 29:11 ~ “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” This scripture has been a guide throughout this process and in life. God has blessed me with an amazing support system along this journey. I want to dedicate my work to my mother, who passed away in 2009. Even though she did not have an opportunity to see me working through multiple degree programs, I believe that she is with me always in spirit and will live forever in my heart. My mother taught me about the power of prayer and the importance of trusting God and his timing.

I also dedicate this work to my daughter, Visaysha Harris (*my sunshine*). I want you always to remember that you can do and accomplish anything as long as you keep God first in your life. The bible says, “write a vision, and make it plain.” Over these four years, we had a vision of graduating together (a mother-daughter GSU dynamic duo). Who knew that COVID 19 would shake our vision and shatter our plan? I know that you are disappointed. However, instead of staying in that disappointment, I see you thriving, putting God first, writing a new vision, making a new plan, and demonstrating a positive outlook despite it all. You are such a blessing and inspiration! I am so looking forward to this next chapter of our lives!

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CHAPTER 1

EXPLORING ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' PREPAREDNESS TO LEAD DIVERSE SCHOOLS AS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

In recent years, student populations within U.S. public schools have become increasingly diverse, both culturally and linguistically (Rigby, 2016). Bakken and Smith (2011) have defined culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students as those who are racially and ethnically different, typically speak different languages and generally express their cultural distinctiveness in various ways. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019) has reported that students of color (Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or two or more races) comprised 51 % of public school students nationwide in 2015. The NCES has predicted that this population will increase to 55 % by 2027. These reported societal changes in student demographics have created a need for school leaders who can effectively meet the challenges of an ever-growing, diverse student population.

With the increase in the number of linguistically and culturally diverse students, principals and assistant principals must lead in ways that demonstrate their competence in addressing diverse students, families, and communities' needs (Bakken & Smith, 2011). No longer are administrators responsible for managing the school environment only, they are expected to educate students, regardless of their cultural and linguistic differences. Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) have reported that as schools continue to encounter increased accountability pressures to improve academic achievement across all subgroups, assistant principals have become more critical for school reform.

The assistant principal's role has become more complicated due to the factors mentioned above and is an integral part of the school's leadership team. Though no direct link has been identified between student achievement and the assistant principal's role, the latter is seen as having a significant part in a school's success (Morgan, 2014). Researchers have found that principals influence teaching and learning; however, there is a noticeable dearth of explicitly focused research on assistant principals (Haller, Hunt, Pacha, & Fazekas, 2016; Kwan, 2009; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Additionally, limited research has been conducted, related explicitly to assistant principals' roles, responsibilities, professional development needs, and their preparedness to lead in diverse settings (Haller et al., 2016; Oleszewski et al., 2012, Khalifa, 2018).

Problem Statement

Many assistant principals employed in school districts demonstrate a lack of clarity regarding their duties, roles, and responsibilities. Haller et al. (2016), Kwan (2009), and Oleszewski et al. (2012) have noted that prior research on assistant principals reflects the ambiguity of their roles and responsibilities. Historically, the research literature has focused on assistant principals and succession planning. In short, serving as an assistant principal has been thought to be the training ground for the foundational knowledge, skills, and talents required to transition into the principalship (Black, Martin, & Danzig, 2014). However, Oleszewski et al. (2012) have reported on the difficulties assistant principals experience as they transition to unclear or nonspecified roles. Oleszewski et al. have argued that the assistant principal's functions are described as "performing all duties assigned by a superior" (p. 273). Often, these roles fail to prepare adequately assistant principals for the principalship. Oleszewski et al. have also noted that, typically within the school setting, assistant principals are not utilized to their

fullest potential, and a focus on them is noticeably absent from the literature. In short, there is limited current research on assistant principals' capacities and professional development opportunities related to their overall preparedness to lead diverse schools (Haller et al., 2016; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Kwan, 2009).

Combs, Craft, Lopez, and Malveaux (2016) have also reported on the lack of research literature exploring role ambiguities, learning experiences, support, and acclimation of assistant principals. Combs et al. (2016) have recommended conducting additional research on supporting assistant principals' leadership capacities and preparedness to serve in the position. Their study has highlighted research dated before 1999 and has found that the seminal research supports the initial claim, affirming the need to conduct more current research as plausible next steps to address the ambiguities and arising challenges with assistant principals (Combs et al., 2016).

Purpose of the Study

As schools continue to evolve in demographic composition, administrators are expected to know their schools' populations and to understand how to promote culturally and linguistically diverse student learning (Johnson, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria et al., 2016). Research has shown that assistant principals can play an essential role in school improvement and student achievement (Combs et al., 2016; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Kwan, 2009). However, due to role ambiguity, limited professional development specifically targeted to their needs, changing demographics, and minimal research, assistant principals have been historically underutilized and understudied in educational leadership (Haller et al., 2016; Kwan, 2009; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Further investigation is needed to increase the volume of professional works related to assistant principals' preparedness to serve as culturally responsive leaders of diverse schools.

In utilizing a qualitative, case study approach, this research advances the scholarly literature on assistant principals' roles, responsibilities, and professional development and interrogates whether they are adequately prepared as culturally responsive school leaders in diverse schools. This study also builds upon the literature specific to culturally responsive school leadership as a viable option to address the educational needs of rapidly changing student demographics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016).

Guiding Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are assistant principals prepared for culturally responsive leadership in diverse, urban school settings?
2. To what extent do assistant principals think they are prepared to lead diverse schools?

Literature Review

The purpose of this section examined the scholarly literature that informs this research on culturally responsive leadership and assistant principal preparedness. This study is unique in that it explores whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development provided to assistant principals adequately prepare them as culturally responsive leaders in diverse schools. Connections among existing literature are established, and the need for this study is explained. Additionally, a review of scholarly research addressing the assistant principal, cultural responsiveness in education, and successful school leadership are provided. This section is organized topically and concludes with the gaps revealed in the literature. While some of the empirical research included in this study dates back ten years or more, this dated material serves two purposes: first, to demonstrate the limited research on this topic; and second, to show that the literature presented is relevant to this study.

Assistant Principals

The Evolution of Assistant Principals.

Early research conducted on the assistant principal position dates back to the 1920s (Glanz, 1994). Glanz's (1994) study has provided a glimpse into what is currently the assistant principal position. In Glanz's research, the term assistant principal was initially referred to as "general supervisor" (p. 579). Glanz has reported that the assistant principal position was created due to the enormous responsibilities of the school principal. Historically, the assistant principal position was held by a male and was considered one of authority. According to the literature, the "general supervisor's" role focused on administrative and evaluative duties instead of instruction. As Glanz (1994) has reported, women entered the equation as what has been termed as "special supervisors"; these individuals were responsible for instructing students in math and science and for helping other female teachers who were less experienced in the role.

These "special supervisors" also prepared attendance reports, collected data for evaluation purposes, and coordinated school programs (Glanz, 1994). Ultimately, this position held no power. Glanz's (1994) study has revealed that by the 1940s and 1950s, the literature began to reflect the relationship between the principal and the supervisor. The research also began to use the term assistant principal instead of "supervisor" (Glanz, 1994). The assistant principal position has evolved from being a mere support role, assisting the principal with managerial tasks, to a more critical role, impacting school improvement, and influencing student achievement. Yet, assistant principals are inadequately represented in the literature (Lee et al., 2009; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Petrides, Jimes, & Karaglani, 2014).

Assistant Principal Preparation

Licensure and Certification.

Research has communicated the importance of school leadership as a critical factor in improving student achievement and retaining quality teachers (Bryant, Escalante, Selva, 2017). However, districts are confronted by increasing turnover rates for school leaders, which has resulted in principal shortages and inexperienced principals leading in contexts that they are not adequately prepared to support. As states and school districts seek solutions to better prepare school leaders, some are intentionally looking at leadership development policies focused on preparation and licensure. To better prepare leaders, some states have adopted leader standards to guide their work in strengthening and increasing the number of quality school leaders (Bryant et al., 2017).

Bryant et al., (2017) report all 50 states plus the District of Columbia have leader standards to guide preparation policy. These policies include alternative routes to leadership development. It has been reported that at least 39 states allow alternative or nontraditional routes to gain initial leader certification. There are also 39 states that require field experience in their traditional leadership preparation programs and at least 37 states that require pre-service candidates to hold a master's degree and have documented teaching experience to gain initial leadership certification. However, it is essential to note that in some states, assistant principals can serve in the role without leadership certification. This is concerning as assistant principals typically transition into the role of principal.

In most cases, the assistant principal position has been entry-level (Lee, Kwan, & Walker, 2009). Currently, serving as an assistant principal requires no specialized training besides earning an administrative degree, the same degree principals receive. An administrative

degree does not explicitly target the assistant principals' needs. Over the years, studies have been conducted on principals' development; however, assistant principals' professional development has not been thoroughly investigated to determine whether principal preparation programs adequately prepare assistant principals for the position (Cunningham, & Sherman, 2008; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Oleszewski et al. 2012; Toure, 2008).

University Preparation.

Hess et al. (2007) have reported that the majority of principals surveyed did not feel their graduate programs adequately prepared them for the principalship. Khalifa et al. (2016) and Hess et al. (2007) have further recommended that graduate programs examine their curriculums and their methods of preparing school administrators. As communicated, much of the research has identified a lack of program curriculum and a lack of explicitly preparing assistant principals for real-world practices, instead of focusing more on theory. The study has also reported the absence of a curriculum addressing the need to prepare administrators for culturally responsive school leadership (Black et al., 2014).

University principal preparation programs have attempted to connect theory with practice through internship experiences. These internship experiences were developed to provide program participants with more meaningful learning. Internships have sought to offer opportunities for students to hone their skills and to gain better understandings of building operations, time management, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving related to the position (Cunningham et al., 2008; Hess et al., 2007; & Oleszewski et al., 2012). However, this learning has typically taken place near the end of the licensure program and ensuring a successful learning experience for the candidate has relied on the effectiveness of the mentor administrator assigned to help the student during the internship (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012).

Even though the literature has identified school administration preparation programs, there is no specific evidence of courses that have helped influence or prepare assistant principals for their positions. There is also little to no consideration for administrators receiving instruction related to culturally responsive leadership practices (Toure, 2008). In their review of literature, Khalifa et al. (2016) have suggested the need to emphasize culturally responsive leadership within educational leadership programs, due to diversity within schools and the continual perpetuation of marginalizing students. Educational leadership programs must consider examining and reconfiguring their academic curriculum due to a lack of culturally responsive leadership content addressed within their programs' course work and expectations (Toure', 2008).

The literature is clear and suggests there is a lack of culturally responsive leadership knowledge taught within educational leadership programs. The research must also communicate that school leaders are not adequately prepared to tackle these types of issues within schools. Principal preparation programs have a responsibility to monitor their programs. They also have a responsibility to ensure all administrators entering the field of education, including assistant principals, are prepared to lead successfully in schools that are becoming increasingly more diverse.

District Developed Leadership Preparation Programs.

Similar to principals, assistant principals need ongoing opportunities and professional development specifically tailored to their needs and their schools' needs to grow in their leadership capacity. Assistant principals are critical to schools, providing support in various ways (Black, Martin, & Danzig, 2014). The need to develop assistant principals is vital because many will become principals. Black et al. (2014) have suggested that recruiting, preparing, and developing the future generation of school leaders pose a challenge for states and local school districts. Black et al. have conducted a qualitative study, reporting on principal preparation in Minnesota.

A team of five researchers conducted 30 interviews to examine the following: a) recruitment and selection; b) university preparation programs; c) licensing and certification and d) continuing professional development of assistant principals. Participants' findings have suggested that continued professional learning opportunities are needed, as they have communicated the rarity for assistant principals to learn all they needed to know about the roles and responsibilities associated with the position before becoming practicing assistant principals (Black et al., 2014).

Identifying and preparing future administrative candidates have become essential in meeting the pressures of accountability and succession planning (Oleszewski et al., 2012). School districts have begun to look within their organizations for solutions. Oleszewski et al. (2012) have addressed an assumption regarding the assistant principal's role being an embedded training opportunity, preparing this group of leaders for the principal position. Unfortunately, researchers have reported this assumption as an untruth in their studies (Combs et al. 2016; Haller et al. 2016; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Kwan, 2009). Studies have found that the assistant principal position often fails to prepare them for the role of the school principal.

Researchers have noted that, typically within the school setting, assistant principals are underutilized and are noticeably absent from the research literature (Combs et al. 2016; Haller et al., 2016; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Due to current demands to improve student achievement, assistant principals have become valuable resources when implementing reform initiatives. They also serve as viable solutions in addressing succession planning (Combs et al., 2016). Scholars have informed that with a shortage of candidates to assume the principalship, many school districts are becoming more innovative in preparing the leaders currently serving in the school district (Joseph, 2009; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Taylor, Pelletier, Trimble, & Ruiz, 2014). They have begun to look for solutions to candidate shortages within their current workforce.

One such attempt has been to develop a district-run preparation program, or “Grow Your Own” principal program. This type of program provides training opportunities to meet the specific needs of districts, principals, assistant principals, and the demographics they serve (Taylor et al., 2014). Ultimately, the district developed leader academies can assist in equipping potential school principal candidates with the tools to help them lead successfully, while also improving student achievement in diverse schools. These academies also serve as levers to instill the desire to pursue the principalship in assistant principals who may not have aspired to the role.

Taylor et al. (2014) have sought to determine the effectiveness of a district developed preparation program in an urban setting, designed to prepare assistant principals for the position. The research used three parallel mixed-methods studies, focused on developing leadership behaviors conducive to student achievement with assistant principals. The purpose of the three studies drew upon the premise that 21st-century leaders must serve as instructional leaders, build teacher capacity, and influence student achievement. Findings from the 122 study participants have suggested the connection between school leadership as essential to improving student-learning outcomes and building assistant principals’ abilities through the completion of a preparation program (Taylor et al., 2014).

In preparing aspiring principals, Brazer and Bauer (2013) have conducted a qualitative study and have suggested re-conceptualizing the current leadership preparation model implemented at the institutional level. They have recommended focusing on professional development opportunities to build leadership capacity. Brazer and Bauer have created a framework for educational leaders to serve as a model for future leadership preparation programs. Educators must begin to re-imagine a new normal, one in which school leaders, principals, and assistant principals receive targeted, meaningful, and ongoing professional development.

How might their continuous growth in knowledge, skills, experiences, and talent influence school climate, teacher capacity, and instructional quality within their schools and, thereby, on student learning (Roland, 2017)? This research emphasizes the importance of understanding whether the current practices of and professional development for assistant principals provide the necessary preparation for current leadership demands. The research also identifies foundational building blocks to inform the reconceptualization of previous leadership development programs. Brazer and Bauer (2013) have recommended pedagogy essential to assistant principals' development and new learning applications within the school context.

Roles and Responsibilities.

As accountability measures have changed and more is expected from school leadership, assistant principals' relevance, significance, and position must be understood. Historically, studies have focused on succession planning and the assistant principal. The literature reveals that upon completing the administrative licensure degree program, many educators serve as assistant principals. Serving in this capacity has been thought to be a prerequisite and the appropriate training ground for the foundational knowledge, skills, and talents necessary to move into the principalship.

However, many scholars have refuted this notion and have reported on the great difficulties assistant principals experience as they transition to unclear or nonspecified roles (Barnett et al., 2012; Haller et al., 2016; Kwan, 2009; Martin & Danzig, 2014; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Oleszewski et al. (2012) have conducted a comprehensive review of assistant principals' roles, responsibilities, and training. Their study has included a detailed comparison of assistant principals' job descriptions spanning 30 years, both in the United States and abroad. Oleszewski et al.'s (2012) research have considered pre-existing information from published, peer-reviewed

journals, conference papers, doctoral dissertations, and ERIC documents. These data have been analyzed across multiple contexts to explore assistant principals' roles, responsibilities, and professional learning, ranging from 1970 to 2011.

Oleszewski et al. (2012) have found that assistant principals' daily duties and responsibilities do not adequately prepare them for the transition to the school principal. Their research has reported implications for future research in the area of reconfiguring the assistant principal role. They have also stressed the importance of clearly defining the position description, and they have recommended connecting the description to assistant principals' professional development needs (Oleszewski et al., 2012; Kwan, 2009). Scholars have argued, that the daily roles and responsibilities have failed to prepare assistant principals for the principalship. They have posited the importance of leveraging the assistant principal position as an embedded learning opportunity to better prepare leaders for changing school demographics and for the future role of principal (Oleszewski et al., 2012). These scholars have also asserted that within the school setting, assistant principals are not utilized to their fullest potential, nor are they provided with professional development designed explicitly for their needs (Kwan, 2009; Oleszewski et al., 2012).

To synthesize, the most prominent job responsibilities for assistant principals have included disciplining students, policing attendance, evaluating staff, scheduling classes, and performing lunch duty (Barnett et al., 2012; Kwan, 2009; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Assistant principals consistently manage a wide range of responsibilities daily and constantly juggle tasks unrelated to student learning. Kwan (2009) and Oleszewski et al. (2012) have suggested that assistant principals spend too much time on management components, primarily in the discipline

area. Studies surrounding assistant principals and the various roles in which they spend the majority of their time report a lack of preparedness for leadership outside of serving as disciplinarians (Barnett et al., 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Kwan, 2009). These findings inform that assistant principals are aware of factors that contribute to their beliefs of being unprepared in their daily roles and responsibilities.

In her ten-year-old qualitative study of 36 assistant principals, Kwan (2009) has addressed a gap in the literature, communicating assistant principals' dissatisfaction with the lack of training and outlining their frustrations with the ambiguity of their roles. Based on these data collected in her study, Kwan (2009) has recommended conducting further research on job duties and professional development specifically designed to meet assistant principals' needs. Kwan's (2009) study and recommendations suggest a need for more current research on the roles, responsibilities, and professional development of assistant principals. Kwan's (2009) research further demonstrates the potential benefits of conducting a study on the absence of current research literature, explicitly addressing assistant principals' roles, responsibilities, and professional development to better prepare them to lead in diverse settings.

Kwan (2009), Khalifa et al. (2016), and Oleszewski et al. (2012) have highlighted assistant principals' concerns. They have suggested more strategic activities, such as opportunities for assistant principals to be instructional leaders, to demonstrate culturally responsive practices, and to manage other aspects related to effective school leadership. However, research also concludes that, in most cases, these roles vary based on the district, local school, and principal designation. As demonstrated in the study, there are limitations concerning clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and professional development, explicitly addressing the needs of assistant principals and preparation for leadership in diverse settings.

Cultural Responsiveness in Education

Empirical studies about leadership and the indirect influence school leaders have on student achievement has been well documented (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2012). A burgeoning research literature in education situates equity issues at the center of educational leaders' practices. These studies have been concerned with addressing and eliminating marginalization of culturally and linguistically diverse students in schools (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007). The nascent literature has suggested examining the role school leadership plays in influencing the learning outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Ishimaru et al., 2014; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria et al., 2016).

Transformational Leadership

School systems continue to face demographic shifts and unprecedented local, state, and federal accountability for school performance and student achievement. Effective school leadership is crucial to overall school success. However, a 2014 report conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute analyzing the recruitment, selection, and placement of school leaders, have suggested that far too many school administrators lack the capacity to lead effectively (Anderson, 2017). With these concerns in mind, the quality of leadership styles has been researched as part of the school restructuring and improvement movements. Scholars have suggested several leadership styles in their efforts to identify effective leadership behaviors to improve the learning outcomes of all students. These leadership styles include transformational leadership, social justice leadership, and, more recently, culturally responsive school leadership as proven to facilitate change, enhance commitment and performance, and improve overall organizational performance (Anderson, 2017).

Transformational leadership (TL) is one of the most researched forms of school leadership across disciplines in both Western and Chinese contexts (Sun, Chen, & Zhang, 2017). Transformational leadership is a term coined by James MacGregor Burns in his 1978 book, *Leadership*, and is further studied more extensively by scholars Bass (1985) and Leithwood and Sun (2012). Transformational leadership is a process where leaders and followers work collaboratively to advance motivation and morale. Although Burns (1978) initially conceptualized this leadership style, Bass (1985) fully developed it in non-educational contexts (Sun et al., 2017; Anderson, 2017).

In educational settings, transformational leadership has undergone 30 years of development (Anderson, 2017). Leithwood and his colleagues (2012) have studied and developed transformational leadership to its most current and mature form. They have postulated that it can influence people's beliefs and to transform organizations. Based on Leithwood et al.'s (2012) most recent work, transformational leadership is conceptualized as including a total of fifteen specific practices, classified into four broad categories: 1) setting direction; 2) developing people; 3) redesigning the organization, and 4) managerial components. When operating with the behaviors mentioned above, transformational leadership positively correlates to improved teacher commitment, satisfaction, perceived leader effectiveness, and changing classroom practices and pedagogical or instructional quality (Leithwood et al., 2012).

According to some scholars, transformational leadership style has the potential to suit diverse national and cultural contexts and is positively associated with school culture, planning, strategies for change, organizational learning, and a small, but significant positive effect on student learning (Anderson, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2012; Sun et al., 2017). However, there is no apparent connection as to how transformational leadership behaviors have influenced assistant

principals' leadership actions, nor is there a direct link as to how this form of leadership meets the needs of diverse student populations.

Social Justice Leadership

As previously discussed in the literature regarding transformational leadership, effective school leadership is paramount to school success. In reviewing the existing research on leadership that addresses the needs of diverse school contexts, social justice leadership emerged (SJL). As applied to educational leadership, social justice leadership shares a view that educational leaders need to become activist leaders with a focus on equity; they must appear to assume that the most important responsibility of school administrators is to institutionalize social justice in schools (Muhammed, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; 2010). An activist leader sees his or her job not only as being an administrator but also as an activist, working towards achieving student empowerment (Muhammed, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; 2010).

Social justice leaders advocate for increased educational opportunities for all students. In their work with teachers, parents, and other staff, social justice leaders create democratic environments aimed at bringing all stakeholders into school programmatic discussions (Muhammed, 2010). American scholar Catherine Marshall drew attention to social justice in the field of educational administration and leadership. Momentum intensified in the educational administration field in 1999 when Marshall convened 140 scholars and organized as Leadership for Social Justice (Muhammed, 2010). Subsequently, social justice became part of the conversation during annual meetings of various educational organizations.

Social justice leadership is a multidimensional concept; thus, it has a complex definition (Zhang, Goddard, & Jakubiec, 2018; Muhammed, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; 2010). Scholars have claimed that social justice leadership should be reflected in the educational vision, values, and

practices of a school. It goes beyond disabilities (Young, 2014), and it extends to low-income families and groups that are oppressed based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, cultural origin, and language diversity (Zhang et al., 2018). Even though social justice leadership is a multidimensional concept touting a wide range of defining factors, the literature has revealed a clear consensus that social justice leadership involves the recognition of the unequal circumstances of marginalized groups with actions directed toward eliminating inequalities. Research has also asserted that social justice leaders interrogate the policies and procedures that shape schools and, at the same time, perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Furman, 2012; Gerwitz, 1998).

Furman (2012) has concluded that leadership for social justice is action-oriented and demonstrated through a leader's ongoing actions, skills, habits of mind, and competencies that are continually being created, questioned, and refined. In schools, social justice-oriented leaders actively try to right wrongs that the dominant society has inflicted upon groups in the past, and they focus on equity. In contrast, scholarship centered on transformational leadership has argued that the purpose of school leadership is to establish a collaborative partnership with non-dominant students and families and to facilitate a more holistic strength-based approach to teaching and learning (Shields, 2010). In addition, social justice leaders advocate for social and economic reform efforts to take place outside of the educational system.

Existing empirical research has focused primarily on how principals enact social justice leadership and explore principal experiences in leading inclusive reforms (Furman, 2012). Throughout the literature, there is no reference to the specific role assistant principal's play in social justice leadership. Yet, it is undeniable that as many schools continue to grow more diverse, assistant principals' development to meet the needs of a more diverse student, family, and

community context is essential. The assumption that the assistant principal position is enough to meet the growing shift in demographics is unrealistic. Administrators, specifically assistant principals, should be provided with professional development opportunities to enrich and to enhance their knowledge base to prepare them for cultural responsive leadership practices (Gay, 2010; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalifa, 2018; Santamaria et al., 2016).

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

The emerging literature on culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) echoes many of the practices of socially just and transformative leaders. However, CRSL has focused more on how leaders draw on culture as a resource for teaching and leading (Gooden, 2012; Ishimaru et al., 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalifa, 2018; Santamaria et al., 2016). Due to an influx of diverse students attending today's schools and to ensure educational equality for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), students, families, and communities, 21st-century educational leaders are expected to become more culturally responsive in their behaviors and practices (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). In response to these shifting demographics, Khalifa et al. (2016) have proposed culturally responsive school leadership to meet the needs of a more diverse student population.

Culturally responsive school leadership has been reported as innovative practices, which administrators employ to meet the rapidly changing demographics of students attending urban schools (Khalifa et al., 2016). CRSL has also been reported as providing a way for educational leaders to create whole school experiences, valuing diversity and taking action when faced with equity issues (Lopez, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016). A growing body of literature has suggested that educational leaders need to be prepared to understand how their work toward equity and diversity matters and how that work can influence meaningful change (Lopez, 2015). Culturally

responsive leadership differs from other leadership approaches because it is anchored in the belief that, in order to lead effectively in multicultural settings, leaders must clearly understand their assumptions, ideas, and values about the people and cultures which differ from their own (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

Khalifa et al. (2016) have suggested that the principal's influence in implementing culturally responsive school leadership practices matter. Furthermore, they advise that the execution of cultural responsiveness will not become a part of the school culture if the principal fails to encourage and model it. As Khalifa et al., (2016) have communicated, four core beliefs are reflective of the behaviors in which culturally responsive school leaders engage. They are: 1) critically self-reflect on leadership behaviors; 2) develop culturally responsive teachers; 3) promotes culturally responsive and inclusive school environment; and 4) engages students, parents, and indigenous contexts. In the following section, an overview of the four significant tenets of CRSL behaviors are discussed in more detail.

Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors.

Critical self-reflection is the first core belief of CRSL and concerns a school leader engaging in intentional reflective thinking about his or her leadership behaviors. Scholars who study culturally responsive school leadership have emphasized the importance of self-reflection of school leaders' own practices as an ongoing process that cannot be completed (Furman, 2012; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Johnson, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016, Khalifa, 2018; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). The literature has highlighted the role self-reflection plays in establishing a critical consciousness and has suggested specific activities in which leaders may engage. Scholars have suggested that these activities include tasks such as drafting cultural and racial autobiographies and participating in conversations around diversity and privilege (Furman, 2012; Gooden

et al., 2012; Khalifa et al., 2016; & Madhlangobe, 2012). They have also recommended journaling to explore topics of culture, as well as conducting equity audits of school and district policies, procedures, and practices as an important aspect of leaders' critical self-reflection.

Furthermore, leaders must be willing to question personal assumptions about race and culture and their influences on students, families, and school organizations. Khalifa et al. (2016) have suggested that critical self-reflection is foundational and occurs before any actions of culturally responsive school leadership can take place. Scholarship surrounding critical self-reflection has contended that this behavior also contributes to leaders uncovering learning opportunities needed to build cultural knowledge for self and staff serving diverse populations (Gooden et al., 2015; Khalifa et al. 2016). As documented in the literature, school leaders must first know who they are before they can understand the context in which they lead.

Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers.

Developing culturally responsive teachers is the second core belief of culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). This core belief focuses on the school leader providing professional development opportunities for school staff members to build their collective capacity in culturally responsive practices and to facilitate culturally responsive school environments (Khalifa et al., 2016). Many studies conducted have explored the instructional strategies and culturally responsive pedagogy teachers use to help diverse students learn (Gay, 1994, 2002, 2010; Johnson, 2004; & Paris, 2012). For example, Gay (2002; 2010) has described culturally responsive pedagogy as teachers developing a skill set about cultural diversity, incorporating into the curriculum cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse students. She has also suggested other essential elements of culturally re-

sponsive pedagogy, including demonstrating sensitivity and caring, developing learning communities, using cross-cultural communication techniques, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction (Gay, 2002; 2010).

Burgeoning research has reported that culturally responsive teachers require the school leader to communicate an inclusive vision that supports the development of culturally responsive teaching and makes available curriculum materials and resources (Johnson, 2006; 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Khalifa et al. (2016) have affirmed that developing culturally responsive teachers is an ongoing effort, including data disaggregation and noting cultural gaps in achievement, discipline, enrichment, and remedial services. CRSL also employs and retains culturally and linguistically diverse staff. It develops leadership teams focused on cultural responsiveness related to instructional methods, assessment practices, and organizational structures, which promote academic achievement for all students, regardless of gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural characteristics (Nieto & Bode, 2011). Johnson (2006) has asserted that culturally responsive leadership occurs when administrators merge curriculum innovation with social activism.

Promotes Culturally Responsive and Inclusive School Environment.

Promoting a culturally responsive and inclusive school environment is the third core belief associated with culturally responsive school leadership. A leader's ability to create a welcoming school environment, while simultaneously exuding a feeling of familial community and learning organization, is a function of culturally responsive school leadership (Ishimaru, 2013; 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016). To create a welcoming atmosphere for students, parents, and the community, culturally responsive leaders build relationships with all stakeholders and encourage joint efforts between school leaders and teachers. This approach goes beyond mandated school,

parent, and community interactions such as parent-teacher conferences, sporting events, fund-raising efforts, or student musicals and plays (Green, 2015; Ishimaru, 2014).

Khalifa (2018) has described this core belief as leaders having high expectations for all students and confidence in their abilities to learn, regardless of racial and ethnic backgrounds. These leaders resist deficit mindsets and model a positive outlook regarding the potential that all students have within them (Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalifa, 2018). They further propose accepting and validating the home cultures of diverse students and use school structures and resources to promote inclusive school environments. As communicated in the literature, this often occurs through bringing the community into the school and the school into the community (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts.

Engaging students, parents, and indigenous contexts is the fourth core belief of culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). This tenet is associated with the principal of promoting opportunities for students, families, and community members to connect in culturally appropriate ways. Scholars have discussed the importance of using the community as an informative space to engage all stakeholders (Johnson, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; & Madhlangobe et al., 2012). Culturally responsive leaders seek opportunities to organize advocacy activities for community-based causes, such as bridging parents' language barriers.

The literature has suggested that parental and community involvement and engagement are critical to culturally responsive leadership. These leaders extend their reach into the community to promote student learning and engagement. Additionally, research has shown that cultivating relationships with families of diverse students has a positive impact on student success

and achievement (Johnson, 2006, 2010; Khalifa et al., 2016). Culturally responsive school leaders also provide the structure in which parents can serve alongside teachers as team members to make educational decisions about their children (Johnson, 2014). When faced with inequitable occurrences, culturally responsive leaders advocate for equality and urge parents to act on their behalf (Gay, 2010; Khalifa, 2016, 2018; Mohammed, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; & Zang et al., 2018).

School Leadership Matters

Over the years, school reform initiatives have substantially changed the focus of education and have increased the demand for schools to raise the achievement gap for all student subgroups. As a result, many schools have been required to demonstrate student progress toward learning and performance, while expecting educators to accept accountability for their instruction and the results (Black et al., 2014). Seminal research has reported that while effective leadership cannot guarantee successful education reform, research affirms that sustainable school improvement rarely occurs without active and skillful leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012). In addition, Leithwood (2009) has concluded that principals are second only to teachers as the most critical school-level determinant of student achievement. These findings are significant, as a large number of principals are projected to leave the profession in the near future.

The demand for principals will grow six percent nationwide by the year 2022 (NCES, 2019). As schools continue to experience a growth in linguistically and culturally diverse students, school leaders must acknowledge this shift in the school dynamic and prepare to meet the needs of a more diverse student demographic. Also, schools are expected to be strategic, persistent, and consistent in their efforts to ensure learning barriers such as the manners in which cul-

tural and linguistic diversity are embraced and become integral parts of the whole school experience. Oleszewski et al. (2012) have reported a need for school administrators who can transform the entire school experience. Hallinger and Murphy (2012) have suggested that leadership alone cannot guarantee reform efforts, but they have argued that school improvement rarely occurs without an effective leader providing guidance. Heck and Hallinger (2009) have reported their findings from a longitudinal study conducted to demonstrate the potential impact of leadership on the academic growth of students. The study has also illustrated the indirect effect leadership has on student growth.

Khalifa et al. (2016) have recommended culturally responsive school leadership practices as methods for administrators to meet the accountability expectations for more diverse student populations. Black et al. (2014) have conducted a qualitative study, inclusive of 30 interviews with individual and respondent groups who reported on the complex demands placed on administrators and the changing conditions and demographics of students attending those schools. Because of the changes, the research has revealed a necessity for new abilities and sensibilities for principals. These data have reported respondents' concerns for social justice and cultural responsiveness as the responsibility of 21st-century principals' work. Joseph (2009) and Oleszewski et al. (2012) have concluded that school leadership matters, and identifying qualified candidates for the position of principal is essential. To address the concerns presented in the research, a study exploring assistant principals' current practices and their preparation for leading in diverse schools is critical.

Oleszewski et al. (2012) have suggested that one source for addressing the need for qualified principal candidates is to examine current assistant principal's practices and professional development. Researchers have confirmed the influence district personnel and local school leaders

can have on educating diverse groups (Hannay, Jaafar, & Earl, 2013; Ishimauru, 2013; Khalifa, Jennings, Briscoe, Oleszewski, & Abdi, 2014; Leithwood, 1995). Prior research has noted that the school principal is the most recognizable leader in a school. The principal is held accountable for school achievement results and is second only to teachers as the most significant factor in student academic growth (Leithwood, 1995). However, with proper preparation and clearly defined roles, the assistant principal is just as crucial to a school's success.

Seminal research has found that school leadership is vital and that school principals' actions indirectly influence student growth and achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). No longer are principals responsible only for managing the school environment. The expectation is that they educate students, regardless of their cultural and linguistic differences. Santamaria and Santamaria (2016) have agreed that leadership practice matters, and schools must employ leaders who are equipped to respond to the needs of all students.

Summary

Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) is distinguished from other leadership approaches. It is anchored in the belief that to lead effectively in multicultural settings, leaders must clearly understand their assumptions, beliefs, and values about the people and cultures that may differ from their own (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Effective leadership is critical to the success of any school. To ensure coordinated, long-standing implementation of cultural responsiveness, principals must directly engage in and support this work (Duke, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016). To address the inherent barriers to students' academic progress, CRSL is paramount in schools working with marginalized groups. Since the implementation of culturally responsive teaching and the fostering of culturally responsive cultures rests on leadership, principals should lead in a

culturally responsive manner to raise marginalized student populations to higher academic achievement levels.

A review of existing research has revealed gaps in the literature focused on assistant principals' roles, responsibilities, professional development and preparedness to lead as culturally responsive leaders in diverse schools. As evidenced in the literature, there is limited research on assistant principals, and there is ambiguity concerning the connections between their daily roles, responsibilities, professional development afforded to them, and their preparedness to lead in diverse settings. Existing literature has shown how some school districts develop leadership academies or programs to provide professional development and practice to address school districts' specific needs. However, the literature failed to communicate curriculum or course-work designed to address cultural competence, awareness, and responsiveness. There is an evident gap in assistant principals' preparation to be culturally responsive leaders.

Current literature has indicated numerous discussions on school principals and pedagogy (Khalifa et al., 2016; Gay, 2002). However, assistant principals' preparation has not been fully explored to date; thus, there is a need for further exploration. Continuing to leverage the assistant principal position and aiming to build upon assistant principals' capacities as culturally responsive leaders will be a significant step in meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and communities (Khalifa, 2018).

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CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' PREPAREDNESS TO LEAD AS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Assistant principals influence the school and community in which they serve. These leaders are an essential part of succession planning as they are the next generation of school principals. It is imperative they are prepared to transition into the new position and equipped with the knowledge, skills, and talent to meet the needs of a more culturally and linguistically diverse school population (Gay, 2010; Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016; Khalifa, 2018). Bakken and Smith (2011) define culturally and linguistically diverse as any student who is racially and ethnically different. These students typically speak different languages and generally express their cultural distinctiveness in various ways, such as through their dress, hairstyles, dialects, familial structures, and religious beliefs.

Due to the demographic growth of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, parents, and communities, the role of the assistant principal is critical in helping the principal meet student needs (Black, Martin, & Danzig, 2014). Becoming culturally responsive and employing the beliefs of culturally responsive leadership has emerged as a form of leadership focused on making the whole school environment responsive to the needs of CLD students (Johnson, 2006, 2014; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) defined cultural responsiveness as a school improvement strategy that has the potential to transform schools into inclusive environments that use students' cultural differences to influence academic achievement positively while building the capacity of practitioners. Culturally responsive school leaders demonstrate behaviors that promote a school

climate that is inclusive of students, their families, and the community (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Khalifa, Jennings, Briscoe, Oleszweski, & Abdi, 2014; Madhlangobe et al., 2012). Without an understanding of cultural responsiveness and proficiency, administrators can inadvertently hinder student growth while marginalizing some students (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Khalifa, 2018; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

As schools continue to change in demographic composition, it is essential for school leaders, specifically assistant principals, to know their schools' populations and understand how to promote the learning of culturally and linguistically (CLD) students. The primary purpose of this qualitative case study sought to explore whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development afforded to assistant principals prepared them to lead diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders.

Guiding Questions

Two primary research questions guided this study:

1. How are assistant principals prepared for culturally responsive leadership in diverse urban school settings?
2. To what extent do assistant principals think they are prepared to lead diverse schools?

Significance of the Study

The literature on assistant principals lacks in the area of educational leadership (Kwan, 2009; Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012). Existing research concerning the assistant principal has primarily focused on the ambiguity of their roles, responsibilities, and their readiness to assimilate into the position of the school principal. An assumption reported by scholars (Oleszewski et al., 2012) is the notion of the role of the assistant principal being an appropriate

training ground to prepare them for the principalship. Oleszewski and his colleagues (2012) argued this is an untruth and reported this explicitly in their study.

Research communicates a common language is used when addressing the role of the assistant principal. Until recently, literature report assistant principals having been underutilized in schools and underrepresented in the professional literature (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Glanz (1994) describes assistant principals as the “forgotten man” and “a wasted educational resource”(p.578). This description becomes vital as this study took an in-depth look into the roles, responsibilities, and professional development of assistant principals and their preparation towards becoming culturally responsive leaders. Findings from this study sought to bolster the research about the current capacities, specific training support, and development needs of assistant principals and to provide universities, district leaders, and school-level leaders with some salient practices to better prepare assistant principals for leadership in culturally and linguistically diverse schools.

Theoretical Framework

Culturally responsive school leadership is the theoretical framework upon which this study was based (Khalifa et al., 2016). Khalifa et al., (2016) referenced Johnson’s (2006, 2007, 2014) research to posit the importance of culturally responsive leadership practices to influence the whole school experience for diverse students. Four core beliefs comprise this theoretical framework. The four tenets of culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016) are:

1. Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors
2. Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers
3. Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment
4. Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts

The four core principles of culturally responsive leadership, as identified by Khalifa et al. (2016), serve as a foundation for this study. These core beliefs provide structure to answer the primary questions guiding this research. The first question guiding this study is: How are assistant principals prepared for culturally responsive leadership in diverse urban school settings? This question was developed to explore whether assistant principals' daily roles, responsibilities, and professional development provide the necessary training to prepare them for leadership in diverse settings as culturally responsive leaders. The proposed research questions connect to the framework in that they relate to the specific practices culturally responsive school leaders engage in.

The second research question guiding this study is: To what extent do assistant principals think they are prepared to lead diverse schools? This study explored assistant principals' understandings of culturally responsive leadership, whether they saw themselves leading in this manner and the reality of how their daily job duties and responsibilities look. These questions also sought to add the experiences and perceptions of preparedness of study participants in their own words, regarding how the implementation of the practices described by Khalifa et al. (2016) can influence the school as a whole. Existing literature generally described culturally responsive school leadership as behaviors in which practitioners engage to bring about meaningful change to culturally and linguistically diverse school populations (Johnson, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2015).

Methodology

Research Design

Based on the study purpose, theoretical framework, and guiding questions, I employed a basic qualitative case study research design. This study explored whether the roles,

responsibilities and professional development afforded to assistant principals prepared them to be culturally responsive school leaders capable of leading diverse schools. Merriam (2009) asserts a qualitative case study “is an interpretive technique which seeks to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (p.13). She further communicates, “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p.13).

Merriam (2009) also described a case study as a research method that situates the researcher as the main instrument of data collection and is concerned with seeking meaning and understanding of the case through a detailed description and analysis of a bounded system. In qualitative case study research, the bound system refers to *what* being studied and the unit around which boundaries are established (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). For this case study, the bounded system is one urban school district located in the Southeast United States. This large urban school district is home to 140 schools and support facilities serving approximately 180,000 students.

A narrative description of the case was created to present a clearer understanding of the topic for researchers and practitioners. Qualitative research relies on identifying patterns and themes related to the proposed problem to gain a better understanding of the problem. A qualitative study intends to interpret the possible meanings of the selected topic. The data collected within qualitative research may use interviews, focus groups, observations, and document review (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010).

This study utilized semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection. However, document review and researcher field notes were also included to triangulate these

data and complement the study. After data was collected, interviews were transcribed using TEMI, a reputable online transcription program. Finally, results, conclusions, and implications for further research were determined.

Site Selection.

Creswell (2013) suggested two critical aspects of any qualitative study involve site selection and identification of study participants. For purposes of this research, one large urban school district (which was given the pseudonym Powell School District) located in the Southeast United States bound the study. This site was purposefully selected based upon demographic information. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019), the Powell School District report a total population of 757,776 persons residing in the county in which the school district serves. This district educates approximately 180,000 students ranging from kindergarten through twelfth grade, and about 74,000 of those students are classified as culturally and linguistically diverse. For these reasons, this study was conducted in the identified school district.

Northview Cluster Schools.

The study narrowed to focus on one particular cluster (which was given the pseudonym Northview Cluster) within the target district and served as the case for this study. The rationale for purposefully selecting Northview Cluster from the 19 school clusters comprising the school district is due to the similarity of demographics between the schools as reported on the district and individual school websites (see table 1). Data from four of the five Title I elementary schools located in the Northview Cluster in Powell County School District were collected and utilized in this study. These elementary schools were given the following pseudonyms: Boykin Elementary, Crews Elementary, Bailey Elementary, and Miller Elementary. I am employed at one of the

school sites, and this site was not included in the study. Therefore, the school was not given a pseudonym or referenced in the research.

After reviewing, the demographic data about the target cluster, as reported in each school's 2017-2018 School Accountability Report and College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI), made the Northview Cluster ideal for study purposes. The target cluster has an average of 57% of students who are classified as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD). During the 2017-2018 school year, Northview Cluster schools also reported that an average of 90% of enrolled students received free and reduced-price meals. These Title I Elementary schools have a long history of supporting the growth and development of students in attendance dating back to July 9, 1905, with the opening of Boykin Elementary and subsequently Crews Elementary (1985), Miller Elementary (1994), and Bailey Elementary (2003). All of the cluster schools included in this study have received recognition as a Title I Reward School.

Northview Cluster schools became more interesting after reviewing the individual school data more closely. The researcher noticed two of the schools were outperforming the other cluster schools across all academic content areas, as reported on district developed formative assessments. These data lead me to wonder whether the current practices of assistant principals and professional development opportunities they participate in influence their leadership within the diverse settings. Investigating assistant principals in the selected cluster provided a chance to determine whether or not being in this diverse environment had influenced their preparation for culturally responsive leadership and their ability to lead in diverse schools.

Table 1

Northview Cluster Demographic Information

Study Sites	Total Enrollment	Free and Reduced Lunch	English Language Learners	Special Education	Asian	African American	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	White	College and Career Readiness Index
Powell School District	180,324	53%	22%	23%	11%	32%	32%	4%	21%	82.5
Bailey Elementary	1,094	92%	53%	12%	3%	29%	62%	2%	3%	74.4
Boykin Elementary	1,168	85%	61%	11%	11%	20%	63%	5%	1%	88.5
Crews Elementary	1,137	90%	66%	11%	4%	17%	74%	2%	4%	79.7
Miller Elementary	927	90%	49%	15%	4%	32%	56%	3%	5%	85.6

Participants.

This study used purposeful sampling. Merriam (2009) refers to purposeful sampling as the unit of analysis, the what, where, when, and who to observe or interview. It also seeks to discover, understand, and gain the most insight specific to the case. As described in the site selection section, information was gathered from four elementary schools comprising the Northview Cluster, specifically from one principal and six assistant principals serving in the diverse schools. Data was also collected from a district-level leader charged with supporting the professional development needs of school leaders employed in Powell School District. At the time of this study, there were five school principals, twenty-three assistant principals, and four district-level leaders serving the target school cluster.

This study employed purposeful sampling to identify study participants. Purposeful sampling, as described by Merriam (2009), “is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 77).

Table 2

Participant Information

Interview Position	Participants	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Date	Time	Length of Interview (min)	Pages Transcribed
Assistant Principal	Ms. Mavin	Caucasian	Female	45-54	11/21	8:00 AM	44.20	11
Assistant Principal	Mr. MaGowan	Caucasian	Male	45-54	11/21	9:00 AM	37.25	10
Assistant Principal	Dr. Simpson	Caucasian	Male	35-44	11/20	8:00 AM	37.48	10
Assistant Principal	Ms. Gibbons	American African	Female	45-54	11/20	9:00 AM	35.35	10
Assistant Principal	Dr. Thompson	American African	Female	55- Older	11/20	10:00 AM	42.15	10
Principal	Ms. Harris	American African	Female	45-54	11/22	9:00 AM	40.47	12
Principal District Leader	Dr. Johnson	American African	Female	35-44	11/22	10:00 AM	45.29	13
Principal District Leader	Dr. Janas	American	Female	45-54	11/21	1:30 PM	45.50	11

Using purposeful sampling, ten participants who would be accessible and willing to participate in one semi-structured interview were invited to take part in this study. The number of participants provides a representative sample of principals, assistant principals, and school district leaders serving in this diverse cluster.

Even though ten participants were invited, eight participants took part in this study (see table 2). After signing consent to participate, two of the original study participants withdrew from the study. One participant withdrew due to personal reasons. Another study participant withdrew from the study due to medical concerns. Six study participants were assistant principals, as this research is primarily concerned with this specific group of administrators.

Assistant principals invited to participate in this study have served in the position within the identified cluster for at least a minimum of one year and no longer than ten years. These criteria will add the novice as well as the middle of career perspective regarding whether or not these leaders think their current capacities, and professional development opportunities have prepared them for leadership in diverse schools. These assistant principals represented a range of

racess, ethnicities, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and genders. Some of the participants included in this study completed the District Developed Leadership Academy for aspiring assistant principals or aspiring principals. Each participant selected for this case study was chosen to add his or her perspectives, perceptions, experiences, and professional development opportunities to gain a better understanding of how those factors have prepared them to serve in diverse schools as culturally responsive leaders (Khalifa et al., 2016; Merriam, 2009).

This study also gathered the perspective of one school principal serving in the target cluster. This principal is ethnically diverse. This leader completed the district aspiring principal program as well as the district aspiring assistant principal program prior to serving in the current position. Including this leader's perspective, perceptions, experiences, and professional development opportunities provided a unique viewpoint in this study. Her input may add value to better prepare assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools and how to enhance the current preparation efforts provided in the target district and beyond.

To further inform this study, responses from one district-level leader round out the eight study participants. Including the district leader whose role is to support leadership development within the target demographic provided a complementary perspective to address the goals of the study. The intent of including a Powell School District leader was to a) gather data regarding the preparation of assistant principals, b) explore the districts' role in preparing assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools, and c) to identify their views about university training as well as future recommendations for assistant principal preparation for the target district and beyond. Including the multiple perspectives from the purposefully selected participants, provide for a broader body of information to include in the study.

Boykin Elementary School.

At the time of the study, eight participants agreed to participate in the study. Assistant Principals Ms. Mavin and Mr. MaGowan serve at Boykin Elementary. Both study participants are Caucasian. They are between the ages of 45 and 54 and have served in their current role for approximately four to nine years. Both participants have previous experience in a diverse school setting.

Ms. Mavin has been an assistant principal at Boykin Elementary for four years. One of her major roles and responsibilities involves leadership of the Dual Language Immersion program. Assistant principal Mavin attributes this unique program as having influenced teacher development as well as instructional resources and support provided at Boykin Elementary. Mr. MaGowan is in his second year of leadership at Boykin Elementary. He shared that his previous experience as a school counselor gave him a foundation inclusive of an ethic of care, empathy, and an understanding of how to support students with diverse needs and family structures.

Crews Elementary School.

Three assistant principals from Crews Elementary took part in the study. Participants at this site include Dr. Simpson, a Caucasian male who recently earned his doctorate in educational leadership at a local university. Dr. Simpson has been in his current role as an assistant principal at Crews Elementary for approximately four to nine years. He is between the age of 35 and 44. Dr. Simpson has supported the diverse learners and teaching staff as an academic coach. When interviewing this participant, he shared his belief that his personal experiences have prepared him for leadership in a diverse school. However, he suggested including professional development in Powell School Districts' leadership development programs would be beneficial.

Assistant principal Gibbons is an African American female between the ages of 45 and 54. She has served at Crews Elementary for approximately ten to fifteen years. Assistant principal Gibbons has been in the field of education for approximately sixteen to twenty years. Before serving at the elementary school level, Ms. Gibbons was a college instructor with a focus on African American Studies. This participant shared the belief that her diverse background and work teaching adult learners about cultural competency, diverse learners, equality, and equity at the university level has made a direct impact on her as a leader in a diverse school. She attributes her cultural awareness to her previous career as a college professor as well as the initiative she takes continuously to seek information and to build her cultural competency.

Dr. Thompson is the final participant rounding out the assistant principals participating in the study who serve Crews Elementary School. She is an African American between the ages of 55 and older. Dr. Thompson has been in the field of education for approximately ten to fifteen years and has spent the last ten to fifteen years at Crews Elementary School. In conversation with this study participant, she believes her preparedness to serve in a diverse school is directly aligned to her experiences and professional development afforded to her as an English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) assistant principal.

However, Dr. Thompson mentioned that additional training and development are needed. She expressed the need for additional training, particularly in the area of cultural awareness and suggested school leaders receive ongoing professional development to build their capacity in this area. Dr. Thompson has completed both the district developed aspiring assistant principal and the aspiring principal programs provided through the leadership development department. Dr. Thompson has aspirations of becoming a principal in the near future.

Miller Elementary.

Ms. Harris is the last assistant principal included in this study. She is African American and has been an assistant principal for approximately one to three years. Ms. Harris has served at Miller Elementary between one and three years and brought a novice perspective to this study. She participated in Powell District aspiring assistant principal program but has not participated in the district developed aspiring principal program. She shared her desire to serve as a school principal in the future. Ms. Harris also expressed her belief that assistant principals need more job-embedded opportunities and a better understanding of the cultures, specifically in the communities they serve, to prepare them for leadership in those areas.

Bailey Elementary.

Dr. Johnson is the only principal serving in the Northview Cluster who agreed to take part in this study. She is an African American between the age of 35 and 44. Dr. Johnson participated in the district developed aspiring assistant principal and aspiring principal programs. She has been a principal for approximately four to nine years. This participant has been the principal of Bailey Elementary for approximately four to nine years. Prior to her appointment, Dr. Johnson served as an assistant principal and teacher in the Powell School District. In conversation with this leader, she shared a belief that assistant principals need to have a better understanding of school culture and strategies for effective communication and building relationships with families from different cultures.

Powell School District.

This study included one district-level leader whose role is to support leadership development in the Powell School District. Dr. Janas is an African American female who has served as an assistant principal and school principal. She served an out of state school district as principal

between one and three years. This leader has supported leadership development in the Powell School District for approximately ten to fifteen years. Dr. Janas did not participate in an aspiring assistant principal or aspiring principal program before her appointment to either leadership position. However, she participated in a district leader preparation program in the Powell School District. Dr. Janas expressed a need for school leaders, specifically assistant principals, to be more open in communication about race and gender, to prepare them for leadership in diverse schools.

Possible Bias.

Bias has been described by Stake (2010) as ubiquitous and sometimes desirable. Researchers must learn how to manage bias, as it is essential to the process of research. According to Stake (2010), the lack of objectivity and subjectivity also describes bias. Thus, in conducting any study, I had to keep an open mind and understand when to be objective and when to accept subjectivity to minimize the effects of biases on the research.

At the time of this study, I served as an assistant principal in one of the schools located in the Northview Cluster. The assistant principals employed in the researchers' school setting did not participate in the study. Serving in this position had advantages as well as disadvantages. My perceptions of being engaged daily in the roles, responsibilities, and professional development opportunities conducted in Powell School District may provide a bias in how I interpreted and communicated results. Having worked in the target district for over 18 years, I may have also interacted in some capacity with study participants.

The advantages of having served in the target district involve the potential to provide a more detailed account of the position and professional development opportunities facilitated in the Powell School District. As the author of this dissertation study, I recognize that I have personal beliefs about the preparedness of assistant principals to lead diverse schools as culturally

responsive school leaders. Therefore, it was vital for me to be open to contrary evidence. During the study, I maintained objectivity, subjectivity, and I remained open to the idea that assistant principals were prepared to lead diverse schools based on their current capacities and professional development opportunities afforded to them.

Ethical Considerations.

For this study, respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice were considered. The treatment of the participants in this study included respecting the privacy of those participants and ensuring the consent process is communicated (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2013). Before conducting the semi-structured interviews, participants were invited to sign an informed consent document that explained their rights as a participant in the study. In addition to ensuring participant privacy, their welfare was also considered.

The consent form signed by each participant included a protection clause, which informed participants their name and identity would be protected. It also communicated the participants' right to leave the study at any time (see Appendices E, F, and G). The initial recruitment email included a statement describing the research and the target population. The statement was also added to justify how study participants were identified for inclusion in the study. Before, during, and after research, measures were taken to ensure that all participants were treated equally and fairly (see Appendix H).

Data Collection.

The primary source of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews. A review of pertinent documents and researcher field notes were used to complement the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of study participants included in the research. As part of this study design, each participant took

part in one face-to-face interview. Participants chose how they wished their interview to be conducted. The options included in-person interviews as well as Skype or FaceTime conversations. All participants in the study selected in-person interviews, which took place in their offices at their respective school sites.

Each interview session ranged between 35 and 45 minutes in length and occurred after written consent from each study participant was received. During the sessions, a recording device captured participant responses to the open-ended questions. All interviews were conducted over one school semester during the 2019-2020 school year. The semi-structured interview sessions provided an opportunity for the researcher to explore further and probe for deeper meanings and insights. Interviews also allowed participants to reflect more deeply on their daily practices, professional learning opportunities, as well as whether or not they thought they were prepared to lead diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders (Khalifa, 2018).

At the beginning of the interview, participants received information regarding the process and intended goals of the research. For this study, three interview protocols were created for each respondent group. One protocol was developed with the assistant principal in mind, the second protocol was designed to interview school principals, and the third protocol was explicitly developed to interview district leaders who support the learning of school administrators throughout Powell School District. Interview questions were designed to address the guiding research questions. They were categorized into the four core beliefs of culturally responsive school leadership; a) Domain I: Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors, b) Domain II: Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers, c) Domain III: Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment, and d) Domain VI: Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts (Khalifa et al., 2016).

The interview protocols aligned with the theoretical framework providing the foundation for this study and followed a specific format. Seven interview questions have been developed for each respondent group (principal and assistant principals). The district leader interview protocol consisted of six interview questions designed with the specific purpose of gathering data to address the two questions guiding this study. Protocol one was developed for the assistant principal. The interview questions progressed as follows; a) questions one and two were designed to gather perspective regarding domain I, b) questions three and four were designed to gather evidence regarding domain II, c) question five was intended to collect the perspective regarding domain III, and d) questions six and seven were developed to gather data regarding domain VI (see Appendix A).

Protocol two consisted of seven questions explicitly developed for the semi-structured interview with the principal. Both primary research questions guiding the study were included in this protocol and tailored to gain a better understanding of the principals' perspective regarding culturally responsive school leadership. The interview questions progressed as follows: a) questions one and two were designed to gather perspective regarding domain I, b) questions three and four were intended to gather evidence regarding domain II, c) questions five and six were designed to gather the perspective regarding domain III, and d) question seven was designed to gather data regarding domain VI (see Appendix B).

Protocol three consisted of six questions developed specifically for the semi-structured interview with the district leader. This protocol addressed both primary research questions guiding the study. This protocol was developed to understand the district's perspective regarding culturally responsive school leadership. The interview questions progressed as follows; a) questions one and two addressed Domain I, b) question three was designed to gather the

participants' perceptions regarding Domain II, c) questions four and five were designed to collect data to address Domain III, and d) question six sought to address Domain VI as communicated in the Culturally Responsive School Leadership theoretical framework grounding this study (see Appendix C).

Document review complemented this study. This method of data analysis is described as an efficient and effective way of including a variety of data representing historical as well as current resources (Stake, 2010). Documents come in a variety of forms, making them accessible and reliable sources of data (Bowen, 2009). Bowen, (2009) also reports the use of document review provides a stable, non-reactive” data source that can be read multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher’s influence or research process (p. 31). Document review was also included to add a level of description of the case and add to the story of these data collected in the research.

This study reviewed documents such as but not limited to: a) job descriptions for principal and assistant principals b) Leadership Standards, c) school accountability reports, and d) course descriptions and curriculum objectives for the district developed leader academies for principals and assistant principals. Also reviewed were e) Powell School District website inclusive of the staff development policy and f) the Northview Cluster schools’ websites located in the target district. The documents mentioned above were used to gather background information and to access historical data related to the case. Document review was used to provide additional information to assist in describing the case and particulars associated with the case to other researchers and practitioners.

All assistant principals serving in the Northview Cluster received a demographic questionnaire sent via the school district provided courier service except for the school location I am

employed. The information was incorporated into the study to build a profile of the assistant principals participating in the study. The questionnaire was also used to include the voices of other assistant principals not involved in the main study. Data collected from the questionnaire were used to complement the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and to assist the unfolding of stories from study participants (see Appendix E).

Stake (1995) communicated the significance of researcher field notes and how to leverage them to gain a better understanding of the case. He also suggested the importance of the researcher's role in making connections and identifying unique relationships based on the observations and noting those moments to reveal and reinforce the case study. For this study, I developed an observation document to capture immediate noticings gathered during the in-person interviews. This document also provided a means for me to note lingering questions and reflections regarding participant responses immediately following the interviews (see Appendix D).

Data Analysis.

Merriam (2009) asserts analysis of qualitative case study data involves the researcher engaging in an interpretive technique focused on describing, decoding, and translating data to understand the meaning people have constructed, how people make sense of the world, and the experiences they have in the world. Data analysis is a critical component in forming the interpretations garnered from the study. For this research, interview data were the primary source utilized in the study. For this research, interview data were the primary source used in the study. However, document analysis and observation field notes added another layer of information used to identify key points and themes that emerged. These data, along with the theoretical framework, provided the lens to answer the research questions, which guided this study.

Table 3

Example of Codes of Culturally Responsive School Leadership Behaviors

Culturally Responsive School Leadership Domains	Domain Description	Descriptive Codes
Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors	Self-Reflective about race and culture and how they impact the school	Displays self-reflection; continuous learning of cultural knowledge and contexts; open-minded; Lead with courage
Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers	States a vision for culturally responsive teaching, guide teacher development about race and culture, and reform practices to be more culturally responsive.	Develops capacities for cultural responsiveness; reforms curriculum; models culturally responsive teaching; provides professional learning opportunities for staff; representation matters
Promotes Culturally Responsive/ Inclusive School Environment	Promotes a culturally affirming environment, discusses inequalities existing in the school and models culturally responsive school leadership for staff	Establishes a vision for inclusive practices; builds relationships with students, parents, and community; models cultural responsiveness for staff
Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts	Promotes the partnership of school and community, respects students' native language and cultures, and creates structures to support families.	Develop positive relationships with the community; community as a resource; community adds value; empowers students, parents, and community

Evidence collected was explored through the four beliefs of culturally responsive school leadership frame; a) critically self-reflect on leadership behaviors, b) develops culturally responsive teachers, c) promotes culturally responsive/inclusive school environment, and d) engages students, parents, Indigenous contexts (see table 3). As described by Merriam (2009), I identified themes, categories, and concepts based on the theoretical framework of culturally responsive school leadership, which anchored and organized this study. Analysis followed a three-phase method of data analysis as described by Strauss and Corbin (1994). Subsequently, responses to interview questions were audio-recorded during face-to-face conversations and entered into TEMI, a reputable and confidential electronic transcription program.

After transcription of data, all study participants received a copy of their transcript to review for accuracy and returned it to me with edits and corrections. I utilized the process of inductive data analysis to examine the data as described by Strauss and Corbin (1994). The scholars

described this method as a manual detailed iterative coding process to analyze the data gathered from the case by reading and memoing, describing, classifying and interpreting. The analytic process the researcher employed consisted of three main coding phases; a.) open coding, b) axial coding, and c) selective coding, as communicated by Strauss et al. (1994).

In phase one, I used open coding (Strauss et al., 1994) to identify categories that were relevant to the study. The initial codes were derived from the Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) Framework developed by Khalifa et al., (2016). The four core beliefs of CRSL are: a) critically self-reflect on leadership behaviors, b) develops culturally responsive teachers, c) promotes culturally responsive and inclusive school environment, and d) engages students, parents, and Indigenous contexts. At this first level of coding, I looked for statements, phrases, and words from the interview transcripts to sort into the four core beliefs of CRSL to form the basic unit of my analysis. This method has also been described as breaking down the data into first-level categories (Strauss et al., 1994).

Axial coding (Strauss et al., 1994) was used in phase two to assist in looking for relationships within the responses while retaining the CRSL categories. I reread the interview transcripts to confirm whether I had identified and sorted the most important aspects of the transcripts into the four core beliefs of CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016). Also, I began to relate the categorical codes of the CRSL framework to confirm my primary research questions and interview questions elicit participant responses and narratives that provide answers aligned and organized into the four dimensions of CRSL. During this phase, the researcher noted responses that do not apply to the four core beliefs of CRSL and added additional categories as needed. Overall, axial coding is a more direct approach to looking at the data to ensure all categories related to the main goals of the research and research questions (Strauss et al., 1994).

In the third phase, I employed selective coding (Strauss et al., 1994) based on the identified categories and relationships to gain a more in-depth understanding of the main goals of the research and research questions. I used the data collected to draw a comparison between the participant responses and specific dimensions of the CRSL framework. Information gathered to provide a narrative description of assistant principals' current practices and professional development experiences. Lastly, I related those experiences to their practice as culturally responsive leaders in diverse schools and to the goals of the study to compose a written account that may lend itself to helping researchers and practitioners to have a better understanding of the case.

Findings

An abundance of data was collected for this research. Table four consists of a summary of the results. This section provides a report of the findings from the interviews with one principal, six assistant principals, and a district leader from leadership development in the Powell School District to investigate if assistant principals are prepared to lead diverse schools as culturally responsive leaders. Each participant shared their perspective when responding to the interview items. The results begin with a brief description of how the findings relate to the research questions. Following this brief overview, the findings based on key themes and points identified in the study provide the descriptive narrative organizing the remainder of this section.

In addition to participant quotes, their experiences, and their perceptions, which support these findings, this section concludes with a summary of the results (see table 4). Through multiple rounds of coding and analysis, I discovered five key findings aligned with the research questions established in this study. The five significant findings identified in the research include: 1) Experiences have helped with preparation, 2) CRSL are open-minded. Additional findings suggest that 3) CRSL understand that representation matters; 4) CRSL cultivate a welcoming school

atmosphere, and 5) CRSL value community partnerships. It is important to note that the theoretical framework of culturally responsive school leadership provided the structure for initial codes (Khalifa et.al., 2016). However, as the investigation progressed, participant responses shaped the narrative of the final themes, as reported in this dissertation.

The first finding aligns with research question one, *How are assistant principals prepared for culturally responsive leadership in diverse urban school settings?* This question sought to understand how the daily capacities assistant principals engage influenced their development of cultural responsiveness. It also sought to determine whether professional development opportunities have built their capacity as culturally responsive school leaders. Four additional findings were discovered that align with the theoretical framework of culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa, et al., 2016). They address the second research question, *To what extent do assistant principals think they are prepared to lead diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders.*

Question two sought to understand how assistant principals perceived themselves, their readiness, and specific professional development needs to build their capacity in supporting diverse learners and communities. These findings are significant as they provide insight into the perceptions of preparedness of each respondent. They further paint the picture of why study participants may feel the way they do about the influence of their current capacities and professional development in regards to their readiness to lead in diverse settings as culturally responsive school leaders.

Table 4

Example Key Points/Themes of Culturally Responsive School Leadership Behaviors

Research Questions	Key Points/Themes	Final Themes
1. How are assistant principals prepared for culturally responsive leadership in diverse urban school settings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly Managerial Responsibilities • No duties/ responsibilities aligned to CRSL • Experiences have helped • Hindrances in preparation • Learning to lead with more culturally responsive practices • Questioning inequalities 	1. Experiences have helped with preparation.
2. To what extent do assistant principals think they are prepared to lead diverse schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of Self • Awareness of student differences • Be open-minded • Relationships • Resources • Representation Matters • Capacity Building • Understanding Differences • Partnership • Courageous Conversations • Community value • Challenging mind-sets and teacher practice • Empowerment • Modeling • Empathy/ Nurturing • Family Engagement 	2. Culturally responsive school leaders are open-minded.
		3. Culturally responsive school leaders understand that representation matters.
		4. Culturally responsive school leaders cultivate a welcoming school atmosphere.
		5. Culturally responsive school leaders value community partnerships.

Experiences Have Helped with Preparation.

The first significant finding in the research that emerged from the interviews and demographic questionnaire help to answer the first research question guiding this study; *How are assistant principals prepared for culturally responsive leadership in diverse urban school settings?* All study participants completed a demographic questionnaire inclusive of the following open-ended response items (see Appendix D):

1. How do you feel your current responsibilities and professional development as an assistant principal has or has not prepared you for leadership in diverse schools?
2. What do you think is needed to better prepare you for leadership in diverse schools?

The responses gathered from the questions mentioned above communicate a belief that the current roles and responsibilities of assistant principals do not directly align with the tenets of culturally responsive school leadership and suggest a need for additional training and professional learning experiences. Assistant principals participating in the study described their duties as more closely aligned with managing school operations, discipline occurrences, instruction, evaluation, and providing feedback to teachers.

Some of the most prevalent roles and responsibilities reported by study participants include a) managing student discipline, b) supporting grade-level teams, c) instruction, d) evaluation and feedback, e) developing master school schedules, and f) conferencing with teachers and parents. They also report other major functions of their daily capacities as g) supervising programs such as Title I, h) Special Education Programs, i) Assessment Administration, and j) English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Assistant principal Thompson said,

My roles and responsibilities include serving as instructional leadership for third grade. I am the ESOL assistant principal, and I serve as the testing coordinator for all district assessments. In reflecting on training that I have had to build my capacity in working with diverse populations, I have had maybe one college course on diversity and being inclusive of second language learners. The majority of my training has come through being an assistant principal over the ESOL program. I attend contact meetings at the district office to expand my knowledge of how diverse learners acquire social and academic language. However, this is just surface level training. I think additional professional development is needed in the area of cultural awareness to assist me in making appropriate decisions as a culturally responsive school leader.

She further explained that had she not been the assistant principal specifically assigned a role that requires her to support the learning of second language learners, she would have no formalized professional development to help her in this area. Assistant principal Thompson also shared her desire for all assistant principals and principals to be expected to learn about how to support culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

When analyzing the data, it became clear that study participants did not view their current capacities nor the professional development experiences provided in the Powell School District as having prepared them for leadership in their current settings. However, they did attribute their competence in supporting diverse learners, having been primarily influenced through personal experiences, previous experiences working with diverse populations, as well as through being diverse themselves or growing up in diverse families and communities. Assistant principal Gibbons shared,

Currently, I supervise three grade levels, kindergarten, first grade, and Special Education. Supporting the needs of teachers and students on my grade levels is a priority. However, my preparation for leadership in this school stems from the Black Studies and Education training I had in college and graduate school, not because of any formalized training provided by my current school district. I do think, as a whole, educators need some form of cultural competence training that addresses culture, race, and ethnicity. This training should be ongoing and job-embedded in the local school and district professional development programs.

Assistant principal Simpson, along with others, also shared similar thoughts regarding experiences having played a role in their development and the lack of alignment of current roles and responsibilities as preparation for leadership in diverse schools. Assistant principal Simpson stated,

I feel that my hands-on experience as a teacher of students of diverse backgrounds, coupled with working for the YMCA in my youth and as a camp director, supporting families of diverse backgrounds and poverty has been my most significant training as a leader. I think someone coming into this role in this setting, having never worked with diverse populations, could be a barrier without adequate training or hands-on experience. I believe ongoing training and professional development is essential. Additionally, I think this could be more of a focus in the district-developed leadership programs offered in this county.

Assistant principal Harris echoed the stance regarding the need for more professional development specifically designed to build the capacity of assistant principals' cultural awareness. She explained,

I think we need more on the job training opportunities and a better understanding of the cultures of the populations in which we serve. Having completed the district leadership academy for assistant principals, I think we had some discussion related explicitly to English Learners. Still, I do not remember having any training specifically on cultural responsiveness or how my duties related to working with diverse populations.

As the interviews progressed, the perspective of Dr. Johnson a school principal serving in North-view Cluster, confirmed assistant principals' statements regarding the lack of training and absence of embedded learning opportunities for assistant principals to grow as leaders of diverse populations. Principal Johnson stated,

Well, I have completed the assistant principal as well as the principal training program in this district. There was some variation of diversity training; however, it was not the emphasis or focus of our learning. I think a lot of my training has come from my background experiences in leading this school. I have also attended conferences and workshops on cultural responsiveness. Some were offered at the district level, and some were not. I think you cannot provide complete training in leading a diverse school, but I believe assistant principals and principals should have a better awareness of diversity. I think they should have more learning surrounding effective communication skills as well as how to build relationships with families from different cultures. I can say my personal experiences have definitely helped me lead in this diverse school.

Assistant principals and principal statements included in this study reflect the agreement in the belief that managing the daily operations of a school does not explicitly lead to becoming more culturally responsive leaders. There is however, an overall connection to the belief that experiences have helped them as leaders in diverse schools. As communicated above, many of the

participants have common roles and responsibilities. Many of their current capacities help to keep the school running, but they do not necessarily influence leadership behaviors as it relates to being responsive to the needs of diverse students, families, and the community. Both principal and assistant principal respondents expressed the absence of training on diversity or cultural issues as a component of their job duties, responsibilities, and professional development experiences.

This study employed the perspective of one district leader supporting leadership development in the Powell school district. When probed, Dr. Janas described her roles and responsibilities to provide context to her involvement with the professional development of leaders serving in the target district. Dr. Janas stated,

I currently work to develop assistant principals, principals, and those who aspire to do such. We provide learning opportunities for district-level leaders, including annual conferences, workshops, seminars, and one to one coaching for those who are novice leaders to the district. In addition to that, we provide some online training so that training is available at the fingertips of individuals who want to have something more specialized.

In analyzing the data, I discovered that the Powell School District leader confirmed the perceptions of lack of training to prepare them for leadership in diverse student and community contexts, as described by principals and assistant principals in the study. Dr. Janas confirmed that as a district building the capacity of leaders in the areas of diversity, cultural awareness, cultural competence, and cultural responsiveness has not historically been a focus. Dr. Janas shared,

This district is very diverse, we have explicit conversations, but I can tell you there is not any content-driven training or training that is related to explicitly calling out cultural diversity, race, gender, or sexual orientation. I will say that the Powell School District is

trying to address this gap with the inclusion of the Chief Equity Officer, one of our newest positions. One of the things that the person is doing right now is undertaking sort of a landscape analysis. He is looking at practices that people are employing, what are some of the systems and structures that are being set up to ensure equitable access, whether it is scheduling content, or access to career opportunities through the development of specialized programs in schools.

In addition, Dr. Janas also explained,

Again, I think this is an area that has a considerable gap, and part of it is that we do not call it out. If I look at the landscape of our professional learning opportunities, workshops, seminars, or even some areas of the online training except for direct coaching of assistant principals or even leaders in totality, we do not designate training around preparing or even leading in diverse cultures. I think there is an assumption that good leadership, in general, is good leadership anywhere. However, there is a particular set of skills, a certain mindset that we have to be in tune with, especially our mindsets when leading in diverse populations.

This leader further communicated,

What I think people are doing on their own is they are trying to reach out to experts in the field. They are finding training on their own. I do not have expertise in this area. I am pretty well-read on some of it, but currently, this is not training we have incorporated into our leadership development courses or training or aspiring programs yet. I will say yet. I think again that we have to be able to develop our ability to utilize the most effective approaches to this because you are talking about biases. You are talking about addressing

stereotypes, and you have to be able to do it in a way where people become freer to examine themselves without becoming defensive and closed. You have to have the right structures in place to allow that type of courageous conversation to occur. You have to have the right people to be able to facilitate those types of conversations. I mean, we can just look at the landscape of our political system. We can look at the way we talk to each other in general. We have to be thoughtful about how to have this conversation productively, and we are not there yet.

Powell School District has the reputation of being a successful large urban school system. This is evidenced through multiple award-winning recognitions. When speaking with this leader, she noted that one of the benefits that Powell School District has in terms of success is that “we take time to go slow, to analyze, and to assess before implementing anything.”

Based on these findings from study participants, experiences have helped with being prepared to serve in diverse school settings. It is important to note that study participants communicated a desire and need for professional development and job-embedded experiences in the area of cultural responsiveness to be a more effective leader. Study participants voice concern for those leaders who may not have had experiences supporting culturally and linguistically diverse students. Additional findings aligned to the theoretical framework and study questions shed further light on the perceived needs of assistant principals, and the following section of this dissertation described these findings in detail.

Findings two through five aligned to the second research question guiding this study; *To what extent do assistant principals think they are prepared to lead diverse schools?* These data were viewed explicitly through the four domains of culturally responsive school leadership framework, as described by Khalifa et al., (2016). Study participants responded to a series of

questions developed with each domain of the four tenets of CRSL in mind. Their individual responses helped to answer the second research question posed in this study and created the narrative for the remainder of this section.

CRSL are Open-Minded.

Since this study employed the culturally responsive school leadership framework (Khalifa et al., 2016), the second finding is significant. The second major finding of this study fleshed out the importance of school leaders critically self-reflecting on their leadership behaviors, and the common thread of being open-minded was discovered from these data collected from study participants. Critical self-reflection and having an open mind as described by participants ultimately begins with knowledge of self, an awareness of student differences, and an awareness of the community in which the school serves (Khalifa et al., 2016). According to Khalifa et al., (2016), culturally responsive school leaders engage in intentional self-reflective thinking about his or her leadership behaviors and question their personal assumptions about both race and culture and their influence on students, families, and the schools' organizations.

This finding aligned to the first domain of the theoretical framework providing the foundation for this study. Based on the examination of assistant principal knowledge and understanding of cultural responsiveness and its impact on the school and themselves, the assistant principals in this study responded to two specific questions aligned to the first tenet of culturally responsive school leadership (see appendix A). According to the assistant principals, they reported that having an open mind and facing their personal bias is a positive step towards becoming more culturally responsive in their leadership practices. Assistant principal Gibbons said,

Being open-minded and self-reflective is a very critical point of leadership. You have to be reflective in every decision you are making, knowing that it is going to impact or affect students. So, we use the data to say, look, we have to do all we can for our students. Their lives depend on it. We reflect on what is or is not working with our students and adjust instruction and resources to meet those needs.

Assistant principal Simpson responded in kind,

As a leader, first and foremost, I reflect over my day to check any bias that I may have demonstrated in my leader actions towards students, families, and even teachers who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Each day, I try to keep an open mind about each student, their background, their family, and try to make sure I am cognizant of those factors so that I can offer appropriate support.

In expressing their thoughts about self-reflection and being open-minded, each participant articulated that taking time to think about how their action or inaction affects their school environment is necessary.

Another component of having an open mind and being self-reflective is the ability to identify and commit to continuous learning and development of cultural knowledge. This belief echoed throughout the interviews of all study participants. They singularly and collectively communicated that in dealing with culturally and linguistically diverse populations, a commitment to continuous learning is essential. All respondents conveyed specifically a need to gain a better understanding of cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural responsiveness, and the development of an ethic of care. Additionally, they noted the importance of self-discovery and confronting personal bias as key in building their capacity as culturally responsive school leaders. Assistant principal Harris explained,

I believe that it is important for me to be in the boat learning with teachers. So, I am learning at all times so that I can perfect my craft, so to speak. I believe that when teachers see me learning, it may help them know that it is also important for them to perfect their craft when dealing with diverse learners. Through reflection, I identified a bias that relates to my belief that if a teacher chooses to work in a diverse school, I expect that they engage in reflective practices and learning about that community.

How each of the participants reflected on their professional learning experience or lack of knowledge, tell their individual stories. A passion and commitment for continuous growth as learners were expressed verbally as each participant responded to the interview items. Their stories communicate a desire to model the importance of continuous learning, self-reflection, and keeping an open mind as it relates to meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations. It is important to note that being culturally responsive within the respective schools looked different for each participant. However, all study participants in some way recognized that they must not stop at self-reflection, they had a responsibility to take action and help staff build their cultural responsiveness to meet the needs of students, families, and communities.

Furthermore, participants suggested the need to lead with courage and the ability to challenge inequalities that may exist in schools. Culturally responsive school leaders learn how to engage in honest conversations about diversity. They welcome frank discussion, which may lead to shifting the mindsets of staff supporting diverse students, families, and communities. Principal Johnson shared,

As principal, there are times I have tough conversations about unconscious bias that

bubble up with my assistant principals and teachers. I have to be mindful and reflective in order to have those tough conversations with people because you are speaking to people's values, what they believe. I have to navigate those conversations purposefully without offending them. Therefore, having an open mind and being self-reflective is important. I will give you an example; I sat in a meeting with a parent and a teacher recently. The parent did not speak English and required an interpreter. Throughout the meeting, the teacher never looked at the parent; instead, she spoke directly to the interpreter. I literally stopped the meeting and asked the teacher to look at the parent when speaking. I reminded her that the interpreter is there to make sure the conversation happens. I did not think there was any negative intent on the part of the teacher.

However, I had to acknowledge it at that moment to ensure that moving forward with this teacher, she will be mindful of her engagement with parents who require interpreters.

Assistant principals also recognized the importance of continuous learning and identified the absence of specifically designed professional development opportunities to assist them in supporting diverse communities would be beneficial. They expressed an awareness of how their experiences helped them get to the seat of assistant principal or principal of a school. However, they also shared their perceptions regarding the need for districts to provide opportunities, whether job-embedded or through workshops or seminars that may assist them with being better prepared to serve the community in which they support. Assistant principal Harris commented,

Since I did not have any formalized training surrounding working with diverse populations outside of my personal experiences, I began to read books about diversity. I reached out to colleagues to talk through diversity issues and truly just built what I know now over time through interactions with families of the students in my school.

Having an open mind and being self-reflective of leader behaviors is foundational (Khalifa et al., 2016, 2018). Keeping an open mind and self-reflection provide the leader with an opportunity to identify professional learning needs. Having an open mind and self-reflecting on one's beliefs about cultural differences based on participant responses may also assist assistant principals in challenging personal bias' they may unconsciously hold about students who are different than themselves. A critical point of leadership based on participant responses suggested the importance of a leader knowing him or herself, the students and community they serve to build their capacity as culturally responsive school leaders.

CRSL Understand that Representation Matters.

The third major finding of this study revealed the importance of school leaders being intentional regarding teacher development and ensuring that students are represented in the school environment itself. Khalifa et al., (2016) highlighted the importance of school leaders being intentional about developing teacher capacity for incorporating cultural responsive teaching, assessment, and resources into the curriculum and classroom environment. At the lowest level of representation, this may involve portraits of culturally and linguistically diverse people adorning the halls of a school. It may also take the shape of the school curriculum and instructional plans inclusive of the students comprising the school community. In some classrooms, representation is in the form of classroom libraries intentionally infused with books in which children can see themselves. Representation should also extend to media centers, parent centers, and all resources and texts purchased for teacher and student use throughout the school.

Culturally responsive school leaders understand that representation matters, and they ensure that it is an integral part of the school culture. CRSL is an expectation that is modeled in leader actions. It is cultivated in collaborative learning team (CLT) discussions and is always a

part of the conversation when discussing teaching and learning. Based on Khalifa et al.'s (2016) culturally responsive school leadership framework, it is the responsibility of the school leader to facilitate teacher development and capacity building opportunities. This study focused more on how assistant principals employ the tenets of cultural responsiveness to influence change in teacher practice and highlight areas of need based on their current roles, responsibilities, and professional development that may hinder them from embarking on this work.

Study participants were asked to elaborate on this second tenet of culturally responsive school leadership in the assistant principal interview protocol and principal interview protocol as well as the district leader protocol (see Appendices A, B, and C). Overall, these leaders collectively communicated the importance of building the capacity of teachers, but also the importance of capacity building amongst themselves. There was also a clear perspective shared between the identified leaders that suggest the importance of interspersing culturally responsive practices and resources representative of the demographics of students attending the school when planning for instruction during collaborative learning team (CLT) planning sessions. When asked how school leaders know what professional development is needed to facilitate more culturally responsive pedagogy, Bailey Elementary School Principal Johnson said,

I look at trends to determine professional development needs. I pay attention to whether or not the learning should be centralized to a particular individual or if it is a wide skill issue. Sometimes learning needs are a result of simply being attuned to what is happening right in front of you.

Principal Johnson specifically addressed her use of trend data in more detail regarding determining the professional development needs of assistant principals and teachers. In concert navigating the landscape of the school, she mentioned the importance of disaggregating the data

to identify specific content needs, as demonstrated on formative assessments as well as district assessments. She communicated that teachers and administrators are currently participating in a book study to shed light on supporting the needs of all students. In analyzing her interview documentation, the researcher noticed how this leader employed coaching strategies and specific, actionable feedback.

Assistant principals in this study communicated that based on their school, the level of concentration in developing teacher awareness and capacity in creating an inclusive classroom environment is situational. For example, assistant principal Mavin stated,

We are a dual language immersion (DLI) school. Some students in our building spend half of their day learning in English and the other part of their day learning in Spanish. I think we are doing a good job providing teachers and students in this model with instructional support and resources that are representative of the students in our DLI program.

We are having more conversations about whether or not the resources we provide, represent the backgrounds and culture of the students. The majority of our students and families represent predominantly Spanish speaking countries.

Assistant Principal Mavin also shared,

Even though conversations about culturally responsive teaching is occurring mostly with the DLI teachers, We know that a whole other half of students enrolled in this school who are not in this program deserve to experience learning that is representative of them and their cultures. As leaders, we must consider this when planning for professional development for all of our teachers not just planning capacity building opportunities to address deficiencies as identified through formative and summative assessments administered to

students, but how can we make the learning relevant for all students no matter their cultural or linguistic differences.

Representation matters! CRSL's are intentional in determining professional development opportunities for teachers. Leaders in this study suggested using trend data to help identify specific areas of learning aimed at building teacher capacity. They shared the beliefs regarding the importance of the school leader modeling cultural responsiveness in their behaviors and practices. Participants suggested a need to discuss cultural responsive practices and instructional strategies within the collaborative learning time. They also describe the importance of establishing classroom environments in which students see themselves in the texts, materials, and resources.

CRSL Cultivate a Welcoming School Atmosphere.

The fourth major finding of this study uncovered the importance of culturally responsive school leaders cultivating a welcoming school atmosphere. Khalifa et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of school leaders, promoting a culturally responsive and inclusive school environment. These scholars recommend creating a vision for inclusive instructional and behavioral practices based on school data. They also suggest when cultivating a welcoming atmosphere, culturally responsive school leaders build relationships. They are intentional in their hiring practices, use data to identify disparities, and model CRSL behaviors.

Study participants were asked how their current capacities and professional development facilitate their growth in cultivating a welcoming environment (see Appendices A, B, and C). This question uncovered three similar responses from each school site included in this case study. Those similarities are building relationships with staff, students, parents, and the community, hiring bilingual staff, having an active parent center, and supervising the implementation of

family engagement events. When speaking about the importance of establishing positive relationships with all stakeholders, assistant principal Harris said,

We use our parent perception survey to help us improve as a school. One of the areas from our parents and community suggested that they do not always feel welcome. This year we were intentional about addressing this concern. In communicating with parents, the feeling of not being welcomed, we believe, stemmed from the uncertainty they have about what their children were learning. So, we stepped up our efforts to get parents into the building. Specifically, we addressed communication to include weekly newsletters. Instead of hosting a curriculum night, we had family dinner night where parents could bring their family in for dinner and afterward participate in workshops designed to share specific grade-level curriculum and how parents can help at home.

Assistant Principal Gibbons stated,

I must say in this school, we pride ourselves on being welcoming to all cultures. Our principal makes sure that we have bilingual staff. We utilize these staff members to support communication with our families. We do not want parents to feel like no one can communicate with them because they are different or because they are of a different culture or because they speak a different language.

Assistant Principal Harris also shared,

In addition, as a staff, we are just a big family. I think when you have that type of feeling, and you build those relationships with your staff members, it spills over to the kids and the community. We have a good group of people who just really care about each other. We encourage our teachers to build relationships with our students and their parents. One of our initiatives this year is #BeNice. We are also reading the book “Culturize” with our

school leadership team and teachers. This text is talking about building that positive culture within the school and then in the community. We are doing what we do because everyone who enters our school should feel like they are wanted, valued, and appreciated. That makes a difference.

Responses to this line of questioning also brought enthusiastic responses of we have an International Night! Assistant principals communicated that one of their roles and responsibilities is to supervise the planning and logistics of this school-wide event. Several assistant principals explained this family engagement night as a time, the schools celebrate the diversity of students and the community through food, dance, crafts, and learning workshops. This night of celebration also brought in community businesses and provided opportunities to share information about joining the schools' respective Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and other committees that parents and community partners could join to become a more active participant in their child's school.

When speaking with assistant principal Thompson, she described International Night as follows,

We have an International Night, which is a big event at our school. It is well attended by our parents. Historically, they come in and learn about the various countries representative of the demographics in our school. Parents bring in dishes native to their culture to share. We also show diversity and multiculturalism through student and family created paper dolls and flags representing their unique culture that hang throughout the school.

Assistant Principal Gibbons also mentioned hosting International Night as a way to bring the community into the school and as a way to foster a positive and inclusive school environment. She said,

We have many celebrations for diversity. Take a walk down our hallways right now, and you will see dolls hanging that represent the various cultures that we have in our school. We have a celebration that we call International Night. During this event, we celebrate different continents, and we focus on different countries.

In analyzing these data, I discovered that assistant principals communicated how supervising International Night demonstrated how they play a role in facilitating a positive and inclusive school environment. Unanimously across the assistant principals participating in this study, they viewed this family engagement night with pride. However, when reviewing the data from the district leader in this study, when asked how a positive, inclusive environment is established within schools, her perspective varied from those of the assistant principals. District leader Dr. Janas said,

First, you have to have an appreciation for who the community members are. You cannot build a relationship with someone you do not understand. Having a culture night does not solve the issue. It is surface level and, in some cases, can be extremely disrespectful. To suggest that the only thing that people can value is food and dance. So, there has to be a way that students and families feel like you are interested in who they are.

Principal Johnson also differed in her perspective of cultivating a positive and inclusive school atmosphere. She mentioned the importance of recognizing the type of impression that the school is giving off to parents. She further shared her belief that when issues arise, she immediately addresses them with the parent and other individuals involved. Frequently questions are used to see how situations could have been handled differently. Facilitating that positive learning

environment stems from relationships. Building positive relationships with our students, families, and the community is foundational to creating and maintaining a positive school atmosphere.

The schools represented in this case study are all Title I schools. As a school with this specific designation, each of the respective sites has a parent center. These parent centers are in place to provide resources and support to all parents in the school. However, they are unique in that they employ a full-time parent liaison and a parent instructional coordinator. They serve in supportive roles for students, teachers, and parents.

Assistant principal Thompson said,

We are all about being welcoming. The parent center is the hub of what we do. The parent center is always reaching out to parents to include them and strive to be a support system. Many parents come into the parent center and volunteer their time. They help prepare resources for teachers to use daily in classrooms. This year we have implemented a mobile parent center of resources. We have many parents who come in to eat lunch with their children. Our parent liaison and parent instructional coordinator put resources on our mobile cart. During our lunches, they talk with parents about the resources and how they can be used to support their students at home. Parents can check out the resources and take them home directly from the mobile parent center cart.

The creation of a welcoming and inclusive environment goes beyond a single night of family engagement. Assistant Principal McGowan communicated the following,

Creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment begins in the classroom and extends to the parents. The main thing that a parent wants for their child is to know that they are getting a quality education. They want to know that their child is safe. So, as a

school, we try to provide a secure environment. We also try to provide the best education possible. We try to include the community, which makes our parents and community partners feel welcomed and included in our school.

When further questioned regarding cultivating an inclusive school atmosphere, Dr. Janas said, I would say that it is incumbent upon the leadership team to create the environment. In some cases, that means attending some community events. It means having people in the school who might speak the language so that parents who do not speak English feel that they can connect and still get the same information. That means acknowledging that the school will take care of their children, just as they would take care of any child. It means that when children walk through the halls, they see pictures and people that look like them. In Powell School District, a majority of our staff are White, but the majority of our students are not. So, if they cannot see it physically, they can see it in books and the things we put up on our walls.

Cultivating a welcoming school environment is aligned to the third tenet of the CRSL framework (Khalifa et al., 2016). Study participants discussed four significant areas in which they demonstrate how their schools foster an inclusive and welcoming environment. They suggested building relationships with staff, students, parents, and the community. A focus on hiring practices and ensuring bilingual staff was available to bridge language barriers that may exist. Participants also spoke of having active parent centers to support parents in learning and helping their students in the home. Hosting family engagement experiences were also shared as a strategy used to include parents.

CRSL Value Community Partnership.

The fifth significant finding of this study revealed the importance of culturally responsive school leaders, recognizing the value of community partnership. Khalifa et al., (2016) described this as the leaders' responsibility to engage students, parents, and Indigenous contexts. The literature further communicated this fourth domain of culturally responsive school leadership as the school leader developing meaningful, positive relationships with the community. Additionally, the review of scholarly literature revealed the importance of CRSL connecting directly with students and families as well as seeking opportunities of overlap in which the school and the community can work in partnership to enhance student learning (Khalifa et al., 2016, Johnson, 2006).

When speaking with Dr. Janas regarding the importance of a leader developing meaningful, positive relationships with the community she explicitly explained,

It takes individuals recognizing that the constituents add value, not the other way around. Not that our schools exist to impart the values of the community. The schools are the center of the values of the community. There has to be an effort on the leadership team to begin to acknowledge the value of the community, and that typically translates to the expectation you have for the teachers. You know when they build their classroom libraries. This is an area we talk about in terms of auditing and assessing. When teachers are building their classroom libraries, does it have a gamut of cultures? Do kids see or hear the positive things about who they are and not the afterthought of being colonized? So essentially, school leaders must recognize the school community adds value. Then do things in the school to help students and their families feel they are valued.

Assistant Principal Simpson also expressed the belief that there is value in establishing and cultivating community partnerships. However, when speaking about this particular area, he communicated the role that the principal has played in including parent and community voice. When asked directly how Crews Elementary included parent voice in the happenings of the school, he stated,

I can answer this question now. I think if you asked me a year ago, I probably would not have been able to answer it. I think one of the cool things about principal leadership changing is you get a new person with a new lens. So, something that our new principal recognized as an opportunity for growth for our school was our local school council. He presented the bylaws to us and shared what the state actually says a school council should look like. As a leadership team, upon reflection, we realized that we were not engaging our parents in decisions that were happening in the school enough. So, we have done a reset this year on our school council. It is now inclusive of our parent center coordinator, our school board member, our school leadership team, and last but not least parents and community members. In the past, we may not have included parents and community members due to language barriers, but now we are bringing our parents into the fold to ensure their voice is heard. To ensure their voice is evidenced in the classroom and as a data piece to help us get better as a school.

Furthermore, assistant principal Simpson communicated as an assistant principal he found value in the principal including the entire leadership team in this work. Previously, the school student council was led by the school principal and not a part of their respective roles and responsibilities. He also mentioned that without the principal bringing this area of growth to the attention of the leadership team, he would not have had any professional learning experiences to

assist him in finding value in community partnership. Assistant Principal Gibson shared a similar perspective in regards to the work they are doing at Crews Elementary to build the local school council. She described the effort as follows,

What we do here goes beyond just a job. It is a purpose. We have to make a difference in the lives of the students. One way we do this is by bringing in our stakeholders. One month during our school council meeting, we discussed attendance being a concern. At that meeting, a parent suggested as an incentive to come to school that we should have a bike raffle. Because of this suggestion, we gave away two bikes donated by a business partner during the first semester of school. Yes, we could have come up with this incentive on our own. However, a parent council member shared this incentive idea. We know that we cannot do this work alone. Our community business partners add value. Once you get the stakeholders to see and share the school vision, their input and support help a great deal.

In addition, assistant principal Gibson added the parent also secured the bikes that were given away. This is one example of how a partnership with parents and community can have a positive influence on students. During those meetings, this assistant principal also shared that part of the agenda focuses on the Local School Plan of Improvement (LSPI). Instructional expectations are discussed with parents. Academic data is shared and the opportunity for council members to ask questions and raise concerns are welcomed.

Consistently across the assistant principals currently serving at Crews Elementary, a single thread ran through each interview. Assistant principals in this school were impacted by the leadership of the new principal regarding his focus on reestablishing the local school council and

the fact that school and community partnerships are valuable. Assistant Principal Thompson reflected on another example of utilizing community partnerships to provide an incentive for student achievement. She stated,

Every time we have a school council meeting now, we invite our business partners. They are a part of our team. For example, to help our students demonstrate positive behavior, a council member suggested reaching out to a local pizzeria owner to ask if they would be willing to provide pizza to students who made positive behavior choices quarterly. We were pleasantly surprised that the business owner agreed to support our school and this initiative. Due to the insight from a council member, we have developed a relationship with this business owner. We now have an incentive that rewards our students who are making positive behavioral choices with free pizza.

This message was consistent throughout the Northview Cluster. Implementation of a local school council and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) provided an avenue to include parent and community voice. Assistant principal Mavin from Boykin Elementary shared,

At this school, we have a parent council. They meet regularly and have an opportunity to share their input about things going on in the school. Over the last four years, we have also rebuilt the PTA. These school and community partnerships have been instrumental in getting parents involved. It has also been influential in providing a safe space for parents and the community to provide input. So building that partnership with the community through an active PTA is another way that parents have a voice in instructional decisions made here at Boykin Elementary.

Assistant Principal Mavin also shared that annually students, parents, and community members have an opportunity to share their input on a state and local survey. Parents complete a

parent perception survey and students complete a student-centered perception survey. One of her roles and responsibilities is to ensure that parents and students alike complete the survey.

Unfortunately, she also shared that it was a challenge to get a high percentage of completion of the parental surveys. Knowing the value that community partnerships bring to the school context is critical in supporting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Connecting with both students and parents is crucial to the success of students.

Discussion

Shaped by the organizational structures of the school district, local school principal designations, and lack of professional development targeted explicitly towards cultural responsiveness. Assistant principals' preparedness to respond to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and communities reflect a gap in understanding and practice. Given the complexity of today's educational system, it is imperative assistant principals be prepared to balance competing demands of their current roles and responsibilities and the challenges of meeting the best interests of students. However, with limited research focused specifically on their needs and a new surge of research interests concerned with teacher leadership and development, the role and needs of assistant principals continue to be overlooked, understudied, and underrepresented in the professional literature. This study sought to add to the conversation and limited research surrounding the preparation of assistant principals.

Five findings emerged from the interviews conducted with all study participants. The first finding suggested current capacities, such as assistant principal roles, responsibilities, and professional development, have not explicitly prepared them for leadership in diverse schools. However, participants expressed the belief that personal and professional experiences have helped in

their preparation to lead as culturally responsive school leaders. These data reported in this dissertation suggest four additional findings related to the theoretical framework of culturally responsive school leadership. They describe culturally responsive school leaders (CRSL) as follows; a) CRSL are open-minded, b) CRSL understand that representation matters, c) CRSL cultivate a welcoming school atmosphere, and d) CRSL value community partnerships.

It is important to note assistant principals participating in this study communicated an awareness of the lack of preparation in regards to professional development offered by the Powell School District. However, in analyzing these data collected, all respondents perceived their personal experiences had helped them to develop the foundational skills and mindset needed to lead in diverse schools. Additionally, each participant was able to connect an experience aligned to the four tenets of culturally responsive school leadership, as communicated by Khalifa et al. (2016). They referenced examples from their educational, professional, and personal experiences in each of the individual interviews as well as in response to the two open-ended questions posed on the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). Lastly, assistant principals reported having additional professional development, and job-embedded opportunities would help better prepare them for culturally responsive school leadership.

Implications

The results of this study revealed several important findings that reflect assistant principals' perceptions regarding their preparedness to lead diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders. The five final findings as a result from the data were; a) experiences have helped with preparation, b) CRSL are open-minded, c) CRSL understand that representation matters, d) CRSL cultivate a welcoming school atmosphere and e) CRSL value community partnerships. The implications of these findings are discussed below with regard to how they relate to school

leadership preparation programs, implications for school districts, assistant principals, and theory development. This section concludes with implications for future research.

Implications for School Leadership Preparation Programs.

As revealed in the review of literature, research suggests the need to provide pre-service educational leadership program completers with culturally responsive school leadership training at the university level (Khalifa et al., 2016). There is a definitive absence of course curriculum related to culturally responsive school leadership (Black et al., 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). The research communicates the need to better prepare school leaders for the diverse school contexts they will encounter as administrators. Much of the research depict university training that is more concerned with theory rather than the real-world application of culturally responsive leadership practices (Khalifa et al., 2016 and Hess et al. 2007).

Khalifa et al.'s (2016), four tenets of culturally responsive school leadership, were used in this research as the theoretical framework. This framework was referenced to explore the preparedness of assistant principals taking part in this study for leadership in diverse schools. Universities may consider using the four beliefs comprising this framework to develop program course work and fieldwork that is inclusive of salient practices of culturally responsive school leaders. Including course work and fieldwork specifically addressing diversity, cultural responsiveness, cultural competency, and culturally responsive school leadership at the pre-service level may prove beneficial for school leaders.

Universities may consider developing partnerships with local school districts whose student populations are inclusive of a diverse clientele. In partnership with these districts, universities can incorporate clinical experiences that require leadership candidates to complete internships in those diverse settings. This would provide an opportunity for pre-service leaders to not

only apply the learning from the program curriculum but also to see experienced administrators model culturally responsive leader behaviors while working in a diverse setting. Prior to serving in the role of principal or assistant principal, all must obtain a leadership degree. In light of this requirement, it is incumbent upon universities to provide theory and practice that provide appropriate learning experiences that address culturally responsive leadership in preparation to meet the needs of today's students, families, and communities.

Implications for School Districts.

To date, school districts find themselves in the middle of U.S. state and federal policy as it relates to district effectiveness and the role the school district plays in leadership development and support for school administrators (Daly & Finnigan, 2016 and Louis, 2015). With a bevy of research studies focused on the role the district has in school and instructional improvement as it relates to students and teachers, school-level leaders such as assistant principals and principals have been neglected concerning their learning and development needs (Ford & Ware, 2018). These findings are critical, as school leadership has been referenced as one of the influential forces behind student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Leithwood, 2009). In a review of the literature, one way school districts have tried to address the professional development needs of school leaders is through the development of district developed leadership programs.

District developed leadership programs help prepare school principals and assistant principals for leadership in the specific district. Khalifa et al. (2016) suggest that school districts can affect school reform efforts aimed at providing an equitable education for all students. Districts can provide ongoing training and development in the area of culturally responsive leadership in their current core curriculum included in the leadership development programs. Districts can

conduct equity audits to evaluate the landscape of leadership development and needs related to building the capacity of school leaders to serve as culturally responsive leaders. This may also be observed in the hiring of chief equity officers whose primary role involves ensuring the district message is clear regarding expectations of the district in all areas of equity.

Implications for Assistant Principals.

Data suggested there are limited opportunities for assistant principals to engage in professional learning explicitly developed to meet their unique needs. Additionally, in analyzing the data collected in the study confirm the need for leadership preparation programs to include in their coursework, as well as fieldwork, learning experiences that address the real-world needs of practicing assistant principals. Providing appropriate coursework and fieldwork becomes extremely important in supporting the assistant principal in responding to the cultural and linguistic needs of students attending schools that are becoming more diverse over time.

Throughout the scholarly literature, a lack of program content and curriculum focused on preparing assistant principals for leadership in diverse contexts is evident (Black, Martin, & Danzig, 2014; Hess, 2007; Taylor, Pelletier, Trimble, & Ruiz, 2014). The research also suggests core content specifically addressing real-world leadership is limited (Oleszewski et al., 2012; Santamaria et al., 2016). However, opportunities for program completers to learn about theory is more prevalent (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012). Research consistently communicate a view of assistant principal roles and responsibilities more aligned with management tasks and discipline occurrences (Barnett et al., 2012). Assistant principals must become their own advocates regarding seeking opportunities for continuous growth in the areas of school leadership and supporting diverse contexts.

Assistant principals are ultimately responsible for their growth and development regardless of the district provided professional development and support. This ownership may present itself as the assistant principals becoming advocates for their own learning. They may also seek out experts in the field. It may involve assistant principals working closely with a mentor who has experience working in diverse settings. This may also present itself as an assistant principal attending workshops and conferences to build their capacity in supporting diverse student populations. Additionally, connecting with school leaders successfully implementing culturally responsive leader behaviors can be a source of capacity building for assistant principals. Lastly, assistant principals may reach out to local universities to identify opportunities to participate in seminars and professional learning offered to their respective districts from partner universities.

Implications for Theory Development.

The theory of culturally responsive school leadership guided this study by providing the framework for exploring the specific roles, responsibilities, and professional development opportunities assistant principals engage in that facilitate their belief of being prepared to lead in diverse schools. This study also examined the correlations between transformational leadership, social justice leadership, and culturally responsive school leadership to provide additional context. As communicated in the literature review, there has been no direct link to how transformational leadership styles meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. However, scholarship surrounding this leadership style report a positive association with school culture, strategic planning for change, and organizational learning (Anderson, 2017).

In the review of literature, social justice leaders (S JL) were described as activist leaders focused on equity. This leadership style, as communicated in the review, situated S JL as being directly responsible for the institutionalization of social justice work in the school setting and

viewed the role of the school leader as a lever to empower students (Muhammed, 2010; Theoharis, 2007, 2010). In comparison, the burgeoning literature on culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) echoes many of the practices of socially just and transformative leaders. However, CRSL has focused more on how leaders draw on culture as a resource for teaching and leading (Gooden, 2012; Ishimaru et al., 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalifa, 2018; Santamaria et al., 2016).

The assumption was made that in order for assistant principals to lead in diverse schools, they also need to exhibit culturally responsive leader behaviors, participate in job-embedded learning opportunities to build their cultural responsiveness, awareness, competency, and be engaged daily in roles and responsibilities that facilitate this work. The results of this research confirmed this assumption and further posited that current capacities and professional development opportunities do not prepare assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders. Khalifa et al., (2016) specifically identified four tenets of culturally responsive school leader behaviors in their theoretical framework that may contribute to assistant principals being more prepared to lead diverse schools (see table 3). It is important to note that the theoretical framework providing the foundation of this study is an emerging theory with limited evidence of a positive correlation to successful leadership in diverse settings.

However, the intent of this study was not to make claims about to what degree culturally responsive school leader behaviors are supported by scholarly evidence. Hopefully, this study and use of a culturally responsive school leadership framework can serve as a guide to assist school districts and universities in constructing a program of theoretical and relevant training for assistant principals that focus specifically on their needs. Additionally, implications for this theoretical framework suggest using this model as a resource inclusive of specific leader practices

that can be fleshed out in leadership development curriculum, coursework, and field experiences at the pre-service level. This framework also provides a promising guide for school districts in the development of core curriculum, learning modules, professional development, and clinical experiences that are a part of district developed leadership academies.

Lastly, it is important to point out that scholarly literature and professional development opportunities specifically designed for assistant principals are sparse. This is explicitly evidenced in the literature review. Assistant principals participating in this study recognized and communicated a lack of preparedness related to training, the alignment of their roles and responsibilities to becoming culturally responsive, and the overall lack of leadership development focused on diversity training at the district and local school level. Given the importance of the role, it is essential for assistant principals to begin to advocate for themselves. They should also communicate their desire for additional professional learning experiences focused on their specific needs as well as designed to help build their capacity to meet the challenges they face leading in diverse schools.

Suggestions for Future Study.

While this dissertation is insightful and yielded findings surrounding how assistant principals perceived their preparedness to lead diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders, I suggest the need for a more comprehensive study inclusive of a larger sample of schools, of varying levels, and a larger sample of study participants. This would allow for a greater possibility of generalization of results. Also, in conducting a study with a larger sample of schools, a variety of levels, and a larger sample of participants would provide an opportunity to garner more wide-ranging perspectives.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to study multiple large urban school districts simultaneously to better understand how assistant principals are prepared for culturally responsive school leadership. Further research should also be conducted on the role universities have in training pre-service leaders for culturally responsive school leadership as it relates to coursework and fieldwork. One final recommendation is for more research to be conducted on how school districts incorporate culturally responsive school leadership training within the coursework and clinical experiences of their respective leadership academies.

Limitations.

I discovered potential limitations to the implications and conclusions of this study. Initially, ten participants agreed to take part in this study. However, due to personal reasons, two of the study participants removed themselves. This left a small sample size of eight participants in this study. In keeping the sample size small, findings and results may be difficult to generalize (Merriam, 2009). Yet, maintaining a smaller sample size allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the problem identified in this study.

Another potential limitation of the study is researching one school district when there are multiple districts in the selected state. Conducting a case study about assistant principals serving in elementary schools in one cluster of the Powell School District may limit the perspectives regarding the problem and also minimize the ability of this study to be generalized on a larger scale. Although potential limitations exist, the researcher believes the benefits of the research design will address the goals of the study and provide insight into whether the roles, responsibilities, and professional development of assistant principals prepared them to lead diverse schools as culturally responsive leaders.

Conclusion

As growth in culturally and linguistically diverse students continue to rise and school systems are challenged to provide a more equitable educational learning experience for all students, understanding how to better prepare school leaders, specifically assistant principals, for these shifting demographics is critical. As communicated throughout the review of literature and research, assistant principals can be valuable resources to help principals in the facilitation of meeting the needs of diverse students, parents and communities they serve. This study revealed five key findings aligned to the theoretical framework upon which this study was based (see table 4). In light of these significant findings, this study contributes to the understanding of salient practices, specific training, support, and development needs of assistant principals, as described in this case study.

I used important quotes, ideas, and examples gained primarily from semi-structured interviews with six assistant principals, one principal, and one district leader supporting leadership development in the target district who participated in this research. This study further communicated the need to conduct additional studies focused on assistant principals as previously reported by scholars (Kwan, 2009 and Oleszewski et al., 2012) in the review of the literature. This study also confirmed a need to provide school leaders with coursework as well as job-embedded relevant learning experiences related to culturally responsive leader practices (Khalifa et al., 2016). Based on the research, it has been concluded to meet the needs of a shifting demographic of students, parents, and community members, assistant principals require explicit training opportunities and experiences that help prepare them for leadership in diverse schools.

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Appendices

Appendix A

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date: _____ Location: _____

Interviewee: _____ Interviewee Position: Assistant Principal

Release form signed? _____ Demographic survey completed? _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Total Interview Time: _____

Interviewer: Catana L. Harris

Notes to Interviewee:

Welcome: My name is Catana Harris. I am a doctoral candidate at the Georgia State University. I am conducting a study to determine if assistant principals are prepared to lead diverse schools. As a result of the study, I hope it will help inform school districts, local school leaders, and universities on ways to successfully prepare assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools. Thank you in advance for your time. Your input and perceptions are critical to this study. I will be respectful of your time. Here are a couple of norms I would like this interview to be guided by: Respect for all participants, confidentiality will be respected, no judgment, and speak freely. Your participation is voluntary.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Domain I: Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors

1. Share with me how self-reflection enables you to become or be more responsive to the needs of the diverse students, families, and community you serve?
2. What leadership behaviors do you exhibit that reflects your addressing the inequalities in schooling?
3. Since becoming an assistant principal, what types of diversity leadership training have you had?

Domain II: Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers

4. Tell me about how you help teachers develop and implement instructional practices, skills, and behaviors to meet the needs of diverse students.
5. What types of professional development do you create or require teachers to participate to build their capacity in supporting diverse students?

Domain III: Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment

6. What specific strategies/practices do you use to promote an inclusive school environment for all students, and how do you measure student engagement and inclusiveness?
7. How do you develop meaningful and positive relationships with parents? The community?

Domain IV: Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts

8. What leadership practices and strategies do you use to develop a school environment that engages students and families from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds?
9. How do you honor and celebrate diversity in your school?
10. When do you provide opportunities for parents and community members to weigh in on issues of diversity and inclusion?

Closure: This concludes the interview. Thank you again for your time and honesty. Here is my contact information. If for any reason you feel the need to discuss anything further or if you have questions (334-718-6151 and catanaharris@gmail.com). As promised, I will maintain your confidentiality and the norms we discussed today. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date: _____ Location: _____

Interviewee: _____ Interviewee Position: Principal

Release form signed? _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Total Interview Time: _____

Interviewer: Catana L. Harris

Notes to Interviewee:

Welcome: My name is Catana Harris. I am a doctoral candidate at the Georgia State University. I am conducting a study to determine if assistant principals are prepared to lead diverse schools. As a result of the study, I hope it will help inform school districts, local school leaders, and universities on ways to successfully prepare assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools. Thank you in advance for your time. Your input and perceptions are critical to this study. I will be respectful of your time. Here are a couple of norms I would like this interview to be guided by: Respect for all participants, confidentiality will be respected, no judgment, and speak freely. Your participation is voluntary.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Domain I: Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors

1. Share with me how self-reflection enables you to become or be more responsive to the needs of the diverse students, families, and community you serve?
2. What leadership behaviors do you exhibit that reflects your responsiveness to the needs of diverse students, families, and communities?
3. Since becoming a principal, what types of diversity training have you had, and did you have any as an assistant principal?

Domain II: Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers

4. Tell me about how you help teachers develop and implement instructional practices, skills, and behaviors to meet the needs of diverse students. Assistant principals?
5. How do you use school data that reflects gaps in achievement or discipline to inform the professional development needs of teachers?

Domain III: Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment

6. What are some of the strategies/practices you employ to promote a vision for inclusive instructional and behavioral practices among different ethnic groups?
7. Before becoming a principal, do you feel your roles, responsibilities, and professional development as an assistant principal prepared you to create a vision for inclusion in a diverse school? Explain.

Domain IV: Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts

8. What leadership practices and strategies do you use to develop a school environment that engages students and families from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds?
9. How do you honor and celebrate diversity in your school?
10. When do you provide opportunities for parents and community members to weigh in on issues of diversity and inclusion?

Closure: This concludes the interview. Thank you again for your time and honesty. Here is my contact information. If for any reason you feel the need to discuss anything further or if you have questions (334-718-6151 and catanaharris@gmail.com). As promised, I will maintain your confidentiality and the norms we discussed today. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

DISTRICT LEADER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date: _____ Location: _____

Interviewee: _____ Interviewee Position: District Leader

Release form signed? _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Total Interview Time: _____

Interviewer: Catana L. Harris

Notes to Interviewee:

Welcome: My name is Catana Harris. I am a doctoral candidate at the Georgia State University. I am conducting a study to determine if assistant principals are prepared to lead diverse schools. As a result of the study, I hope it will help inform school districts, local school leaders, and universities on ways to successfully prepare assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools. Thank you in advance for your time. Your input and perceptions are critical to this study. I will be respectful of your time. Here are a couple of norms I would like this interview to be guided by: Respect for all participants, confidentiality will be respected, no judgment, and speak freely. Your participation is voluntary.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Domain I: Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors

1. In what ways does the school district address the challenge of being responsive to the needs of diverse students, parents, and communities?
2. Is there any training offered to build capacity in knowledge, skills, and talent regarding cultural awareness? If so, how often and to whom is it offered?
3. What type of support/training does the district provide for assistant principals leading diverse schools within your office and other offices, if known?

Domain II: Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers

4. In what ways is the school district building the capacity of school leaders (principals and assistant principals) to create professional development opportunities for teachers that build upon their capacity in planning and developing instructional strategies and practices that address gaps in achievement or discipline among different ethnic groups?

5. How does the professional development, curriculum, and resources provided to schools address the educational and behavioral disparities among different ethnic groups?

Domain III: Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment

6. How does the district prepare school leaders (principals and assistant principals) to promote a vision for inclusive school environments?
7. In what ways does the school district support the development of school leaders' (principals and assistant principals) capacity to cultivate positive relationships with site-based and community-based stakeholders?
8. What training do you perceive is needed specifically for assistant principals to prepare them for leadership in diverse schools?

Domain IV: Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts

9. How does the district discourage deficit images of students and families, including low socioeconomic status at the local school level?
10. In what ways does the district support the training/development of school leaders' ability to build meaningful relationships with parents? The community?

Closure: This concludes the interview. Thank you again for your time and honesty. Here is my contact information. If for any reason you feel the need to discuss anything further or if you have questions (334-718-6151 and catanaharris@gmail.com). As promised, I will maintain your confidentiality and the norms we discussed today. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix D

Assistant Principal Demographic Questionnaire

The following questions will help to create a better understanding of the participants in this research project. This information is key to making connections to help draw conclusions about the purpose of the research. All identifiers will be removed in the findings section of the project to maintain anonymity.

Personal Characteristics:

Sex

- Male
- Female

Race

- African America
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian or Asian American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Non-Hispanic White
- Other

Age

- 25 to 34 years
- 35 to 44 years
- 45 to 54 years
- Age 55 or older

Years served as an assistant principal

- 1 – 3
- 4 – 9
- 10 – 15
- 16 – 20
- 20+

Years served at the current school assignment:

- 1 – 3
- 4 – 9
- 10 – 15
- 16 – 20
- 20+
- N/A

Level:

- Elementary
- Middle
- High

Approximate percentage of students who receive free and reduced lunch

- 0-5%
- 6-10%
- 11-15%
- 16-20%
- 21-25%
- 26-35%
- 36-50%
- 50-69%
- 70%+

Predominant racial composition of the school

- African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian or Asian American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Non-Hispanic White
- Other

Are you bilingual?

- Yes
- No

Have you participated in a district developed leadership academy for aspiring assistant principals?

- Yes
- No

Do you have aspirations to be a school principal?

- Yes
- No

Have you participated in a district developed leadership academy for aspiring principals?

- Yes
- No

How do you feel your current responsibilities and professional development as an assistant principal has or has not prepared you for leadership in diverse schools?

What do you think is needed to better prepare you for leadership in diverse schools?

Appendix E

Georgia State University
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Informed Consent for Principal

Title: Exploring the Preparedness of Assistant Principals to Lead Diverse Schools as Culturally Responsive Leaders in an Urban School District
Principal Investigator: Dr. Yinying Wang
Student Principal Investigator: Catana L. Harris

I. Introduction and Key Information:

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study.

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development afforded to assistant principals prepare them to lead in diverse schools. Your role in the study will last approximately 60 minutes over one school semester.

You will be asked to do the following:

1. Commit to participate in one 45-minute semi-structured individual face to face audio-recorded interview
2. Commit to 15 minutes to review audio-recorded interview transcript for accuracy

Participating in this study will not expose you to any more risks than you would experience in a typical day. This study is not designed to benefit you. Overall, we hope to gain information about how to better prepare assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders.

If you do not wish to take part in this study, the alternative is to not take part in the study.

II. Purpose:

You are invited to take part in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development afforded to assistant principals prepare them to lead in diverse schools. You are invited because you are a principal in Gwinnett County Public Schools. All elementary school leaders working in the Berkmar Custer will be asked to participate in this study. Participation could require up to one hour of your time from October 2019 to May 2020.

III. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to engage in the following tasks:

1. Participate in one face-to-face audio-recorded interview about your current roles, responsibilities, and professional development. Questions about assistant principal preparedness to lead in diverse schools based on their roles, responsibilities and professional development will be asked. You will also be asked questions about diversity and diversity leadership. The interview location is your office. The 45-minute interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. It will also be coded for individual and group learning in private and public settings.
2. Commit to approximately 15 minutes to review audio-recorded interview transcript for accuracy

You will receive a copy of the completed interview transcript. A copy of the coded information to confirm accuracy will also be provided. You will be asked for any additional information related to the study prior to the release of the findings.

IV. Future Research:

Researchers will not use or distribute your data for future research studies, even if identifiers are removed.

V. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

VI. Benefits:

Participation in this study is not designed to benefit you personally. The desired outcome of this study is to gain information about the current roles, responsibilities, and professional development of assistant principals serving in diverse schools. This information could help to decrease role ambiguity in the position of assistant principal, identify the professional development needs of assistant principals serving in diverse schools, and improve the academic achievement of students in diverse schools.

VII. Alternatives:

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

VIII. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. You may drop out at any time.

IX. Confidentiality:

Information obtained by and/or about you will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- PI - Dr. Yinying Wang
- SI – Catana L. Harris
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)
- Gwinnett County Public School Local Research Review Board

A study participant code rather than your name will be used on study records. The information you provide will be saved on a USB drive and stored in a locked file cabinet. We will destroy all hard copy documents, the USB file, and all audio recordings after a minimum of five years. Your name and other facts that might identify you will not appear when this study is released.

Contact Information

Contact Dr. Yinying Wang at 404-413-8291 or ywang@gsu.edu or Catana Harris at 334-718-6151 or charris134@student.gsu.edu if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study.

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded, please print and sign below. Then, return the signed consent in the provided self-addressed envelope to Catana Harris at Minor Elementary through the district courier service.

_____	_____
Printed Name of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix F

Georgia State University
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Informed Consent for Assistant Principal

Title: Exploring the Preparedness of Assistant Principals to Lead Diverse Schools as Culturally Responsive Leaders in an Urban School District

Principal Investigator: Dr. Yinying Wang

Student Principal Investigator: Catana L. Harris

I. Introduction and Key Information:

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study.

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development afforded to assistant principals prepare them to lead in diverse schools.

Your role in the study will last approximately 75 minutes over one school semester.

You will be asked to do the following:

1. Commit to approximately 15 minutes to complete a demographic questionnaire
2. Commit to participate in one 45-minute semi structured face to face audio-recorded interview
3. Commit to approximately 15 minutes to review audio-recorded interview transcript for accuracy

Participating in this study will not expose you to any more risks than you would experience in a typical day. This study is not designed to benefit you. Overall, we hope to gain information about how to better prepare assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders.

If you do not wish to take part in this study, the alternative is to not take part in the study.

II. Purpose:

You are invited to take part in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development afforded to assistant principals prepare them to lead in diverse schools. You are invited because you are an assistant principal in Gwinnett County Public Schools. All elementary school leaders working in the Berkmar Custer will be asked to participate in this study. Participation could require up to two hours of your time from October 2019 to May 2020.

III. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to engage in the following tasks:

1. Complete a demographic questionnaire. Questions related to your perception of your current responsibilities and professional development will be asked. Questionnaire could be completed in a location of your choice. It could take up to 15 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in up to two one-to-one interviews about your current roles, responsibilities, and professional development. Questions about assistant principal preparedness to lead in diverse schools based on their roles, responsibilities and professional development will be asked. The interview location is your office. The 45-minute interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. It will also be coded for individual and group learning in private and public settings.
3. Commit to approximately 15 minutes to review audio-recorded transcripts for accuracy.

You will receive a copy of the completed interview transcript. A copy of the coded information to confirm accuracy will also be provided. You will be asked for any additional information related to the study prior to the release of the findings.

IV. Future Research:

Researchers will not use or distribute your data for future research studies even if identifiers are removed.

V. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

VI. Benefits:

Participation in this study is not designed to benefit you personally. The desired outcome of this study is to gain information about the current roles, responsibilities, and professional development of assistant principals serving in diverse schools. This information could help to decrease role ambiguity in the position of assistant principal, identify the professional development needs of assistant principals serving in diverse schools, and improve the academic achievement of students in diverse schools.

VII. Alternatives:

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

VIII. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. You may drop out at any time.

IX. Confidentiality:

Information obtained by and/or about you will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- PI - Dr. Yinying Wang
- SI – Catana L. Harris
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)
- Gwinnett County Public School Local Research Review Board

A study participant code rather than your name will be used on study records. The information you provide will be saved on a USB drive and stored in a locked file cabinet. We will destroy all hard copy documents, the USB file, and all audio recordings after a minimum of five years. Your name and other facts that might identify you will not appear when this study is released.

Contact Information

Contact Dr. Yinying Wang at 404-413-8291 or ywang@gsu.edu or Catana Harris at 334-718-6151 or charris134@student.gsu.edu if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study.

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded, please print and sign below. Then, return the signed consent in the provided self-addressed envelope to Catana Harris at Minor Elementary through the district courier service.

_____	_____
Printed Name of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix G

Georgia State University
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Informed Consent for District Level Leader

Title: Exploring the Preparedness of Assistant Principals to Lead Diverse Schools as Culturally Responsive Leaders in an Urban School District

Principal Investigator: Dr. Yinying Wang

Student Principal Investigator: Catana L. Harris

I. Introduction and Key Information:

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study.

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development afforded to assistant principals prepare them to lead in diverse schools.

Your role in the study will last approximately two hours over one school semester.

You will be asked to do the following:

1. Commit to participate in one 45-minute semi-structured individual face to face audio-recorded interview
2. Commit to 15 minutes to review audio-recorded interview transcript for accuracy

Participating in this study will not expose you to any more risks than you would experience in a typical day. This study is not designed to benefit you. Overall, we hope to gain information about how to better prepare assistant principals for leadership in diverse schools as culturally responsive school leaders.

If you do not wish to take part in this study, the alternative is to not take part in the study.

II. Purpose:

You are invited to take part in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore whether the roles, responsibilities and professional development afforded to assistant principals prepare them to lead in diverse schools. You are invited because you are a district-level leader in Gwinnett County Public Schools. The District Level Leadership team will be asked to participate in this study. Participation could require up to two hours of your time from October 2019 to May 2020.

III. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to engage in the following tasks:

1. Participate in a one-to-one interview about your current roles, responsibilities, and professional development. Questions about assistant principal preparedness to lead in diverse schools based on their roles, responsibilities and professional development will be asked. The interview location is your office. The 45-minute interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. It will also be coded for individual and group learning in private and public settings.
2. Commit to approximately 15 minutes to review audio-recorded interview transcript for accuracy

You will receive a copy of the completed interview transcript. A copy of the coded information to confirm accuracy will also be provided. You will be asked for any additional information related to the study prior to the release of the findings.

IV. Future Research:

Researchers will not use or distribute your data for future research studies, even if identifiers are removed.

V. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

VI. Benefits:

Participation in this study is not designed to benefit you personally. The desired outcome of this study is to gain information about the current roles, responsibilities, and professional development of assistant principals serving in diverse schools. This information could help to decrease role ambiguity in the position of assistant principal, identify the professional development needs of assistant principals serving in diverse schools, and improve the academic achievement of students in diverse schools.

VII. Alternatives:

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

VIII. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. You may drop out at any time.

IX. Confidentiality:

Information obtained by and/or about you will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- PI - Dr. Yinying Wang
- SI – Catana L. Harris
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)
- Gwinnett County Public School Local Research Review Board

A study participant code rather than your name will be used on study records. The information you provide will be saved on a USB drive and stored in a locked file cabinet. We will destroy the USB file and all audio recordings after a minimum of five years. Your name and other facts that might identify you will not appear when this study is released.

Contact Information

Contact Dr. Yinying Wang at 404-413-8291 or ywang@gsu.edu or Catana Harris at 334-718-6151 or charris134@student.gsu.edu if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study.

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded, please print and sign below. Then, return the signed consent in the provided self-addressed envelope to Catana Harris at Minor Elementary through the district courier service.

_____	_____
Printed Name of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix H

Email Recruitment Text

Hello,

My name is Catana Harris, and I am a doctoral candidate at Georgia State University. I am conducting a research study about leadership, specifically focused on training, developing, and supporting the specific needs of assistant principals serving in diverse schools. My research is aligned with the strategic priority for Governance and Leadership here in Gwinnett County.

As part of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership in the Department of Educational Policy Studies in the College of Education and Human Development Georgia State University, I am emailing to ask if you would be willing to participate in a 45-minute interview for this research project. The information you provide would be helpful to this study. Participation is completely voluntary, and your answers will be anonymous.

If you are interested, please reply by printing and signing the attached consent form as soon as possible so that I may schedule an interview time. You may return the signed consent form in the provided envelope via the district courier service.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at charris134@student.gsu.edu. I can also be reached at 334-718-6151.

Thank you for your time.

Catana Harris

Appendix I

Observation Log

Participant # _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ Setting _____

Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework
<p style="text-align: center;">Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Displays self-reflection (Knowledge of self and aware of student differences)○ Continuous learner of cultural knowledge and contexts○ Lead with courage and take action when self-reflection uncovers inequalities <p>Narrative Evidence:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Develop teacher capacity for cultural responsiveness (curriculum, assessment, resources)○ Use school data to see gaps and planning purposes○ Reforms school to become more culturally responsive (curriculum, assessments, and resources) <p>Narrative Evidence:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Promote a vision for inclusive instructional and behavioral practices○ Challenge exclusionary policies, teachers, and behaviors○ Develop meaningful and positive relationships with students <p>Narrative Evidence:</p>

Appendix J

GLOSSARY

Assistant Principal- a person whose job is to help another person to do work, specifically the principal, an assistant principal, also known as a vice-principal, is an entry-level position in educational administration that helps the principal in the overall running of the school. (Combs, Craft, Lopez and Malveaux, 2016).

Culturally Responsive School Leadership - practices and actions, mannerisms, policies, and discourses that influence school climate, school structure, teacher efficacy, or student outcomes and address the cultural needs of the students, parents, and teachers (Khalifa, Gooden, Davis 2016).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse- Any student that is racially and ethnically different. These students typically speak different languages and generally express their cultural distinctiveness in various ways (Bakken and Smith, 2011).

District Leader- a district leader, works with the board of education or other governing entity, building leaders, school and district staff, and key stakeholders to develop a vision for schooling within the district to ensure that the educational vision is embodied in each school (Hannay, L., Jaafar, S. B., & Earl, L. (2013)).

Diversity – the inclusion of different types of people (such as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization (Lopez, 2015).

Principal- a person who has controlling authority or is in a leading position as the chief executive officer of an educational Institution (Black, Martin, and Danzig, 2014).

Professional Development - activities that are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals) with the knowledge and skills

necessary to enable students to succeed and to meet the challenging state academic standards (Taylor, Pelletier, Trimble and Ruiz, 2014).

Responsibility/Duty – something for which one is responsible, involving important duties, decisions, etc., that one is trusted to do (Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett, 2012).

Roles – a function or part performed especially in a particular operation or process (Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett, 2012).