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Culturally Responsive School Leaders: Actions, Barriers and the Impact of Critical Self-Reflection

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERS:

ACTIONS, BARRIERS AND THE IMPACT OF CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERS:
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The importance of culturally responsive pedagogy has gained prominence in the last few decades. Educational leaders have a significant impact on student outcomes and, as such, it is important that leaders are culturally responsive to meet student needs. The purpose of this study was to use qualitative case study methodology to gain a better understanding of culturally responsive school leaders including their daily actions, the barriers they face and the role of critical self-reflection in their practice. The research design and methodology of this study take into consideration the study's focus on culturally responsive school leadership through the theoretical triad framework of critical race theory, critical social theory and transformative learning theory. This research study used individual case studies with a cross-case analysis as a research design.

This qualitative study answers two research questions:

1. What is the relationship between critical self-reflection and the role of culturally responsive school leaders in transforming their schools to align with culturally responsive pedagogy?

2. What actions do leaders make to enact culturally responsive practices in schools, and what barriers do they face enacting those practices?

There were five major findings from the analysis of data in this study. The first was the impact of a leader's background on their leadership. All of the participants in this study shared how their

background impacted their perspective as a culturally responsive school leader. The next three findings focused on how leaders respond to the needs of their students and then transform the school to meet those needs. One of the primary actions of a culturally responsive school leader is first to understand and know the needs of their students and then to address those needs directly. Another finding of the study was how the culturally responsive school leader cultivates a culturally responsive school environment. Next, each of the participants expressed how they are a catalyst for change through the daily actions they take to transform their schools to meet the needs of all students. Finally, by using critical race theory as a lens for this study, the fifth finding emerged of Culture as a Gateway to Race. This finding focuses on how culturally responsive school leaders tend to use the safer term of "culture" as a gateway to the discussion of race when working to create culturally responsive schools.

The results and findings of this study provide opportunity for future research related to culturally responsive school leadership. The focus of this study on critical self-reflection supports the importance of critical self-reflection to the work of culturally responsive school leadership. The findings of this study also support the body of literature regarding the importance of culturally responsive practices being intertwined into every action a leader takes. This study additionally supports the research regarding the importance of opposing the status quo through the confrontation of barriers to equity and social justice.

I dedicate this work to two people. First, my grandmother, Willanna Orebaugh Kramer. She was the utmost example in modeling kindness and acceptance of others, both of which have assisted me on this journey. The second person I dedicate this work to is my baby sister, Ashley Ann Klein. At only 36 years old with three young boys and the youngest, barely a toddler, the world lost her just a week before this dissertation was due to my committee. The only way I finished it through that utterly raw initiation of the dreaded grieving process was with her pushing me to do so and constantly hearing her voice telling me that she would not be the reason I didn't finish...so, I did, in her honor. I thank you, Ashley Klein and I miss the world with you in it, sassy sister.

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Topic and Research Problem

Although educational inequities have existed since the beginning of public schools for black and brown students, it has been only about 70 years since it was acknowledged in research that educational barriers existed for children of color (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Additionally, it has been only a few decades since the concepts of cultural responsiveness and culturally responsive pedagogies were introduced to the educational community (Khalifa et al., 2016). Unfortunately, the topic continues to be vastly under researched. The research that has been conducted mainly focuses on creating culturally responsive classrooms for teachers (Khalifa et al., 2016). While culturally responsive teachers and classrooms are desperately needed in schools, culturally responsive school leaders are just as vital. It is essential to have culturally responsive school leaders who can impact the comprehensive school setting to make the substantial changes required to meet the needs of all students (Getha-Taylor et al., 2020; Theoharis, 2007).

Educational leaders have a significant impact on student achievement and outcomes second only to classroom teachers (Calnin et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2005; Khalifa et al., 2016). Knowing this makes it of paramount importance that school leaders create environments where all students from all cultures feel welcomed and can learn. According to Getha-Taylor et al. (2020), it is important that educational leaders go beyond "understanding, tolerating and accommodating diversity. It is about embracing and harnessing the power of differences to address community challenges" (p. 58) in order to be culturally responsive. One of the primary purposes of educational leadership is to create environments within their schools where all students have access to the same opportunities and high expectations as their White counterparts.

By doing this, an environment is created in which all students feel welcomed and included and one in which all students achieve academically (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Additionally, by doing this, outcomes for all students are improved, for both those of the majority and the minority. Unfortunately, based on the achievement gap between Black and Brown students and White students, these welcoming environments for all are not being created in the vast majority of schools. This puts our society in peril because a high school education is foundational for achieving success in life in the twenty-first century (Scheurich et al., 2000). Recent research indicates that culturally responsive school leaders (CRSLs) are able to influence entire schools and districts to become more culturally responsive, transforming them to meet the needs of all students, not just the majority (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Purpose of Study

More than 80% of all teachers and administrators in the United States are of the White majority; however, the populations in which they serve are very different in both race and socio-economic status (Getha-Taylor et al., 2020). Bustamante et al. (2009) state that leaders who go into their school days without considering the cultural lens needed, could create negative practices that adversely impact the achievement of their students. Leaders who are culturally responsive use a cultural lens on a minute-by-minute basis allowing them a focus on all aspects of the school (Bustamante et al., 2009; Getha-Taylor et al., 2020). Khalifa et al. (2016) explicate that "because minoritized students have been disadvantaged by historically oppressive structures, and because educators and schools have been—intentionally or unintentionally—complicit in reproducing this oppression, culturally responsive school leaders have a principled, moral responsibility to counter this oppression" (p. 1275). Culturally responsive school leaders understand these different groups within our society, as well as how history and oppression

impact their reality and perspective in order to cross the boundaries of these racial divides (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Murphy, 2009). Culturally responsive school leaders who are knowledgeable about social justice and culturally responsive issues aim to combat the negativity students of these groups receive from society by transforming their school environments. These leaders are able to provide an environment for students in which they can achieve and succeed in the midst of a society that battles against them by providing positive messages about their culture (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Murphy, 2009). Culturally responsive school leaders recognize and appreciate student cultures and communities (Khalifa et al., 2016). Khalifa et al. further explains that unjust practices in schools will remain until leaders challenge the status quo and break down barriers to commonplace unjust routines and procedures (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Minoritized Students and the Achievement Gap

Many minoritized students are also the same students who are impoverished. Both of these groups have lower achievement scores, lower teacher expectations and receive fewer resources (Brown, 2004; Barakat et al., 2019; Miller & Martin, 2015). Murphy (2009) explained that socioeconomic status can sometimes be even more critical than the issue of race for students. According to Murphy (2009), "Achievement gaps have important consequences for both individuals and the nation. They damage the economic and social fabric of society, undermine civil rights and social justice for a large segment of the population, and destroy the principles of democracy" (p. 12). This consequence not only impedes social growth, but it also impedes the ability for the educational system to change societal injustices. Brown (2004) states that even with the rapidly growing societal consciousness regarding social justice, there is still a tremendous injustice in society and the schools that mirror it. She further explains that large and various populations of students attending public schools deal with inequities in their schooling

(Brown, 2004). Culturally responsive leaders who foster cultural responsiveness are able to counter these inequities and transform schools into equitable learning environments for all students (Barakat et al., 2019; Brown, 2004). Being a CRSL is not just about focusing on the federally identified protected groups, it is about understanding how all cultural differences can improve structural procedures and outcomes and how transforming the school culture can create better outcomes for all students (Getha-Taylor et al., 2020). Berryman et al. (n.d.) argued that:

> School leaders must disrupt and change the status quo that all too often perpetuates student marginalization and underachievement. In order to do this, leaders need to understand that schools have traditionally had a role in reproducing the fabric of society in which they are located, that leaders are part of the power base, and that, under the school's mandated policies and within their own spheres of influence, school leaders have the power and the responsibility to make more of a difference for all marginalized students. (p. 22)

The continuous cycle can be broken by educational leaders who learn to become culturally responsive. Training to become a CRSL can help to break the marginalization created as a result of the achievement gap.

Policy Addressing the Achievement Gap

Although many attempt to use policy as a way to cure the achievement gap, policy is often one of the barriers CRSLs encounter (Theoharis, 2007). Lunenburg (2003) stated that "it is institutional racism that is systemically embedded in assumptions, policies and procedures, practices and structures of schooling" (p. 6). Black and Brown students are the fastest growing segment of school population, second only to English Language Learners, yet the racism, prejudice and bigotry towards these students continue to exist (Lunenburg, 2003; Mavrogordato

& White, 2020). This institutional racism has not only had an overwhelming impact on Black and Brown students, but prejudice and bigotry can be found in society, reaching all tiers of government (Lunenburg, 2003). Interestingly, the impetus behind much of the accountability policy legislation has focused on improving the achievement gap between marginalized groups of students and White students, yet the achievement gap still exists, and in some cases is widening (Lunenburg, 2003). This gives culturally responsive leaders even more fervor to transform school environments into those that are equitable and socially just for students.

Behaviors of Culturally Responsive School Leaders

Based on the current literature, CRSLs demonstrate a few key behaviors in order to exhibit cultural competence. The first of which is self-awareness (Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Van Hook, 2000). Culturally responsive leaders exhibit awareness of themselves, their values, and their beliefs (Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Van Hook, 2000). This self-awareness and cultural aptitude are behaviors that can be developed if a leader does not possess them inherently (Bustamante et al., 2009; Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015). Knight-Manuel et al. (2019) state, "Culturally responsive educators demonstrate a critical consciousness that seeks to understand how and why educational opportunity is influenced by broader socio-political contexts" (p. 41). Research indicates that whether it is called self-awareness, critical consciousness or critical self-reflection, it is critical for CRSLs.

It is also important that CRSLs have the knowledge and skills to challenge and address inequities (Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015; Theoharis, 2007). Culturally responsive school leaders are dedicated to their critical competence while emphasizing inclusivity (Khalifa et al., 2016). The CRSL also leverages resources to support culturally responsive environments

in their classrooms and school (Khalifa et al., 2016; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Theoharis, 2007). They have the confidence to have courageous conversations with staff members about social inequities (Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Engaging students and parents in community contexts and engaging the full school community in culturally responsiveness are two additional behaviors of culturally competent leaders (Khalifa et al., 2016; Murphy, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). The leader uses these community engagements to understand, address and advocate for culturally responsive issues within the school community (Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007).

Inequities in Education

Although it is no surprise that socioeconomic backgrounds directly influence education, it is surprising the lack of effort society has made in correcting the differences. Lunenburg (2003) explains that by all reasonable measures, Black and Brown students and White students receive a different and inequitable public education. Additionally, he adds that students of rich families and students from poor families receive a different and inequitable public education (Lunenburg, 2003). Lunenburg (2003) further expounds that it is vital to achieve an equitable education and equitable opportunities for all students no matter their background. He goes on to state that failure to create equitable educational opportunities for all students will have major impacts on our democratic society (Lunenburg, 2003).

Critical Self-Reflection

Critical self-reflection not only allows administrators to learn about themselves, their biases and their assumptions of others, but it also allows them to grow as leaders and transform themselves which in turn can lead to a transformation of their school environments. Khalifa (2018) discusses the implications of critical self-reflection and how it plays a significant role in

the practices of CRSLs. Culturally responsive school leaders benefit from strong critical self-reflection to help recognize and diminish their own bias as well as the biases that have been mainstreamed into educational practices (Khalifa, 2018; Theoharis, 2007; Brown, 2004). Only by recognizing these biases, can they address them and change the status quo.

Triadic Framework

The three theories of critical race theory, transformative learning theory and critical social theory make up the triadic frame of this study. Like this study, they all center around critical self-reflection and it's necessity for personal and professional growth. Critical self-reflection allows a leader to identify and understand their own biases and transform and grow based on that reflection. With this growth, the leader can work to model critical self-reflection in others to cultivate the growth in their community and combat the racism entrenched in it.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) offers a lens to educational scholars in which they can recognize, understand and analyze the experiences of minoritized populations in schools (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Researchers and scholars on the topic agree that with no intervening force, education will continue to serve the privileged and exclude the poor (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Cook & Dixon, 2013; Stovall, 2013). Ledesma & Calderón (2015) further explain:

> The current trend in CRT in education research related to pedagogy demonstrates that CRT scholars are building, engaging, and enacting critical race pedagogical practices that if used appropriately have the potential to empower Black and Brown students while dismantling notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, deficit thinking, linguicism, and other forms of subordination. (p. 208)

Although the work of CRSLs using CRT as a lens is arduous but necessary, CRT scholars explain that one of the reasons the work of CRT is so difficult is because the goal is to "unsettle and center highly charged histories and contemporary realities that the majority dismiss with narratives of colorblindness, meritocracy, or post racialism (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Critical race theory has been criticized because it offers a lens to see the inequities and injustices within the confines of our society but offers no solutions to address the issues it unveils (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). This is where the work of the CRSL comes into play. Not only do they use CRT to unveil the systemic racism in their schools and society, but their job is to use critical self-reflection for themselves and their community members to transform their school into one that is equitable and socially just for all students including those who have been historically underserved.

Transformative Learning Theory

At its core, transformative learning theory focuses on developing independent thinking and transforming thinking from what has been ingrained in a person through their life and experiences (Mezirow, 1997). It is explained by Mezirow (1997) in this way:

> Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world. Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings. We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration—aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken. When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward

a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative

of experience. (p. 5)

Mezirow (1997) goes on to explain how critical self-reflection can be used with these frames of

reference to transform a person's perceptions of the world. He further expounds that critical self-

reflection can lead to significant personal transformations.

Critical Social Theory

Critical social theory is the third theory in the triadic framework used for this study. In

this study, the theory works in conjunction with the other two theories to emphasize an

understanding and practice of critical self-reflection and its impact on the CRSL. This theory was

first introduced by Paulo Freire when he began his work in the 1970s. Whereas Mezirow's

(1997) transformative learning theory focuses on personal transformation, Friere (1998) was

more concerned with how critical self-reflection can drive a social transformation (Brown,

2004). Friere's critical social theory focuses on people using constant reflection followed by

action which results in transformation of their community, society and possibly even the world

(Friere, 1998; Brown 2004). Both Mezirow and Freire espouse that critical reflection is

foundational to personal and social transformation (Brown, 2004; Freire, 1998; Mezirow, 1997).

One of the major differences between the two theories is how Freire espouses the purpose

of critical self-reflection around the understanding of those that have power in society (Brown,

2004). Once that power is recognized, critical self-reflection and action can be used to transform

society which then in turns transforms individual reality as well (Brown, 2004). Another goal of

critical self-reflection in Freire's critical social theory is to create an "awakening of critical

consciousness whereby people perceive the social, political, and economic contradictions of their

time and take action against the oppressive elements" (Brown, 2004, p. 86). In using critical self-

reflection, the goal is to create a more equitable and just world for all by transforming an unjust and inequitable world to one that is more inclusive for all.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate the practices of CRSL focusing on the actions a CRSL demonstrates, the barriers they face, and the role critical self-reflection plays in transforming their schools to align with culturally responsive pedagogy. This study was conducted through the triadic lens of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. This triadic lens helped to frame the topic by focusing on the issues of race and bias, transformative leadership and a critical social theory including the idea of how self-reflection plays a role in both the concept of race and transformation.

This study sought to answer these two research questions:

1. What is the relationship between critical self-reflection and the role of culturally responsive school leaders in transforming their schools to align with culturally responsive pedagogy?

2. What actions do leaders make to enact culturally responsive practices in schools, and what barriers do they face enacting those practices?

Answers to these questions will help educational leaders know and understand how to transform their schools into inclusive and equitable environments that will meet the needs of all students.

<center>**Brief Overview of Theoretical Framework**</center>

The framework for this study consists of the three theories of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. Together they will be layered to explore the practices of CRSLs. All three of the theories that underpin this study revolve around the concept of critical

self-reflection. Critical race theory will be discussed first. Critical race theory focuses on how race permeates the world in which we live and only through critical self-reflection of our own biases, perceptions and actions can one understand and transform (Khalifa et al., 2016). By doing this work, leaders are able to transform themselves and therefore their schools, their communities and the world in which they live. Next, transformative learning theory will be discussed. Transformative learning theory focuses on leaders who work to create change in their schools in regard to inequities and injustices through critical self-reflection. Lastly, critical social theory will be examined. It focuses on the cyclical rotation of self-reflection, taking action based on the self-reflection and then the transformation that takes place in their world due to the cycle making the world more socially just for all (Brown, 2004). Figure 1 below demonstrates how all three theories overlap with each other as well as critical self-reflection. Standing alone, each individual theory is beneficial as a lens for CRSL; however, together they provide a lens which is clearer and in focus in which to study the topic.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework
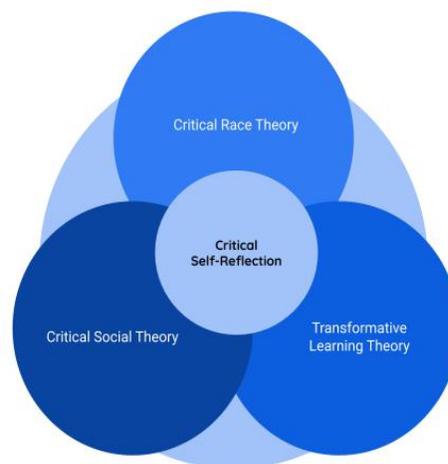
Significance of Study

The significance of this study was focused on the need for equity in schools and leaders who can cultivate social justice through culturally responsive school leadership. The purpose of this study was to investigate the CRSL including the actions a leader takes, the barriers they face, and the role critical self-reflection plays in the daily practices of CRSLs. Theoharis (2007) stated, "creating a space to wrestle with developing resistance can provide future administrators the opportunity to be a step ahead of the resistance they will face and address proactively issues of burnout that can impact social justice leaders" (p. 251). According to Khalifa (2018), there has been research focused on culturally responsive teaching, pedagogy and curriculum, but there has been little scholarship on the topic of culturally responsive school leaders. Although there has been some research regarding the need for critical self-reflection in the practices of culturally responsive school leaders, there has been little on the role critical self-reflection plays in their practices (Brown, 2004; Khalifa, 2018). Interviews of practicing culturally responsive leaders were used to determine what actions principals take, the barriers they face and the role that critical self-reflection plays in their practice. Interview transcripts and coding provided the data for the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The literature review will highlight what is already known about the practices of culturally responsive leaders, while also highlighting research on critical self-reflection.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

1. Achievement Gap - Disparities between demographic groups (Khalifa, 2018; Santamaria, 2014).

2. Culture - The "lens through which people see and understand the world" (Nelson & Guerra, 2014, p. 71).

3. Culturally Responsive School Leaders (CRSLs) - Leaders who approach their daily work through a lens of social justice and equity to create school communities that are accepting of all students while setting the same high expectations for these students as all others (Santamaria, 2014; Khalifa, 2018).

4. Equity - The understanding that people need different things in order to attain the same outcomes.

5. Social Justice - Supports a process built on equity for all no matter their race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or any other marginalizing circumstance and uses that as a lens in which to work (McKenzie et al., 2008).

6. Critical Self-Reflection - A process in which a person questions their views and beliefs and then uses that reflection to reframe their thoughts on the issue allowing the person to create new perspectives and transform their views (Brookfield, 1995).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

School leaders have a substantial impact on student learning and achievement (Barakat et al., 2019; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Furman, 2012). Culturally responsive school leaders work diligently to provide this positive impact for students of all cultures and backgrounds (Khalifa et al., 2016). Social justice and culturally responsive issues are topics that CRSLs need to thoroughly understand in order to be effective (Barakat et al., 2019; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Furman, 2012). Khalifa et al. (2016) describe CRSLs as leaders who ensure a positive school climate for all students no matter their culture, race or socio-economic group. They further explain that CRSLs maintain a presence in their school community; ensure professional development is constantly focused on being responsive to minoritized students and create a hospitable, inclusive school environment for all (Khalifa et al., 2016). Culturally responsive school leaders are so important because as Brown (2004) states:

> Despite conflicting views of social justice, of the sources of injustice in schools and society, and of educators' obligations to commit action, the evidence is clear and alarming that various segments of our public-school population experience negative and inequitable treatment on a daily basis. (p. 79)

Students cannot reach their optimal achievement if they are feeling inequitably treated every day as they enter a school building (Brown, 2004). Culturally responsive school leaders can combat this negativity and create environments where all students can learn and achieve (Brown, 2004; Khalifa et al., 2016).

The literature review below will begin with a review of the literature regarding culturally responsive pedagogy and the derivation of culturally responsive terms. Following that will be a

discussion of literature regarding the theoretical framework triad encompassing CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. Next, will be a discussion of the literature addressing inequities in educational leadership programs and then enactment of CRSLs. After addressing the inequities, there will be a discussion of the literature focused on actions that CRSLs take daily and then the barricades they face to those actions as culturally responsive practices. This chapter will wrap up with recommendations for professional development and then a discussion of the literature in regard to critical self-reflection and its relation to CRSLs.

Pedagogy Derivation and Defined

Many terms have been used to describe culturally responsive educators and pedagogy over the last few decades. Mohatt and Erickson (1981) used the term "culturally congruent" (p. 110) to describe their research on Native American and Anglo language integration in schools. Mohatt and Erickson (1981) migrated to the term "culturally responsive" (p. 70) a year later along with Cazden and Leggett (1981) in their work regarding linguistic diversity and Native Americans in schools. Vogt et al. (1987) used "culturally compatible" (p. 281) in their research regarding Hawaiin children in public schools. Irvine (1990) termed the phrase "cultural synchronization" to describe the needed connection between African American students and their teacher in order to feel included in the school environment. Additional terms used in the 1980s were "culturally appropriate" and "multicultural" (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Initially, the term "multicultural" was one that was widely used to raise awareness of the importance of culture in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995). All of these terms have one thing in common; they focus on the student's home culture as well as its inclusion of that home culture in the school community (Barakat et al., 2019; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Furman, 2012;

Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) states, "This work is important for its break with the cultural deficit or cultural disadvantage explanations which led to compensatory educational interventions" (p. 469). She goes on to explain that she termed the pedagogy to address this as "culturally relevant pedagogy" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). Khalifa (2018) migrated to the term culturally responsive pedagogy because he asserted that it is not just important for educational leaders to create school environments responsive to student cultures, but it is important that leaders are culturally responsive to the varying students' needs based on their culture.

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted using the triadic lens of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. The triadic lens was chosen to frame this study because the study and all three theories interconnect through the concept of critical self-reflection. In Khalifa et al.'s 2016 work, they espoused four pillars or "strands" important for the practices of CRSLs. They are critical self-awareness, teacher preparation, school environments, and community advocacy. The triadic lens frames this study by focusing on the issues of race and transformation through the use of critical self-reflection.

These three theories are connected using the strand of critical self-awareness. The focus of critical self-awareness, later termed, critical self-reflection was chosen to be the focus of this study because it is foundational to the practices of CRSLs. Without it, none of the other strands can occur. Wright et.al (2018) elaborated on the connection between critical self-reflection and its importance to transforming school culture. They maintain that critical self-reflection is foundational to transformational leadership and it is integral to social justice work (Wright et al., 2018). They go on to explain that transformational leadership begins with critical self-reflection,

analysis of the school systems of inequities and injustices, and then taking action to confront the identified inequities (Wright et al., 2018). They continue by explaining the importance of critical self-reflection to understanding one's own biases ingrained from decades and centuries of societal norms within schools and communities (Wright et al., 2018). In the work by Khalifa et al. in 2016, they establish the importance of critical self-reflection in regard to a leader's own beliefs and assumptions as being one of first steps, as well as being fundamental, to all aspects of culturally responsive school leadership including equity and social justice work. Critical self-reflection is integral to the practices of CRSLs (Wright et al., 2018; Khalifa et al. 2016; Brown, 2004)

Critical Race Theory

One of the first known mentions of CRT was Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) article on CRT in which they propose theorizing the idea of race and discuss its impact on the inequities that exist in public schools (Bernal, 2002; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Santamaria, 2014). In a later article, Ladson-Billings (2000) states, "The 'gift' of CRT is that it unapologetically challenges the scholarship that would dehumanize and personalize us" (p. 272). Critical race theory helps researchers examine topics by looking at race, law and power (Bernal, 2002; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Bernal (2002) further explains that CRT is an appropriate lens for qualitative research in education because it moves researchers and educators into "spaces of moral and critical practice" (p. 110).

Parker and Lynn (2002) explain that CRT allows researchers to reveal how racism functions as a force to control and disempower an entire group of people in society. They further explain that CRT can be used specifically as a device to assist researchers in exposing racism in education (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Researchers use CRT and qualitative research methodologies

to address historical, legal, and contemporary social context of African Americans (Bernal, 2002; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Critical race theory allows educators to confront the racism that exists in schools by encouraging the use of social justice with regards to how educators conduct themselves as well as their practices (Santamaria, 2014). Santamaria (2014) further expands, "the theory is likened to a new scholarly covenant moving educational scholars toward new interpretations and understandings" (p. 351). Overall, CRT serves as a lens for researchers to focus on how race and racism affect minoritized peoples and society at large (Bernal, 2002; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Santamaria, 2014).

Critical race theory initiated as a way to move the discussion of race to the forefront of society and in research circles (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explained that CRT moved the idea of race as something that stands alone in society to something that is understood to be part of the fabric and interwoven into society. Parker & Lynn (2002) stated, "Whereas African Americans and other people of color have always thought in theoretical terms about their conditions of social, political, and economic subordination in a White supremacist society, racism has not been given full explanatory power in the academy" (p. 8). Critical race theory is necessary as a result of how racism is so deeply entrenched in American society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Derrick Bell (1988), in his legal scholarship and a pioneer CRT researcher, argued that racism is so ingrained in American society and life that it cannot be eliminated because it has shaped all parts of America as it is known today. Parker & Lynn (2002) contend that, "Concepts such as color-blind interpretations of the law or meritocracy are 'unmasked' by critical race theorists to be precursors for White, European American hegemonic control of the social and structural arrangements in U.S. society" (p. 8). Critical race theory uses race, instead of class and socio-economic status to explore legislation, policy and issues in society at large. It

allows researchers and educators to delve into the underlying issues regarding race, racism, prejudice and bigotry in American schools (Santamaria, 2014).

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow's (1997) Transformative learning theory posits that all learners use learned assumptions, expectations, and beliefs to make sense of the world around them (Brown, 2004). In order to delve deeper into these underlying issues, critical self-reflection is an integral component of transformative learning theory. Transformative learning theory focuses on adult learning as a different approach from the learning that works best with children (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow (1997) states, "The process involves transforming frames of reference through critical reflection of assumptions, validating contested beliefs through discourse, taking action on one's reflective insight, and critically assessing it" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11). This theory is about change through reflection of oneself and society (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Mezirow, 1997; Santamaria, 2014). Berryman et al. (n.d) described transformative leaders and how they effect that change.

> Transformative leaders commit to equitable change; deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequality and injustice; focus on emancipation, democracy, equity and justice; address the inequitable distribution of power, emphasize both individual and collective good; emphasize interdependence and interconnectedness and global awareness; balance critique with promise; and demonstrate moral courage. (p. 14)

Transformative learning theory emphasizes a person's experiences, critical reflection and then discourse (Brown, 2004; Mezirow, 1997; Santamaria, 2014). Through transformative learning theory, learners transform through problem solving, practical undertakings and critical

contemplation and reflection (Brown, 2004; Mezirow, 1997). Furthermore, transformative learning theory elucidates how a lifetime of learning and meaning changes over time and how "these meaning structures, which are inclusive of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, are frames of reference based on the totality of an individual's cultural and contextual experiences" (Brown, 2004, p. 84). Brown (2004) explained that this theory actually transforms the way people view themselves, their place in society and the world itself.

Critical Social Theory

Freire's (1998) critical social theory is the third part of the triadic framework for this study. Critical social theory is based on Freire's (1998) work specifically focusing on marginalized populations. Brown (2004) described this as "a theory of existence that views people as subjects, not objects, who are constantly reflecting and acting on the transformation of their world so it can become a more equitable place for all to live" (p. 85). Black and Murtadha (2007) describe it as a theory in which "ethical frameworks, as well as conceptual and abstract knowledge, inform the critical reflective inquiry of educational leadership interns and supports the kind of reasoning that is not only practical but morally, ethically, and politically informed" (p. 12). At its core, the theory focuses on the transformation of self and society through the use of critical self-reflection.

Although both transformative theory and critical social theory deal with the concept of transformation, the focus of critical social theory moves beyond transforming oneself and shifts the focus to social transformation enacted from the critical self-reflection (Brown, 2004). This theory emphasizes a social transformation that impacts both the group in power as well as those that are marginalized socially and culturally (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Brown, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). Overall, critical social theory involves constant reflection, action and then transformation

of a community in order for all groups to have an equitable existence (Brown, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). Because critical social theory focuses on not just individual transformation, but also societal transformation it is an integral part of the theoretical framework for this study.

These three theories used to inform this study all emphasize critical self-reflection (see Figure 1) encompassing critical inquiry and self-reflection (Brown, 2004; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). The discourse, that results from critical self-reflection, acts as a social process to focus on domineering constructions of culture and how they influence discriminatory and unjust practices in educational locations (Brown, 2004; Santamaria, 2014). Policy praxis provides leaders with analytical skills, not previously needed, to promote social justice in schools (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Miller & Martin, 2015). Praxis can, in its simplest terms, be described as reflection and action (Furman, 2012). Rojas and Liou (2017) further explain that "schools must create the space and time for teachers to reflect on their beliefs about students, and whether their conscious and unconscious practices create rigid profiles that differentiate the intellectual capacities of students by race and other identity markers" (p. 38). The same holds true for CRSLs. Critical self-reflection is interwoven within the theories as a frame to increase awareness and pedagogy in CRSL keeping the concepts of social justice and cultural competence at the forefront of their practice (Brown, 2004). Critical self-reflection was chosen as the focus of this study because it is the foundation to each theory, as well as and as a pillar to support the other tenants of the theories.

Critical race theory, transformative learning theory and critical social theory are used as the lens for this study in order to understand the importance and the interconnectedness of critical self-reflection on the practices of CRSLs. Critical race theory creates a lens in which to understand the inequities impacting marginalized populations due to historical and systematic

racism. Transformative learning theory focuses on adult learning and how the cyclical system of critical self-reflection can assist leaders in understanding their own biases and assumptions so that they can transform their own thinking regarding race and justice which in turn allows them to work to dismantle the inequities that exist in schools. Critical social theory also revolves around critical self-reflection but goes a step further to transform social systems dismantling those that are unjust. The research presented supports the claim that in order for students to be successful, they need to have their needs met. Only through the practices of CRSLs can students of all cultures be met because only through the practices of CRSLs are their needs understood. Additionally, the research maintains that in order to understand issues impacting marginalized populations, race must be a central focus for the CRSL. Reviewing the literature in regard to the triadic lens used for this study as well as the connection of these theories is important to understanding the needed work of the CRSLs.

Addressing Inequities in Educational Leadership Programs

Educational inequities have always existed in American education but teaching about those inequities and how to address them has not always existed in university educational leadership programs (Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). These inequities included, but have not been limited to, a students' opportunity to learn, grow and achieve, inadequate leadership capacity, unbalanced teacher expectations, and incongruent educational rigor (Black & Murtadha, 2007). According to Black and Murtadha (2007):

Educational inequities came to the forefront when critical theorists put forth the argument that traditional hierarchical leadership was inherently biased toward maintaining stability, and thus served to reproduce inequity in education. Concurrently, educational disparities

became more visible to the general public through accountability system indicators and

other measures of school performance. (p. 3)

Because many educational leadership programs have not addressed these inequalities, education

leadership programs have been under scrutiny over the last few decades (Black & Murtadha,

2007; Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015). Culturally responsive school leaders are

prepared to address and act upon the inequities in their schools (Theoharis, 2007). Educational

leadership programs are tasked with ensuring leaders are prepared so that all students are able to

achieve and succeed (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015;

Theoharis, 2007). Purnell et al. (2011) add that in order to address cultural competence of any

organization it is important to focus on all levels and aspects of the organization.

McKinney and Capper (2010) add to this body of literature that although there is an

abundance of research on the preparation of culturally responsive school leaders, they further

elaborate that none of the research focuses on a comprehensive program oriented toward social

justice. They studied a psychology department that has been grounded in social justice for over

fifteen years. From this, McKinney and Capper (2010) gleaned findings including the ever-

changing definition of culturally responsive terms, barriers that leaders must face to establish

culturally responsive programs, leveraging funding, faculty hiring, and student recruitment.

Additionally, their work added to the body of research regarding the importance of developing

student cohorts and critical reflection (McKinney & Capper, 2010). Many lessons were garnered

from the research that could be used in improving educational leadership preparation programs.

The first is the importance of the educational leadership program's focus on the world in which

leaders are being asked to lead (McKinney & Capper, 2010). The second is to focus on hiring

faculty of color and recruiting Black and Brown students whenever possible (McKinney &

Capper, 2010). The third is that the journey for cultural relevance is never-ending (McKinney &
Capper, 2010). The journey should be seen as one that continues indefinitely until equity is
achieved with many challenges expected along the way (McKinney & Capper, 2010).

Educational Leadership Preparation

Culturally responsive leadership preparation should be prominent in all educational
leadership preparation programs (Brown, 2004; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller &
Martin, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Today's classrooms and schools look
very differently than they did 50 years ago, because of that it is imperative that cultural
responsiveness not only be addressed in educational leadership programs, but also be an integral
part of the program (Khalifa et al., 2016; McKinney & Capper, 2010; Miller & Martin, 2015).
According to Marshall and Khalifa (2018), although educational leaders are one of the most
influential forces on teaching and student achievement, there is very little research regarding
culturally responsive leaders' perceptions, views and actions.

In 1972 about 22% of American students were considered ethnic minorities, but in 2004,
that percentage was 42.4%, and by 2017 that percentage was more than half (Akiba, 2011; U.S.
Census Bureau, 2018). In 1979, about 8.5% of children spoke a language other than English at
home, but in 2005, that percentage was 48.2% (Akiba, 2011). However, with the abundance of
minoritized students, in 2011 only 16.7% of teachers were minorities (Akiba, 2011). The
numbers tell the story. The teachers and leaders in our schools need to be culturally responsive in
order to address the issues that these students face. This is an arduous task when so few of our
teachers and leaders have faced the same issues in their own lives. This racial and cultural
disparity between teachers and students is the impetus as to why educational leadership programs
are tasked with preparing leaders ready to tackle inequities in school (Barakat et al., 2019; Black

& Murtadha, 2007; Theoharis, 2007). Unfortunately, many leadership programs lack opportunities for leaders to build the needed knowledge, skills and strategies to transform into CRSLs (Miller & Martin, 2015).

Some research indicates that even if leaders possess culturally responsive knowledge, they do not always use it (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Because of this, it is imperative that leadership preparatory programs focus on "critical consciousness" (Furman, 2012, p. 212) and arm leadership students not only with the knowledge, but also the skills and action steps they need to address culturally responsive issues in schools (Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). With a melting pot of cultures and a history of ignoring these marginalized students, this is a major undertaking. Berryman et al. (n.d.) state:

> A pressing challenge in education, that has been driven by and in turn continues to drive the ongoing and seemingly immutable educational disparities, can be associated with the power imbalances in classrooms and schools as a result of increasing ethnic, cultural, and language diversity disrupting the composition of the dominant mainstream. As our education systems become more culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse, rather than benefiting and learning from each other, we still expect all students to be represented within the same curriculum, pedagogy and testing regimen or we form separate enclaves, and the divide becomes even wider. (p. 1)

The wider divide as discussed by Berryman et al. (n.d.) can be tapered through programs that teach educational leaders to create inclusive environments using culturally responsive practices. It is important that these programs prepare educational leadership graduates to lead with impartiality and inclusivity (Barakat et al., 2019; Theoharis, 2007). This will create environments

in which all students feel like schools are designed with each of them in mind no matter their heritage or culture (Barakat et al., 2019; Theoharis, 2007).

Toolbox for Cultural Competence

There are many qualities that are essential for a CRSLs as well as several tools that a CRSL needs in their toolbox (Furman, 2012; Miller & Martin, 2015). One of the most important qualities is that CRSLs must be action oriented and focused on transforming schools for students who are oppressed and marginalized (Furman, 2012; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). They must also be committed, persistent, inclusive and democratic (Furman, 2012). Theoharis (2007) found that the principals he studied used their communication skills to create a path for equity through the use of critical self-reflection and transformation of themselves and then their community. This allowed the principals to see the change they were hoping for no matter how slow the journey (Theoharis, 2007). These qualities assist a CRSL in breaking down the barriers society has in place for marginalized students. Khalifa (2018) stated, "the ways in which students are marginalized in school--will be automatically reproduced unless there are intentional efforts to confront the oppressive structures in society and schooling" (p. 9). This is what makes the work of the CRSL so vitally important.

Just as importantly, CRSLs must be able to build rapport and relationships with both adults and students (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). Without the skill of rapport building, a CRSL will not be able to affect change and create needed transformations (Furman, 2012; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Even if a leader were to have all the other qualities and skills necessary, without the trust of those one leads, they will have no followers (Santamaria, 2014). The socially competent leader uses the rapport they have with staff to leverage buy-in, prioritizing socially just and culturally responsive pedagogy in the school

(Furman, 2012; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Some of these skills are inherent in leaders, but some have to be learned and practiced. Many leaders have not been adequately trained on culturally responsive practices, and therefore do not feel comfortable or simply do not have the skills in addressing and enacting policies and protocols to support a culturally responsive climate in their school (Bustamante et al., 2009; Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

Santamaria found in his 2014 study that CRSLs encompass many of the same qualities or tools to assist them in developing culturally responsiveness in their schools. He found that culturally responsive leaders are not only willing, but proactive in having courageous conversations (Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Santamaria's (2014) research found that CRSLs view their world through the lens of CRT while working towards obtaining group consensus as a major decision-making strategy in their schools (Santamaria, 2014). He also found that CRSLs work to dispel negative stereotypes that threaten marginalized populations and ensure that academic discourse around culturally responsive practices is a focal point of professional development (Furman, 2012; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). This is one way that the CRSL transforms the school community.

Another quality of CRSLs is their dedication to seeking inclusivity of students, communities and parents through leading by example (Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Theoharis (2007) also found that culturally responsive leaders build supportive networks. In developing these professional networks, the leaders are able to share ideas with each other, offer each other encouragement, and assist and help when needed (Theoharis, 2007). Another quality of culturally responsive leaders is that they are constantly growing and learning (Theoharis, 2007). They look for ways to expand their professional repertoire so that they can better develop their culturally responsive plans to transform their school communities (Theoharis, 2007). This

2014 work by Santamaria also found evidence that African American educational leaders may have a skill set that leaders of other races do not have because they have had more experience with institutional racism themselves (Santamaria, 2014). Because of these experiences, educational leaders of color may be more likely to recognize the need for equity and social justice work in schools (Santamaria, 2014). A final finding of Santamaria's 2014 research is that CRSLs feel as if they have had a calling to lead and are true servant leaders (Murphy, 2002; Santamaria, 2014).

Enactment of Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Culturally responsive school leaders find ways to raise student achievement (Barakat et al., 2019; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). All of the principals Theoharis (2007) studied in his research deemed it as their mission to transform schools into ones in which all students including marginalized populations can achieve academically. Culturally responsive leaders also improve school structures (Theoharis, 2007). Principals who structured their schools in a way to improve the structure for marginalized populations did this in many ways (Theoharis, 2007). One avenue could involve deleting tracking in scheduling students in their math classes or increasing rigor and opportunities for rich educational experiences in all classes (Theoharis, 2007). Increasing staff capacity for culturally responsive practices was another theme that Theoharis (2007) found in his research of CRSLs. The principals he studied created on-going professional development to address issues of race and equity (Theoharis, 2007). The leaders Theoharis (2007) studied used hiring and supervising as a way to increase staff capacity in race and equity issues. Using these strategies, the CRSLs were able to transform their schools so that they were able to better meet the needs of all students.

Actions and Barricades to Cultural Responsiveness

Expectations of school leaders have changed over the last several decades, but many educational leader preparatory programs have not made the necessary changes (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Miller & Martin, 2005). Because of these changes, educational leader preparatory programs need to focus on how issues of race influence beliefs, views and academic outcomes for marginalized students (Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015). Not only do leader preparatory programs need to ensure that educational leaders are trained to be culturally responsive, but it would also be helpful if they joined forces with local schools, state licensure boards and higher education professional associations to prepare these leaders to affect change in schools (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). All of these sectors can work together to emphasize, not only moral leadership, but the technical aspects of how to effect culturally responsive change (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Furman, 2012). It is especially important for all sectors to work together because there are times when government policies such as housing, transportation, and employment policies impact social justice issues which work against equity in schools and society at large (Bustamante et al., 2009; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Furman, 2012).

It is vital that CRSLs are vigilant in their focus of larger political issues as well as the micro-politics within their school (Bustamante et al., 2009; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). In fact, Bustamante et al. (2009) state that programs developing educational leaders need to develop the skills and expertise in their students so that they can have the confidence and knowledge to combat the status quo of culturally insensitive, unjust and inequitable policies and legislation. They further state that leaders need to be trained and feel competent with their knowledge so that they feel empowered and qualified to advocate for and

influence legislation, protocols, and procedures that impact students (Bustamante et al., 2009). The development of the care and commitment for social justice and cultural relevance is a long-term commitment in a collaborative program between all government sectors working together (Black & Murtadha, 2007).

Many researchers also warn against equity traps which are another barricade to cultural competency (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Miller & Martin, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). These traps involve deficit thinking and repudiation of social injustices and inequalities (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Miller & Martin, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Deficit thinking is the practice of teachers setting lower expectations for Black and Brown students based on pity for their societal and cultural circumstances (Khalifa et al., 2016; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Rojas & Liou, 2017). Deficit thinking or "deficit lenses" (Knight-Manuel et al., 2019, p. 41) can involve a lack of culpability and negative beliefs and stereotypes (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Miller & Martin, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Miller and Martin (2015) found in their study that many "equity-oriented leaders wanted to provide an equal education to all students regardless of cultural, racial, or socioeconomic background; however, their deficit thinking created a paradox" (p. 147). Deficit thinking is especially disconcerting because all a leader's decisions and actions are sifted through their beliefs, ideals, and values which can greatly impact a school's culturally responsive environment either positively or negatively (Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

Nelson and Guerra (2014) found that many educators have a general awareness of issues impacting culture, but at the same time exhibit beliefs that coincide with deficit thinking. Educational leaders have beliefs and values that they use as a lens to make all decisions

impacting the school (Murphy, 2002; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Rojas and Liou (2017) expound that:

> Although the life challenges of young people of color in this country have very real consequences on students' motivation to learn, fixating on these challenges without attempting to address them at a systemic level can create a glass ceiling that hinders their academic achievement. (p. 28)

Although not meant to be racist, these practices have a long history that contribute to the systemic racism that Black and Brown students already face daily as they minimize students' academic experiences and create an even wider achievement gap (Miller & Martin, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Rojas & Liou, 2017). Deficit thinking often blames the culture, language and economic reasons for the achievement gap (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Those that entertain the concept of deficit thinking often assume that students from certain cultures enter school without basic skills and use this as a reason for the achievement gap (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). If substantial change is going to be made, addressing deficit thinking of educational leaders and teachers will make that change (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Weisman and Garza (2002) stated that "Developing this level of cultural competence requires a transformative journey that takes educators beyond cultural awareness and knowledge to a place where deficit beliefs and practices can be explored, challenged, and changed" (p. 90). Exploring and then eradicating deficit thinking and practices from our schools is one reason CRSLs are so greatly needed in our schools and is one important way CRSLs can transform their school community.

Weisman and Garza (2002) found that even at the end of the teacher preparatory program, many teachers had beliefs about culture and race that indicated they would not be the best candidates to work with marginalized students. What makes this finding even more

disconcerting is that these teachers become the educational leaders of tomorrow. This indicates

why leadership preparatory programs must work diligently to ensure that they graduate leaders

who are culturally responsive. Unfortunately, research also indicates that there is a lack of

training regarding cultural competency both at the district level and university level (McKenzie

& Scheurich, 2004; Miller & Martin, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). A recent study by Barakat

et al. (2019) indicates that some university preparatory programs are improving in producing

CRSLs. This study indicates that participants were more culturally responsive at their end of

their program than at the beginning (Barakat et al., 2019). However, this study also suggested

that although there was a positive correlation from the beginning of the program to the end for

participants' cultural competency, it was not statistically significant (Barakat et al., 2019). The

authors suggest that in order to develop leaders, students may need more time than has been

typically devoted to the subject in leadership preparatory programs as well as the likelihood that

a more "deliberate and rigorous" (Barakat et al., 2019, p. 229) process is needed.

The importance of CRSLs focusing on advocating, promoting and encouraging

government policies that are socially just and equitable that impact students' lives is imperative

(Black & Murtadha, 2007; Theoharis, 2007). Theoharis (2007) found that this in itself is a barrier

to culturally responsive school leadership because it seems an insurmountable task. Black and

Murtadha (2007) further expound that "engagement in policy requires us to deconstruct existing

logics of leadership, promote alternative notions of leadership (care, love, community-based)

where appropriate, and to incorporate social justice practices into the daily life of school" (p. 20).

This requires the collection of equity data and the analysis of that data to determine where the

true inequities hide (Black & Murtadha, 2007). It also involves initiating uncomfortable

conversations with staff regarding social justice and culturally responsive issues which lead to

inequity in schools (Black & Murtadha, 2007). Theoharis (2007) found that the CRSLs he studied "enacted their own resistance by (a) raising student achievement, (b) improving school structures, recentering and enhancing staff capacity, and (d) strengthening school culture and community" (p. 232). This is one path CRSL can use to transform their own school communities and therefore used as examples for other CRSLs.

Recommendations for Professional Development

In order to support culturally diverse students and break down the barricades that these students encounter daily, it is important that leaders experience and engage in professional development at the university level and within their own districts to encourage and support culturally competence (Brown, 2004; Bustamante et al., 2009; Barakat et al., 2019; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Programs need to analyze and assess essential changes to their programs ensuring that leaders graduate with the knowledge needed to be culturally responsive (Brown, 2004; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). They can do this by analyzing course offerings and foundational purposes in their program (Brown, 2004). It is important that there are common themes running through each course such as equity and social justice to ensure leaders are developed to be culturally responsive (Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010). Brown (2004) explains, "Although many agree that theory, research, and practice should be intertwined to support the type of schooling (and society) that values rather than marginalizes, few scholars offer ground-breaking, pragmatic approaches to developing truly transformative leaders" (p. 77). This is imperative work needed for CRSLs to gain the skills and knowledge needed to transform their schools.

Joseph Murphy (2002) outlined a reculture design for the profession of educational leadership. He called this recultured design a blueprint. According to Murphy (2002), there are three anchors in educational leadership: "moral stewardship, educator, and community builder"

(p. 178). All three of these anchors support CRSLs. School leaders act as moral stewards when they focus on purpose and use reflection to analyze their work (Brown, 2004; Murphy, 2002). When educational leaders are moral stewards they are anchored by beliefs and values in equity, social justice and education for all students (Brown, 2004; Murphy, 2002). Murphy (2002) states, "They must view their task more as a mission than a job" (p. 186). Murphy (2002) continues describing how educational leaders have moved from being a manager to a focus on learning. By making this change the educational leader leads as an educator (Brown, 2004; Murphy, 2002). Murphy (2002) ends with his third anchor to describe educational leaders as one of a community builder. The qualities of community building encompass how educational leaders focus on creating a holistic community for parents and community members, creating a community of learners for teachers and creating personalized learning to reach all students equitably (Furman, 2012; Murphy, 2002; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Although Murphy (2002) does not address CRSLs specifically, the metaphors he states are required of educational leaders are those that are present in CRSL. Additionally, the three anchors Murphy discusses are present throughout the research literature on CRSLs.

In addition to analyzing course offerings and foundational purposes of their programs, it is essential for universities to ensure that professors are properly trained on social justice and culturally responsive practices (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2004; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010; Khalifa et al., 2016; McKinney & Capper, 2010; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Higher education facilities should be indicative of the culturally responsive organizations they are developing leaders to build themselves in their own schools (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2004; Khalifa et al., 2016; McKinney & Capper, 2010; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). In order to do this, university professors need intense ongoing professional development related to all areas of

social justice and cultural relevance to assist faculty in "viewing themselves as change agents, not just content experts" (Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010, p. 66). This means going beyond traditional approaches such as cohorts, internships, and real-world application and developing alternative approaches such as cultural autobiographies, life histories, prejudice reduction workshops, cross-cultural interviews, educational plunges, diversity panels, reflective analysis journals, and activist assignments (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015). All of these approaches promote self-awareness of one's own culture and background because the first step in being culturally responsive is being self-aware (Brown, 2004; Khalifa et al., 2016; McKinney & Capper, 2010; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). They also allow students to analyze their own racial identity and encourage students to examine their own beliefs which influence their actions (Getha-Taylor et al., 2020; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Research indicates that cultural autobiographies cause White students to personalize race and see it as their problem, instead of someone else's issue (Getha-Taylor et al., 2020; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015). Cultural autobiographies also encouraged all students to reflect on White privilege and its impact on their own lives whether White or minoritized populations (Getha-Taylor et al., 2020; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015). Both of the journaling strategies lead to eye opening dialogue for graduate students and the cross-cultural interviews provide individuals the chance to interact with people from different ethnic, socio-economic, religious and sexual orientation which is an absent phenomenon in our society (Brown, 2004). These are especially impactful because humans react differently to stories than they do expository dialogue, data and statistics (Brown, 2004). All of these activities provide monumental steps in becoming a CRSL (Brown, 2004; Gertha-Taylor et al., 2020).

Research indicates that Prejudice Reduction Workshops focused on racism in society and exposing it as an ongoing system of oppression have also been beneficial to students in their evolution to become CRSLs. These allow leaders to learn that "guilt is the glue that holds prejudice in place, that every issue count, that stories change attitudes and that skill trains leaders to empowerment" (Brown, 2004, p. 92). These workshops celebrate similarities and differences of cultures and races, identify misinformation about cultures and races, describe how discrimination impacts individuals, and gives suggestions for dealing with prejudices comments and behaviors (Brown, 2004). Educational plunges are another way to "help adults emerge from their cocoons" (Brown, 2004, p. 95). Both Educational Plunges and Diversity Panels focus on understanding the power struggle of the oppressed, the privileged, and the entitled as well as understanding the perspectives of others (Brown, 2004; Santamaria, 2014). Activist Action Plans are progressive plans for school level, district/community level and state level focus on social justice change (Brown, 2004). Hernandez and McKenzie (2010) advocate for a community service component such as this to training of culturally responsive leaders. All of these approaches help educational leaders to reflect on their own practices and influence culturally responsive change in themselves as well as their educational settings (Brown, 2004). These culturally responsive and social justice strategies that involve field-based inquiry and critical reflection shine light on oppression in schools and help leaders see the need for creating inclusive schools that are socially just in academics and conduct (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

Many educational leadership programs use adult learning theory to focus on social justice and cultural relevance issues such as personal biases, inequitable policies and practice and organizational cultures (Bustamante et al., 2009). These programs consider that developing these

skills takes time (Barakat et al., 2019; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Miller & Martin, 2015).

Emerging CRSLs need time to apply their new understandings and beliefs to practical and real-world situations than many programs provide (Barakat et al., 2019; Black & Murtadha, 2007).

This involves including field-based experiences in diverse settings to apply what they have learned in real-world situations (Barakat et al., 2019). Field-based experiences allow leaders to not only perceive contradictions and disparities but be able to act on them in a way that makes meaningful change (Brown, 2004). This is imperative because research indicates that disparity is found between leader rhetoric and their beliefs about culturally responsive schools (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Miller & Martin, 2015). By creating a reflective process of contradictions and distortions of leaders' own feelings and thoughts regarding race and ethnicity based on theory as well as real-world practice, they ensure that rhetoric, actions and beliefs align (Schwandt, 2001).

It is important that CRSLs collect and analyze culturally responsive data to support culturally responsive practices in their schools (Bustamante et al., 2009). Inquiry to examine equitable and inequitable practices in their school is the first step (Bustamante et al., 2009). Another step is to use the culturally responsive data to make decisions that impact the school and community at large (Bustamante et al., 2009). One way to do this is to conduct culture and equity audits and then develop an action plan based on the findings (Bustamante et al., 2009; Miller & Martin, 2015). Esposito and Swain's (2009) research indicated that by observing these canons of culturally responsive pedagogy, participants were able to understand and think more critically about how social injustices affected their lives and therefore the lives of their students.

Critical Self-Reflection

Khalifa et al. (2016) developed four anchors or themes (see Figure 2) from their review of the literature on culturally responsive leadership: critical self-awareness, curricular and

teacher preparation, school environments and community building. The first theme, critical self-awareness, refers to educational leaders having a critical awareness of their own values and beliefs (Khalifa et al., 2016). Theoharis (2017) called it reflective consciousness. Some researchers, such as Brown (2004) and Hernandez and McKenzie (2010), called this critical consciousness and others, like Santamaria (2014), refer to it as critical self-reflection. In fact, in later works, Khalifa (2018) refers to it as critical self-reflections as well. Whether it is called self-awareness, critical consciousness or critical self-reflection, all researchers agree that reflection is something that can be developed if the leader does not inherently possess it naturally (Brown, 2004; Khalifa et al., 2016; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). Khalifa et al. (2016) further expound, "The principal's critical consciousness of culture and race really serves as a foundation to establish beliefs that undergird her practice" (p. 1281). Khalifa et al. (2016) found that critical self-reflection "is foundational and actually precedes any actions in leadership" (p. 1285). Researchers have found that engaging in critical self-reflection supports growth of leaders because they can better understand their own biases, values and assumptions (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). This understanding leads educational leaders to transformative practices (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Dogherty, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016). Critical self-reflection is a cyclical process that is never ending and encourages improvement and creates growth (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Critical Self-Reflection
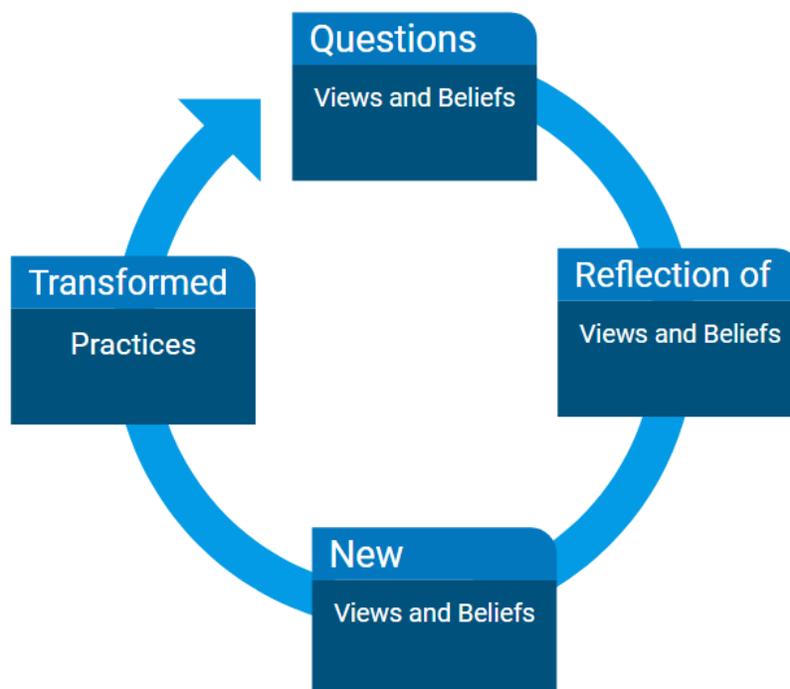
Skills and Barriers

Khalifa (2018) expounds that there are three skills necessary for CRSL to continually

self-reflect. The first is that leaders must be able to connect with the students and communities

they serve and be able to identify the oppression that they endure on a daily basis (Khalifa,

2018). The second skill that Khalifa (2018) states is integral to all CRSLs is that they are able to

identify their own biases based on their personal background and privilege. By doing this,

CRSLs are able to recognize their own contribution to the oppression facing their school

community (Khalifa, 2018). The third skill Khalifa (2018) found vital for all CRSLs is that they

are able to create space for conversations addressing the oppression of their colleagues and staff.

These three skills are essential to the transformation of the school community toward a culturally

responsive school environment to meet the needs of all students (Khalifa, 2018; Rapp, 2002; Theoharis, 2007).

Theoharis (2007) found that in order to develop critical self-reflection there are four factors to address barriers to cultural responsiveness. The first factor is believing that the work is possible and doable (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis, 2007). The second factor in developing critical self-reflection is modeling culturally responsive practices for staff and the community (Theoharis, 2007). The third factor is understanding and reflecting on values, beliefs and principles (Theoharis, 2007). The final factor is constant contemplation in opposing the status quo (Rapp, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). Theoharis (2007) states, "along with the ability to enact resistance through enhancing reflective consciousness and developing a broader knowledge and skills base, future leaders require the skills to develop their own resistance and resilience as they face barriers to social justice" (p. 250). Not only is critical self-reflection essential to successful CRSL practices, it also aids the leader in their resoluteness of the constant opposition to injustice and inequities in society and schools (Theoharis, 2007).

Because racism, oppression and the marginalization of minorities is so pervasive in our society, it can sometimes be difficult to identify (Khalifa, 2018). To many who may not be critically self-reflective, this oppression is, in fact, invisible because it is just the way of our society (Khalifa, 2018). Without CRSLs who are personally critically self-reflective as well as reflective of their school structures and procedures, a "muting of community voice" (p. 62) occurs (Khalifa, 2018). Because the voices are silenced, leaders can be mollified into believing that they do not even exist (Khalifa, 2018). This allows them to blame communities, school and parents for problems within the school (Khalifa, 2018). In order to be truly critically self-reflective, Khalifa et al. (2019) explained it in their research.

Leaders must consciously acknowledge schooling as a colonizing structure in both past and present tense. This level of consciousness requires recognizing that within such structures, leaders have and continue to be required to lead in ways that are inherently imperial and colonizing. Expanding one's conscientiousness necessitates critical reflection not only on the way in which these colonizing structures are deeply embedded in contemporary schooling practices and educational policy, but how they can be contested. (p. 61)

It is important that critical self-reflection is continual and consistent so that oppression is addressed from the past and present. By doing this, the CRSL can identify marginalization and oppression so that it can be stopped before it takes hold and becomes ingrained in the community (Khalifa, 2018). Khalifa (2018) stated that, "impactful critical self-reflection is an iterative process that involves personal and structural reflections in a constant state of change, combating the ever-morphing systems of oppression that our students face." Critical self-reflection is an integral part of being a CRSL, a leader must understand their own biases in order to address others and lead others on the never-ending but purposeful journey.

Educational Leadership Programs

McKinney and Capper's (2010) research showcased how the use of critical self-reflection can be used as a tool by educational leadership programs focused on a goal of self-awareness and growth in regard to the concepts of cultural responsiveness. Using critical self-reflection students are challenged to see themselves as cultural beings and continually reflect on the impact society has on them (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; McKinney & Capper, 2010). This focus on critical self-reflection creates the underpinnings necessary for discussions based on race, equity and diversity (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010;

Khalifa et al., 2016; McKinney & Capper, 2010). The program McKinney and Capper (2010) studied, as well as other educational leader development programs, focus on social justice use activities such as class discussions, journal writing, and autobiographical writing to create time and space for the critical self-reflection in the program (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; McKinney & Capper, 2010). Other practices which support critical self-reflections are cultural and racial autobiographies, educational plunges, cross-cultural interviews, diversity panels and cultural journals (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Khalifa, et a., 2016). Critical self-reflection is a practice that is on-going and never-ending in order to be truly transformational and meaningful (Brown, 2004; Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalifa, 2018; McKinney & Capper, 2010).

In their 2016 work, Khalifa et al. share that there are four strands integral to the work of CRSLs (see figure 3). These four strands or anchors are critical self-reflection, community, curricular teacher preparation and school environment. All components are integral to the work of a CRSL, but none more so than critical self-reflection. In order to transform and make changes in the other three strands, a leader must possess a keen sense of critical self-reflection. The authors further explain that there are requirements in the development of a leader's ability to possess the skill of critical self-reflection. They believe that the CRSL must believe in the work they are doing, and they must also model the work in all of the words and actions. The CRSL must also reflect on their own values and biases and use the reflection to oppose the status quo.

Figure 3

Requirements for the Development of Critical Self-Reflection
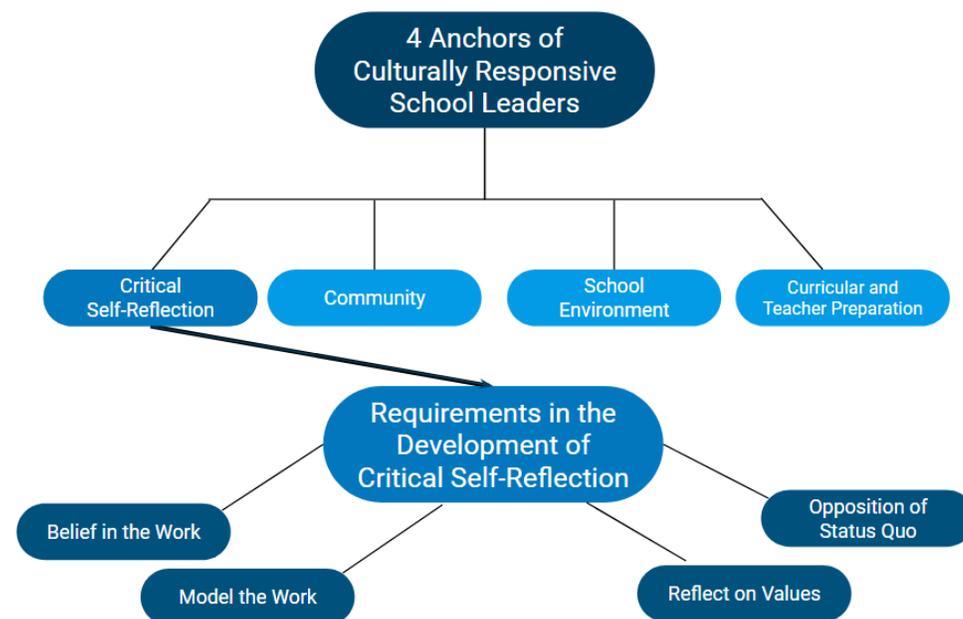
Summary

This review of the literature reveals a copious amount of research on CRSLs over the last several decades. The review also highlights the importance of culturally responsive educational leadership to student performance (Barakat et al., 2019; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Furman, 2012). There is substantial evidence that leaders who are culturally responsive are able to positively impact students of all backgrounds (Barakat et al., 2019; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Furman, 2012). Although inequities have always existed in education, educational leadership programs have not always addressed these issues when developing educational leaders in our schools (Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). The literature review also divulged a lack of focus on equity, social justice and cultural responsiveness in preparatory programs for educational leaders with a few anomalies of programs that do have a focus on preparing leaders that are culturally responsive (Brown, 2004;

Khalifa, 2018; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). Another area that is lacking in the research is action-orientated information of exactly what culturally responsive leaders do to create culturally responsive schools that impact student learning (McKinney & Capper, 2010). The literature review revealed that one vital component in the practices of CRSLs is that of critical self-reflection. Without this key component, it is difficult for any leader to be culturally responsive. Theoharis (2007) cautions leaders "to consider that decades of good leadership have created and sanctioned unjust and inequitable schools" (p. 253). Leadership to ensure equity and social justice is more than good leadership, it is what is needed and necessary to create equitable and socially just schools (Theoharis, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Chapter Three

Methodology

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on CRSLs, critical self-reflection and the three theories used to frame this study: CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. This chapter will identify the research design and methodology of this study and take into consideration the study's focus on culturally responsive school leadership through the theoretical framework of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. First, the rationale of the study will be discussed. Next, the value of qualitative research as well as the significance of the case study in qualitative research will be discussed. Finally, details concerning the sampling methods, data collection procedures, data analysis process, and study limitations. A roadmap and understanding of the study should be identifiable by the end of the chapter.

Rationale and Assumptions for the Qualitative Design

This research study was focused on understanding educational leaders who diligently work to create inclusive and equitable environments in their schools through culturally responsive leadership in order to meet the needs of students of all cultures. The qualitative research study was grounded in the use of a case study design. The qualitative case study was based on the interviews of eight public school, self-proclaimed, culturally responsive principals. The qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed as independent case studies and then the data was examined through a cross-case analysis.

Design

Research is done across the world and in many fields of study, but according to Patton (2002) it is done for one primary purpose. Patton (2002) explains that the primary purpose of research is to create a theory and then test that theory through research. Once the theory has been

developed, researched and tested, it is then that it can be added to the knowledge of the research field (Patton, 2002). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explain that qualitative research involves participant observation and in-depth interviewing using open ended questions. They further explain that qualitative research follows the phenomenological tradition that "requires a set of assumptions that are different from those used when human behavior is approached with the purpose of finding "facts" and "causes"" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 25). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) elucidate that qualitative research focuses on the understanding of subjects, events and interactions of unremarkable people in chosen conditions.

Case Study

A case study is often used in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Yin (2014) further explains that a case study is a type of empirical research that focuses on the subject or the case using various sources of evidence. The theoretical framework of the study is used to guide the collection of data and then the analysis of the data (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) further explains that the case study is a way to help the researcher evaluate and comprehend multifaceted situations which are considered the case. According to Yin (2014), the case study allows researchers to see and understand the case through a lens allowing for a real-world perspective. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explain that the data from a qualitative research study is focused on the words instead of the numbers that would be used in a quantitative study.

This research study used individual case studies with a cross-case analysis as a research design. The researcher studied the individual experiences of the participants and then compared these individual experiences with the other participants' experiences. By using a cross-case analysis, it improved the reliability of the findings as well as the generalizability (Merriam, 1998). Based on the Bogdan and Biklen's (1998) description of qualitative research, using a case

study with cross-case analysis will allow for an understanding of the meaning of events and interactions of people in situations. This study sought to answer the questions of why and how critical self-reflection impacted the practices of CRSLs. It also sought to identify actions and barriers to the work of CRSL. These two reasons make a case study with cross-case analysis appropriate for this research.

Participant Selection

It is customary for qualitative research to be based on a small sampling of participants (Patton, 2002; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Because qualitative research is to uncover, understand and then elucidate the topic phenomenon instead of generalizing information, the sample size can be much smaller than a researcher would have in a quantitative study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Although a small sample size, the participants are purposefully selected to allow for inquiry and understanding into the topic phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Because this study focused on the data collection and analysis of that data, anonymity of participants was maintained. The participants were selected based on recommendations from university faculty members as well as other recommendations. The participants included public school, educational leaders in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The participants consider themselves to be culturally responsive leaders and have a range of experience levels as well as various school levels.

The participants were emailed a request for their participation in the study. Once they responded, the researcher responded to set up mutually agreeable interview times. The interviews took place via video conferencing tools such as Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The length of each initial interview was approximately 60 minutes. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed at a later date. Signed copies of interview protocols for each participant were

collected and filed. The interview protocols for participants are attached (Appendix A), which include the consent form, the script, and the interview questions.

Researcher's Role

The study was conducted by a 49-year-old, White, female doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Foundations Department at Old Dominion University. The researcher has worked in the field of education for eighteen years as a middle school teacher and eight years as an assistant principal with the vast majority of her educational years spent in the same district. The researcher taught in a small system for three and a half years prior to moving and taking a teaching position in the district where she currently works. Many of the schools in which the researcher has taught had diverse populations of students. All of her time in education has been at the middle school level. Her role as an assistant principal in a middle school with a diverse population did not inhibit her ability to conduct the research with fidelity. Her focus on culturally responsive leadership comes from a belief that all students should receive an equitable education and in order to accomplish this all students must be accepted in all that they are culturally. Any other option is unjust.

Protection of Human Subjects

Participation in this study was voluntary for all participants and informed consent was received from all. Participants were given a statement explaining the purpose of the research study and the expected duration of the study totaling up to five weeks depending on the number of interviews that were needed with a participant. Participants were given a description of the procedures to be followed. There were no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the participants nor were there any benefits to the subject from the research. A statement was given to participants describing how records and data were to be maintained while keeping their

identity confidential. There was no risk to participants, and they were informed of this. Participants were given contact information of the researcher so that they could contact the researcher with questions or concerns. Participants were given a statement that the participation was voluntary and that there would be no penalty if the subject decided to discontinue participation at any time. This research study proposal was presented to the Internal Review Board (IRB) and then approved by the IRB at Old Dominion University once it was approved by the research committee.

Data Collection

An initial grounding interview was conducted with each participant. The initial interview lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes and had 12 questions. Data gleaned from the initial interviews drove subsequent interview questions. Up to three follow-up interviews were scheduled including three to five questions each. These interviews lasted anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes. The approach for all the interviews was similar to critical incident technique. Each interview was studied individually, and the data was analyzed to determine patterns in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data was then analyzed in a cross-case analysis. This cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to examine cases together and categorize similarities and differences looking for patterns within and across the group (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010).

Instrumentation

The instrumentation of the study involved the initial interviews of each participant and then any subsequent interviews as needed. The research for this study used a two-part qualitative design beginning with a grounding interview with each participant. Up to two follow-up interviews were then conducted with participants after the initial interview depending on the

need. The interviews were conducted by the researcher. The interview participants were

presented with the interview protocols and consents prior to responding to approximately twelve

open-ended questions created using a critical incident approach guiding the development of the

questions. Questions were based on the participants' practices as a culturally responsive school

leader, the actions they take, the barriers they face as well as how critical self-reflection has

played a role in their daily lives as leaders (see Appendix A: Interview Protocol). Interview

questions also considered the triadic framework of the study involving CRT, transformative

learning theory and critical social theory. These theories were used by the researcher to create

questions in hopes of eliciting responses regarding the participants' biases and assumptions,

transformative practices both personally and socially as well as their use of critical self-

reflection.

Interview participants were presented with the interview protocols and consents prior to

responding to the open-ended questions developed using a critical incident approach. The

interview questions were focused on the participants' background and their thoughts on culturally

responsive practices, as well as the ways in which critical self-reflection has helped to shape their

practices as culturally responsive leaders (see Appendix A: Interview Protocol). The interview

protocols for both are attached (Appendix A), which include the consent form, the script, and the

interview questions. The interview questions were planned around the phenomenon of the

practices of CRSLs. The questions were designed to reveal the participants' views and

perceptions regarding culturally responsive practices. A critical incident approach was used to

develop the open-ended questions in hopes of garnering in-depth responses. Responses to the

initial interview questions were used to develop the follow-up interview questions. Finally, the

questions were intentionally crafted around potential themes, such as their perceptions of their

own racial and cultural biases, their implementation of culturally relevant practices in order to create transformation and critical self-reflection. All these fit within the triadic framework of the study including CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory.

Critical Incident Approach

The interview questions were developed using a critical incident approach, which is loosely based on the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954). Critical incident technique is a methodology researchers use to obtain qualitative information from subjects (Flanagan, 1954). The subject is asked to reflect and describe behavior and actions regarding particular incidents (Flanagan, 1954). When using a critical incident technique, the researcher has follow-up questions used to garner more information from the subject as needed (Flanagan, 1954). Conversations with participants were grounded in the use of a critical incident approach. The eight case studies provide understanding into how critical self-reflection impacts CRSLs, the actions CRSLs take, as well as barriers they encounter in their practice.

The interview questions were designed with the idea of the phenomenon of culturally responsive school leadership. The questions were crafted after considerable thought to determine how the participants' views might best be garnered from specific questions and their wording. Questions were developed using an approach similar to critical incident approach encouraging open-ended responses in order to elicit thorough and in-depth responses. These types of questions and responses allow for deep reflection time for the subject as well as probing questions and explanations as follow-up (Flanagan, 1954). Using a critical incident approach allows the researcher to identify multiple incidents over a long time period as the interview participant can recount incidents from as far back as they can remember (Flanagan, 1954). This allows the participant to recount incidents that are rare or uncommon and might not be

discovered in other forms of research (Flanagan, 1954). Using a critical incident approach allows the researcher and participants to focus on the most important issues regarding the topic because more noteworthy incidents are more likely to be remembered by the interview participants (Flanagan, 1954). Of course, this reliance on memory and recall of the participants can be a negative to a critical incident approach in that the participants might forget incidents, especially those that might be unsettling to remember (Rosala, 2020). It is also possible that minor incidents that are of interest to the topic of research are not mentioned by the participants when using a critical incident approach (Rosala, 2020).

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

The process of recording, transcribing, and analyzing the interview data for specific categories, themes, and ultimately patterns, open, axial, and selective coding were appropriate analysis methods based on research by Strauss & Corbin (1990). The interviews with all practicing administrators were initially recorded and then transcribed. The initial interviews were transcribed prior to the start of the follow-up interviews for initial data analysis so that data could be used to drive future interview questions. The grounding initial interviews were used to provide background information of the participants and identify their insights and views on culturally responsive leadership. The researcher then listened to each of the interviews multiple times both as individual cases and cross-case listening during the multiple weeks of research. By interviewing practicing administrators who self-identified as being culturally responsive, it helped the researcher better understand culturally responsive leadership as a phenomenon taking place in schools regarding actions and barriers as well as how critical self-reflection plays a role in their administrative practices.

Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, data analysis began using grounded theory. First, the data from the initial interviews was analyzed followed by the data from the follow-up interviews. The critical incident approach allowed the interview participants to describe many incidents related to their culturally responsive practices which will be coded until the point of saturation is reached (Flanagan, 1954). The aim of the coding was to analyze the data that allowed the researcher to identify similarities and congruences in the interviews amongst the administrators (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The transcripts were also read multiple times to allow for coding of the data. Fellow researchers reviewed the data and validated the coding process that was used.

Both open, axial and selective coding were used to analyze the data. The open coding allowed for the researcher to categorize data and find themes throughout the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher first entered all the data on a spreadsheet with each participant's data on its own page and the questions and answers separated in separate cells within the page. From there, the researcher analyzed the data on the spreadsheet and identified themes in a corresponding column to the data. The researcher then added a new page for each question on the spreadsheet and entered the data from each participant's answer on the corresponding question's page. The researcher again analyzed the data and identified themes in the corresponding column. Next, the researcher used axial coding. Axial coding enabled the researcher to assemble the data in new ways based on new themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This was done by adding another column on the spreadsheet and moving the data around based on the themes to group the data. Then selective coding was used to develop the overarching categories based on the codes, themes and connections. This was done using sticky notes with the data and themes and moving the data around to developing the overarching categories based

on the connections. The researcher used the three types of coding in order to more accurately categorize and analyze the themes in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The coding of data from the interviews helped the researcher gain a better understanding in relation to the research questions of the study.

Following the coding, themes were identified for each individual case. These themes were used to understand how the administrators identified as culturally responsive. Once the individual data analysis was completed, the cross-case analysis began. The cross-case analysis focused on the themes identified within the individual cases of the administrators. Cross-analysis took place after multiple case studies were researched (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010). The researcher again used sticky notes and the data spreadsheet to further cross-case analyze and connect the data and the overarching categories. Cross-case analysis involves comparison of the themes within the individual case studies which then fortifies the solidity and accuracy of the research (Merriam, 1998). By analyzing and comparing the data from the cross-case analysis, authenticity and generalizability are increased when patterns emerge (Merriam, 1998). Sample size is also increased using a cross-case analysis by identifying patterns across the cases (Merriam, 1998). This leads to the case results to either reinforce or contradict each other (Merriam, 1998). After the cross-analysis, the researcher identified similar themes across all of the cases. The researcher finalized categories, themes and patterns that emerged from the coding processes through the use of selective coding. This process was done numerous times using the spreadsheet and sticky notes to ensure that all valuable data was extracted from the interviews. This process ensured that authentic and reliable data afforded clear, sound and consistent understanding of the case and adequately addressed the research questions of this study.

Reliability and Authenticity

Qualitative research often involves issues of reliability and authenticity. Reliability and authenticity are two of the criteria used to determine the methodological rigor of constructivist inquiry (Shannon & Hambacher, 2014). This researcher used the work of Lincoln & Guba (1986) to analyze the reliability of the research findings. Two of the criteria Lincoln & Guba (1986) identify to determine the reliability of qualitative research are credibility and dependability. Credibility in a research study means that there is certainty and integrity in the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The criteria of credibility is sometimes referred to as internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Dependability in the research means that the findings are considered consistent and could be repeated with other researchers in other studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Dependability can also be referred to as reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The researcher employed inter-coder reliability during the data analysis and had research colleagues analyze the data, codes and themes to ensure reliability. Participant quotes of the data analysis were used to buttress and elucidate the findings. The study findings were also compared against previous research on CRSL as well as the individual cases compared against one another in the cross-case analysis to demonstrate credibility and reliability of the findings. These ways of determining reliability are supported by Lincoln & Guba's (1986) work. It is also important that a researcher fortify credibility by maintaining thorough data analysis processes including using transcription of interviews; accurate records and clear notes all of which was done in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

This researcher used an ontological approach to determine the authenticity of the research study findings. Shannon & Hambacher (2014) state that authenticity is the one aspect of evaluation that is exclusive to qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1986) describe ontological authentications as, "a person's reality is constructed and reconstructed as that person gains

experience, interacts with others and deals with the consequences of various personal actions and beliefs" (p. 73). Based on this, Lincoln & Guba (1986) go on to explain that evolution and growth of an individual's perceptions of their world is one condition that can be used to measure authenticity.

Although the concept of authenticity was proposed by Lincoln & Guba in the 1980s and is an essential element of qualitative research, the criteria and techniques used to measure authenticity are still influx (Shannon & Hambacher, 2014). Shannon & Hambacher (2014) explain that researchers are able to develop processes which ensure authenticity from the accounts of participants involved in the study as well as by examining the grander effects of research. Also, of utmost importance is how the research can benefit humanity and society at large. Ultimately, assessment of ontological authenticity can be measured through the changes in the participants perception and understanding of society. Shannon & Hambacher (2014) suggest that this can be done through field notes review. The authors also shared questions that could be used to guide the researcher such as: "Are stakeholders quoted directly in the case report?" and "Did stakeholders make personal growth statements?" (p. 10). These strategies were used in determining the authenticity of this study.

Limitations

This study seeks to understand how critical self-reflection plays a role in the daily practices of CRSL, the actions they take in the quest for cultural responsiveness as well as the barriers they face. There were limitations to consider regarding this research study. The first was personal bias to the topic of culturally responsive leadership of those interviewed. Another was the sensitivity of those interviewed to the topic as well as the researcher's presence during the interviews. As this is a qualitative research study, the data collection of interviews created issues

of anonymity and confidentiality. The small sample size and generalizability could also be limiting. Another limitation is that it is not a longitudinal study, and therefore does not show progress over time. The global pandemic, COVID-19, was also a major limitation to this study, preventing observations that might have assisted the researcher in acquiring more data.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology that will be used to conduct this qualitative case study of culturally responsive leaders. A critical incident approach was used as a guide in developing the interview questions as well as the triadic lens of the study. The participants were administrators from the identified case. Both open and axial coding was used to analyze and categorize the data. Information regarding the data collection and analysis process, as well as the limitations of this planned study were also described. The next chapter will comprise the findings and results of the data analysis.

Chapter Four

Analysis and Presentation of Findings

This research study is designed to explore the actions of CRSLs including the challenges they face and how critical self-reflection impacts their practice. The study of CRSLs is a difficult task because there is no checklist or guidebook for leaders who hope to become culturally responsive. It is very much individualized by the leader and the environment in which they work. This makes critical self-reflection paramount to the CRSL. The cross-case analysis will focus on the similarities and shared themes between these eight leaders. Merriam (1998) relates that analyzing multiple cases is a strategy that allows for identification of these commonalities and increases the validity of the study's findings. The research answered the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between critical self-reflection and the development of culturally responsive school leaders in transforming their schools to align with culturally responsive practices?

2. What actions do leaders make to enact culturally responsive practices in schools, and what barriers do they face enacting those practices?

This chapter provides an analysis of findings from the qualitative research study grounded in the use of a case study design. The study focuses on the intense interviews of eight self-proclaimed culturally responsive principals serving in public schools. The individual case study of each of the participants is presented. After that, the themes that emerged are analyzed as a result of the case study, to include: Influence of Background, CRSL as a Responder, CRSL as a Cultivator, CRSL as a Catalyst and The Gateway of Culture. Then the perceptions, practices, and behaviors of those educational leaders who participated in this study are discussed as subsections within each theme.

Description of Interview Participants

Eight public school principals were interviewed for this study. The principals were selected upon recommendation from university faculty members and from other educators. The principals interviewed were CRSLs. The eight participants were a mix of secondary and elementary public-school principals as well as a mix of races with two identifying as African American, one as Black and five as White. Their educational experience ranged from sixteen to 37 years. They were each interviewed between one and three times based on their initial interview. To protect the anonymity of the participants, their schools, and divisions, each principal was assigned a pseudonym: Principal Kim, Principal Hilda, Principal Scarlett, Principal Desiree, Principal Howard, Principal Vanessa, Principal Sheryl, and Principal Mae.

Table I.

Demographics of Interview Participants and Number of Interviews

Role	Race	Gender	Experience	School Level	Interview #
Kim	African American	Female	37 Years	Secondary	1
Hilda	White	Female	21 Years	Elementary	2
Scarlett	White	Female	19 Years	Secondary	1
Desiree	African American	Female	17 Years	Secondary	3
Howard	White	Male	16 Years	Elementary	2
Vanessa	Black	Female	16 Years	Elementary	2
Sheryl	White	Female	24 Years	Elementary	2
Mae	White	Female	29 Years	Secondary	1

Findings of Individual Case Analysis

This section will focus on the eight principals who participated in this qualitative study. The first part of each section will provide background information of the CRSL as well as their insights on culturally responsive leadership. Next, the themes that emerged from the coding and data analysis will be discussed. Lastly, each section will shift focus to the combination of the background information and the themes identified connecting to the theories of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. This combination will be used to create a thorough illustration of the case in terms of the triadic lens used to frame the study.

Case One - Principal Kim.

Principal Kim is an African American female with 37 years of educational leadership experience. She participated in one interview for this study. She began her career in an urban division before migrating to the current division where she works as a principal. As a teacher, she taught English and was a reading coach. She has been a principal in both elementary and secondary schools, but currently she is a secondary school principal. Much of her teaching experience and all of her administrative experience has been in Title I schools. She comes from a family of educators and avowed that she never imagined herself doing anything other than teaching.

> Several of my school counselors were trying to lead me into secretarial work because in 1979 that is where the counselors were directing black females. And my parents were really insistent upon their children going to college because neither one of them had a college education. My dad didn't have a high school diploma. Their culture from the segregated South is what inspired me and my sisters to pursue collegiate studies. Now, my mom didn't know what she was talking about; She just knew college was something

that was supposed to happen. Becoming a teacher, going into education, just started with

me playing with my dolls as a young person. I was always the Sunday school assistant.

At the time there were little wooden chairs that the little kids would sit on and I would be

responsible for games. That drew me into the concept of being a child advocate, wanting

to help children and eventually into wanting to be an advocate for non-White children.

Like many of the other participants, Principal Kim's upbringing and background had a great

impact on why she became an educator and more importantly why she became a CRSL.

Principal Kim has had extensive experience living in and teaching in diverse areas. These

experiences have helped to shape her leadership. In addition to having vast personal experience

with diversity, once she became a teacher against the advice of her high school counselors, she

had mentors encourage her to pursue educational leadership. She states that it was nothing she

ever planned to do because she loved teaching so much. In fact, she stated that she still considers

herself a teacher, but now, she is a teacher of teachers. She also shared that she was always

transformational and critically self-reflective in her teaching process, just as she is now

transformational and critically self-reflective as a leader. She shared a story of her first year of

teaching when she was talking to a young man and he would not look at her. She demanded that

he look at her by telling him to do so multiple times. Later, she discovered that in his culture, it is

offensive for a child to look directly into the eyes of an adult. By demanding he look at her, she

said she was teaching him the American culture to look at the person when they spoke. Upon

critical self-reflection of the incident, she realized that was being disrespectful. This was a

turning point for her. This is when she began to recognize that when a leader is really being

culturally responsive, they have to look at the individual student instead of just seeing things as

black and white.

Principal Kim shared how she worked to meet the needs of her stakeholders when it came to the instability in their lives. She mentioned how many of her students were being evicted from their homes due to urban renewal projects. She shared that the students do not know where they will be from day to day because their families do not have the resources to secure other housing accommodations. Because of this, she felt it more important than ever that she create a school environment of normalcy for students right down to her clothes. She told the story of how she decided to wear a pantsuit to work instead of her normal skirt suit one day. As students entered the building, one of them came up to her and told her that she looked different. She smiled and told him that she was wearing pants instead of a skirt. He gave her a quizzical look and said, "I like you better the other way." She went on to explain how this made her realize that her constancy was important to this student possibly because he did not have it anywhere else in his life.

Data from Principal Kim's case study also led to the code of immersion. Principal Kim shared the importance of culturally responsiveness being immersed throughout all aspects of the school environment down to the curriculum that is used in the classroom. She shared that she felt her English teachers were most adept at including culturally responsive literature and resources in their classes because it was easier for them to choose literature and non-fiction that was culturally responsive as their curriculum is more about teaching the skills of reading than the content itself. She also shared how some of her social studies teachers try to incorporate real-world, culturally responsive content as they include some of the recent social instability such as the issues at the United States Capitol in 2021. Although Principal Kim does work to ensure that her teachers include culturally relevant issues, bold, explicit speech against racism seems to be somewhat lacking. She works with all of her teachers to include culturally responsive content but

stated that there is still work to be done in this area. Principal Kim also shared how she makes a concerted effort to ensure that her school does not just focus on African American history during African American History month or Hispanic History during Hispanic History Month, but that students see their culture reflected in every part of the school every day.

Principal Kim discussed how her teachers understand her students' culture and needs and how that transfers into the classroom. Although these conversations are occasional, Principal Kim does not feel like they happen enough. She is working with her teachers to ensure that they are intertwined throughout the curriculum daily, not just when a major political event occurs. She went on to explain that it is slow but steady progress. Principal Kim discussed how her teachers understand her students' culture and needs and how that transfers into the classroom.

My English teachers do a better job because of the choices they make of their texts. We were fortunate that the division purchased texts that were reflective of various cultures. They try to use novels with characters that reflect the culture of the students in our classes. I would say they are considerate of everyone's culture, but I don't think it's to the extent of really impacting their teaching. Does it change how they teach? Do they really try to find relevant topics? Real-world experiences? It came up a little bit in civics and English with the riot at the Capitol building. Was it a riot? Was it an insurrection? What's the difference in vocabulary?

Principal Kim went on to explain that it is slow but feels they are making steady progress. This data fits the codes of both consistency and immersion.

The codes of consistency and immersion also emerged from other data in this individual case study. Immersion emerged from Principal Kim's account of how she has conversations with her faculty and staff every day to address issues and concerns. She stated that she has found that

private, individual conversations and addressing concerns in small groups often get better

responses than addressing issues in teacher content groupings or faculty meetings.

> Well, most of the time it's never in a whole group faculty meeting because whole group
>
> faculty meetings turned into segregated seating by content. So especially when there's
>
> something in the media that can spark a little bit of discomfort, I have grade level
>
> meetings. This seems to help ease people's anxiety about speaking up if they have
>
> concerns. It just makes it a more comfortable setting to have crucial and sometimes
>
> courageous conversations.

Principal Kim espoused the importance of knowing and understanding the needs of your faculty

and staff when having conversations that could cause discomfort for some.

> She continued discussing the importance of ensuring that culturally relevant practices are

consistent and continually reinforced in every part of the school from professional development

for teachers to the bulletin boards in the hallways.

> Every morning I'm in the hallway greeting my kids. I do that because each student comes
>
> from a different environment and I need to make eye contact and watch for visual cues. I
>
> look at body language to see if something good, bad, or indifferent may have happened
>
> overnight.

Principal Kim explained how her presence is important every day. If she misses a day, students

notice. This is a constant and a consistency that they can count on in their lives that so many of

them need.

> Principal Kim was the only participant who discussed the importance of going deeper

into understanding the culture of students than just surface elements of Black culture, Hispanic

culture, Asian culture, or White culture. She explained how when she lived in an urban city in

the northeast, it was important to understand the intricacies of each individual culture such as Greek culture, Italian culture, Jamaican culture, Mexican culture, etc. She explained how it is not just White or Black, but one must understand the culture within the culture. She further explained how she feels most of her faculty and staff see their students.

> I just think they see the students as black students. They don't see the different cultures in the lumped umbrella of black. I see the different cultures in the lumped umbrella of White because of where I grew up. You just don't call everybody White. You have to know when you go on into an Italian pizzeria that you're dealing with Italians, you have to know about Greeks. We are working to do the same with black students and in order to do that we have to provide students with the opportunity to learn about what they think their culture is because some of them don't know. They just say, I'm black. So, I really try to ask them, what does that mean to be black?

Principal Kim went on to explain that she works to make sure students get to explore this question in her school and see it as something that is positive. She further shared that in order to see the intricacies of each students' culture, leaders must really know who their students and their families are. They must get to know the community in which they serve by attending community events and inviting the community into the school. She explained her personal experience as a child. She was often looked at as an African American student, but there was so much more to her culture as her grandmother was Native American. She wished her teachers would have looked beyond her Black skin.

Case One - Principal Kim Analysis

Case one focused on Principal Kim who is an African American secondary principal in her 37th year of education with decades of experience in administration. She has worked in

multiple districts in her current mid-Atlantic state as well as an urban district in another state. Parker and Lynn (2002) stated that CRT is a way to move the discussion of race and culture to the forefront of society. Principal Kim does this by ensuring that culturally responsive practices are immersed throughout her vision, plans and building daily. She ensures that culturally responsive practices are not only apparent in the resources and curriculum but also the pedagogy of her teachers. Principal Kim also stated that she has always been a transformational educator starting when she was a teacher to now in her role as a leader. She shared that she does this by having critical conversations with individuals as well as in small groups in order to effect change. She uses critical self-reflection to help her transform herself and her school community. This finding aligns with all three theories in the triadic lens framing this study.

Principal Kim discussed the importance of language when having discussions with students and staff. The words that are used make a difference and have meaning. This focus on vocabulary is another connection to CRT considering that an event such as the riot on the Capitol can be characterized in many ways. If it is deemed a "protest," that looks very different from an "insurrection." The vocabulary school leaders use is important to the lens of CRT (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). It is important that school leaders be bold and try to dismantle the status quo, but at the same time CRSLs have to make sure that everyone is in alignment or they will have their own "insurrection" within their school (Khalifa et al., 2016). Balancing moving forward while ensuring that all staff are ready for the journey is a difficult situation for school leaders.

Critical self-reflection is a critical pillar of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. Critical social theory involves constant reflection, action and then transformation of a community in order for all groups to have an equitable existence (Brown,

2004; Theoharis, 2007). Whereas transformative learning theory focuses on experiences, critical self-reflection and then reflective dialogue (Brown, 2004; Mezirow, 1997; Santamaria, 2014). Principal Kim shared how she uses critical self-reflection on a daily basis to determine if she did her best to meet her students' needs. She also shared how she mentors her administrative team to do the same and use their critical self-reflection to improve and transform her school each and every day. She went on to state that without the critical self-reflection, she would not be able to effect the change she hopes to make because through critical self-reflection she is able to rethink and evaluate each action and each decision she makes ensuring that they are in the best interest of all students.

Case Two - Principal Hilda

Principal Hilda is a White female with 21 years of educational leadership experience. She was interviewed twice for this study. She has worked at eleven different schools in the same district. She began in education as a teacher assistant and then worked for ten years as a teacher. From there she became an assistant principal and is currently a principal. She has been an elementary school principal for seven years at two different schools. Principal Hilda shared that she knew she wanted to be a physical education teacher from the age of eight. She also discussed how she did not plan on going into administration, but she was encouraged to do so by mentors and other educators. She discussed what impacted her most as a CRSL

> I've always been interested in people who live different lifestyles than me. I just feel like
> diverse people and cultures are part of what makes our world so great. My parents are
> very open-minded, and I was raised in a loving military family. We lived in Navy
> housing, so we were exposed to lots of different people with different cultures.

Principal Hilda further elaborated that knowing lots of people from different cultures at an early age and having parents who instilled kindness and acceptance contributed greatly to her culturally responsive leadership.

Principal Hilda faces numerous challenges and barriers every day in trying to be culturally responsive to her stakeholders. The main challenge she faces is that of resources. She listed numerous resources such as access, money and personnel, but the resource she said is most scarce is time. She simply does not have enough time to meet all the needs of all of the stakeholders.

I could probably list a hundred challenges to culturally responsive work: access, money, time, resources, personnel, people. But instead of focusing on the negative, I remind myself to flip it and think about every challenge as an opportunity. I try to figure out how to take on the challenge. Between kindergarten and fifth grade, I've got 80 students that speak no English at all in my school right now. There's no other school in my district that can say that. So, I say, "bring it." We're gonna do this. So, to be a culturally responsive leader, you just have to constantly learn and grow and fight for your students, your school and your community.

Principal Hilda went on to explain that to meet the needs of students, all of the signs in her building are written in both English and Spanish. She explained that this doesn't just help the Spanish speaking students to learn English, but also helps the English-speaking students to learn Spanish. In fact, she discussed that next year her school will be the only in the district of over 80 schools with a dual immersion program where English-speaking students will learn Spanish and Spanish speaking students will learn English. This will create a more equitable playing field where all students are learning and being challenged together to create a welcoming school for all. Principal Hilda has already started modeling this by reading books in Spanish to students on

the morning announcements. As she is not a fluent Spanish speaker, this is an example to all students that learning, and growth are paramount and that it is something that the whole community is doing daily.

Principal Hilda shared how she works daily to meet the needs of each and every one of her students and families.

> Truthfully, I just do. When we hear the need, we try to act and do what that family needs, but we also then try to think of the big picture. So, for instance, I was approached by a church wanting to help and one of the big things we need is parenting resources. We need monthly parenting resource clinics for Spanish speaking population to help them navigate things like getting dental work, finding a doctor, and signing up for free/reduced lunch. Sometimes we have to work hard to get them to fill out those forms because they don't want to be tracked if they are not in the country legally. They also are reluctant to complete the forms because they don't know what they're filling out if they can't read it. We have to build a relationship with them so that they trust us with these things until they can navigate it all on their own.

She went on to explain that these are just a few of the ways she and her staff help students and families and that the need is always changing. The pandemic brought about new needs for Wi-Fi that also had to be navigated. She stated that they helped as much as they could, but the need outweighed the resources, so they were constantly looking for more ways to help. The pandemic highlighted areas of needed growth in meeting the needs of students but it also provided new avenues for meeting their needs with the additional trust that was built between the families and the school.

We have these monthly workshops designated to spread that wealth and bring in resources. The Sheriff's department coming in to work with families is one way we spread the wealth, but we'll never be done. So COVID was a blessing in some ways because so many of our students' families attended school with them. We had parents learning English, right alongside their kindergartener. We had one mom who would attend every day and she would ask questions and ask for things to be repeated because she was learning too. So, we've invited, or some would say we basically forced, them into the process. So, now that we've got that we just need to keep them in because it's always been intimidating for them to come to the building, but now they are already involved, and they trust us.

Principal Hilda went on to explain that just as the pandemic was considered a negative aspect to our lives, it was still something that they learned from and could turn into a positive. It was a challenge that she and her school flipped into an opportunity and learned from so they can better meet the needs of their students and families.

Principal Hilda went on to explain how it is utterly important to be inclusive of all students each and every day. She does this through her vision that she uses as a roadmap for her faculty, staff and stakeholders. She is sure to include it in her plan for professional development. In one meeting, she had the teachers view a lesson in Mandarin so that they would have a tiny glimpse of what their ELL speaking students endure every day.

Everything in our building is labeled with both the English names and the Spanish names. We're constantly training our teachers and having them watch lessons in another language so they can be fully immersed in what their students deal with each day. After a minute and a half of a Mandarin lesson where you don't know what they're saying, you

just want to give up. And that level of frustration of not being able to communicate, they can feel what it feels like to be that kid in that classroom. These kids have been taken from their country. They've left everything including their family, because they usually only come with one parent. So, they left their country, their culture, their church...the church is very important to these children and their families so that is a big loss to them.

Principal Hilda explained how they must fill in the gaps of all these things the students are missing. but she also works hard to focus on highlighting what the students can do instead of the gaps.

We must highlight their talents. We can't put them in a box because they are our future. We're connected to our future right now. Every decision we make today is connected to our future tomorrow and so just keep doing the best we can.

She went on to explain how focusing on the positive is what she models every day to her staff so that they focus on what the students can do and the growth that they make each day.

Principal Hilda went on to discuss how she uses data to keep a constant eye on these students and critically self-reflect on what else can be done to add additional support. She discussed a situation in which nine out of the twenty-two students in a fifth-grade class spoke no English at all. After looking at the data, her administrative team was able to determine a way for the ELL teacher and the general education teacher to co-teach together all day long, taking turns to work with the virtual and face to face students during the pandemic and virtual learning. This strategy has been extremely successful in providing a higher level of support for these students.

Principal Hilda also shared the importance of cultivating a staff who not only understand, but also want to meet the needs of their students. She shared that hiring and communication with the community are both major factors that she takes very seriously.

I try to hire teachers and staff who will buy into our vision and do all they can to meet the needs of our students and families. I just hired a reading teacher who is fluent in Spanish and all of our cafeteria workers are fluent in Spanish. Having teachers and staff that can speak to the parents is important. Once you have a relationship with that parent, we have them for many years. We also have all of our messages from the school sent out in both Spanish and English. This helps to keep them involved in the process and allows them to feel included as part of the community.

She went on to discuss the importance of inclusivity and cultivating the school community by simply using the family's home language. This one act alone, makes families feel like they are a part of the school community and increases the trust the families have in the school. Principal Hilda ended with her thoughts on being a CRSL.

I don't have any big grandiose plans. I just want to do what we're doing better and just keep making it better and meet each individual student's needs. For instance, I have a call to the health department to take a little guy to the dentist, because his teeth hurt. He can't learn if his teeth hurt. That's not a big grandiose plan, but we're going to have to do what we can do for that kid. Then we just have to focus on high quality teaching. It comes back to that with some parental wraparound support where we can improve.

Although Principal Hilda stated that she does not have big grandiose plans, meeting each students' needs both educationally, emotionally, and medically is a grandiose plan in itself.

Case Two - Principal Hilda Analysis

Case two centered around Principal Hilda, a White, elementary school principal. She has decades of educational experience with a little more than half of those in administration as an assistant principal. Currently she is at her second school serving as principal. She discussed how

her family and living in military housing had major impacts on her attitude towards culturally

responsiveness. As explained by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), CRT shifted race and culture from

something that is a solitary force outside the confines of society to something woven into the

fabric of society. Principal Hilda weaves the cultural needs of her stakeholders throughout her

school in numerous ways. She does this in her culturally responsive professional development

for teachers, in her reading of Spanish books to students on the morning announcements and

ensuring that everything in the school is labeled in both languages. She works diligently to make

sure that not only is she inclusive of all students but also that her vision ensures all staff members

are also inclusive of all students. All of these ensure that students feel like her school is their

school and builds a welcoming community for all. Although Principal Hilda spends an enormous

emphasis on weaving cultures throughout the school, race is not a focus. She, like other

principals who participated in this study, focuses more on culture than race. Although CRT does

involve the concept of culture, the name itself includes the term, "race." Therefore, in order to

fully embrace the tenets of CRT, one must emphasize race in addition to culture.

As mentioned before, critical self-reflection is an underpinning element of all three

theories of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. These theories

comprise continuous reflection, action and then transformation based on what was learned from

the process (Brown, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; Brown, 2004; Mezirow, 1997; Santamaria, 2014).

Principal Hilda stated, "It's not enough to just understand, you have to be constantly improving

and working to learn. And then change and adapt." Principal Hilda shared how one way she does

this is through the use of data. She and her team use the data to target areas of improvement.

They then reflect on what they can do to improve and then change and adapt to meet the needs.

Another way that Principal Hilda has used critical self-reflection is to focus on the positives of

the pandemic. One of the positives with her stakeholders was that when students were learning

virtually at home, many of her Spanish speaking parents were sitting at the computer learning

with their children. Through this process they were learning English and could now read to their

children in English which helps both the child and the parent. This has transformed some of her

thoughts on meeting her stakeholders needs. She shared that even after the pandemic, she will

use that reflection to help her ELL speaking parents. They are considering offering virtual

classes after school for parents and students together. Principal Hilda shared that in order to be

culturally responsive, it is vitally important that she critically self-reflect, transform and adapt.

This fits with the triadic lens underpinning this study.

Case Three - Principal Scarlett

Principal Scarlett is a White educational leader with nineteen years of experience serving

at the secondary level. She participated in one interview for this study. She initially planned to be

an attorney even though she always felt she was a teacher in her heart. She practiced law for a

few years in a firm that represented local school districts before taking a break from working

when she had her child. When she went back to work, she taught for a few years and then she

moved to her current district. She began as a coordinator for the district's high school law

academy before becoming an assistant principal and then a principal.

Principal Scarlett stated that her background influenced her culturally responsiveness

greatly. She shared how until she was fifteen years old, she lived in a very segregated, White

community in a southern state. Not until her family moved to an integrated school district did,

she realize that her earlier life experiences were very narrow and sheltered. She also felt that

working in some of the Title I schools in her first few years of teaching opened her eyes even

further to the need for culturally responsive practices. She stated that this made her realize the

importance of understanding and being inclusive of multiple cultures. Like most of the other

participants of this study, she disclosed that she never planned to go into administration but was

encouraged by mentors and other administrators.

Principal Scarlett shared that when she was appointed as a principal at her current school,

she was not aware of the preponderance of ELL students. She had worked as an assistant

principal for multiple years in a school with a very diverse population, but it did not have the

expansive ELL population of her current school.

> When I was appointed here, I did not realize it had such a big ELL population. I did
>
> realize that it had a population of transient students because in the off season, families
>
> live in the hotels zoned for this school and then leave during tourist season and stay in
>
> hotels zoned for my previous school. It's interesting that I've been able to work in both of
>
> these schools to see how that works. So, I knew about the transient population, but the
>
> ELL population has been a huge eye-opener to me. Right now, especially with kids being
>
> out due to the pandemic, the needs of the community are just so great. It's overwhelming.
>
> My counselors spend the majority of their time out in the community trying to make sure
>
> our students, as well as their younger brothers and sisters, get logged on. The students are
>
> home taking care of themselves and their siblings, making sure they're doing what they
>
> need to do.

Much like Principal Hilda, Principal Scarlett discussed how her staff often works much like a

social worker in addition to being educators making sure that students have all that they need.

This social worker mentality has been especially prevalent during the pandemic. She went on to

discuss barriers that they face.

A huge barrier for success for our kids is just their circumstances in which they live. For our kids that live in the motels, they might have five or six people living in a motel room. How in the world, even if we were in person learning, but especially with virtual learning, can we expect a student living in those kinds of circumstances to get all of their schoolwork done? Add on top of that, that they are often on their own with no parent supervision and on top of that the frustration they encounter because of the language barrier.

Principal Scarlett discussed how her administrative team and staff work to address these barriers on a daily basis.

Another barrier Principal Scarlett discussed was ensuring that these students' academic needs were being met. She went on to communicate that she works tirelessly to immerse culturally responsiveness into the fabric of her school from focusing on curriculum resources to using data to determine if students of all cultural backgrounds are enrolling in advanced courses. She further shared that she often has tough conversations with faculty and staff when she notices that they are not understanding of the different cultural differences within the school. She explained how she uses professional development about instructional and discipline practices to integrate culturally responsive practices, so her staff sees that it is not one more thing but instead part of what they already do. She explained that they cannot meet their students' needs unless they understand the needs.

I want to make sure our teachers and all staff understand our students' circumstances. We've taken teachers to their neighborhoods on bus tours, and they cannot believe the living conditions of our students. They had no idea what kind of circumstances those children were living in.

Principal Scarlett explained that this really helped the teachers to better conceptualize why they need to change in order to help their students. Because of professional development like this, she has seen a transformation in the teaching practices and empathy of many of her staff.

Principal Scarlett also discussed how they work to break down the barriers to build trust with the community so that they can better meet their needs.

> We make home visits and make sure that we are out there in those neighborhoods building that level of trust, because that is a huge issue, especially with the Hispanic population. Most of our Hispanic students are illegal immigrants, so it's all about building trust. This is especially important if we have to send out our social worker, so they realize we're there to help. We don't care what your immigration status is; we care about your kids and their health and their education. We've worked really hard to build that trust.

She went on to explain some of the various ways they build that trust and bring parents into the school.

> We had a big ELL parent informational night back in January, right before we closed for the pandemic. We brought families in by school bus and fed them dinner. We had people from the health clinic here and they gave dental and vision checks. We had a translator for each session and showed them how to use the technology tools available so they can keep up with their child's grades and work. Those kinds of community outreach pieces are important to help develop a culturally responsive school. So, I think, the biggest thing is outreach, outreach, outreach.

Similar to Principal Hilda, Principal Scarlett used the pandemic as an impetus for growth. Instead of only seeing the pitfalls and roadblocks the pandemic put in place, she used it as a way to better understand each student's and family's needs.

Principal Scarlett shared how she uses critical self-reflection to improve and grow as well as the importance she places on critical self-reflection.

> I do a lot of critical self-reflection because I know we're not near where we need to be. One of our school board members has been posting a lot on social media recently about CRT and the fact that it's being taught in the schools. It's really interesting to read those comments. It shows that this is an area that we all need to grow in, but how to get our community to see that is unknown to me. I love what one of my fellow principals has done with community conversations. I think it is something that is desperately needed at a school. I'm working to get comfortable in leading and facilitating those kinds of conversations, because, I'll be honest, I don't feel equipped to do it. So that in turn causes a lot of critical self-reflection. Where do we want to go? What steps do we need to take to get there? What are we already doing? How can I help to get us where we want to go? Those are the things I spend a lot of time reflecting on. I also have to reflect on how I can better lead those kinds of conversations building-wide and then incorporate that with the entire community so that my school is a welcoming place for all students.

Principal Scarlett continued sharing how she would like to move forward but feels somewhat stymied due to the current political discord.

Case Three - Principal Scarlett Analysis

Case three centered around Principal Scarlett, a White, secondary principal, who although was always drawn to teaching, initially became a lawyer. Once becoming a teacher, she was encouraged to go into administration by mentors and co-workers. Her experience with diversity did not begin until she was a teenager when her family moved from an all White community to one that was much more diverse. She shared how this change opened her eyes to the importance

of being inclusive of all cultures. She went on to teach in schools that were very diverse which

also impacted her leadership as a CRSL. Principal Scarlett's legal background allowed her to see

how legislation and public policy has been used to create a society at large that undermines the

rights of all people. She uses this lens in her work as a principal to examine underlying issues

regarding race, and prejudice in the policies at her schools and then works to undo them. This

aligns with the theory of CRT as Santamaria (2014) stated that CRT allows educators to

investigate underlying issues regarding race and racism in schools.

Principal Scarlett discussed the issue regarding the societal and political challenges

CRSLs face when it comes to race and using CRT as a lens. Many CRSLs feel that the political

climate has created a blockade to their work. This could be because there is a juxtaposition

between the way CRT is portrayed in the media and the actual tenets of CRT. Principal Scarlett

went on to discuss how the political climate has changed in just the last year or two with some of

the pervasive social justice issues that have occurred and then broadcast world-wide. She shared

how as much as she wants to move forward, it is hard to do with such an outspoken political

barrier trying to prevent any growth in this area and instead trying to push society into reverse.

Principal Scarlett's work in her school to create policies and procedures that are inclusive

of all cultures aligns with the triadic lens underpinning this study. The theories emphasize the use

of critical self-reflection to transform. and transforming the way people view themselves and

their position in the world. By creating a school that has policies and procedures that are

inclusive of all cultures, Principal Scarlett is altering the way these students see themselves in her

school. This supports CRT as Principal Scarlett uses a continuous cycle of constant reflection,

action and then a change and shift in the school community working to create an environment in

which all students can exist equitably (Brown, 2004; Theoharis, 2007).

Case Four - Principal Desiree

Principal Desiree participated in three interviews for this study. In these interviews, she divulged that she always wanted to be a teacher but did not initially go to school for education and instead went to business school. She identifies as African American. She worked in corporate America for two years but hated her job. A friend of hers suggested that she begin teaching at the charter school where she worked; so, she did. The school was an urban charter school where one could teach without a teaching degree. She taught there for one year, prior to applying to a program at a local college which prepared college graduates without teaching degrees for the teaching profession. She was accepted into the one-year program which came with a requirement to teach in the district the subsequent two years. She continued teaching in that district for ten years prior to being promoted to assistant principal. She shared how working in the urban district had a large impact on her perspective of the world.

> We had such a diverse staff...race-wise, gender-wise, sexuality-wise. We all did so much together, not just working together but they were my social network as well. It helped to expand my own thinking. I don't think I would be the same if I had not worked there. It helped me to be super knowledgeable about race and equity, because we were talking about those things years ago there. We are just beginning to discuss those things in this district. Because I have a progressive work experience, it makes me look at things differently. It has allowed me to understand things from different vantage points.

She served in that district for three years as an assistant principal before moving to her current district. She served as an assistant principal there initially for two years before being promoted to principal. She has been in the position of secondary school principal for two years.

Like many of the other study participants, Principal Desiree revealed that she grew up in a family of educators spending much time in schools helping her aunts and cousins grade papers and set up classrooms at the beginning of the year. This had a great impact on her decision to become a teacher. She also shared that as the daughter of a single mother, she grew up in areas that were considered "bad neighborhoods."

> Every little kid grows up playing school, but I was actually doing schoolwork and grading papers. I'm not one of those people that went into teaching because I love kids. I enjoy them; but some people go into education because they've always loved kids. That is not my thing. The kids are fun and they're great, but I care much more about their education than I do about this passion for all little people. So, when teachers say, I want to do this because I love kids, my question to them is, do you care about their outcomes? I think that's a little bit different, and a much more important question to ask.

She went on to explain that this came out of her living in the areas that would be considered "underprivileged." She saw how important it was to have a good education and saw an education as a way out of the neighborhoods in which she lived.

Principal Desiree also shared that she feels she has always been a leader. It just came naturally to her and she felt like she always had something to offer even as a young person. This led her to be leaders in her school and with her friends. Even more than that, because of her background experiences, she stated that she feels being a CRSL is inherent in who she is.

> I'm very aware of who I am and what that means to other people first. I have a true sense of my own self and I think some people don't really have that and therefore they struggle with leadership and especially with cultural responsiveness. I respect all people and I have empathy for their experiences and also celebrate the things they bring to the table. I

feel that if you let your own bias influence your decisions, whatever that bias, whether it be against race or gender or sexuality, you limit your own ability to really understand the people that you work with and that you support. I think we're required to do that. I don't even know if I like the term, culturally responsive school leader. Being a culturally responsive school leader is just what a leader is supposed to be. Should we be cognizant of people and their experiences and how all of those things impact them, how they show up, and what they bring to the table? Yes. I feel like I just acknowledge those things and I understand those things and I hope that they make us better as individuals and workers because of those things. So, I think being a CRSL is having a value and sense of importance for having the various voices at the table too...just an awareness, recognizing and maximizing your power at the table, to create opportunities in leadership and hiring practices, and always thinking about what's best for students.

Principal Desiree went to explain that she feels being culturally responsive to students is understanding who they are and being your own authentic self with them.

As many of the other participants shared, Principal Desiree feels that having culturally responsive practices at the center of everything a leader does is of paramount importance. She shared how she immerses her school community in culturally responsive practices by centered her professional development around it, targeting it in all Professional Learning Communities with teachers and other stakeholders such as the School Planning Council, Parent Teacher Association, and Instructional Leadership Team. She further elaborated how it must be at the nucleus of every decision a leader makes. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic the Parent Teacher Association wanted to have a drive-by parade for all of the grade eight students who were moving on to high school. The parade would consist of parents of the grade eight

students driving them to school in the afternoon and driving through the parking lot to pick up treats such as cookies and t-shirts. Although, on the surface this sounds like a great idea, Principal Desiree considered the number of students in the community that would not have parents to drive them either because they were working or do not have transportation. She and her administration team realized that it was not equitable for all students and that many students would be left out of this celebration. Instead, the team decided to have a virtual celebration in which all students could participate. These are the kinds of decisions that Principal Desiree said are just as important as the big ones. She imparted the significance of every decision and how it will impact every student.

Principal Desiree discussed what she thinks it means to be culturally responsive to meet students' needs and how you handle it when you have not been culturally responsive.

If you do something that's not really culturally responsive, you show your human side. You listen to them; you listen to what their needs are. When you make mistakes through that process, you apologize to them. You think about their needs. You have to expose every child to different voices, but also to voices that reflect their own experiences. You have to give them perspectives and voices that reflect who they are, not just a race, but gender, socioeconomic, sexuality, religion. You have to give them opportunities to explore that and be thoughtful about it, but also teach them how to talk about and think about other people in a respectful way. It's important to understand this also for your teachers and staff because people's experiences impact how they show up in a classroom.

After sharing her thoughts on what it means to be culturally responsive, Principal Desiree went on to explain how she uses long-term planning to create a roadmap which will get her school where she wants them to go in terms of cultural responsiveness.

I think the key is understanding that we have racist systems in our schools. For instance, even if we just get our teachers to think a little bit differently or to ask some questions, that's better than nothing. We need to look at grading practices, assessment practices, classroom pedagogy practices and relationship building practices. We need to have them do some critical self-reflection to think about a time that they had a really challenging interaction with a student of color. Then have them consider biases they might've had towards that student that they can only now reflect on now. I think even small things like that would help them start to think about it as they approach their students the next year. In the bigger picture, have them think about why kids are really struggling in their classes. I think it's going to be small and big things. It's a lofty goal, but it's something that we have to work on every day with every action we take. It's a long-term, never ending process.

Principal Desiree went on to explain that a CRSL must be patient because it is going to take some time. She shared how a leader must work with their team to decide where they want to go and decide on what steps are needed to get there.

I'm typically a linear, goal-driven thinker. I like to have a clear pathway and outcome, so I work with my administrative team to set up our path focusing on where we want to go and how we are going to get there. Then we can measure the outcomes using the data because the data will always show if we've made progress or not.

Principal Desiree went on to explain the importance of having an administrative team focused on the vision and on the same path. She explained how if the administrative team works together in creating these, it makes it easier to reach the intended destination.

Principal Desiree also shared her concern for the instability of society and its impact on students and young people. She shared how her Instructional Leadership Team had been conducting a book study throughout the year. The book they were reading and discussing was centered around understanding race and culture. When a local school board member determined that this book had underpinnings of CRT, the board member not only made it a local political issue by posting it on her social media pages, but also a national one, by taking it all the way to national news sources. This instability in society and the political consequences thwarted the book study due to lack of psychological safety for the team members. Principal Desiree shared:

> I questioned whether or not our building was ready to discuss race and equity issues which is why I only started with the Instructional Leadership Team versus the whole building because I didn't believe everyone was ready. Even with this media backlash, I've come to the conclusion that we will continue to do the work around race and equity, but it will really be grounded in political correctness. My concern is: How can teachers use culturally responsive pedagogy if they don't understand why they need to use it? That was why we were doing the pedagogy so that they could understand the need for culturally responsiveness. It just always seems bizarre that some leaders try to approach the work with the assumption that all teachers understand why using culturally responsive pedagogy is essential. If they did, they wouldn't need professional development. This event has helped me to see that I have to find a politically correct way to engage teachers in doing tasks that are appropriate and understanding of their students. So, we will continue the work. We will just be much more cautious and go much slower than we were already going.

Principal Desiree went on to share how traumatic this has been for many of her faculty and staff who were directly involved, but how it has also helped to bring the school community together to rally and therefore created a positive transformation.

Case Four - Principal Desiree Analysis

Principal Desiree was the spotlight of case four. She is an African American, secondary school principal whose family of educators was a great influence on her decision to become a teacher even though initially she got a business degree and then became a teacher as a Career Switcher. Her experience with diversity from an early age was a great influence on her leadership. She has always felt like she was a leader, even as a small child. The triadic lens of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory were all evident in the data from her case. She shared how she critically self-reflects daily and encourages this in her administrative team. After every major event such as the first day of school, she and her administrative team have a "huddle." This huddle is where they all reflect on the event and determine what went well and what can be done better the next time. This fits in with the two theories of transformative learning theory and critical social theory because she and her team reflect and then use that reflection to create transformation.

She further discussed how critical self-reflection has been paramount in understanding the incident that occurred regarding her book study that was publicly rebuked by the school board member. Principal Desiree is the only participant that discussed "race" directly instead of only referring to "culture." She, like Principal Scarlett, shared how the current political divisiveness is creating a challenge to her work as a CRSL. Although she was already trying to move slowly and backdoor the issue of race by beginning with discussions of trauma and culture, the work was stymied anyway by this school board member. This makes using CRT as a lens

very difficult, however she sees the importance of the issue, so she focuses on culture instead which allows her school to at least move forward instead of remaining at a standstill. She keeps culturally responsive practices as the nucleus of every decision she makes in order to transform her school community into one that is welcoming for all students of all cultural backgrounds.

Case Five - Principal Howard

Principal Howard has served as an elementary principal for two years, an assistant principal for six years and before that, and he taught for ten years before that. He participated in two interviews for this study. He identifies as a White male. Like many of the study participants, Principal Howard began working in an urban school district before moving to his current district where he taught and is now a principal. Unlike many of the other participants, he did not always want to be a teacher. His decision to become a teacher was by happenstance. When he first went to college and was asked what he wanted to study, the person who was asked before him answered that he wanted to be a teacher, so Principal Howard just gave the same answer. In his freshman year, he found that he enjoyed the education classes and later as he began working with students, he discovered that not only did he enjoy it, but he was quite good at it. Leadership also happened by coincidence as his wife began taking leadership courses, he decided to do the same. Similar to the other participants, he explained, "I had something to contribute that I felt was a different perspective and important. I felt like I had something to offer and that I could make a difference." Principal Howard went on to explain that he feels it is important to lead his school to find commonalities that bind everyone together for a common purpose. He used this idea as a guide to develop his vision for this school and work to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

When a student is having struggles, I work with the teachers not to make assumptions as to why. I encourage them to reach out and find out what they can do to help. I think that's

probably the biggest way that we work to be culturally responsive as a staff on a daily

basis. The teachers are contributing and just trying to be present and as helpful as they

can be to the students and their families. We talk a lot about it. I think it's important to

have dialogue that goes on between my teachers and myself or my assistant principal.

This dialogue leads to a lot of self-reflection.

Principal Howard discussed how he has ensured that meeting students' needs is intertwined in

the vision of the school and through that, he is able to intertwine it in their daily work.

Principal Howard went on to discuss what has really allowed him to cultivate culturally

responsiveness in his building so that the culture is one that is inclusive of all. He shared how the

various districts he has worked in have shaped his understanding of culture and how to build an

inclusive one in a school.

When I began my first year of teaching, the school was the complete opposite of diverse.

All of the students were a hundred percent free and reduced lunch. All of the students

were African American. All of the students were from one neighborhood and many of

them had never left it. The vast majority of the students knew nothing beyond their

neighborhood, and this caused a lot of stagnation.

Principal Howard then shared that when he moved to a different area of the country, the school

was completely different. The school zone was a middle to upper middle-class area, but because

it took students from all over the city, it was a very diverse school unlike his previous school.

The students had different origin stories, different languages spoken at home, and different

experiences of school and life up to that point. That really helped Principal Howard to shape his

outlook on how to form a climate in a building and cultivate a culture of success and learning

incorporating different backgrounds. Principal Howard went on to describe his experience in the

next school where he served as an assistant principal and how it helped him to shape his perspective on school culture.

Principal Howard shared how he was fortunate to move to a magnet middle school next. That school was like the second school experience he described because it pulled students from all over the city using a lottery process. The school was made up of students from all over the city to a central location, so the leaders had to figure out how to make a community that was successful, and they did. He went on to elucidate that it was so successful that it earned the Blue-Ribbon School Award. He further clarified that the reason they were able to earn that honor was because of the school culture they had cultivated. Principal Howard explained that the culture considered all the differences of the students so that it was inclusive of all.

> It's not that it succeeded despite those differences, which is something I think that a lot of people thought, but it happened because of those differences. The teachers and the leadership in that building figured out a way to take students from all different walks of life and different backgrounds and experiences and get them to believe in the school and their education.

Principal Howard went on to explain how he uses experiences from his past schools to build an inclusive culture in his current school and district

> Now, in my current district, I'm in a magnet school again that pulls from the whole city. So, it's a similar challenge here because the building is composed of students from all walks of life and from one end of the city to the other. All those things have contributed to my desire to become a more culturally responsive school leader and to examine my past and my experiences and apply them to my current situation.

This led right into Principal Howard discussing how he uses critical self-reflection to analyze and examine how he grows and improves as a CRSL.

> I don't think you can be a leader, period, without being able to critically self-reflect. I will be the first to admit that I screw up on a lot of things. I decide or I plan something out and it doesn't work the way that I wanted it to. Instead of just moving forward with the mistake, I go back and reflect? Where was my thinking wrong? Where were my assumptions wrong? Where was my execution wrong? What can I do so that this works better, or it doesn't happen again? For leaders, if you are not willing to look at the things that you are doing and the reasons why you're doing them, you're never going to improve as a leader. You're never going to be a better principal or assistant principal or teacher or whatever it is if you're not willing to go back and reflect and admit that there are certain things that you did wrong or could have done better.

Principal Howard continued to discuss the next step in his critical self-reflection process as one of action.

> Then the next step after you reflect is to put it into action and make changes to improve for next time. Being able to be your own biggest critic is important. You know, nobody likes other people telling them what's wrong with them. I'm not a proponent of hating oneself by any stretch, but I don't think that you should ever walk around with a feeling of complete satisfaction because there's always room for improvement for you to do things better. So that's a hugely important role for any leader anywhere especially if you want to move your community forward.

In addition to the importance of his own daily critical self-reflection that he uses himself, Principal Howard also builds critical self-reflection into his work with his faculty and staff.

I think one of the main challenges that we face is to overcome some of our own preconceived notions. A lot of folks don't have the upbringing that I did where I was able to experience all different people and places. We all have to understand that where we come from influences our thinking and our conceptions of others. If we are reflective and think about the way that we think through critical self-reflection and metacognition, that goes a long way in helping us mentally overcome some of the barriers that we have when it comes to accepting students as they are and accepting their circumstances. Instead of being upset about things, the way that they are, or complaining or giving excuses about why students can't do something, if we look at the way we're approaching the problem individually, then it broadens our perspectives and allows us to meet kids where they are and come up with solutions rather than just complain about things. That's one of the biggest challenges is getting over ourselves and being able to communicate with, understand and accept people who differ from you.

Principal Howard explained how he works with his community members to critically self-reflect in many different ways. Sometimes he has conversations with people when he needs to address issues. He also shared that he demonstrates being critically self-reflective by modeling his own critical self-reflection with community members. He feels that this is one of the most powerful ways he has found to encourage others to be critical thinkers. If community members see their leader being critically self-reflective and vulnerable enough to share it with others, they are more likely to do it themselves. He further described how he feels the pandemic of 2019 has actually had a positive impact on critical self-reflection of his teachers and their ability to have empathy for students and parents.

A lot of parents do not have the luxury of a job where they are able to leave at the drop of a hat to come and get a student from school. Because of COVID-19 though we have had the necessity of that a lot this year. I've noticed that my faculty and staff have, instead of judging the parents on their lack of ability to care for their child at the moment, they've begun seeking resources and looking for ways they can help. So instead of being judgmental, they focus more on solving the problem. It's a different mindset, but I'm seeing that change in many of them.

Principal Howard shared how pleased he has been to see this transformation as it is what is best for students and the community.

Case Five - Principal Howard Analysis

Principal Howard, a White, male elementary school principal was the focus of case five. He has had extensive experience with diversity as he moved throughout his childhood meeting and living in communities with various cultures. He also began his teaching career in a very urban area shortly after it was hit by one of the worst national disasters the United States had experienced. This district had no diversity with all students being from the same neighborhood and all identifying as African American. Then he moved to the urban area in which he currently lives. He has served as principal in two districts in that area, both of which are urban districts. The schools that he has served in these districts contrast with his first district in that they are extremely diverse. Principal Howard shared that these experiences as well as his background were integral to being a CRSL.

Principal Howard focused on transforming his school community through the use of critical self-reflection. This coincides with all three of the theories supporting this research study as CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory all emphasize critical self-

reflection and rational discourse (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005) involving critical inquiry and self-reflection (Brown, 2004; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Rational discourse is also highlighted in each of these three theories (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Principal Howard highlighted his use of critical self-reflection and discourse as a process to identify and transform unjust ideas and practices in his school which aligns with the triadic lens of the study (Brown, 2004; Santamaria, 2014).

Case Six - Principal Vanessa

Principal Vanessa participated in two interviews for this study. She shared that she is a naturalized United States citizen originally from a Caribbean island. She does not identify as African American, but instead identifies as Black. Due to the birth of her daughter shortly after high school, instead of going to college, she began working in corporate America. However, as she always wanted to be a teacher, she went back to school to get her teaching degree. After a few years of teaching in an elementary school, she became a Gifted Resource Specialist. From there she became an assistant principal and is currently in her third year as an elementary school principal. Once a teacher, much like the other participants, she did not plan to be an educational leader, but was encouraged to be a leader by co-workers and mentors.

Principal Vanessa shared how her background both, personally and professionally, has helped to shape her as a CRSL.

> My background, being from an island nation, and the experiences I had there are very
> different from what people experience growing up in America. When we came to
> America, my family didn't talk about the same things because they didn't have the same
> experiences. I connect well with the kids, because that's just a part of who I am, but what
> I didn't understand was how culture and understanding play a role in being a leader.

She went on to explain how her experiences in the different schools and roles she had within those schools shaped her as a CRSL.

> I learned a lot from my position as a gifted resource teacher. It was easier for me to see the kids and how the different teaching styles supported all children. But, still, some of the experiences the kids had just weren't understood, so my principal asked me to facilitate some professional development for the staff to help with the lack of culturally responsive practices and understanding. I just remember thinking, "Oh, so, you want the new black girl to do this? Are you crazy?" But I did it and it was well received. That really shaped me as a CRSL showing me that I could impact change in a community to help students be better understood by their teachers.

Principal Vanessa continued to share how being a CRSL comes down to seeing and understanding what each student needs, as well as analyzing why students are not making progress so that the leader can address the needs. She explained that this role and professional development experience taught her to ask, "What do we know about the student and their experiences so that we can better respond to them?" As a CRSL, you have to move from yourself asking these questions, to help the teachers to see that? She continued that that is the goal. Teachers must understand who is in front of them so that they can respond appropriately. A leader cannot do it by themselves, they have to be able to understand their faculty and staff just as they are asking their faculty and staff to understand their students in order for the needed transformation to occur.

Principal Vanessa went on to explain how she took time to learn her kids, their families, and really understand the history and background. She went on to explain that culture is different everywhere you go. Principal Vanessa shared that she feels one cannot be a good teacher or a

good leader unless one is cognizant and understanding of the people in front of them. She elaborated that one cannot be cognizant and understanding of people unless you understand their culture.

> Being a good leader is about responding to the needs of the cultures of the people who we have in front of us. As a teacher and now as a leader, I always make sure that I take time to learn about the kids, their families and really understand their history and background, because culture is different everywhere you go.

Principal Vanessa shared how she uses this understanding of culture as a framework for all she does in her school.

> We started at the end of my first year talking about culture after I'd used the year to assess where we were as a school and then we kicked off the beginning of year two with it...at every staff meeting, in every newsletter, at every PLC. We were very intentional about looking at that data and using it to make decisions, to respond to what our kids needed. The cultural frame started…that was one way to help the teachers see how our kids were thinking and seeing about themselves and how to use that. We spent a lot of time doing that...discussing, reflecting, changing, learning, growing and we just keep doing that to get better and better.

Principal Vanessa continued to talk about how she immerses the "cultural frame" throughout every aspect of her school community daily starting with her vision for the school.

> The biggest challenge is to articulate your vision clearly and consistently to stay on that trajectory. When you have to make those daily decisions every day, it's not always seen. Sometimes it's hard for staff to connect each decision to your vision until it is ingrained in their psyche. So, they might ask lots of questions and not understand the decisions you

make. Sometimes it takes time for people to connect the dots. So, you can be transparent, but you can't be naked. That's when you give them the permission that they need to push back.

She further elaborated that when staff push-back and you have crucial conversations is where you can gain the most momentum on your trajectory. She shared how this process along with that of critical self-reflection has helped her staff to see her students as they are and meet them where they are.

Like Principal Desiree, Principal Vanessa shared how important critical self-reflection and self-awareness are to her role as a CRSL.

Self-reflection is probably one of the most important aspects to being successful in my role as a CRSL. In order to be successful, I have to be self-aware, and I have to spend the time to reflect. The vast amount of time I spend reflecting is ridiculous. When I replay questions or conversations or decisions that were made or what's happening in a classroom or down the hallway, there's so many pieces to that puzzle that I have to take that time to step back and almost detach in order to adequately reflect on it. The pieces have to connect. And so I think self-reflection plays a huge role because I also have to remember, I have my own biases and I have to take "me" out of the equation.

Principal Vanessa elaborated that in order to encourage teachers to really "see" their students, she must model "seeing" them and meeting them where they are. This takes professional development, analysis of data and repeated critical self-reflection to transform and improve. She explained her thoughts on culturally responsive practices as well as one way she has worked with her faculty and staff to address perspectives.

On the simplest level, it is responding to the needs of the students who we have in front of us, but I think it's much bigger than that. For example, our school has about 51% of students receiving free and reduced lunches. But when I started here as principal three years ago, I asked the staff, "Where do you think we need to grow?" What I learned from that year was that we have hard-working, committed people, but they don't truly know who's in front of them. I learned that through interactions I had with staff and witnessed my staff having with students. I also learned that through conversations I had with staff when most would say that they thought our free and reduced lunch student percentage was below 25%. Some might say, "Well, it's good that your staff didn't see the poverty." However, the problem is that there is so much research about the culture that comes with poverty and the experiences that come with poverty. So, it was important that we shifted to see who was in front of us in order to understand who was in front of us, because only if we see them and understand them, can we teach them.

Principal Vanessa went on to explain that this is how they started their journey and went back to discuss what she thinks it means to be a CRSL. It is about initiating, facilitating and engaging in sometimes very difficult conversations. She described how in her first year she focused on learning and asking lots of questions and hoping that others would then start asking questions. She began her second year with the mindset, "we are marching to the beat of a different drum." She also discussed how patience is important because in order to go on this journey, vulnerability is a must. Although it is a lot of hard work, it was fruitful, and the journey continues. It is never-ending.

Case Six - Principal Vanessa Analysis

The focus of case six was a Black elementary school principal. Principal Vanessa has experiences with diverse cultures as she was raised on a Caribbean island and did not move to the United States until she was an older child. Like many other participants, Vanessa always wanted to be a teacher but upon finishing high school went into corporate America prior to going to school for education. Vanessa shared how her personal background impacted her as a CRSL because as a child, she was from a very different culture herself. This allows her to connect to students who feel excluded from her school communities and work to create a more inclusive environment. She also shared how her professional experiences shaped her as a CRSL and allowed her to see how different strategies help different students and understanding that one-size truly does not fit all when it comes to education especially when dealing with students from many different cultures.

The triadic lens comprising CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory all converge with the idea of praxis where reflection and action are dominant (Furman, 2012). Principal Vanessa uses critical self-reflection not only to transform her own thinking and actions, but also works with her faculty and staff to use critical self-reflection to transform their thinking and the ways in which they understand their students. She does this through difficult conversations and professional development. But before she did any of this as a first-year principal, she listened and observed. Once she understood where her faculty and staff were, she devised a plan and a vision to help them to grow so that they could better meet the needs of all of their students and create a culture that was inclusive of all. She shared how she has seen change in her faculty and staff resulting in change for her school community and students. Although she has focused on culture and transformation through critical self-reflection, she has not spotlighted

the concept of race with her faculty and staff. As the other participants have done, she has begun the journey with the more socially acceptable discussion and understanding of culture.

Case Seven - Principal Sheryl

Principal Sheryl participated in two interviews for this research study. She is a White female elementary school principal who comes from a family of teachers who discouraged her from going into education. In fact, they encouraged her to do anything but teach. She tried to follow their advice, but found that, like other study participants, teaching was a calling and inherent within her. Principal Sheryl grew up in a very small, southern town. Her parents were very open-minded and taught her to be accepting of others, but their beliefs did not mirror those of the members of the community in which she lived. Seeing the inequities and unjust language and treatment of those deemed "different" shaped her thoughts on the importance of culturally responsiveness.

> I grew up in a small Southern town where most people were closed-minded, but my
> parents were incredibly open-minded, and they taught me to be that as well. Because of
> this, we didn't really fit in where we lived. Seeing the juxtaposition of what my parents
> taught me against the backdrop of my small town, shaped my understanding of culturally
> responsiveness. It helped me to see how equity and fairness don't exist everywhere, but
> how important the concepts are to improving our world. Seeing the inequities firsthand
> allowed me to have an open mind. It also made me feel a responsibility to make the world
> a better place for all people.

Once graduating from college, she taught elementary school for ten years prior to becoming a reading specialist in Title I schools. She then worked in the central office of her division for ten years prior to becoming a school level administrator. She worked for eight years as an

elementary assistant principal prior to becoming a principal. She has been a principal for five years at two different elementary schools.

Principal Sheryl shared how she sees being a culturally responsive leader as embracing the culture of every student and finding ways to celebrate and be inclusive of each culture. She explained how at each school where she has led as a principal, she has shaped the vision around culturally responsive pedagogy and then used that vision as a map for herself and her school community. She shared the importance of living and breathing the vision every minute of every day and that means knowing your students and your community and responding to what they need. She illustrated how her faculty and staff have started moving on their culturally responsive journey.

In traditional elementary school culture, schools celebrate Christmas and maybe Hanukkah, but you assume everyone pretty much celebrates the same way. However, you've got to look to see what every family does and let them share. Teachers can also share ways holidays are celebrated, not just in different countries, but different cultures and different religious groups within those countries. Since we've started asking for more input from our community about holidays, I've heard teachers exclaim that they are amazed about how many different ways of celebrating there are. We will never teach it the same again. We are evolving and evolving and it's so important because our school has a very large and growing Indian population, so our teachers have to be cognizant of differences so that those students feel included and not excluded.

She went on to describe how she is in the only school in her district that has this very large and growing Indian population. Because of this, she has tried desperately to include Indian culture in the resources and curriculum that her teachers use with students. Unfortunately, this has been

more difficult than one might assume, and she often runs into roadblocks trying to find children's books with Indian children as characters. She has also had to include lots of professional development on the Indian culture for her faculty and staff including their uses of nicknames and what surnames mean. She elaborated on meeting her staff and student needs.

> So, I think you keep it going with discussions and setting a vision. We are a very small elementary school so it's really easy for us to look at students individually and then we aggregate the data to see if there are any trends or patterns. We don't fall into a lot of patterns so we're very focused on the individual doing well and doing whatever it takes to get them moving forward. But I think that's kind of tied to culturally responsiveness. You've got to adapt your instruction to meet your kids and get them going. You have to be responsive to their needs. I've got to be responsive to what the staff needs too. It's all about identifying what the needs are and coming together with the point of getting there and you have to make sure you do that each and every day.

Principal Sheryl expounded on how she infuses culturally responsive practices throughout all aspects of all she does so that she is not only meeting the needs of students but also her faculty and staff. She shared how during the COVID-19 pandemic this became even more important.

Because of the large population of students from other cultures, Principal Sheryl identified inequities that her students faced and that she and her staff would need to work to overcome. She shared how there is a major inequity for many of her students with background knowledge because so many of her students' parents did not attend American schools and are new to the country. Additionally, many of these children do not even have family that speak English so the only time they hear it is at school. Principal Sheryl explained that overcoming

some of the inequities born out of language and lack of experiences can be difficult, but educators have to fill those gaps to meet those students where they are.

Principal Sheryl discussed some of the challenges she faces in moving her faculty and staff from closed to open mindsets.

I have to work to combat some of the closed mindsets by figuring out how to support my faculty and staff. I can set rules and I can set expectations, but those things aren't going to shift mindsets. If you can get people to explore the why, and not just mandate rules and protocols, that's how you shift the pendulum. That's the real challenge...trying to get people to understand the need driving the behavior. And I, as principal, have to do this.

Principal Sheryl went on to explain that you can do this in many ways, and you have to determine which way is right for each individual and for each situation. She explained how sometimes direct individual conversations work best, sometimes they do not. She also discussed how sometimes she has coaching conversations with the teacher regarding what she noticed in an observation. This might involve a lot of questions regarding teaching pedagogy and data. She discussed how most of the time it is important to be very specific, not broad. Other times she has discussions with her instructional leadership team about how to address an issue. From there, they normally do learning walks and look for examples. This then allows them to find examples highlighting tools and strategies other teachers can use. She concluded by reiterating that leaders have to look at the individual person and situation to determine the right technique to move mindsets.

She went on to discuss how critical self-reflection is vital for her role as a leader. She explained how she feels it is necessary for growth. She encourages it in her faculty and staff by asking questions.

Where are we doing well and where are we not? What do we need to do to get where we want to be? How are they doing on this? How are they doing that? What can each of us personally do to meet each students' needs?

Principal Sheryl went on to discuss the importance of having these conversations and asking these questions consistently. The idea of critical self-reflection has to be infused throughout the community in order for teachers to grow, learn, improve and transform. It is vital that the leader is a model of this.

Case Seven - Principal Sheryl Analysis

The focus of case seven centers around a White, elementary school principal with the most experience of any of the participants in this study of 37 years. She shared how her open-minded parents and her upbringing in a very segregated and unaccepting small town influenced her as a culturally responsive educator as well as the experiences she had as a young teacher and leader. Both of her parents were educators who encouraged her to do something other than teach, but through soul-searching she found that in her heart, she was a teacher.

The triadic lens framing this study of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory all unite with critical self-reflection and action resulting in transformation (Furman, 2012). Principal Sheryl shared how she transforms and therefore moves her faculty and staff on the culturally responsive pendulum. She does this by assessing the situation at hand and meeting the needs of the faculty or staff member just as she asks them to meet their students. She discussed how sometimes she has found the best way to shift mindsets is through individual conversations, sometimes professional developments, sometimes modeling and other times coaching conversations. Like many of the other participants, Principal Sheryl also expressed frustration in the patience it takes to make these small shifts over time.

Principal Sheryl feels that critical self-reflection is a function necessary for life. She shared how she works with her faculty and staff to constantly assess what they are doing and how they are meeting each students' needs individually. She also shared how she works to build rapport with her teachers so that she can be culturally responsive to them as well. Building rapports means being vulnerable with your faculty and staff. Principal Sheryl does this by modeling what teachers need to do with their students when she is working with them. Through both the personal critical self-reflection that she does herself as well as the critical self-reflection that she has been able to instill in her teachers, she has seen mindsets shift, transformation and culturally responsive growth, albeit slow.

Case Eight - Principal Mae

Principal Mae participated in one interview for this study. She has served as a secondary principal in the same school in the same district for eleven years. She taught for ten years as a special education teacher in both elementary and secondary, in the same district, prior to becoming a secondary assistant principal for ten years. She is a White female who grew up in a low socio-economic neighborhood. She shared how being exposed to multiple cultures in her neighborhood impacted her leadership as well as her mother who taught her from an early age to be accepting, understanding and compassionate towards people who are from different backgrounds. She described how important this was in shaping her work as a special education teacher by cultivating an empathetic mindset to her students' needs. Her mother's advocacy of those that could not advocate for themselves also had a vital impact on her work as a special education teacher and as a leader as she has had to proactively advocate for her school when she felt it was being slighted. She shared how she had to advocate for her school.

I've had to fight a lot to get the things that my school needed. Because the students overall in my school have always done relatively well academically and because we are not in the news, we were thought of as doing ok. But I knew we could do even better if we had the resources, we needed to meet all students' needs. At our school, it is a battle, a fight every day to make sure everything goes the way it's supposed to go. So, my challenge is partly with school leadership, seeing that our school is doing ok, so we might not need resources. Some schools were given more allocations and more assistance because they're more visible, more needy, according to their data. I've had to fight and advocate for my school.

Principal Mae went on to discuss how she felt her advocacy was looked upon differently because she is a female.

Sometimes people looked at my advocacy negatively, but I think it was because when a woman advocates some people look upon it differently than when a man advocates. I don't want it to sound like I felt the leadership was sexist, but in our society, it's looked at differently.

Principal Mae went on to explain that in the past few years, her consistent leadership has ensured that her school has had all the resources it needed. If her school needed something, she said that she just had to ask. She shared that her school is at the point now that they do not really know what to ask for because her school has been given all it needs. She also shared how glad she is that she no longer must fight to get the resources her school needs. Now, she is able to use her energy to focus on other areas of need.

One of the other areas of need that Principal Mae discussed was ensuring that the school environment was one of safety and inclusivity for her students.

My main goal every day is to make sure this school is a safe environment for all students. So, one of my major challenges is figuring out what's going on and what the kids need. We have kids who need a lot of support for lots of reasons whether they are students that are identified as having a federally identified disability or students who have special needs because of the environment and societal conditions from which they come to us each day. Some of our students identified as having disabilities can take up to six adults to calm them down when needed.

Principal Mae went on to explain that she feels deeply responsible for each student in her building and making sure that they all get what they need.

My goal is to figure out what they need because I don't allow branding of kids; they're my kids. So, I'm either going to figure it out myself or find someone who can help me figure it out so they can get what they need. Our goal is to make sure that each student excels to the best of their ability. A lot of students end up doing better in my school than at other schools and I think it's because they feel like they finally belong.

Principal Mae feels that one of the reasons she has been able to make so much progress in meeting students' academic and behavioral needs is because she has been able to lead her school for an extended period. She feels incredibly fortunate to have been the principal at the same school for eleven years. She explained that in her district it is more typical for principals to be moved from one school to another every five to six years and even that is considered a long tenure. She further explained that sometimes principals are moved even more frequently as often as two or three years.

Principal Mae went on to discuss additional challenges she faced when she first got to her school in addition to advocating for resources.

When I first got here, I was stunned to find out parents and students didn't want to be at this school. People were submitting paperwork asking to go to other schools even though they did not live in the other school zone. I thought, "What is going on?" I was determined from that point forward that I wanted my school to be a place that students, parents and families wanted to be.

Principal Mae went on to discuss how she has worked diligently to build strong rapport with the community and families. Most importantly, she has worked to create a safe, inclusive environment so that all students feel welcomed.

Principal Mae described how the COVID-19 pandemic has helped her faculty and staff be more understanding of the various cultures of their students. She shared that virtual teaching has really helped a lot of her staff because they were virtually in students' homes and often saw them doing their work with a younger sibling on their lap while a parent slept because the parent worked the night shift. Experiences like these opened the eyes of many of her staff members to understand what their students deal with daily. She shared how she has always tried to immerse her faculty and staff in their students' lives, but nothing has really helped as much as the virtual teaching. In the past, they have taken bus rides through their neighborhoods and she has informed them of community news such as drive-by shootings or gang activity. She does this not to scare them, but in hopes that it will help them to see and understand their students. She felt that it did help some staff members, but not all. She communicated that she has seen a real shift and transformation in her faculty and staff due to virtual teaching. She explained how teachers have been more likely to give students additional opportunities to complete missed work. They have also worked more diligently to find resources for students to assist with family issues. The teachers have been more likely to contact school counselors with student needs. Although the

influx of more needs is taxing on resources, Principal Mae explained that it does not mean that the need was not there before, it just means that teachers are now aware of and cognizant of the needs and more importantly, empathetic to try to meet those needs.

Principal Mae also shared how she has tried to combat the inequities facing her students especially in terms of resources.

> Inequities are what we are really trying to combat. We do a good job at my school, but it wasn't that way when I got here. I really had to advocate and fight for the resources we currently have. Because we were doing alright with test scores and not really causing the district any problems, we weren't getting the resources we needed.

Principal Mae continued to share that she works hard to meet the needs of all of her students, and this means continued professional development for her teachers so that they can recognize, empathize and meet the needs of their students. She shared how another way she does this is through staffing.

> We really try to be intentional about the people that we hire. We want to make sure our staff is diverse like our student population. Last year we got data that showed our school was one of the most diverse in the district for faculty and staff, but even though I could brag that we have the most diverse staff, that doesn't mean that we're done. We're always striving to make sure our kids see themselves in the teachers and if not, they can at least see themselves in their personalities.

Principal Mae shared how vital she feels hiring is to create a staff reflective of the school vision and culture.

Principal Mae was the one participant who shared that she was not inherently critically self-reflective. Although she shared that she is not inherently critically self-reflective, she is self-

reflective enough to know that she needs help in this area because of its importance. She stated, "I always say it takes a village to help me be a principal. You have to trust people to do their job and demonstrate your vision." She has worked hard to develop a team of people that will be honest with her regarding the actions and decisions that she makes. In this way, she takes their feedback and uses it to reflect. This takes a lot of time, just as the leaders who are critically self-reflective shared. She asks lots of questions of people she trusts in order to assist her with reflection. In this way she has been able to grow and transform herself to better meet the needs of her community as well as transform the school community into one that is more culturally responsive.

Case Eight - Principal Mae Analysis

The focus of case eight centers around a White, female principal who has been a principal in the same high-needs secondary school for eleven years. Prior to this, she was an assistant principal for ten years and before that she was a special education teacher. All her experience has been in the same district. She discussed how the area in which she grew up as a child impacted her leadership as a CRSL. Additionally, she shared that her mother's teachings also impacted her as an advocate for her students and contributed to her choice to be a special education teacher as well as her leadership as a CRSL.

The triadic lens that frames this study of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory marry to bond critical self-reflection with action which results in transformation (Furman, 2012). Principal Mae discussed how her longevity as a principal has allowed her to truly transform her school into one in which students and their families want to be. She has done this through advocacy of resources to meet the needs of her students, building rapport with the community, hiring staff that understands and enacts her vision daily as well as creating a safe

and inclusive environment that is welcoming to students. Principal Mae's leadership supports the triadic lens of this study by understanding and addressing the needs of the cultures of her students and transforming her school to be equitable.

Principal Mae is the only participant in this study that stated critical self-reflection does not come naturally to her, however she understands that it is vitally important and based on research, critical self-reflection can be developed if a leader does not possess them innately (Bustamante et al., 2009; Khalifa et al., 2016; Miller & Martin, 2015). Due to the lack of inherent critical self-reflection, she has built a network of colleagues and co-workers to help her to be critically self-reflective. She also shared how she has worked tirelessly over the last eleven years to ensure that her faculty and staff reflect her students and respond to their students' needs. This transformation that she has created also aligns with the triadic lens in that reflection occurs, then action takes place resulting in transformation.

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Findings of Cross-Case Analysis

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The eight case studies were used to gain a better understanding of the actions CRSL take each day, the barriers they face, and the role critical self-reflection plays in shaping their leadership practices. This section will present the findings as they relate to the two research questions posed in chapter one and again at the beginning of this chapter. The sections are broken up into the following categories: Background Influence, CRSL as a Responder, CRSL as a Cultivator, CRSL as a Catalyst and Culture as a Gateway to Race. The first four overarching themes are further divided into subsections.

Background Influence

One of the overarching themes that materialized from the data analysis was the influence each leaders' background had on the path to being a CRSL. The following sub themes were

developed from the data surrounding the theme of Background Influence: Diversity, Educational

Importance, Prolonged Aspiration to Teach, and Critical Self-Reflection. Each of these

subsections played a crucial role in the background influence of each CRSL.

Diversity

Most of the participants had some sort of diversity in their background. Sometimes this

was diversity from the neighborhood or city in which they grew up or from their transient

childhood moving from place to place. Principal Sheryl expressed that it was actually the lack of

diversity in her background that influenced her work as a CRSL. Some participants also had

different races represented in their families which created diversity in their own family. Others

stated that their families had an influence on their leadership because of the way they were taught

to be open and understanding of other cultures.

Family

Family was a sub theme that emerged under how the participant's background influenced

their leadership. Principal Kim is a mix of Native American and African American and grew up

hearing the stories of both cultures. This taught her to be accepting of other cultures. She also

taught in all Title I schools as well as alternative schools giving her a diverse personal and

professional background. Principal Hilda stated that she has always been interested in other

people and cultures as well as those that live different lifestyles than hers. She stated that her

parents taught her to be very open minded and loving and understanding towards others.

Principal Mae stated that her mother always instilled in her the importance of "sticking up for

people that cannot stick up for themselves." She further explained that her mother was an

advocate for everyone which in turn taught her to be an advocate for others. She shared how her

mother was the school cafeteria manager at a low-income school and her father would always

say, "I've paid for more school lunches at her school than at the school my children attend," because her mother was always paying for the lunches of students that did not have enough money. This led Principal Mae to be interested in working with people with marginalized students and eventually led her into education.

Four of the eight leaders grew up in a family of educators. Principal Kim stated, "I didn't see myself doing anything else" and further explained, "To this day, I still consider myself a teacher even though I'm in an administrative role." Principal Desiree shared how two of her aunts were teachers and because her mother worked multiple jobs as a single parent, she spent much of her time with her aunts. She stated, "It's just always what I did. I spent my time grading papers and putting up bulletin boards." Principal Sheryl stated that both of her parents were teachers and they tried to dissuade her from teaching, but she stated, "I did some soul searching and teaching was where my heart was." Principal Kim stated that neither of her parents were teachers and they did not have college degrees, but they were insistent on her going to college as teaching was one of the only choices for African American females at the time.

Transience

Principal Hilda was raised in a military family allowing her the privilege and the challenge of living all over the country. She expressed that it was a privilege because they were able to meet all kinds of different people and learn about different cultures. It also taught her to be open-minded because she was constantly joining new schools and making new friends when they moved. Principal Howard, although not from a military family, moved often due to his father's occupation. He expressed that these experiences helped give him a global perspective on things and allowed him to see that people and culture differ from one place to another.

I think that that has really helped my leadership because it's allowed me to maintain a perspective that I don't know everything, that I'm not the final expert word on anything, and that I do need to be able to take other people's ideas and thoughts and values into account when I'm discussing various things and coming up with decisions. So, I think that mental flexibility that I grew up with has helped me to be culturally responsive as a leader.

The transience of these participants, either due to the military or parent occupation, played a role in exposing these leaders to various cultures at an early age.

Location

Principal Scarlett spent her early childhood in a very segregated community both in regard to race as well as religion. Then, as a teenager her family moved to a new, more diverse community. This really opened her eyes to different people and cultures. She also stated that her initial work in Title I schools helped to shape her teaching and her thoughts about culture. Principal Vanessa shared that she was originally from a Caribbean island and moved to the United States when she was quite young. She shared that her background from Jamaica and her work in Title I schools helped to shape her thinking as a CRSL.

Only Principal Kim grew up in an urban area, but Principal Mae and Principal Desiree shared how they grew up in families that had little money, and because of that, they grew up in low-income suburban neighborhoods. This impacted the schools they attended as well as their group of friends ultimately providing them experience with diversity and an accepting nature. Although Principal Sheryl grew up in a very rural area without diversity, she felt that the lack of diverse people and thinking shaped her as a CRSL. "I think seeing what I thought was unfair allowed me to have an open view and an open mind. It made me feel that I had a responsibility to be

fair and inclusive of everyone." All eight participants were either impacted by the various cultures they were exposed to as a child or their lack of exposure.

Prolonged Aspiration to Teach

Principal Desiree, Principal Kim, Principal Scarlett, Principal Vanessa, Principal Hilda and Principal Sheryl stated that they always had the aspiration to teach from a very early age. Principal Kim stated that becoming a teacher started with her teaching to her dolls prior to teaching to younger children at Sunday School as a teacher assistant. She shared that her time as a teacher assistant in Sunday school, "drew me into the concept of being a child advocate and helping children especially Black and Brown children." Principal Hilda stated that being a teacher is what she always wanted to be, and she never strayed from that to this day. Principal Desiree stated that she always wanted to be a teacher but knew that she would not make much money in education, so instead she went into business. When she graduated, she worked in corporate America. She was very unhappy because she had no purpose in her job. That was when a friend of hers told her about an opportunity to teach in inner-city schools without a teaching certification. Knowing that teaching was what she always wanted to do, she jumped at the opportunity and followed her heart. Principal Vanessa stated that although it is a cliche, if anyone asked her parents, they would say she has wanted to be a teacher since she could speak. She also worked in corporate America for the financial rewards before going into education, but then followed her heart as did Principal Desiree.

There were also participants who did not plan on teaching. Principal Howard actually went into education, quite haphazardly informing a counselor he wanted to be a teacher simply because the person that was asked before him stated that he wanted to teach. He followed suit and then found that he was quite good at it and enjoyed working with children. Although Principal Scarlett and Principal Sheryl always wanted to be teachers, when it came time for

college, they went to law school. When Principal Scarlett graduated from law school, she worked in a law firm representing school districts. Principal Sheryl realized that law school did not suit her and began some soul-searching which led her to change her major to education. Principal Mae planned on going into the medical field and set her sights on being a physical therapist. However, at the time, her college counselor suggested she get her undergraduate degree in special education prior to going to physical therapy school. She actually told the counselor, "Ok, but I'm not going to be a teacher." Then during her stint in student teaching, she realized that she loved teaching, so she became a special education teacher.

Path to Leadership

The educational leaders who participated in this study all have very different paths to leadership, but they also had one common propulsion. All the leaders speak of the importance of mentors on their path. They all share how they were encouraged to seek leadership by others. Most also share they were natural leaders even though it was not their aspiration to become an educational leader.

Natural Leaders. Many of the participants expressed that they were natural leaders and that they had been leaders since childhood. Others expressed that leading came naturally to them because they were just helping and inspiring others. Principal Desiree stated that as a child, she had been labeled as "bossy." She was always class president because she felt like she had something to offer, and it just came naturally to her. She went on to explain that even as a first-year teacher, she was asked to lead her department of veteran teachers. Principal Hilda stated that leading was natural in the sense of how she interacted with people and utilized the people around her. She went on to explain that she easily connects with people and that those connections and care of others has really shaped her as a leader.

Conversely, many of the participants expressed that they never planned on leadership because they were so happy teaching in the classroom. Principal Kim said that although she always wanted to teach, she was always a transformational leader and because of that was encouraged to lead teachers in her building which then led to her delve into administration. Principal Vanessa stated that she was encouraged by her principal and colleagues to go into administration even though she hadn't considered it. She further shared that it happened much faster than she anticipated.

One important pathway to leadership shared by all of the participants was the influence of mentors. All of the participants had mentors who encouraged them and assisted them in their growth and development as a leader. Principal Desiree stated that her mentors provided, "safe spaces where I could ask questions and get coaching advice." Mentors were especially helpful to all of the participants when needing direction in dealing with difficult situations.

Professional Development. All the participants discussed how professional development was one aspect of their journey to educational leadership, whether they provided professional development at the school level or from central office. Principal Hilda stated to herself and others that she would never be an administrator. Her reason for this was that she did not want to deal with the politics involved. Her principal, however, convinced her to pursue her administration degree instead of one in psychology as she had planned. Her principal also encouraged her to become a teacher leader and involved her in various professional development opportunities for teachers. This helped her to realize the impact she could have as an administrator and how that could translate into making a difference for students on a much larger scale.

Principal Sheryl stated that after she was given the opportunity to conduct professional development at her school, she was asked by the central office to begin sharing with teachers from other schools. Through this experience, working with teachers became her passion and she was eventually hired to facilitate training to teachers full time. She did this for many years until she realized that although she loved her work, she was not having as direct an impact on students as she would have liked. She realized that principals could make things happen for students which led her to transition to a school administrator. All of the participants shared that they chose to go into administration in order to effect change and impact outcomes for students.

Culturally Responsive School Leader as a Responder

Another theme that emerged from the study was that CRSLs respond to the needs of students, families and the community. This response comes in many forms and addresses various aspects such as language, inclusivity, and equity. Principal Scarlett shared that she often feels her team members are more social workers than educational leaders because of the constant needs they respond to on a daily basis. All participants shared how responding to the needs of their students and stakeholders is the most demanding part of their job. They also shared how the COVID-19 pandemic created more need and highlighted needs that were not already visible.

Language

As the number of students in public schools who are English Language Learners increases dramatically year after year, the CRSL has to respond to the needs of these students who speak little English (National Education Organization). In fact by the year 2025, it is estimated that one in four students in the United States is an English Language Learner (National Education Organization). Along with responding to the needs of students who are English Language Learners, public schools also need to respond to the needs of their families. Principal

Hilda, Principal Sheryl, Principal Howard and Principal Scarlett all focus much of their time responding to the language needs of their students and their families.

Principal Hilda shared how the number of English Language Learners in her school continues to grow exponentially each year. She and her school community have responded to this need in numerous ways and continue to look for more ways to meet the needs of their English Language learners and families. Everything in the building has been labeled with both the English and Spanish words. She also continues to deliver professional development to her staff to help them, first, understand the needs of their students and then, secondly, to meet the needs of their students. In one training session, the teachers were shown a video of an elementary science lesson taught in Mandarin. She shared that after about ninety seconds into the lesson, the teachers were ready to give up. Their level of frustration helped them to understand the frustration that their English Language Learners experience daily.

Principal Hilda went on to share that she has more English Language Learners than any other school in her district, but she thinks about each of them as an opportunity and challenges her staff to ensure that they give each student what they need to succeed. She also shared how it is important that they do what they can to immerse students in both languages so that the Spanish speaking students are exposed to English as well as the English-speaking students exposed to Spanish. In addition to reading picture books to the whole school on the morning announcements in English, Principal Hilda also reads picture books in Spanish. She explained that this is vitally important because she is not fluent in Spanish, in fact, she is just learning it. When she reads the book, it is noticeable that she is struggling with pronunciation of the words. The vulnerability allows all of the students to see her struggling with something as the students might also struggle when they read both English and Spanish. Afterwards, when she passes a Spanish speaking

student, she asks them for tips on what she can do better. This allows them to feel that they have something to contribute to the community as well. The findings reveal that CRSLs have to find new ways to respond to language inequities daily.

Instability

Another subtheme that surfaced within the CRSL as a responder was how CRSLs responded to the instability many of their students face in their lives. All of the participants shared how instabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic were magnified and highlighted more than ever before. Teachers were virtually in students' homes every day which led to the highlighting of many instabilities in some students' homes. Additionally, instability was highlighted as some students did not have access to Wi-Fi or could not attend class due to caring for younger siblings while their parents worked outside the home. The CRSLs in this study work diligently to respond to these instability needs.

Principal Kim shared that one of the major needs of her students right now is that their homes are being taken away due to urban renewal projects causing them to be evicted from their homes. Some students shared with Principal Kim that when they got home from school, their belongings were out on the sidewalk. This creates incredible instability in their day to day lives because they do not know where they will be living. Some have moved in with family but travel from family member to family member so as not to overstay their welcome. This is a trauma that her students are experiencing every day. She explained that she responds to that by making sure that school is a stable environment and a safe place for them because often that school stability is all they have when their world is crumbling around them.

All of the participants explained how the pandemic of 2019 has created massive instability for students especially for those without strong support systems. Principal Howard

shared how a student had become systematic of the COVID-19 virus while at school but when they called the parent, the parent was unable to leave work and pick them up from school. The parent had no support system to help her, and the parent needed to remain at work to feed and medicate her child. He continued to explain how previously, some staff might say that the parent was not fit to be responsible for the child, but because the instability of the pandemic had been broadcast on the news daily, more staff were empathetic to the parent instead of being judgmental. This has helped his staff to see the bigger picture and to understand that not all parents are able to drop what they are doing to get to the school on a moment's notice. He has responded as a leader to this instability by seeking and understanding the resources available in the community to help families.

All of the participants shared that the instability of learning caused by the pandemic is a major need to which they have responded in the recent year. Principal Vanessa shared how she feels like she is in limbo balancing the needs of her staff with the needs of her students. She stated that she always puts students first, however, the pandemic has not only caused extensive instability for students, but teachers as well. Many teachers were being expected to teach virtually while also watching their newborns and toddlers because daycare locations were closed as were schools. Others may have had school aged children that they needed to help through the virtual learning environment while teaching to their students at the same time. She stated that this has led to a loss of the normal baseline for high expectations. She further explained, "It's like a teeter-totter. We know students aren't on grade level, but we have to balance that with the fact that they were not taught for three months. Then we teeter back, but we have to have high expectations, and this is where they should be." She continued that she just supports her teachers and tells them to do the best they can because that is all anyone can do in this environment.

However, she has a huge worry about how this instability of learning will impact her students, especially those who were already struggling.

Inclusivity

One of the sub themes that surfaced from the data on CRSL as a responder was the idea of inclusivity. CRSLs work hard to create school environments that are welcoming to all students. This work can materialize in many forms. One example is for CRSLs to include professional development for teachers on inclusivity. Another is for the CRSLs to craft a vision for the school that is inclusive of all cultures and then to immerse the school community in that vision.

Principal Desiree shared that in order to be inclusive, a leader needs to be responsive to the current cultural and societal issues of the day. She further explained how issues that happen outside the school impact students' lives and the school environment as well. She explained how the societal instability between police and minority communities is a constant topic in her school is as well as society. Recently, a White student made a derogatory remark about one of the incidents to a Black student which caused a major upheaval in the school. She further explained that the culture of a school is formed by combining all of the components that do not always seem to naturally mesh together. It is the leader's job to find ways to blend these into one school culture while still not losing the identity of the component parts. By doing this, the leader creates an inclusive environment where every student and staff member feel welcomed. Because they feel welcomed and valued, they are more likely to invest in the school environment. She further explained that being inclusive means a leader "takes the things that may, on the surface, seem to not have much of a relationship, and find the commonalities that can be used to bind all members together for a common purpose." This is what the CRSL does.

Contrarily, Principal Kim stated that although she does feel her faculty and staff understand and are inclusive of the larger culture of Black and Brown students, she further shared that she does not feel they do a great job of digging deeper into the cultural backgrounds. She explained how even White students do not just have a "White" culture. There are Greek students, Italian students, Russian students, etc. that all have intricacies of their culture woven into their family environment and their backgrounds. She discussed how the same is true of Black and Brown students. Principal Kim feels it is important to see them for who they are and not just a Black or Brown student. These two incidents were two of the few times throughout the interviews that participants referenced race. During most of the interviews, participants referenced culture and how they address culture but did not reference race.

Equity

All of the participants discussed how they respond to issues of equity. They reflected on how they immerse their community in the concept of equity with everything that is done in the building from resources to professional development to hiring. At the beginning of the year, Principal Hilda rented bicycles for her staff and took them on a bike ride through the different neighborhoods they serve. She shared how they bring resources into the building to help families including Sheriff's deputies who speak Spanish to work with their English Language Learners. This served a two-fold purpose. One reason was to have additional people available to mentor the students and help them with their language skills, but the other is that it allows the students and their families to be more trustful of the government. She also shared how responding to the equity needs of her stakeholders involved helping families navigate the travails of accessing dental care, government food assistance and government housing. Sometimes this can be difficult because families do not always want the government to know where they live because

of their immigration status, but it is important that the CRSL works to address the need. Principal Scarlett found that in order to respond to the equity needs of their community, it is helpful to bring resources into the school for family nights so that families become familiar with the resources that are available to them and can take advantage of them.

Professional Development. All the participants shared how they immerse equity in their plan for professional development throughout the year. They all shared how it is important to meet their faculty and staff where they are in terms of equity. Principal Desiree began her long-term equity planning the first year with a focus on trauma. At the beginning of the year, she had a trauma counselor present a one-day training to the faculty and staff and was pleased to see many of the teachers use take-aways they gleaned from the training in their classrooms. The principal shared how many teachers began their classes with a quick check-in with students such as each student using a finger scale of one to five to show how they felt that day. One finger represented the student not having a good day at all and five fingers representing that they felt great. This allowed the teacher to check in with students that were not having a good day and giving them grace as needed. The next year the principal moved on to focus on culturally responsive practices in the classroom tying it to their work on trauma from the year before. Principal Desiree shared how important it was to her to build from one year to the next instead of presenting disjointed training where teachers feel like there is a new concept to embrace each year.

Hiring. All the participants also shared how equity is at the forefront of the mind when hiring staff members. Principal Howard shared his frustration with the system in which he worked, because their teacher candidates are panel interviews involving principals from multiple schools, central office and human resources. The panel chooses the teachers they want to hire

and places those applicants in a pool that principals can then use to choose candidates for their vacant positions. He shared that these candidates are always professionally competent, but he often feels he cannot choose a candidate based on fit and the needs of the building because there are so few candidates to choose from. He combats this challenge by relying on the veteran teachers who are invested in the vision and working towards the common goal. The veteran teachers mentor the new teachers on the cultural direction of the building. He continued that it does not always work and that some people stay only for a year before moving on to other positions because they decide the school is not the right place for them.

Critical Self-Reflection

Throughout the study, all the participants discussed how they continuously reflect on their daily practice and how it impacts their students, staff and community. Principal Vanessa stated, "It's not enough to just understand. You must constantly be improving and working to learn, change and adapt. That is the only way to be culturally responsive because culture is ever changing and developing." Principal Kim shared how during one of her first years of teaching she was speaking to a student and demanded that the student look at her. She repeated, "Look at me," several times to him. She later discovered that in the students' culture, it is offensive for a child to look directly at an adult. She shared how she realized that she was teaching him American culture and not considering his culture. From this she realized that educators have to know their students, not just as one student belonging to a racial group, but really know each individual student. She shared that from this, she garnered the importance of not just seeing black or white, but the intricacies of the gray area as well.

All participants noted how critical self-reflection has impacted how many of their staff members see parents and families differently post-pandemic versus pre-pandemic. They shared

how assumptions and judgements are often made about parents on their ability to care for their student because they might not have the luxury of a job where they are able to leave with a moment's notice to get a student due to illness or some other emergency. The pandemic and virtual learning allowed teachers to see into their students' homes and see the dynamics that played out in those homes. The participants shared that many of their staff have reflected on the assumptions they made about these parents in the past. They explained that many staff members are more empathetic, caring and flexible because of these virtual experiences and their critical self-reflection.

Principal Sheryl shared that she has been reflecting on her cultural responsiveness during the pandemic. The pandemic has been difficult for everyone but especially for meeting the needs of so many students when they are not in the building. It has also provided more opportunities for teachers to learn about students' cultural backgrounds since they are virtually in the home with them each day. She also shared how many of her students' parents are first-generation American and therefore do not have experience in American schools. One of her areas of reflection and growth was learning about how names and surnames work in different cultures.

Principal Desiree shared that although she felt she was responding to the cultural climate of the community by conducting a book study with her Instructional Leadership Team, in intense critical self-reflection spurred by a barrage of attacks by a local politician, she realized that she may have moved too quickly or not properly assessed the comprehensive climate of the community. However, she also noted that the political climate vastly changed over the twelve months in which the book was initially chosen for the study and when the attacks came from the politician. Although the book was not based on CRT, during the year of the book study, CRT became a major topic in the national media. With this intense media focus on CRT, the school

board member began attacking the school for leading the book study basing her attacks on CRT. Although one side of the community was clearly ready for the conversations roused by the book study, another very fervent and zealous part of the community was not ready. So, although she had considered the teachers that were involved in the study and their eagerness and enthusiasm for the topic, she did not properly assess how this would be received by the other side and how it would become mired in controversy.

Principal Vanessa shared how she models critical self-reflection to her staff. She shared how she not only has individual conversations with staff, but also shares at larger faculty meetings.

> I've spent a lot of time with critical self-reflection and I'm open with my staff about that. I'll tell them that I went home, and I slept on everything about it for three days. And here's where I am. I heard somebody refer to a child in a certain way and that cuts me deep. I don't like that.

From there, she has discussions with her staff about why and how they move forward. She uses this as a teaching opportunity and impetus to transform and move the community forward. This shows how critical self-reflection is not just important for the CRSL themselves, but it is also important that they model it and discuss it with their staff.

Culturally Responsive School Leader as a Cultivator

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the study was the CRSL as a Cultivator of cultural responsiveness. The CRSLs that participated in the study were all intentional and diligent in understanding the culture of their students and staff as well in their mission to foster a culturally responsive mindset in the school community. Multiple sub themes

developed under this overarching theme including vision, professional development, resources and staffing and critical self-reflection.

Vision

All the participants related the importance of their vision to the creation of a culturally responsive school environment. By creating a vision that mirrored their beliefs in the importance of cultural responsiveness and equity, they are then able to immerse the school community in those beliefs. The culturally responsive vision focused on equity for students of all cultural backgrounds and was paramount to the leaders because it drives what is done each and every day by the leader and the administrative team.

Principal Sheryl shared how her instructional team was having a discussion about equity when they realized that their vision did not adequately address equity. When they made this realization, they began the revision process of the vision. In doing this, they included all stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, staff members, and community members. Including all stakeholders in the revision process was important so that there would be ownership of the vision from all stakeholders. These discussions with stakeholders allowed the principal to better understand where the stakeholders were in terms of cultural responsiveness. She found this especially important with the teachers because it allowed her to determine who needed more assistance in their understanding of culturally responsive practices. This then led to guidance on how to build their professional development plan for the year based on what the community needed.

> At my school we are very focused on the individual student doing well and doing
> whatever it takes to get them moving forward. That in itself is tied to being culturally
> responsive. You've got to adapt your instruction to meet your kids. And then I've got to

be responsive to what the staff needs in my own way. It's identifying what the needs are

and coming together with the point of getting there.

She went on to share how creating this vision together with all stakeholders, created common expectations to move everyone forward.

Principal Vanessa also shared that the vision must be seen in every decision and every action that the leader makes every day. She continued that it is not just that one has to ensure the vision is representative of their beliefs regarding culture and equity, but just as importantly, the leader must articulate the vision in a way that leads the school on the proper trajectory and further allows for a discussion about that trajectory. Only with an open dialogue by asking questions and offering divergent views can all stakeholders understand and learn. This is the way CRSLs can hope to shift mindsets. If a leader does not allow for open discussion, little growth can be made, and the vision is just the leader's vision with no buy-in from the school community. She further elaborated on the importance of the leader not just allowing, but encouraging, feedback from stakeholders.

A leader needs to be transparent, but not naked. And so, from that standpoint, there are

many times where the staff might be unsure or uncertain of something, but I encourage

them to push back. I tell them all the time, if there's a decision made or we're going in a

direction that you're not sure about…push. Some challenges require a different mindset,

and it takes time. And that in and of itself is a challenge, because we want to see results,

but it isn't always realistic in a short period of time. So timing is a challenge and because

of that sometimes people are left behind. I told them right at the beginning of the year,

you have to decide whether you're on the bus or you're not, because we are using the

vision as our compass. Not everyone was on the bus and that's okay, because those that

believe in the vision are on the bus and that is who we want on the bus with us because this is a journey we have to all make together. This bus is rollin' no matter how slowly. We definitely aren't going to get a speeding ticket, but we are making progress.

Principal Vanessa as well as all of those participating in this study shared the importance of building and shaping the school community using the vision as a cornerstone.

Principal Vanessa went on to discuss how at the end of her first year, she sat with her leadership team to create a shared vision. She discussed how they were especially interested in ensuring that student empowerment was part of the vision. She further elaborated on how she included stakeholders in the creation of the shared vision focusing on how the vision would impact teachers and students in the building. They now use the vision as their compass. Since then, she has provided extensive professional development on culturally responsive classrooms to support the vision including taking key members of her leadership team to a national conference. She also shared how when they became a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school, she ensured that the training was infused with the vision of the school so as not seen as something separate by teachers and staff.

Principal Desiree shared that cultural responsiveness means embracing, celebrating and building on the differences among different cultures of the school. She continued that it can only be enacted with a vision that holds everyone to high expectations. The culture and the expectations shape the vision. By shaping the vision in this way, it provides a roadmap to all stakeholders. Principal Desiree explained that this means sometimes leaders have to have difficult conversations with stakeholders as to where they are and where they think the path of the school community assuring that the two align. Most importantly, she added that you must monitor. You cannot just have this lofty vision. It cannot be a plan that you do not monitor. It

must be part of the day-to-day work. She explained that it is a cyclical system as the leader is always monitoring, reflecting and then circling back.

Principal Vanessa shared that she has found the most beneficial way to establish and cultivate the vision is to model it. She models how to be culturally responsive to students every day in the school community, so teachers see what culturally responsiveness looks like in action. She has found that this is more effective than any other aspect of moving teachers on their path to cultural responsiveness. She reflected on a conversation she had with a teacher assistant regarding a student who had been challenging. She had observed the teacher assistant engage with the student in the hallway after the student left the classroom without permission to go to the bathroom. The teacher assistant began speaking to the student in a harsh tone and the student rolled his eyes and continued. The principal then spoke to the student modeling culturally responsiveness to find out why the student had left the room without permission and was able to meet the students' needs that day. Later, when the principal had a conversation with the teacher assistant about the incident, the teacher assistant shared that she felt like the principal wanted her to make excuses for parents who are not raising their children correctly. What astounded the principal is that although the teacher assistant did not seem to learn from the interaction, she had numerous teachers talk to her later about what they learned from the interaction seeing both the teacher assistant first address the student and then the principal addresses the same student in a very different way. It was a very teachable moment.

All of the CRSL participants discussed the importance of cultivating a student voice in their vision because without student voice there is no equity. Many of the participants shared how they have included student voice in the daily running of the school by creating Student Leadership Teams where students are able to share their thoughts and ideas and leaders are able

to solicit responses from the students to help them create and implement policies that impact the students. These Student Leadership Teams allow students to give input into how to improve their school experience. Students have given input on extracurricular activities, the morning announcements, dress code requirements, etc. This allows students to learn to speak up for themselves and understand that they are a valued member of the school community.

Professional Development

One of the sub themes that emerged from the overarching theme of CRSL as a Cultivator was professional development. All of the participants shared how they use their professional development plan to cultivate culturally responsiveness within their building. The overarching theme was expansive; the following subcategories emerged within it: Content, Structure, and Immersion.

Content. Principal Scarlett shared how she has focused her professional development for teachers around the data for their middle school. Teachers were led through an analysis of the data and determined that very few Black and Brown students were in advanced and high school credit classes. Once teachers analyzed data and realized the extremely low to negligible numbers of Black and Brown students in these classes, then they went on to learn the implications of this. The participant shared how she talked with her teachers about how being in advanced classes directly correlated to higher graduation rates and higher college attendance rates. From here, the teachers and school counselors determined ways that they could inform students, parents and the community about the importance of these classes and what supports needed to be put in place to help these students be successful.

Principal Desiree and Principal Scarlett shared that they do not feel most of their school community understands their students' culture. Principal Desiree explained that she feels there

are some community members who believe they understand, but they do not really show understanding towards students of different cultures. Principal Desiree shared that there are a few members of her staff who are examples of what it means to be culturally responsive. Because of this, she feels that her plan for professional development is paramount in really moving the community to a place that understands Black and Brown students, but that the plan needs to be differentiated based on the needs of each staff member.

Principal Scarlett shared that although she had not presented any professional development to her staff that was explicitly about cultural identity or cultural responsiveness, she has made sure that equity is at the forefront of all planned professional development based on their division's vision. However, like Principal Desiree, she addresses cultural responsiveness from a different lens. She feels that she can get more traction from her teachers and community that way. She has addressed it in professional development through the lens of student-centered instruction and student achievement. She further explained that if all students are having their needs met independently through student centered instruction, she feels the community is being culturally responsive even if it is not explicitly stated. This was a common statement among all of the participants in that they feel they must address the issue of race through other means such as cultural responsiveness and student-centered instruction instead of explicitly referencing race. Although the leaders themselves use CRT as a lens themselves, they feel unable to be candid about its use with their school communities.

Principal Vanessa explained that she cultivates culturally responsiveness through professional development based around maintaining high expectations. She stated,

> You have to make sure you aren't seeing kids for who you wish they would be, but who they actually are. It is knowing that it doesn't matter where they're from or what

experiences they have, they have potential and then maintain high expectations while

meeting them where they are.

She also explained how often teachers sympathize with students through deficit thinking. This

does not help them. She continued that it is more important to empathize with them so that you

can be culturally responsive to their needs. Often the teachers that sympathize, instead of

empathizing, just lower expectations which hinders students instead of helping them. Principal

Vanessa shared how she began her professional development plan having teachers really look at

the students as the people they were and then address their own biases that they might have in

helping these students. She explained that this was not easy, and the conversations were hard.

She explained that she spent the first year really building relationships and trust so that the staff

were comfortable enough to be vulnerable for these difficult conversations. She also shared how

she uses storytelling in her professional development to help teachers see the classroom, the

school and the world through the eyes of the students. She shared that she has found that

"storytelling pulls people in and helps them to respond from a place of it's just the right thing to

do rather than I do not owe them anything." She followed with the fact that this professional

development plan shifted the mindset of her teachers to be responsive to the students' culture and

needs. Principal Vanessa stated that she is starting to see a mindset shift in her faculty and staff.

One of the examples she gave to illuminate this is that when she first arrived at her school and

would ask teachers to nominate students to participate in the morning announcements, all the

students looked the same on paper: honor roll, White, no discipline issues, etc. Now, after four

years at her school, when she asks for student nominations, all of the students look different and

have different backgrounds. This alone has made a huge difference in the way the school looks

and feels to students, staff and the community.

Differentiation. Principal Desiree shared how because each of the teachers are in a different place, it is important that you meet them where they are so professional development has to be tailored to meet their needs. This includes differentiation of the professional development that is provided to teachers. It also includes being intentional and deliberate about each word that is said and how it is said. Principal Vanessa explained her staff's lack of cultural understanding in this way, "They don't see who is in front of them." She explained how when she was first appointed to her school, she asked her staff what they thought the percentage of free and reduced lunch students was. Much of the staff responded with a percentage of 25% or lower. In actuality, the free and reduced lunch percentage at her schools was more than 50%. From this, she realized that her staff did not see the poverty in their school. Principal Vanessa's concern is that research shows often culture and experiences, or lack thereof, are intertwined with poverty. The staff went on to share that they thought the students were getting "worse over time." What she realized from this is that the failure to see and understand who was in front of them meant that they were also failing to see their culture and the need for culturally responsiveness. She went on to explain that in year two they started from the "mindset of we're marching to the beat of a different drum." This is when she took many of her teacher leaders to a national conference on cultural responsiveness and merged it all together. She stated, "It was a lot of work, but it was fruitful." Other participants also shared the importance of knowing where your faculty and staff are so that you can differentiate the professional development to their needs.

Structure. Principal Desiree shared how starting small and being patient is paramount but at the same time it is essential that the work continues through the ebbs and flows of societal discord. She explained how something will happen in society that is a catalyst to bring conversations and get people on board with culturally responsiveness. Then that societal

upheaval will die down and people inevitably go back to the status quo until there is another

catalyst. It becomes cyclical and nothing really gets accomplished. She continued that her goal is

to "create sustainable long term, real work with teachers." She explained that they began the

professional development in the first year with understanding of trauma because it is something

that most people can relate to in some small way, even if not to the level that many people of

color face day in and day out. She felt that this was a "softer entry point for basics" on the lack of

understanding and empathy which would then lead to understanding of lack of culturally

responsive practices. She continued that she felt this was a respectful place of where people are

in their understanding of culture. She also explained how some people would challenge her that

she was moving too slowly because they felt the work was more urgent. Although she agreed,

she felt that if they started too fast, they would lose ground in the work and end up going

backwards. She stated, "You have to start off very small and very concrete and then move on to

the next level and challenge." She explained the pertinence of schools moving at their own pace

and comfort level. This is yet another example in which the CRSL feels unable to be overt about

race and instead uses culture to be ambiguous about the work regarding equity for Black and

Brown students' school experiences.

Principal Desiree elaborated on the idea of starting small and somewhat covert in her

work towards racial equity by adding, "Even if we get a teacher to think a little bit differently or

to ask questions that they wouldn't normally ask, that is better than nothing at all." She continued

with one way she is doing this which some might perceive a bit backwards. She is not

necessarily talking about culturally responsiveness but instead having her teachers look at the

fairness of their grading practices, assessment practices, classroom pedagogy practices, and

relationship building practices. She started this by having them do some critical self-reflection about their practices with questions.

> Think about a time that you had a really challenging interaction with a student in your
> class that was a person of color. What biases might you have had towards that person that
> you can only now reflect on? If you had that situation to do over, what would you do
> differently?

She continued that through this simple process, many teachers have had pivotal reflections that have changed the way they interact with all students including Black and Brown students. Another avenue she took with her teachers was to have them have real authentic conversations in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) about students who are struggling and then develop ways to address their struggles.

Immersion

All the participants discussed the importance of immersing the school community in cultural responsiveness in order to cultivate the community. Principal Vanessa shared that in addition to the professional development that is provided for teachers throughout the year on culturally responsive practices, she ensures that the concept is immersed throughout the building daily. One way she does this is by adding a section on the weekly school newsletter for teachers on culturally responsive practices. This section in the newsletter is not just telling teachers what to do, but instead actually giving them practical ways to be culturally responsive in their classrooms with students. These ideas address how to look at data, how to understand the needs of students, how to adjust instructional and daily practices, and how to be inclusive of student voice. This part of the weekly newsletter, along with her planned professional development was really the initiative of the "cultural frame," as she has titled it, in her building.

Resources and Staffing

One of the sub themes that emerged under the umbrella of the CRSL as a cultivator was that of resources and staffing. Participants shared how in order to cultivate and build a school community that aligns with their vision, they had to be strategic to maneuver resources and staffing. Principal Desiree shared how she is intentional about making sure that her team always brings minoritized candidates to the table for interviews. She discussed how this year she was pleased that her team had hired two minoritized candidates of the six positions that were to be filled. She further explained that if that trajectory continues, they would be building a very diverse and dynamic environment for students. Principal Mae discussed how fortunate she is that all of her security members are minorities who understand students and build strong relationships with students. Because of this, her security team is often able to thwart issues that could become very problematic for the school. Contrarily, Principal Vanessa shared that just because a person is a member of a minoritized population, it does not mean that they are going to connect with and understand minoritized students. She shared how when she first arrived at her current school, there were quite a few teachers of color who did not relate well to Black and Brown students. She shared that it is a person's mindset about students that is most important. She further explained that although mindset is the most important, it is also important that a student see themselves in the adults in the school, so it is a strategic balancing act.

Principal Mae shared how she has had to prudently advocate and keenly campaign for resources for her building including staffing. Because her building had demonstrated success on achievement tests and other benchmarks, her school had often been dismissed as one not needing additional resources. When she became the principal, she found that she had to be intentional about what they needed and why they needed it in her requests and explanations to central office

personnel. Not until she was relentless in her campaigning endeavors for multiple years did her labors prove fruitful.

Critical Self-Reflection

All of the participants of this study shared the importance of critical self-reflection in their work of CRSL as a cultivator. In fact, Principal Sheryl shared that she does not believe one can be a good leader, yet alone a good CRSL, without the propensity to critically self-reflect. One of the reasons this is so imperative for CRSLs is that a leader has to be willing to reflect on their own biases and assumptions regarding race in order to move their own thinking forward, let alone transform and move the mindset forward of multiple staff members.

Principal Desiree shared that she is a very linear thinker and likes to have clear pathways and identified outcomes. She explained that she has had to critically self-reflect on her plan for her building to make sure that it is manageable and achievable. She would like it to be a one-year plan, bu, knowing that is not possible, she is making herself create a five-year plan. To determine the outcomes, she thinks about what she wants to see, what it will look like and what both the academic and discipline data will show. Principal Kim shared how she cultivates critical self-reflection in her faculty and staff by sharing her own processes and experiences of critical self-reflection. She stated that she teaches her faculty and staff to think about their day in a way that focuses on growth instead of focusing on negatives. For example, she stated, "It's not important that you forgot to tell them about gerunds, what is important is how you are going to fix it the next day." Ultimately, she shared what she conveys to them is to ask the question, "To the best of my ability, did I do right by students today?" This is a question she asks herself every single day.

Principal Howard shared that when reflecting on cultivating the culture of his building it is primarily impacted by the attitude and the language used by staff, the way they interact with each other as professionals, and the level of respect they have for one another. He also stated the way they talk to students is foundational. He shared that he has visitors in the building who always comment on the positivity and the attitude of his staff.

> It's not a put on. It's not a show for somebody walking through. It's a genuine thing. So, I think that when people come in, one of the biggest things that they see is that we deal with everybody as individuals and we are respectful of them, whether it's a student or a teacher or a parent or a grandparent.

He went on to share that as a leader, one must demonstrate this attitude every minute of every hour of every day. He shared, "If you don't embody what you want your staff to be, you're not going to get there." He continued that intentionality is paramount regarding attitudes and the way in which they approach their daily tasks. Intentionality on every aspect of the job is the best way to impact the mindset of staff, students and community.

Principal Howard went on to state, "I don't think you can be a leader, period, without being able to critically self-reflect." He continued that he knows he does not get everything right, but what he has learned as a leader is that those times are some of the most important opportunities for growth. This is his chance to model courage and vulnerability as a leader and admit to his staff that he was wrong. He continued that if leaders are not willing to look at the things they are doing and the reason they are doing them, they will never grow and improve.

> You're never going to improve as a leader. You're never going to be a better principal or assistant principal or teacher if you're not willing to go back and reflect and admit that there are certain things that you did wrong or could have done better.

He shared that the next step after reflection is figuring out how to improve and grow so that you do not make the same mistakes again. He shared that he would continue to make mistakes, but hopefully he will not make the same ones if he is critically self-reflective. He further elaborated that modeling of the critical self-reflection process for his staff is vital for cultivating critical self-reflection in teachers and is especially important for critical self-reflection related to culturally responsiveness. He shared that especially with cultural issues, everyone is going to make mistakes because we all have implicit biases, but what is done when one makes those mistakes is what is important.

Conversely, Principal Mae shared how critical self-reflection is a major area of growth for her. She stated, "I just don't naturally do it." However, she does realize how important it is to be critically self-reflective. Because of this she has cultivated a network of support staff who help her to be critically self-reflective. This has taken time to build trust and rapport so that her direct reports feel comfortable telling her things that she does not always want to hear. They have to give her feedback that is negative which can be hard for employees. However, she has used her time to build those relationships and ensure that people feel safe when they tell her something that she could have done differently or better. She shared that she always says, "It takes a village to help me be a principal." This would be a true statement for all leaders.

Culturally Responsive School Leader as a Catalyst

One of the themes that emerged from this qualitative study is that CRSLs are catalysts of change. They are leaders that identify the need for change and then create a vision and develop a path for that transformation. One of the subcategories that emerged from this data was the importance of the clarity of vision. The other was the way in which CRSLs use the inequities their stakeholders face each and every day as an impetus for needed change.

Vision Clarity and Articulation

One aspect that all participants discussed was the importance of their vision. The eight leaders expressed how important it is to ensure their vision permeates the school environment. All of the CRSLs that participated in this study discussed how important it is for cultural relevance and equity to be considered when determining the vision. The vision must be an aspect of every classroom and at the forefront of every decision made for the school by the CRSL. When forming the vision, it is important that the CRSL understands the uniqueness of the school environment, and most importantly, the needs of the school. The vision can be used to shape the culture of the school.

Principal Kim stated that her son described her vision as "her save the world kick." She went on to describe her passion to ensure that each student has what they need and that in a small way, that was her way of saving the world. Principal Sheryl shared that the leaders' role is to educate the community, the staff and the students. The leader needs to ensure that the idea of equity and meeting each individual students' needs are in the vision. Principal Scarlett stated how important it is that the vision clearly states equity as a priority to ensure the curriculum and resources used throughout the school reflect the idea of equity. This allows all students to see themselves in the resources used within the school.

Principal Howard expressed that his vision differing from his principal's vision is what led him on the path to leadership. He began realizing that the thoughts and ideas he had were contradictory to his principal's at the time

If I truly believe that I'm capable of this and I truly believe this is the right way to do some of these things, I need to take the next step and move into a leadership position

where I can actually do them instead of just kind of hoping that the principal picks my

option.

As he reflected on this, he realized that his vision was very different from his administrator's. He

realized that his vision was impacted by the global perspective he had as a military child and

how this allowed him to be inclusive of all students.

Inequities

All the participants stated that addressing inequities is one of their constant challenges as

a CRSL. There are many inequities such as inequities of access, inequities of opportunity and

inequities of prior knowledge. The scope of these inequities can also vary day to day depending

on the students and the political climate. These inequities have been present for decades if not

longer, but they became heightened during the virtual learning environment of 2020-2021 due to

the COVID-19 pandemic. One aspect that was a common thread across all of the participants'

interviews regarding inequities is that one must know their students, their families and their

community in order to know and understand what the inequities are and furthermore, how to

address the inequities.

Inequities of Access. All the participants discussed the struggles they have addressing inequities

of access. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students were expected to learn and complete their

schoolwork at home. If their district was a more affluent district, they had the opportunity to stay

connected with teachers and possibly even attend class using their computers. This highlighted

numerous barriers that many students face. Many students did not have parents at home with

them during virtual instruction to ensure that they attended their virtual classes or completed

their asynchronous work provided by their teachers. Many parents still had to work so that they

could provide for their families because they worked in essential jobs such as healthcare or the

service industry. Even though some school districts were able to provide computers, some students did not have access to Wi-Fi, basically deeming their computer useless as they could not access their classes or work without going to a public location with Wi-Fi. However, because of the pandemic, most of these were closed leaving students with no access to learning.

Principal Hilda stated that almost 100% of her Spanish speaking population was without Wi-Fi. She, her assistant principal and school counselor worked with the district to get Wi-Fi and hotspots so that students could attend classes virtually and connect with teachers. Unfortunately, the demand outweighed the availability of resources so many were still without access. This also created another inequity of access because now the Spanish speaking students were being immersed in their Spanish speaking family instead of spending six hours in school hearing and learning English. They were now fully immersed in the Spanish language again. Principal Hilda said that oftentimes she feels that she is 85% social worker and 15% principal. She stated, "Truthfully, I just do. When we hear the need, we try to act and do what the family needs." This is a trait that was echoed by the other participants in the study

Principal Hilda stated that it is important to see the big picture. She further explained that it is important to meet the needs of the students and their families but also focus on what the school community can do to assist long-term. She shared that she and her team offer parenting resources such as resource clinics for the Spanish speaking population. These clinics can do everything from assisting parents in navigating dental care for their child, arranging for a doctor and acquiring free or reduced school lunches. She shared that some of these families are resistant to filling out these forms because they are illegal immigrants and do not want to be tracked by the government while others simply have trouble navigating the often-complicated government protocols and systems.

Inequities of Opportunity. Concerns regarding how to address inequities of opportunity were also shared by the participants. Principal Scarlett shared that the school counselors in her school spent the majority of their time in the community meeting the needs of students and families. She explained that she has a huge transient student community because they move from hotel to hotel depending on the season. Sometimes there are many people living in a hotel room. This is a huge barrier for success for these students because they are moving school to school throughout the school year. Then when they get "home" each night to the hotel room, it is difficult to get homework done with multiple people in one room doing multiple things at a time. Additionally, she discussed that sometimes the children are taking care of other children while parents are at work. The school counselors went to the hotels to help students and their families address these concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted inequities of opportunity as well. In addition to all of the problems that might occur when families are moving from hotel to hotel, now multiple students need to use the hotel Wi-Fi at the same time. Many of these transient families are also families of English Language Learners which creates another barrier to opportunity concerning language.

Another barrier raised by Principal Desiree was the lack of opportunities for students in advanced placement courses. She shared she worked diligently to address the number of Black and Brown students as well as students considered socio-economically underprivileged in advanced classes at her current school but still has a long way to go. She had done this work in her former urban high school as an assistant principal by identifying the concern of underrepresented students in these classes and then used professional development to train teachers on helping these students succeed in these classes. She stated that this work was the pride and joy of her career as an assistant principal. She shared that this work involved focusing

on the needs of all of the stakeholders and then supporting those needs. For some students, it might be a mentor that needed to check in with the student daily. Another student might need a tutor to help them with challenging material. For leaders, much of the work revolved around having candid and courageous conversations with teachers and professional development to help them see each individual student potential. The needs of the community were met by helping parents and community members understand how important these classes were to propel these students into college bound tracks.

Inequities of Prior Knowledge. Participants also referenced the inequities students have regarding background knowledge. Participants discussed the gaps present due to primary home language and lack of experiences. Lack of vocabulary and language create an inequity of prior knowledge because students do not have the words that they need to speak and understand. Then as they are learning these words, they are falling further behind in the content. Many of these same students lack experiences that would assist them in making connections and learning. For students that lack the language and experiences, they have inequities that can cause major struggles. Others may only experience one of these inequities. Some students may live just miles from the beach but have never been. Others have never been to a restaurant other than a fast-food establishment. Others have not had books read to them or been to a movie theater. Many participants stated they had students who had never left the city in which they lived. Principal Howard described how the first school in which he worked had almost 100% of students in the African American, and low-socioeconomic subgroups; many had never even been out of the neighborhoods in which they lived. This lack of experience causes additional struggles for students because it is hard to imagine and make connections when they have never experienced it for themselves.

Principal Desiree shared that although it is important to expose every child to different voices, a leader must also expose them to voices that reflect their own experiences. Leaders have to give them perspectives and voices that reflect them, not just their race, but gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and religion. Leaders must give students opportunities to explore that and be thoughtful, while also teaching them how to talk about and think about other people in a respectful way. This is another area of inequity of prior knowledge because there are students who have not had experiences with people that look differently, sound differently, and believe differently. By exposing students to new and different voices, leaders help them to access a more global perspective. In addition to teaching students with materials that reflect their culture, leaders need to expose them to different cultures as well.

As a CRSL it is critical that leaders look for inequities at every step. For instance, it is important to make sure the curriculum and materials used are equitable when referencing experiences and cultures. It is also important to ensure that teachers are building rapport and relationships with students so that they know how to respond and fill in the gaps to the inequities students might experience. It is also important that CRSLs put structures and systems in place to monitor all these aspects and help people to understand why they are important.

The Gateway of Culture

The final finding from the data was based around the use of CRT. The participants of this study consider themselves to be CRSLs. The word "race" is not in the title of CRSL, yet much of the research on CRSLs involves the use of CRT in their work. Whether it is because of the political divisiveness, or the leaders' lack of skills, what was found from this data is that the CRSLs are not addressing the issue of race and when they do step their toe into that metaphorical pool of race, there is a backlash preventing them from swimming or even treading water. This

was evident from the case of Principal Desiree. She dipped her toe into the pool with the idea of trauma informed practices her first year. She then went a little deeper the next year when she began a book study around understanding race with a small group of teachers on the Instructional Leadership Team. When a local school board member found out about the book study, she was not only critical on her own social media but took the story to national news and the book study was halted.

Principal Scarlett also discussed an issue with a school board member regarding a book study on race. Although she was not directly involved, the issue made her think about how she can move her faculty forward on the issue. She shared how she needs to spend a lot of time using critical self-reflection to help her determine how she can lead conversations building -wide to help her school community on the journey to create an equitable school for all students. All the participants discussed their work around culture, but none, except Principal Desiree. had even attempted any work specifically on race based on the data from the study.

Based on the data, the CRSLs in this study have chosen to focus on culture as a gateway to the contentious topic of race. They all discussed how they focus on culture daily including conversations with teachers, professional development, and community involvement, but they have not yet moved to focus on race. They may themselves use CRT as a lens, but they are not able to be bold and explicit about the work that needs to be done around race. When they even attempt it, they are thwarted. The use of culture may be a gateway to move their faculty, staff, and the community to focus on the issues of race and the way race is systemic in our society and schools.

Conclusion

Chapter four provided a summary of the findings of this qualitative study based on the culturally responsive thoughts and experiences of eight public school principals. First, the individual cases of each of the eight participants were discussed. Next, the eight cases were discussed regarding the five themes that emerged from the data. The four themes that surfaced were: The Influence of Background, The CRSL as a Responder, The CRSL as a Cultivator, the CRSL as a Catalyst and The Gateway of Culture (see figure 4). Study participants shared the actions they take daily to create culturally responsive schools. They also shared the challenges and barriers that they face. Additionally, but importantly, they shared the importance of critical self-reflection in their work as a CRSL and how they use culture as a gateway to issues of race.

Figure 4

Findings
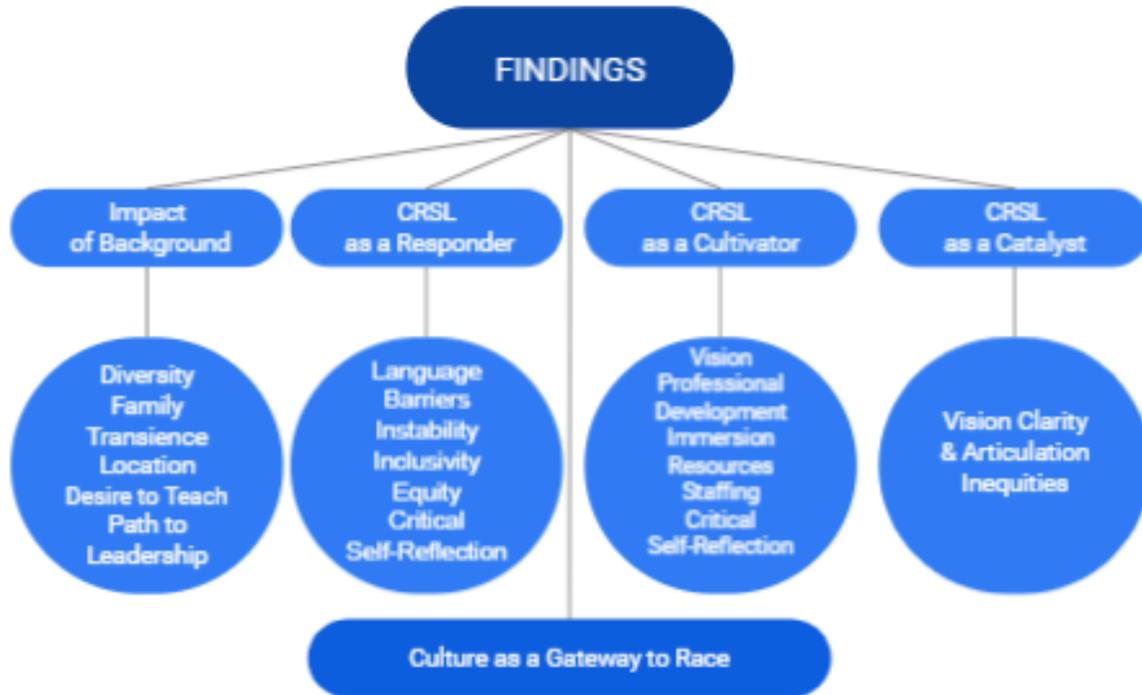
Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter four presented the findings from this study focusing on CRSLs daily actions, the barriers they face, and the impact of critical self-reflection on their practice. This chapter will present the findings and implications based on the eight case studies and the cross-case analysis. This chapter presents a summary of the qualitative study of CRSLs and important conclusions drawn from the data presented in chapter four. A review of the five major themes that emerged from the study including: Importance of Background, CRSL as a Responder, CRSL as Cultivator, CRSL as a Catalyst and The Gateway of Culture will be summarized. The chapter will provide insight to the two research questions that anchored this study. The triadic lens of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory serve as a lens for interpreting and presenting the findings. This chapter will present the overarching themes, interpretations and recommendations based on the cross-case analysis of the eight case studies. This chapter will also provide a discussion of the implications for CRSLs and include implications for the profession regarding cultural responsiveness. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research in reference to the practices of CRSLs.

Summary of the Study

Cultural responsiveness has been a topic of research for the last few decades. This study sought to identify the actions of CRSLs daily along with the challenges they face regarding those actions. Additionally, the study focused on how critical self-reflection impacts the practices of CRSLs. The importance of culturally responsive pedagogy has gained prominence in the last few decades. Educational leaders have a significant impact on student outcomes which makes it vital that leaders understand the needs of their students to ensure positive outcomes for their students.

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative case study methodology to gain a better understanding of CRSLs including their daily actions, the barriers they face and the role of critical self-reflection in their practice. The research design and methodology take into consideration the study's focus on culturally responsive school leadership through the theoretical triad framework of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. This research study used individual case studies with a cross-case analysis as a research design.

Five major findings emerged from the study's data. The first was the impact of a leader's background on their leadership. All of the participants in this study shared how their background impacted their perspective as a CRSL. The second finding focused on how leaders respond to the needs of their students and then transform the school to meet those needs. One of the primary actions of a CRSL is first to understand and know the needs of their students and then to address those needs directly. Another finding of the study was how the CRSL cultivates a culturally responsive school environment. Each of the participants expressed how they are a catalyst for change through the daily actions they take transforming their schools to meet the needs of all student which was the fourth finding. The final finding focuses on how culture is used as a gateway to the discussion of race. Although all the participants use CRT as a lens themselves, they do not use the theory overtly because they feel their communities are not ready for the candor of those conversations. Instead, they use the concept of "culture" as a gateway to the issue of race.

The results and findings of this study provide opportunities for future research related to culturally responsive school leadership. This focus of this study on critical self-reflection supports its importance to the work of culturally responsive school leadership. The findings of this study also support the body of literature regarding the importance of culturally

responsiveness being intertwined into the practices of school leaders. Additionally, this study supports the research regarding the importance of opposing the status quo through the confrontation of barriers.

Overview of Problem

Educational barriers have existed for children of color since the beginning of public schools, but research on them did not begin until the early twentieth century (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Even with the research, it was not until recently that the idea of culturally responsiveness was introduced to the educational community and the topic continues to be vastly under researched (Khalifa et al., 2016). The existing research focuses mostly on how teachers can establish culturally responsive classrooms (Khalifa et al., 2016). Leaders have a major impact on classroom instruction, so in order to have more culturally responsive classrooms in schools, it is essential to have culturally responsive leaders and therefore research investigating and understanding CRSL (Getha-Taylor et al., 2020; Theoharis, 2007).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the practices of CRSLs, focusing on the actions a culturally responsive school leader demonstrates, the barriers they face, and the role critical self-reflection plays in their practices. This study was centered around two research questions and five major findings emerged from the study answering the research questions.

1. What is the relationship between critical self-reflection and the role of culturally responsive school leaders in transforming their schools to align with culturally responsive pedagogy?

2. What actions do leaders make to enact culturally responsive practices in schools, and what barriers do they face enacting those practices?

Methodology

This study was conducted using the triadic lens of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. This triadic lens helped to frame the issue by focusing on the issues of race, transformative leadership and a combination of the two through critical social theory including the idea of how self-reflection plays a role in both the concept of understanding culture and transformation. A critical incident approach was used as a guide in developing the interview questions. The participants were administrators from the identified case. Open, axial and selective coding were used to analyze and categorize the data. Information regarding the data collection and analysis process, as well as the limitations of this study were also described.

Overview of the Sample, Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection and analysis included recording, transcribing, and analyzing the interview data for specific categories, themes, and ultimately patterns. Open, axial, and selective coding were appropriate analysis methods based on research by Strauss & Corbin (1990). This qualitative study is based on a small sampling of participants as is customary for qualitative research (Patton, 2002; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Because this study focuses on the data collection and analysis of that data, anonymity of participants was maintained. The participants were selected based on recommendations from university faculty members. The participants included public school, educational leaders in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The leaders are those who consider themselves to be culturally responsive school leaders, have a range of experience levels and include both elementary and secondary leaders.

An initial grounding interview was conducted with each of the eight participants. All interviews were conducted using an approach like critical incident technique. Data gleaned from the initial interviews drove subsequent follow-up interview questions. Based on data analysis of initial interviews, up to two follow up interviews were held with participants. Each interview was studied individually, and the data was analyzed to determine patterns in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Individual cases were built on the data from each participant. Data was then analyzed in a cross-case analysis. This cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to examine cases together and categorize similarities and differences looking for patterns within and across the group (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010). By interviewing practicing administrators, it helped the researcher better understand culturally responsive school leadership as a phenomenon in schools including their actions and barriers as well as how critical self-reflection plays a role in the administrators' practices.

The data was coded using both open, axial, and selective coding to categorize and analyze the themes in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The coding of data from the interviews helped the researcher gain a better understanding in relation to the research questions of the study. Following the coding, themes were identified for each individual case. These themes were used to understand how the practices of culturally responsive school leaders. Once the individual data analysis was completed, the cross-case analysis began. The cross-case analysis focused on the themes identified within the individual cases of the administrators. After the cross-analysis of the cases, the researcher identified similar and divergent themes across all of the cases in order to answer the research questions and shed further light on the practices of CRSLs. The researcher finalized categories, themes and patterns that emerged from the coding processes through the use of selective coding. This process was done numerous times to ensure that all pertinent data that

affords understanding of the cases had been extracted from the interviews addressing the research questions.

Synopsis of Major Findings

The eight case studies were used to gain a better understanding of the actions CRSLs take each day to ensure their school is responsive to the needs of students. They were also used to gain a better understanding of the challenges CRSLs face in creating a culture of inclusivity for all students. Lastly, the eight case studies and cross-case analysis was used to better understand the impact of critical self-reflection on the daily practice of CRSL. This section will present the findings of the five overarching themes emerging from the qualitative data as they relate to the research questions and using the triadic framework of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. The first theme that surfaced was the influence of background on the CRSLs. The other themes that emerged were CRSL as a Responder, CRSL as a Cultivator, CRSL as a Catalyst and The Gateway of Culture. The triadic lens of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory were all used to frame the findings and will be discussed in this section.

Influence of Background on the Culturally Responsive School Leader

This qualitative study investigated the daily actions of CRSLs, the challenges they face and how critical self-reflection influences their work as a CRSL. Five major findings arose from the thorough data analysis. The first finding unearthed the importance of a leaders' background in their practices and understandings of culture as a CRSL. All of the participants were in some way shaped by their family and their experiences in childhood. All participants discussed how their parents were impactful on their perspectives of the world and people of different cultures.

Some discussed how their parents instilled an open-mindedness in them that helped them to not only accept and understand but be curious and open to people of different cultures.

All were influenced in some way by the area or areas in which they lived as a child. Some were influenced by their neighborhood in which they grew up. Principal Mae shared that her neighborhood influenced her because it was considered a "poor" neighborhood and therefore introduced her to inequities in society as well as the cultures of many different people. Principal Sheryl shared that she was influenced by the area in which she grew up because it was a very conservative area with little to no diversity. Because of this, her parents were diligent about making sure she understood that there were different ways to live and pointed out inequities and the injustices that were present in the world. Principal Howard and Principal Hilda were influenced because they often moved throughout their childhood. Principal Hilda added shared how she lived most of her childhood in military housing. They stated that this helped them to be introduced to different cultures and people throughout their childhood and by living around people of different cultures, they became not only, accepting but also appreciative of the differences.

The importance of education arose as a sub finding as some participants were swayed by the educators in their families. Principal Desiree discussed how she grew up grading papers and putting up bulletin boards for her family members who were teachers. Principal Kim was swayed because there was a lack of education in her family and therefore, she knew she wanted an education to help others through teaching. Most of the participants have had a prolonged aspiration to teach and lead since childhood. Principal Kim talked about how she taught school to her dolls and was a teacher helper in Sunday school. All, but Principal Howard, shared how they felt they were always teachers even if they initially went into another field. They described how

they felt a force pulling them to education because it is just a part of who they are. Principal Howard shared that he never really thought about being a teacher and it just happened by coincidence but once he began working with children in the field of education, he realized there was no other place for him. All the participants shared how they felt they were called to education whether as children or teenagers because they felt a need to advocate for those that needed them.

Culturally Responsive School Leader as a Responder

The second major finding involved the response of CRSLs to the challenges of their students and their schools. All the participants discussed various challenges they face in being a CRSL. They shared the challenge of working with staff to understand culturally responsive pedagogy and the challenge of dealing with the instabilities and therefore the needs of their students. All eight participants also shared how they use critical self-reflection to improve and grow as a CRSL and therefore transform themselves as well as their communities.

One such challenge is meeting the needs of the vast number of students and families that are learning English Language Learners. Three of the participants shared this as one of their greatest challenges due to the vast and growing number of English Language Learner students and families. The pandemic highlighted many of the inequities and needs of these families, but it also helped in other ways. The need for W-Fi and parental support was highlighted by the pandemic because many of the parents of these students continued to work so students were home alone navigating the virtual learning world. However, the pandemic helped in other ways. One participant shared how she had mothers learning English right along with their child. This brought about the idea to provide family learning nights to help children and parents learn English together after the pandemic.

Another challenge is assisting students and families with the instabilities they face in their lives and in the world and another is the challenge of the exclusive nature of society and in many schools. All the participants shared how they try to meet the needs of their students in various ways. They do this through professional development and individual coaching conversations. They do this to advance their schools' culturally responsive journey so that students of all cultures feel included. They also find ways to help families by inviting the community and families in to assist navigating different systems such as dental and medical care.

The importance of a leaders' propensity to be critically self-reflected also emerged in this theme. All the leaders shared how they use critical self-reflection to analyze their daily actions ensuring that they are doing all they can to meet the needs of their students and community. They also shared how they work to model this behavior for their faculty and staff and encourage critical self-reflection in them as well. Principal Mae readily shared that critical self-reflection does not come naturally to her so instead she has built a network of trusted people who helped her to critically self-reflect. She also discussed how she asks her network of people lots of questions to help her be reflective so she can better respond to the needs of her students, staff and community.

Culturally Responsive School Leader as a Cultivator

Another major finding was the importance of the CRSL to cultivate, nurture and build a culturally responsive school culture. Participants shared how they incorporate culturally responsiveness into their vision for the school. This vision then drives all aspects of the school environment from professional development to teaching and discipline practices to the actual language that is used in classrooms and the school. By using the vision to immerse the school in culturally responsive practices it changes the trajectory of the journey to one that is more laser

focused and it may also increase the speed of the journey, albeit still very slow. All the participants shared how patient they have learned to be on this journey and how they often want to move faster, but in knowing their community, they know this is something where they have to meet them where they are and grow slowly from there.

One of the subordinate themes that emerged in this finding involved how CRSLs use professional development to build the cultural responsiveness in their schools. All eight of the participants shared how they use professional development to cultivate a culturally responsive culture with their faculty and staff. They shared how they build this professional development into professional learning communities, instructional leadership teams as well as whole school development. Principal Vanessa shared how she had taken her instructional leadership team to a national conference on cultural responsiveness to initiate their journey. Principal Desiree discussed how she began her five-year professional development plan focused on trauma as an entry point the first year and then moved on to a book study with the instructional leadership team. Unfortunately, the book study was stymied due to negative political influences, but even with this roadblock, Principal Desiree is still determined to lead her school on the journey. She stated that she will just take a detour to get them where they are going.

Another theme that developed under the CRSL as a Cultivator was how CRSLs developed their vision to immerse the school community in culturally responsiveness. A subordinate theme that derived from this overarching theme was how the leaders use student voice to cultivate culturally responsiveness. The participants shared how they actively solicit student voice as much as possible. One way they do this is by simply knowing their students and being visible in the hallways, the cafeteria, and classrooms. The more visible they are, the

likelier they are that students will trust and know them. The participants also discussed other ways that they seek out student voice through student advisory councils and surveys.

Another subordinate theme that grew out of the theme of cultivating the vision was the role of critical self-reflection in the leaders' role as a CRSL. The participants all shared how they use critical self-reflection not only to respond to student needs but also to cultivate their culturally responsive vision. This takes a lot of reflection, action and transformation. As needs are identified, the participants share how they work to meet the needs and then reflect on what they can do to cultivate the culture of the community so that the needs continue to be met. The participants all shared that this is a never-ending cycle because once those needs are met and they have cultivated the community to meet those needs, other needs will arise.

Culturally Responsive School Leader as a Catalyst

The fourth major finding involves how the CRSL transforms practices, mindsets, and community into a culture that is accepting and inclusive of all. This major finding ties in with the triadic framework in that all three theories revolve around transformation. Based on data from this study, the CRSL works diligently day in and day out to transform their environment into one that is equitable, socially just and inclusive of all. Through this, they create school environments where all students from all cultures can be successful.

All of the participants discussed the importance of vision which surfaced as a theme under the CRSL as a cultivator, but there was a slight nuance to the theme under the CRSL as a catalyst. Under this overarching finding, the code that emerged was clarity of the vision. All of the participants discussed the importance of articulating the vision clearly in various ways. This involved not just developing the vision but ensuring that it is articulated clearly and immersed

throughout the school community. This is important to do from the smallest to detail to the largest as well as in every action, decision and practice that the leader makes each and every day.

Another subordinate theme that arose from the CRSL as a Catalyst was to truly transform their school using the inequities of students as a catalyst. The major inequities that were revealed from the research were the inequities of access, opportunity, and prior knowledge. All eight of the participants shared various ways they address these inequities. One way is to fill in the gaps of knowledge and experience base of the students. Another is to assist the families in identified areas of need such as access to medical and dental care. Another finding was that after identifying the need, CRSLs constantly do outreach to families to assist with issues such as accessing Wi-Fi during the pandemic. This in turn builds rapport and trust which creates a more inclusive school environment.

The fifth finding of the study was The Gateway of Culture. This finding involves how the participants in the study use the concept of "culture" as a gateway to discussions of race' because the concept of race can be too politically divisive for some staff to discuss. When Principal Desiree attempted to conduct a book study for her instructional leadership team around the concept of race, it was stymied by a school board member who took issue with the study due to, what she claimed, were underpinnings of CRT. This board member posted about the book study on her social media pages and then was able to get it covered by national news sources. The societal unrest and political divisiveness regarding the concept of race and more recently CRT, have created a major blockade for the CRSL in their practices as it is almost impossible for them to do any real work around racial issues. Because of this, the CRSLs in this study have found a backdoor to the issue. While not doing the work as overtly as they might like, they are able to continue their journey using the concept of culture instead of race. Although the two concepts

are not congruent, using the concept of "culture" allows the CRSL to at least gain traction

regarding culture. Even though the definition of CRT is characterized very differently in higher

education and in the mass media, the societal unrest and political divisiveness around CRT have

severely limited the momentum of any CRSL on their work around race.

    The major findings of this study add to the research of the importance of CRSLs to

creating schools that are welcoming and nurturing to students of all backgrounds and cultures.

This is needed in all schools. Only with equitable, socially just and inclusive schools will

educators create environments where all students can be successful. Because this study was

framed and conducted with the triadic lens of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical

social theory, the theories will be revisited in the sections below as the triadic lens is connected

to the findings of the study.

<center>**Findings Related to Literature**</center>

The five major findings of this study were Influence of Background on the CRSL, The

CRSL as a Responder, The CRSL as a Cultivator, The CRSL as a Catalyst and The Gateway of

Culture. These findings bolster the current research and literature on CRSL in numerous ways.

One way is that CRSLs must work diligently and continuously to impact students of all cultural

backgrounds (Khalifa et al., 2016) because students are unable to reach their full academic

potential if they feel marginalized in their school environment (Brown, 2004). The findings of

this study reveal that CRSLs keep culturally relevant practices and the principles of

transformative learning theory and critical social theory at the forefront of every decision they

make and every action they take. Based on the final finding of this study, The Gateway of

Culture, the CRSLs in this study may use CRT as a lens for themselves, but due to political

divisiveness, the CRSLs are not openly able to use CRT as a lens. This coincides with

Santamaria's (2014) research which found that CRSLs view their world from the smallest detail to the largest through the lens of CRT if they are using CRT as a lens themselves even if they are not openly using it. By doing this, they can impact the school environment for students of all cultures because students cannot reach their optimal potential if they feel they are being treated inequitably (Brown, 2004). Even without the focus on race that might be needed, the focus on culture can help to create more equitable school environments.

Another connection from these findings to the literature is that being action oriented and possessing a growth mindset are imperative qualities for CRSL (Furman, 2012; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). All the CRSLs who participated in this study were just that. They focused on continual improvement, not just for themselves, but they also encouraged this in their teachers and staff members. They were also action oriented leaders by working diligently each day to combat some of the biases and misconceptions held by staff in their building. They do this through professional development and addressing concerns in daily conversations with staff. This action oriented and growth mindset focus models their commitment, persistence, and inclusiveness (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). These daily conversations were something that all of the participating leaders had in common and support the current literature on CRSLs (Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Theoharis (2007) found in his research that these conversations and action-oriented communication skills were one of the major components of CRSLs to create a sometimes slow, but persistent path to equity in schools.

The slow path to equity is something else that was found in the research of this study as well as in previous research. All the participating CRSLs remarked on the patience required to make significant growth in this area. One of the reasons for the slowness of this journey is due to the necessity of building a strong rapport with stakeholders before these conversations and

growth can be made. Rapport and trust take time to build but are necessary to affect change (Furman, 2012; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Rapport and trust are paramount in obtaining group consensus as a decision-making process but also essential to obtaining ownership and buy-in for new policies based on culturally responsive practices (Santamaria, 2014). Another reason for the slow journey is because the leaders are having to use culture as a gateway to the topic of race instead of focusing on it overtly. Although this will make the journey a slow one, it may allow more people to join the journey as they get used to the idea of race using culture as a gateway.

The findings of this study coincided with Santamaria's 2014 research regarding the importance of academic discourse in professional development as an avenue for CRSL to dispel bias and stereotypes that threaten marginalized students and populations (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). This was also a finding in Theoharis' 2007 study in which he found that increasing staff capacity in terms of culturally responsive practices was a cornerstone for CRSL. Another finding of Santamaria's (2014) research that concurred with the findings of this study is that CRSLs feel as if they have a calling to lead others (Murphy, 2002). All of the participants in this study shared that they not only felt a calling to lead, especially in terms of culturally responsive practices, but that they have always been leaders. They shared how being a leader is inherent in who they are as people.

Theoharis found in his 2007 study the importance of hiring and supervising the faculty and staff of a building. The participants in this study shared the importance hiring plays in increasing staff capacity in terms of race and equity. All participants shared the significance of ensuring they interview and hire faculty and staff that mirror their student population as often as possible and even more importantly that they hire staff that embrace their vision for the school.

Three participants also shared the importance of guiding those faculty and staff who do not share the culturally responsive vision of the school to new career opportunities. The subtheme of hiring emerged in both the areas of CRSL as a cultivator and as a catalyst.

Earlier research indicates the importance that CRSL remain vigilant in their attention to the larger political issues as well as the micro-politics within their school divisions (Bustamante et al., 2009; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). This research aligns with findings from this study as well. One participant shared that she and her leadership team had determined to conduct a year-long book study on equity with the Instructional Leadership Team. However, the book study was thwarted after a local school board member was alerted to the equity book study and publicized it on local and national media. The school board member had strong concerns regarding the book study and how it was being used in the school. The school board member went on to publicize that the study revolved around CRT as a negative aspect to the study. The study participant shared that the political climate had changed dramatically in the six months since the study began and the twelve months since the book had been chosen by the study. She also shared that upon further critical self-reflection, she may have moved too quickly with the book study pushing some participants beyond their comfort level in terms of race and should have kept the focus aligned more with culture. It should be noted that the majority of the Instructional Leadership Team involved in the book study, drafted a response and delivered it to all members of the school board detailing their shock and dismay with the abrupt curtailment of the book study due to the one board member's actions and politicization of the study. This is the prime example from the study of how if a leader moves too quickly and beyond the staff's comfort level, the work may backfire.

Although research shares the importance of leader preparation programs on the growth of CRSLs (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Miller & Martin, 2005; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015), none of the participants in the study cited their leader preparation program as an influence on their work as a CRSL. It is unclear as to whether this is because the leader preparation programs, they attended did not prepare them for their work as a CRSL or if divisions in which they work are more adept at promoting CRSL leaders. When asked what had influenced them on their path to becoming CRSLs all the participants shared their experiences in childhood and family as influences, but none shared any experiences in either teacher preparatory programs or educational leader preparatory programs.

This study also bolsters support for the analysis and use of culturally responsive data. All of the CRSL participants discussed their use of this data to assess student achievement, school climate, etc. and then use that data to develop pathways to address culturally responsive improvement. In Bustamante et al.'s 2009 study, they find that CRSLs collect and analyze data to support culturally responsive practices in their schools. They also found that inquiry to examine equity practices in schools is the first step (Bustamante et al., 2009). The leaders in this study use data as a foundation to support their work as a CRSL.

In Murphy's (2002) study he found that there were three cornerstones of CRSLs. Murphy (2002) states, "They must view their task more as a mission than a job" (p. 186). This holds true with the findings of this study in that all the participants shared how they felt a calling to educational leadership. Even those who initially tried to go into another field, shared how they were pulled back to education and then educational leadership. Murphy's (2002) study also found that educational leaders must focus on education and not the managerial aspects of their job (Brown, 2004). The findings of this study bolster this claim as all of the participants shared

their laser-like focus on learning for all students of all cultural backgrounds. The final anchor in Murphy's (2002) study was that educational leaders must be a community builder (Furman, 2012; Murphy, 2002; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). This finding is strongly supported by this study as all participants work diligently to build community both within and outside the school building to include all stakeholders.

Critical Self-Reflection is one of the cornerstones of this study based on Khalifa's 2018 study where he found that critical self-reflection is one of the four anchors of CRSL. Theoharis's 2007 study further found that there were four anchors of critical self-reflection: belief in the work, model the work, reflect on values and opposition of the status quo. Multiple studies have supported this proposition of the importance of critical self-reflection (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). This understanding leads educational leaders to transformative practices (Brown, 2004; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016). All of the researchers found that critical self-reflection assists leaders in their growth so that they can better understand their biases. The findings in this study correlate with the work of these researchers in that each of the participants shared the magnitude of critical self-reflection on their growth and work as a CRSL. Principal Howard stated that a person simply cannot be a CRSL without critical self-reflection. Although all leaders shared the enormity of critical self-reflection, Principal Mae shared that she was not inherently critically self-reflective. However, she was aware of her lack of this needed skill, so she created a web of support to assist her in being critically self-reflective. She described how she makes sure that she surrounds herself with people that are comfortable giving her constructive feedback so that she can reflect and then adjust accordingly. This is another example of just how integral critical self-reflection is to being a CRSL.

Findings Related to the Triadic Lens of

Critical Race Theory, Transformative Learning Theory and Critical Social Theory

Just as there are connections between the findings of this study and existing research, there are also connections between the findings of this study and the triadic lens used to approach and conduct the study. The triadic framework of the study included CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. All three theories focus on the importance of critical self-reflection and transformation to create environments that not only recognize the inequities of society, but also address them in ways that create more equitable, inclusive and socially just environments for all students. This section will review the major canons of each theory, as well as frame the major findings using the theoretical framework. This study links culturally responsive school leadership to the triadic theories used to frame this study of CRT, transformative learning theory and critical social theory. Not only does the study marry the three theories to CRSL, but it also shows the interconnections of each to one another. All center around the cyclical system of critical self-reflection, action and transformation for an improved society for all students of all cultures.

The first theory that framed this study is CRT. All of the participants in this study shared their beliefs that they must confront racism in their schools by emboldening social justice in all of their daily and long-term actions and decision making. The participants shared that they center their role as a CRSL by doing all they can to create an educational climate that is accepting and welcoming to students of all cultural backgrounds. In order to do this, they must keep racism and its impact on their school culture and society at large in focus as they center their vision and mission around equity and social justice. They shared how they do this in various ways including daily conversations with teachers and staff, purposeful professional development, creating and

articulating a mission and vision centered around culturally responsive practices and then truly living that vision every single day. However, although they may use CRT as a lens, they are not explicit about its use. Instead, the leaders address the issues by using the term "culture" as it tends to be a more socially acceptable concept. CRSLs in this study are all working to move the concept of race and equity to the forefront of their school community instead of allowing it to be thought of as something that stands alone in society, but again, they are having to do this using the word "culture" as a gateway to the discussion of race. They have done this through revision of their school's vision and aligning it with the division's vision. They have done it through their plans for professional development to meet faculty and staff where they are, yet still move them on their journey in creating a culturally responsive school as they do not feel that their faculty and staff are ready to discuss the issues of race. They do this by focusing on hiring new staff who have perspectives that align with their vision. They do this in their daily actions with students, staff and the community. Although this aligns with the research on CRT, the research on CRT encourages a more emboldened dialogue around race (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

The second theory to frame this study was transformative learning theory. The CRSLs in this study shared their understanding that to create a school environment that embraces and glorifies cultures, one must understand their own biases, assumptions, expectations and beliefs about culture. The CRSLs all shared how they are currently working to address biases of their faculty and staff so that their staff can use critical self-reflection to transform. Some of the CRSLs in this study shared that they are at the forefront of this process by assessing exactly where their faculty and staff are and then developing a plan to move their community forward. Others are in the crux of the work now by having daily conversations with staff, using data to

transform biases and assumptions and centering professional development around culturally responsive practices.

Some of the CRSLs shared that they have seen growth in many of their staff members through critical self-reflection of oneself and one's place in society transforming their view of racism and culture and its impact on their educational practices (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Mezirow, 1997; Santamaria, 2014). All of the participants shared the patience required in this work because the growth, although happening, is very slow. CRSLs are trying to transform structures and practices that have been in place for hundreds of years. The participants shared that they have to keep this fact in mind and focus on the small victories to keep moving forward.

The findings of this study also connect and align to critical social theory in that it is a theory focused on constant reflection and then acting on the transformative ideas to create a more equitable community (Brown, 2004). This connects succinctly to what each of the CRSLs in this study work to do daily. At its core, critical social theory involves critical self-reflection, action based on that critical self-reflection that then impacts transformation of a community so that all groups, both those with and without power, are equitable (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Brown, 2004; Theoharis, 2007).

The findings of this study show that the participants were all working diligently to use the tenants of this theory as well as CRT and transformative learning theory to create a social transformation. The goal in doing this is to ensure all students and stakeholders of all cultures have a warm, welcoming school environment in which they can prosper. In order to do this, the participants shared that they have to be aware of the political climate as well as the school climate because our schools tend to mirror our society. The CRSL tries to break the cycle and

create an equitable and socially just society within the school even though society has not succeeded with that goal yet. This is just one of the many reasons being a CRSL is so difficult.

Implications for Practice

This section will highlight the recommendations for practice related to the findings of this research study. The section is broken down into subcategories focusing on implications for aspiring educational leaders, implications for current school leaders and implications for school districts. As our society continues to become more culturally diverse, the need for CRSLs is more crucial than ever. It is also important that all three levels of educational leaders keep the importance of CRSL at the forefront of decision making in order to make needed changes creating schools accepting of all students from all cultures.

Implications for Aspiring Educational Leaders

The participants in this study all discussed the paramount importance of their background to their role as a CRSL. Some shared the importance of what they learned from their parents. Others shared the impact of moving from place to place and learning about different cultures. Whether it was a multicultural childhood or just a mindset that was instilled in them from their parents, they all felt their upbringing impacted their leadership. Aspiring educational leaders can begin to focus on their own backgrounds and critically self-reflect on their own biases and assumptions and consider how these will affect their leadership.

As all of the CRSL in this study discussed the constant professional development they attended, it is important that aspiring leaders actively seek out professional development offered by their division and from other resources to assist them in attaining the knowledge and skills necessary to be culturally responsive. Aspiring educational leaders should ensure that they are partaking in professional development available on equity and cultural responsiveness so that

they can plan their own professional development when they have the opportunity. By attending professional development, learning and developing their culturally responsive skills, they can become leaders in their buildings. They can do this through their work in professional learning communities, team planning times, faculty meetings, etc. Being a teacher leader will help them to develop their skills to be ready when they are promoted to being a school leader.

Implications for Current Principals

The implications from this study are paramount for educational leaders today. The eight participants in this study were all well aware of the importance of culturally responsive practices in their leadership. One dominant theme that emerged was the importance of critical self-reflection. Seven of the eight leaders involved in the study stated that critical self-reflection was a foundation of their work as a CRSL. One leader readily shared that critical self-reflection was not innate for her, but she had developed a network to assist her in being critically self-reflective so in that way all participants were critically self-reflective and worked to model that to their faculty and staff.

Another implication for principals that developed from the study is that CRSLs need to meet faculty and staff where they are on their journey. If a leader tries to move too soon or too quickly, a backlash could occur. This was described by one CRSL leader in the study who did not accurately identify the political climate or its changing tide. She shared how there was a political repercussion that thwarted some of her efforts. Another implication for principals is that of patience. The cause of the inequities and disparities did not happen overnight, it has taken centuries to cement them into our society. Unfortunately, it will take patience, fortitude and a never-ending vigilance to overcome them.

Implications for School Districts

The implications of this study are fundamental for school districts. First, districts need to ensure that their vision is reflective of the equity practices and culturally responsive practices they wish to see in their schools. The vision of the district will drive the vision of the schools. If these visions keep equity at their foundation, equity will permeate the schools in the district. Although the vision is of utmost importance, it is crucial that school districts hire and promote educational leaders who have proven themselves to be culturally responsive. Districts must not just listen to the talk of the leaders, but they must look at the work of the leaders. It is important that they look at the leader from all aspects of their position including what students say, what their fellow leaders say, what faculty and staff say about the leader. Unfortunately, this takes more time than many divisions want to spend in promoting and hiring leaders, but without a thorough examination of the leader's true equity practice and focus, divisions are bound to hire and promote leaders that simply talk equity but do not actually do the work. Equity work is difficult, arduous and painstaking as outlined by the leaders in this study. Many leaders want to do the work, but simply either do not have the skills or the fortitude to do it. Without hiring the leaders that have the skills and fortitude to do the work, divisions will not move forward.

Thirdly, it is essential that school districts provide consistent professional development for their educational leaders on equity practices and culturally responsive practices. Even with hiring the leaders that have the skills and fortitude to do the work, it is still important to ensure that divisions provide a well-crafted professional development plan so that all leaders are on the same culturally responsive journey which fits the vision of the division. The plan needs to be intensive and provide checkpoints along the way so that the division and the leaders themselves are using data to analyze their path so they can make detours if needed. If division leaders know the work of their school leaders well, it is also important to provide differentiated professional

development to meet each leader where they are on the journey. Just as we ask teachers to meet their students where they are and school leaders to meet their teachers where they are, it is important that division leaders meet their school leaders where they are so that they get the support they need to be successful.

Next, by analyzing data from their schools, districts can hold schools accountable and lend support for ensuring that there are equitable practices in their schools. This is an extremely important step that could be an elusive one for districts. But just as teachers are no longer left on their own in their classroom, school leaders should not be left to their own devices in their schools. Districts need to create protocols and structures to hold school leaders accountable by analyzing data, setting goals based on the data and lending support as needed to assist school leaders in achieving the goals. Most importantly, when school leaders do not meet their goals even with added support, they need to be held accountable just as, in this age of accountability, teachers are held responsible for their data.

Finally, it is utterly important that school districts not only talk the equity talk, but walk the equity walk. In education, fads and buzzwords appear seasonally and everyone talks about them until the next fad or buzzword takes its place. Equity, social justice and culturally responsiveness cannot be fads or buzz words. School districts are facing difficult and divisive political climates right now, but this is when they must hold strong and stand up for what is right. It is not enough that they talk about equity, add it to their vision and say that they work for equity. The division must insist that their leaders do the hard work, and they must be ready to support that work when it is met by political opposition. Because, ultimately, this hard work is protecting and supporting the children of our nation. This hard work is giving students what they need. This hard work is creating a world in which students, all students, not just those in the

majority, are accepted, included, supported and loved for who they are. Only through this hard work can leaders create an equitable and socially just world which begins in our schools. Freire (1998) stated, "It is true that education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation, but without it transformation cannot occur" (p. 37). Instead of our schools mirroring the ills of society, school districts can be the impetus for change and push society to mirror the schools.

Implications for Future Research

This qualitative study offers many parallels to existing research on CRSLs. It also expands on the research related to the importance of critical self-reflection for CRSLs. However, there is still extensive work to be done in the area of CRSLs including studies with a more expansive participant size. As this study only focused on one of the pillars of Khalifa's 2018 research, another suggestion for study would be research on all four pillars. A third suggestion that was not touched on in this study is to focus on the networks that CRSLs create to assist them with their work. A final suggestion is to focus studies on district leadership and their impact and support of CRSLs. This section will outline these areas of further research focusing on various possibilities for different research approaches.

The first recommendation for future research is to complete a study similar to this study, but with a larger scale of participants. Although eight participants were included in this study, findings would benefit from a larger scale study over a longer period. This would allow for even more focus on the cyclical critical self-reflection. The participants of this study were all self-affirmed CRSLs, although admittedly at different stages in their progress and work. In Santamaria's 2014 study, he found evidence that African American educational leaders may have a skill set for CRSL that leaders of other races do not possess. Santamaria (2014) espoused that because of their background and experiences, educational leaders of color may be more

likely to recognize the need for equity work in schools. This study included participants of different races and cultural backgrounds. A future study could zone in on participants who are of one race. Another avenue would be to choose participants of a minoritized and majority race and then compare the data from both groups.

Khalifa (2018) espoused that there were four major pillars for CRSL: critical self-reflection, community involvement, school environment, teacher and curricular preparation. This study sought to understand the importance of critical self-reflection on CRSLs. One area for future studies would be to focus on the other pillars of Khalifa's (2018) research in their relation to CRSLs. Each of these pillars is integral to the daily work of CRSLs so in-depth studies of what and how CRSL address these pillars could assist current and future leaders. Another area of future research integrating Khalifa's (2018) pillars, would be to study all of the pillars and how they intersect in the practice of CRSLs.

Additionally, Theoharis (2007) found that culturally responsive leaders build supportive networks. This is an area that did not emerge in this study, but it would be an interesting topic for future research. By building networks, leaders may gain ideas of how they can work to support their students and staff by responding to their needs and on building and cultivating their culturally responsive environments and communities. It would be beneficial to determine the impact these networks have on CRSLs so that current and future leaders could work to build networks to assist in their work.

Finally, a future area of research is to focus on the school division leadership's part in creating culturally responsive schools. School leaders cannot do this work without the support of their division leadership. A study focused on what districts do to support CRSLs could be advantageous to the field as a whole. Research could involve how districts choose who to hire

and promote. It could also include how districts support their leaders in their work as well as how they hold leaders accountable for the work. Another avenue would be to focus on how divisions build their professional development around their vision to promote the work of CRSLs.

CRSLs are of utmost importance in today's culturally dynamic schools especially considering the impact educational leaders have on student achievement and learning (Calnin et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2005; Khalifa et al., 2016). This area of research has the potential to be advantageous to the field of educational leadership research regarding cultural responsiveness. Future studies on this topic will build upon the knowledge base in the research and therefore trickle into the knowledge base. By assisting CRSLs to become more adept at what they do, student outcomes and achievement will be directly impacted (Calnin et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2005; Khalifa et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The connection between the impact of school leaders and student achievement is compelling throughout the literature (Calnin et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2005; Khalifa et al., 2016). The connection between school leaders and their ability to create welcoming environments for students of all cultures is also prevalent (Calnin et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2005; Khalifa et al., 2016). Only by creating communities that are culturally responsive, can school leaders have the most impact on their student outcomes. This study used eight independent case studies and a cross-case analysis to determine the actions and barriers of CRSLs as well as the importance of critical self-reflection on their practices.

What was overwhelmingly apparent in this study was that all of the CRSLs place cultural responsiveness at the foundation of their leadership. In Ecclesiastes 9:10, it states, "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Ecclesiastes,

9:10). It is overwhelmingly evident that in order to create effective transformation in schools from those with outdated exclusionary policies to those that are inclusive of students from all backgrounds, CRSLs must do it with all their might. Only in this way can they effectively cultivate an inclusive school welcoming student of all cultures, so that all students can have positive outcomes and reach their full potential.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Study Description

Over the last several years working as an administrator in a suburban middle school, I have become incredibly interested in culturally responsive practices in schools. There has been quite a bit of research over the past several decades regarding the practices of culturally responsive school leaders, but there is little research on the actions of culturally responsive leaders, the barriers they face as well as how critical self-reflection assists with their practice. During my studies at Old Dominion University in the doctoral program in Educational Leadership, I learned and practiced ways to collect data and research. I have practiced interviewing in a few of my courses as well as the data collection and analysis that goes along with interviewing participants for research. Interviewing is valuable as a way to collect data. I appreciate your willingness to participate in these interviews allowing me to collect data for my study.

Dawn Kramer, M.A.

dkram005@odu.edu

757-620-8690

Email to Potential Study Participants

Greetings,

      I am a student in the Educational Leadership doctoral program at Old Dominion University. While studying at Old Dominion University, I have developed an interest in the culturally responsive school leaders including the actions and barriers they face as well as how critical self-reflection might impact their practice. Although there has been research done on culturally responsive school leaders, little has been done on the actions, barriers and the impact of critical self-reflection on their practice.

      You are invited to participate in the research study regarding culturally responsive school leaders. The interview process would last for five to six weeks. We would begin with an initial interview and then I would interview you up to four times after with follow-up interviews, if needed. If you are interested, interviews will begin in late February and last into early April. Interview dates and times will be set based on your availability. Interviews will be held on Zoom and will be audio recorded. If you choose to participate you will be emailed a letter of consent to complete prior to the meeting.

      I appreciate your consideration to participate in this interview process and assist with my research study. If you agree to be a part of the study, the work you do daily in your building will be used for my research study which will add to the body of research around this very important educational topic. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email Dawn Kramer at dkram005@odu.edu. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Regards,

Dawn L. Kramer

Old Dominion University

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: Culturally Responsive School Leaders: Actions, Barriers and the Impact of Critical Self-Reflection

INTRODUCTION
The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES for participation in the research study for Culturally Responsive School Leaders: Actions, Barriers and the Impact of Critical Self-Reflection, which will be conducted via Zoom.

RESEARCHERS
Dawn L. Kramer, Ph.D.Graduate Student, Old Dominion University, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Educational Leadership

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY
The development of culturally responsive school leaders has been a focus of research over the last few decades. Although there has been research done on the development of culturally responsive school leaders, little has been done on the actions those leaders take, the barriers they face and the impact of critical self-reflection on their practice. I am looking to learn more about the work educational leaders do and how self-reflection impacts that work.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of culturally responsive school leaders. You will be asked to join a Zoom meeting with the researcher for an interview five times over a six week period. During this time you will be asked to answer questions regarding your role as a culturally responsive leader. If you say YES, then your participation will be required in five interviews lasting approximately sixty minutes on Zoom. Approximately six culturally responsive school leaders will be participating in this study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA
To the best of your knowledge, you should have some involvement in culturally responsive leadership practices.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
RISKS: And, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS: The main benefit to you for participating in this study is reflecting on your practices through the interview process which could promote your growth as a culturally responsive leader. Others may benefit by aggregating these lessons learned and sharing with the broader educational community.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS
The researcher is unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION
If the researcher finds new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher will take all reasonable steps, including recording only audio of the Zoom sessions and not asking for any identifying information on the written document to keep private information as confidential. The researcher will remove identifiers from all identifiable private information collected. Recordings (audio) of the interviews will be stored on password protected computers and names and only on university approved, secure servers. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not identify you. Of course, your records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with oversight authority.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of any potential harmful situations arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researcher are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dawn Kramer, dkram005@odu.edu/757-683- 6698 or Dr. Chezan, DCEPS IRB Chair, : lchezan@odu.edu/757-683-3802 at Old Dominion University, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researcher should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researcher should be able to answer them:

Dawn Kramer, dkram005@odu.edu – 757-620-8690

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. Chezan, DCEPS IRB Chair., the current IRB chair, at 757-683-3802, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	Date

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	Date

Opening Script

My name is Dawn Kramer, and I am a student in the Educational Leadership doctoral program at Old Dominion University. While studying at Old Dominion University, I have developed an interest in the practices of culturally responsive school leaders, the actions and barriers they face as well as how critical self-reflection might impact their practice. Although there has been research done on culturally responsive school leaders, little has been done on the actions those leaders take, the barriers they face and the impact of critical self-reflection on their practice. I will use the responses to the interview questions as important data for research regarding the culturally responsive school leaders.

I have given you a copy of my study description and the consent form for participating in this interview. Are there any questions that I can answer for you at this time?

May I please have permission to record our interview today? I will retain the recordings for this interview and I will transcribe them. I will be the only person who listens to them.

I truly appreciate your willingness to participate in this interview process. We will now begin.

Initial Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

    a. What culture/ethnicity do you identify with?

    b. How many years of experience do you have in education?

2. Talk to me about why you wanted to become an educator?

    a. Talk to me about the path that led you to become an educational leader?

3. Talk to me about your background, leading up to becoming an educational leader. What do you believe influenced your choice to become a principal?

    a. Talk to me about how your personal background may have shaped you as a leader.

    b. Probing question: cultural background, professional background, etc.

4. Talk to me about your definition of culturally responsive leadership.

5. Talk to me about how your life and professional experiences influenced your development as a culturally responsive leader.

6. Tell me about what it means to be culturally responsive to students?

    a. Please illustrate a few specific examples.

7. Tell me about the most pressing issues affecting the success of your students right now?

    a. Probing question: academic, behavioral and personal

    b. Probing question: Talk to me about how you respond as a culturally responsive leader.

8. Describe how faculty/staff in your building understand the students' culture and needs.

    a. Is there a range of understanding?

    b. Please provide specific examples

9. Talk to me about the daily actions you take that you would describe as culturally

responsive?

   a. Please illustrate with examples.

10. Talk to me about challenges you have faced as a culturally responsive leader.

   a. Please illustrate with a few examples

   b. Please illustrate how you overcome the challenges

11. Talk to me about long-term planning you implement to ensure culturally responsive

practices are at the center of learning?

12. Tell me about how self-reflection impacts your role as a culturally responsive leader?