Towards Equitable and Inclusive Schools:

Cultural Competence in Principals

Leading Diverse Schools

by

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ABSTRACT

By the year 2023, most children attending public school in the United States will be of a minority race (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). However, 80% of the teachers in public schools are White (Musu, 2019). Student identity (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, cultural/linguistic, disability, gender identity/expression, and sexual orientation) fosters inequities, negatively impacting students' experiences, academic outcomes, and graduation rates (Cooc & Kiru, 2018; Frattura & Capper, 2015; GLSEN, 2017; Gorski, 2013; Shifrer, 2018; Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011; Theoharis, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Principal leadership is instrumental to developing culturally competent cultures to navigate the dynamics of student diversity and mitigate the impact of identity-based inequities (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Gorski, 2013; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010, 2017; Theoharis, 2007). A descriptive case study design was used to explore participants' leadership actions and cultural competence beliefs as they lead diverse schools. Three urban high school principals from one district in Ohio participated in the study. The findings revealed that participants enact both leadership actions and cultural competence beliefs to develop culturally competent cultures and that the process is developmental and continuous. Implications for principal leadership include providing school leaders understanding of the complexity and nuance of culturally competent leadership. Central office administrators and educational leadership preparation programs can better understand culturally competent principal leadership to inform their work based on this study.

Keywords: Urban principal leadership, cultural competence, equitable and inclusive schools, social justice leadership, and cultural competence leadership

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As educational leaders strive for continuous improvement in their schools, many possible strategies and pathways can be leveraged. Accountability systems driven by test results, individual teacher quality, technology, and fragmented strategies contribute to the lack of results (Fullan, 2011). The wrong drivers for systems change will never yield the results that allow schools "to make good on the promise of public education" (Fullan, 2011; Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 1). Fullan and Quinn (2016) affirmed that the right drivers include "focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability," components of the Coherence framework (p. 3). Within the Coherence framework, the leader is at the center, contextualizing and operationalizing the drivers in the right combination to meet the varying needs within their schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

One factor on which researchers agree is foundational and an influential aspect of successful schools is effective principal leadership (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010, 2017; Theoharis, 2007). Educational leaders need to focus the direction of continuous improvement efforts by developing a shared moral imperative and outlining the progression for achieving that moral imperative (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). "The moral imperative focuses on deep learning for all children regardless of background or circumstance" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 17). Yet, America's public schools are falling short on fulfilling the moral imperative to ensure all

students are achieving similar outcomes in schools that are equitable and inclusive (Cooc & Kiru, 2018; Frattura & Capper, 2015; GLSEN, 2017; Hansen et al., 2018; Milner, 2013; Morgan et al., 2015; Morgan, et al., 2017; Shifrer, 2018; Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Milner (2013) contended that these achievement gaps are really opportunity gaps resulting from structures and systems that lead to different learning opportunities for the most vulnerable students including students experiencing poverty, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities (Milner, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Students with marginalized identities are subject to systems and practices in schools that marginalize them based on their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, language, ability, and sexual orientation (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2019).

Opportunity gaps continue to persist for students based on their backgrounds, circumstances, and identities even though it is the moral imperative of the school to overcome these barriers to provide an equitable education for all students (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Milner, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). To proactively address the various needs of diverse student populations, principals need to be culturally proficient leaders (Lindsey et al., 2019). Culturally proficient principal leadership is fundamental to changing school cultures "to educate all learners, regardless of and because of their cultural differences," (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 3). Culturally proficient principal leadership requires a reflective, personal journey where the principal recognizes and examines their own cultural and personal biases, but also assumes risks, takes actions, and accepts consequences for decisions that may be unpopular with the predominant culture of their schools (Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019). When

principals engage in introspective work about their cultural competence, only then can they create a collaborative culture within their buildings, to provide space for staff to engage in learning about cultural proficiency (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2019). This transformative work can pave the way for the creation of equitable and inclusive schools for all students (Frattura & Capper, 2015).

Problem Statement

Just as our country's population is becoming increasingly diverse, the demographics of our student population is also changing. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), by the year 2023 the majority of students attending public school will be of a minority race. Further, 80% of the teachers in our public schools are White (Musu, 2019). Students of color experience race and the world differently than their White teachers, creating potential barriers to learning opportunities negatively impacting the students' overall academic performance (Milner, 2013). Research suggests that students of color benefit from having teachers of the same race because teachers of color can relate to the racial experiences of their students, infuse curricula materials into their teaching that are representative of the students, provide examples when teaching to which students of color can relate, and act as role models (Milner, 2013; Tatum, 2017). Racial and ethnic diversity is not the only identity that impacts students' experiences and academic outcomes in school (Cooc & Kiru, 2018; Frattura & Capper, 2015; GLSEN, 2017; Gorski, 2013; Shifrer, 2018; Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011; Theoharis, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Students experiencing poverty or low income, English learners (EL), students who identify as LGBTQ, and students with disabilities have poor academic outcomes, graduation rates

and experience bias at greater rates than White students without these identities (Cooc & Kiru, 2018; Frattura & Capper, 2015; GLSEN, 2017; Gorski, 2013; Shifrer, 2018; Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011; Theoharis, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Therefore, it is important to explore how urban high school principals respond to diversity in their schools. The role of the principal is complex and nuanced; and while there is evidence that principals are instrumental in leading learning and creating a culturally competent culture in their schools, there is a continued need to understand what principals do to build these cultures (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010, 2017; Theoharis, 2007).

This work is difficult and often comes with unexpected challenges since the dominant narratives can be imposing and in direct opposition to creating equitable schools that serve all students (Capper, 2015; Franco et al., 2013; Howard & Navarro, 2016). Equitable systems require principals to be forward thinking and establish structures that will support their schools in the learning, adapting, and responding to changing student needs in a way that views students through an asset lens (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013). Finally, cultural competence is a moral and worthy, albeit aspirational goal, because as our society continues to change and become more diverse, so will our students. As students embrace and express new and varied personal and multiple identities, those identities and the intersections of those identities create dynamic school environments to which all staff must respond if students are to learn, feel safe and included, and be treated equitably (Capper, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989).

While there have been a number of qualitative case studies that explore social justice leadership and transformative leadership, specifically the importance of a social justice leadership orientation and specific actions taken in schools, more research is needed because there are large achievement gaps for certain student groups (DeMatthews et al., 2015; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Gorski, 2013; Hansen et al., 2018; Milner, 2013; Shields, 2010, 2017; Theoharis, 2007; Wang, 2018). The latest revision of the National Education Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards has established the need for cultural competence as a leadership skill for preservice school leaders (NELP, 2018). These factors provide evidence that continued research around the application of culturally proficient principal leadership across student identities is worthy of further investigation. If all students achieved proficiency across our public, urban high schools, then there would not be a continued need for such a research study. However, the evidence is clear that students are not achieving proficiency or meeting other success indicators such as graduation rates and other postsecondary measures solely based on their marginalized identities by race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, disability, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). The research problem was to determine how a principal's cultural competence promotes equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in their schools.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how urban high school principals, with a self-identified orientation towards culturally competent leadership, perceive their beliefs and leadership actions promote the creation of equitable systems and use of

inclusive instructional practices. Principals with an orientation towards culturally competent leadership may be more likely to use their beliefs and subsequent actions to make decisions that promote equity and inclusivity within their schools which, in turn, support students from diverse backgrounds and across identities (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2019; Theoharis, 2007). The data gathered through interviews, reflective journal prompt responses and document review revealed particular cultural competence beliefs and actions that the participants pinpointed as aspects of their work, to promote equity and inclusivity for all students in their schools. These conclusions may be helpful to other principals who also lead diverse schools to know what dispositions and actions might support their work. Furthermore, the outcomes may be of value to district leaders aspiring to support principals who lead diverse schools to become culturally proficient leaders. The results of this study may also support district level administrators in defining candidate competencies when hiring principals to lead diverse schools.

Research Questions

The researcher derived the research questions for this qualitative case study through the literature review, which explored student diversity in today's public schools, culturally proficient leadership, and systems change theory. Additionally, the conceptual framework which ties culturally proficient leadership and systems change theory together also influenced the creation of the research questions (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007). Principals must hold beliefs rooted in cultural competence to lead through the type of radical change that is necessary to promote the development of equitable systems and

inclusive instructional practices in their schools. Nevertheless, beliefs alone may not be enough, so also exploring the leadership actions that principals with these beliefs take is important to understanding how equitable and inclusive schools develop. Specifically, the research questions centered on understanding how urban high school principals with an orientation towards culturally competent leadership perceive that their beliefs and leadership actions promote the creation of equitable systems and use of inclusive instructional practices. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

- What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in diverse, urban high schools?
- What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive instructional practices in diverse, urban high schools?
- What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in diverse, urban high schools?
- What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive instructional practices in diverse, urban high schools?

Overview of Methodology

A qualitative, descriptive case study design was conducted to understand the perceptions of three high school principals' beliefs and actions taken to promote equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices within their diverse schools. Using a purposeful, typical, and criterion sampling process, predetermined criteria to select participants included that principals were currently leading a diverse school in an urban setting and self-identified as a principal with an orientation towards culturally proficient leadership based on a demographic questionnaire and responses to a cultural competence

self-assessment checklist (Creswell, 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.; Terrell et al., 2018). Within the study, the researcher employed multiple data collection methods including the use of semi-structured interviews, reflective journal prompt responses, and document set review. Data collection consisted of a participant interview, collection of reflective journal prompt responses based on participant completion of a cultural competence self-assessment, and document set review, ensuring each data collection sequence was the same for each participant (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). Furthermore, a set of data collection tools provided the opportunity to collect data in a systematic manner, allowing for consistency throughout the study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All data and any documents used during both the data collection and data analysis phases were stored in a data collection database, created to organize everything in a single, secure location with access only available to the principal and sub investigators in the study (Yin, 2014). A self-assigned pseudonym for each principal ensured confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study, especially during data collection and analysis. All procedures used for data collection and storage were in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the American Psychological Association (APA) and Youngstown State University (YSU).

Given the multiple sources of data, a data triangulation process was used to analyze the multiple data sources. The researcher applied a data coding process to determine themes from the data both across data sources from a single research

participant, but also among the data gathered across multiple research participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Both open and axial coding procedures were used in the data analysis phase of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, several strategies were applied to address reliability and validity within the study. First, the researcher created an audit trail to establish a timeline and description of the procedures used to collect and code data throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study participants engaged in a member checking process to determine if they agreed with the data in the conveyed format (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These strategies aimed to improve the reliability and validity of the research study.

Rationale and Significance

There is evidence that students from certain backgrounds and identities (students of color, students learning English, students with disabilities, students experiencing poverty, and students who identify as LGBTQ) do not achieve the same educational outcomes or have the same experiences compared to other students (Frattura & Capper, 2015; GLSEN, 2017; Gorski, 2013; Milner, 2013; Theoharis, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). In addition, the teaching force (largely White, middle class, and female) does not match the various identities of the students they serve (Musu, 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). There is a significant void created by this incongruence between student and teacher identities, creating a unique diversity dynamic that can be addressed through culturally proficient leadership (Lindsey et al., 2019). Milner (2013) suggested that rather than viewing the achievement gap in today's schools from a deficit-based lens that blames the students and their backgrounds, the gap should be reframed to consider

how to proactively recognize and re-address the existing opportunity gaps for all students across identities. However, this work is complicated and nuanced, making it challenging for even the most culturally competent principals since it not only involves personal convictions about valuing diversity, but also leading staff learning. Principals need to support staff in adopting similar beliefs and making changes to their instructional practices to improve student outcomes (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018).

Leading diverse schools is complicated because it requires a specific disposition towards cultural competence, the courage to make ethically sound decisions, and take actions that might be unpopular (Wang, 2018). This study provided insights from principals in the field about their perceptions of their culturally proficient leadership to promote the creation of equitable and inclusive schools. It is critical for principals to know how to pursue an interpersonal journey of cultural competence and also what leadership actions have been effective for colleagues striving for the same pursuits (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Moreover, principals must learn from those who are building learning organizations within their schools to proactively address the diverse needs of their students. By striving for equality for all, principals can build a culture of trust and collaboration that can support school staff in finding solutions to the unique challenges of serving a diverse population of students (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013;).

While the study focused on urban high school principals, principals leading diverse schools and pursuing equity and inclusion within their schools could benefit from reviewing the results. Additionally, the study offered insight to central office administrators who are focused on building systems of support for their principals to

engage in this transformational work. Central office administrators could use this information to design new structures and systems for principals as they address the development of cultural competence beliefs and system change within their schools. Finally, this study could assist central office administrators in defining candidate competencies when hiring principals to lead in diverse schools.

The participants in this study benefited by reflecting on their own culturally competent leadership practices, which is an important component of culturally competent leadership (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). This study also adds to the research on culturally competent leadership, providing insight into what experiences principals in the field have as they practice culturally proficient leadership while leading diverse schools. These data could be used by educational leadership preparation program leaders to give additional context to what it means to be culturally proficient principal, as they prepare pre-service principals for these new roles. Finally, because "culture is a predominant force in society," it is important for students to experience a school system that is truly equitable and inclusive (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 31). By experiencing an equitable and inclusive school, students could develop a foundational understanding that all people have unique identities, and that diversity is an asset. If schools produced students who become citizens with an asset-based view of diversity, society could reap the benefits of more culturally competent citizens.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research it is important to acknowledge the role of the researcher, since the researcher serves as "the primary instrument for data collection and analysis," (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). Given this notion, it is important to acknowledge my

role as the primary data collection and analysis instrument in this in-depth qualitative case study. I collected data and analyzed it soon after, creating an audit trail and data collection database as I progressed through the study. The data were collected within the context of the participant's natural work setting of the diverse, urban high schools which they lead. Additionally, as the researcher, I took an etic role, as an objective outside observer during the course of the research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, it is essential to declare that I applied an inductive data analysis process to assist in developing the emerging concepts and ideas from the semi-structured interviews, collection of reflective journal prompt responses, and document reviews completed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Researcher Assumptions

Creswell (2013) indicated that a philosophical perspective is important as it influences how research questions are constructed and how data collection is structured to answer those questions. There are four philosophical assumptions that need to be considered as a qualitative researcher: ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological (Creswell, 2013).

An ontological assumption relates to how one describes and embraces reality, which includes the notion that the reality of the participants might be different from the researcher's known reality and the reality of other research participants (Creswell, 2013). Within the study, I highlighted the multiple perspectives and realities of urban high school principals leading diverse high schools. As outlined within the study results, I chronicled the various cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions of these urban high school principals as educational leaders. In addition, I brought my own reality to this

research as a White, female regionally based educational consultant who works with various urban districts and high school principals on school improvement initiatives. My other position as a researcher and reality within this study is the belief that culturally proficient leadership beliefs and practices can lead to the creation of systems, policies, and practices, supporting all students across identities, improving educational outcomes for all. Moreover, I also believe that the opportunity and achievement gaps that exist for students experiencing poverty, students of colors, students learning English, students with disabilities and youth who identify as LGBTQ are the fault of the educational systems and not the students themselves. These viewpoints influenced decisions I made all throughout the research study.

According to Creswell (2013), an epistemological assumption describes the notion of the researcher conducting research in the field, in close proximity to the research participants so that their perspectives can be assembled for analysis. As a researcher with an epistemological lens, I spent time with the research participants during the interview process. Gathering responses to the reflective journal prompts based on responses to a cultural competence self-assessment checklist also provided an up close and personal viewpoint on the cultural competence beliefs of the participants (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). These methods of data collection allowed me to gather an intimate perspective to learn about their cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions as they shared their experiences.

Axiological assumptions deal with the role of researcher's values in the research study (Creswell, 2013). I recognized that as a qualitative researcher I have a number of

biases that I brought to the research study. Based on my background in educating students with disabilities, I have a strong bias towards inclusive educational practices for all students. A few years ago, I had the privilege of spending a week at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's National Leadership for Social Justice Institute. To say this was a life-changing experience for me would be an understatement. The presenters, Dr. Elise Frattura and Dr. Colleen Capper, shared their framework, Integrated Comprehensive Systems for Equity (ICS) and their vision for equitable and inclusive school districts and schools. For the first time, I saw new possibilities for reforming education to meet the needs of all students in their philosophy and framework (Frattura & Capper, 2015). The ICS framework leads educators to begin to address the educational inequities for students who have marginalized identities that I have seen throughout my career as an educator. The ICS framework emphasizes viewing students through an asset lens, presuming competence, and using practices that consider student diversity and principles of universal design in lesson planning and the systems that make these things possible (Frattura & Capper, 2015).

This single experience and my subsequent personal cultural competence journey led me to design a research study to learn from principals who are doing this social justice work every day. I desired to capture principal perceptions and experiences from the field. I aspired to determine what principals think actually propels them to lead in bold and courageous ways to support the diverse students within their schools. My passion to realize equitable learning opportunities for all students drove me to examine how principals can promote the type of school culture that allows all educators in the buildings to be relentless about student learning, stopping at nothing to help all students

realize their potential. I wanted to uncover both the beliefs that guide these culturally competent principals and the actions they take based on their beliefs to make their schools more equitable and socially just. I believe that principals should all lead through the lens of cultural competence, because not only is it moral and just, but it is the right thing to do for students.

The final assumption, methodological, describes the philosophical process that the researcher uses to collect and analyze the data within the study, which is characterized by ongoing data collection that is inductive and is impacted by the researcher's ongoing data collection and analysis process (Creswell, 2013). In other words, emerging themes and theories develop from the data as they are collected and analyzed in an ongoing process throughout the research study. I made use of an inductive research process as I studied urban high school principals leading diverse high schools who had a self-professed lens towards cultural proficient leadership. The ongoing data collection and analysis through the use of semi-structured interviews, collection of reflective journal prompt responses, and document reviews revealed emerging themes and ideas throughout the research process.

Definitions of Key Terminology

To aid with clarity and understanding within the study, I have defined several key constructs with relevance to the research study as defined by the literature review and informed by the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter III. Subsequently, there are a number of terms and constructs defined to enhance the understanding and clarity of the dissertation.

Adapting to diversity: "Being the lead learner at your school about cultural groups different from your own and adjusting to acknowledging others' cultural experiences and backgrounds in all school settings" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).

Assessing cultural knowledge: "Leading the learning about others' cultures, about how educators and the school as a whole react to others' cultures, and about what you need to do to be effective in cross-cultural situations" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).

Cultural competence or proficiency: "A mindset, a worldview, a way a person or organization makes assumptions to effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that arise in diverse environments" (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 5).

Culturally proficient leadership: Principals dedicated "to educating all students to high levels through knowing, valuing, and using students' cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning styles within the selected curricular and instructional contexts" (Terrell et al., 2018, pp. 28-29).

Diverse schools: Diversity is defined as "differences between people due to race, ethnicity, SES, gender, language, ability, sexual orientation, religion, and so forth" that are represented by students' various identities within schools (Howe & Lisi, 2020, p. 103). In a school district, diversity is used to describe the overall racial makeup of the student population (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). Districts are categorized as diverse if no one racial student identity comprises more than 75% of the district's enrolled students (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). Within this study, diverse schools are defined based on the following three conditions: the student population has more than 50% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged; the student population has no more than 50% of the students identified as White, Non-Hispanic; and a minimum of three student

groups are identified on the gap closing measure of the state report card, which could include any combination of the groups for race (other than White), students with disabilities, economic disadvantage, or English learners (Ohio Department of Education, 2019b).

Equitable structures: Policies and procedures that promote equity in access to resources and instruction for all students. These policies and procedures address the structures and govern the ways in which the collective school makes decisions (Frattura & Capper, 2015).

Inclusive instructional practices: Grade-level learning for all students through access and the application of effective teaching practices, proactively co-planned by adults to be facilitated in diverse classrooms (where there is proportional representation of student groups that mirrors the demographics of the school), (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Ohio Department of Education, 2019a).

Institutionalizing cultural knowledge: "Making learning about cultural groups and their experiences and perspectives an integral part of the staff's professional development. Establishing norms for a culturally proficient educational environment" (Terrell et al., 2018).

Managing the dynamics of difference: "Modeling problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies as natural and normal processes within the organizational culture of the school and within the cultural contexts of the communities of your school" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).

Social justice leadership: School leaders with an orientation towards social justice leadership recognize that marginalization exists within our educational system for

students based on their individual and at the intersection of their collective identities. Leaders act on these inequities by enacting policies and procedures that attempt to remedy them to improve conditions and outcomes for students (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Shields, 2010, 2017; Wang, 2018).

Systems change theory: Requires principals to go beyond the traditional types of leadership, which involves creating a collective and collaborative learning organization within the school that develops the internal capacity to change practices in response to the diversity of the students they serve (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013). This type of leadership is bold, student-centered, and culturally competent and requires principals to hold strong, asset-based beliefs about the students in their school (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018).

Traditionally marginalized students (based on identities): When referring to students who are traditionally marginalized across student identities, students being referenced include students who are racial, ethnic, and linguistically diverse students experiencing poverty, students with disabilities, and youth who identify as LGBTQ (Frattura & Capper, 2015).

Transformational leadership: Includes three types of leadership actions: "setting directions, helping people, and redesigning the organization," (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 181).

Transformative leadership theory: Focuses on describing the actions of principals who view education as a lever for social justice (Shields, 2010, 2017). With a transformative leadership orientation, principals make decisions based on their belief

system that the diversity of their students should be viewed through an asset-based lens, and they have the power to redress inequalities that are present in their buildings for students based on their identities (Shields, 2010, 2017).

Valuing diversity: "Creating informal and formal decision-making groups inclusive of people whose viewpoints and experiences are different from yours and from those of the dominant group at the school, and that enrich conversations, decision making, and problem solving" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).

Organization of the Dissertation

This qualitative case study focused on how urban high school principals, with an orientation to culturally competent leadership, perceive that their beliefs and leadership actions promote the creation of equitable systems and use of inclusive instructional practices in their diverse schools. The research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I outlines the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, role as researcher and key terminology. Chapter II highlights the theoretical frameworks, critical race theory, and intersectionality, from which the study was developed. Then, a thorough literature review discusses the context of diversity in our public schools with a focus on culturally competent leadership and navigating systems change to address diversity to create equitable structures and inclusive instructional practices in schools. Chapter III describes the methodology of the research study including the conceptual framework, the data collection and analysis process through semi-structured interviews, reflective journal prompt responses, and document review, my role as a researcher, sampling techniques, and evidence of reliability and validity within the study. The fourth chapter of the dissertation shares the data findings including the emergent themes and ideas from the

research. Finally, the results and implications of the research study for urban high school principals and central office administrators who support these principals are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the United States, the accountability movement and high stakes standardized testing aimed at improving educational outcomes for all students has illuminated inequities in achievement scores, graduation rates, enrollment in honors and advanced placement courses, and disproportionate placement in special education for students of color, students with disabilities, students experiencing poverty/low income and English learners (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Hansen et al., 2018; Milner, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Inequalities do not stop at performance and outcomes alone. Inequities are also evident for students in terms of school engagement and motivation, participation in extracurriculars, positive school experiences, and a sense of belonging in their school communities (GLSEN, 2017; Meier et al., 2018; Shifrer, Callahan, & Muller, 2013). Milner contended that "standardization, in many ways, is antithetical to diversity because it suggests that all students live and operate in homogeneous environments with equality of opportunity afforded to them" (p. 3). Based on the poor outcomes for students of color, students with disabilities, students experiencing poverty/low income, and English learners, these improvement efforts have fallen short (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Schools with diverse populations of students may grapple with improvement efforts if there is a lack of focus on the right drivers for systems change (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Milner, 2013).

In schools facing changing and increasing diversity among their student population, culturally proficient leadership has been identified as a way to focus improvement efforts to create equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in

schools (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Equitable and inclusive schools support student learning in a number of ways including enhancing learning for all students since teachers collaborate to improve their pedagogy, improving community relations within and outside the school, and preparing students to be global and culturally competent citizens (Lindsey et al., 2019).

Principals leading diverse schools who want to implement culturally proficient leadership must reflect on their beliefs, actions, and practices, aiming to change them to support and address diverse student needs (Gorski, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Scanlan, 2013; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). School leaders who apply culturally proficient leadership are called to recognize that inequalities within school policies, and practices can sometimes be perpetuated by unacknowledged bias and beliefs (Cooper, 2009; Scanlan, 2013). By recognizing historical contexts of discrimination and deficit-based ideologies, school leaders understand that they have "a substantial amount of power to mitigate these inequalities" (Gorski, 2013, p. 3). According to Wang (2018), "What matters is how principals transform their beliefs and values into practice to address social values such as democracy, inclusion, justice, and equity" (p. 473). Principals must embody and model these social values as part of their leadership practices if equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices are going to be part of the culture of their school communities (Lindsey et al., 2019).

As building leaders, principals are responsible for building equitable and inclusive schools creating the conditions for all students to learn (Lindsey et al., 2019). "A school cannot become culturally proficient without effective leadership focused on moving the academic and social needs of all demographic groups of students enrolled at the school"

(Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 71). Yet, leading work that addresses long-standing bias, discrimination, and inequality in schools can be a daunting task (DeMatthews, 2018; Franco et al., 2013). Not only does it require the principal's strong conviction and belief that all students can learn, but also the relentless pursuit to develop the systems that allow for inclusive instructional practices, leaving no students behind (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). The purpose of this research study was to examine how leadership actions of urban high school principals rooted in cultural competence promote equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in diverse, urban schools.

Theoretical Framework

Students of color attend highly impoverished and more diversified schools more frequently than White students which makes intersectionality of these students' identities an important consideration (Boschma & Brownstein, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c). Therefore, in studying the urban high school setting, the intersection between race, ethnicity, and poverty level cannot be ignored. There may be other student identities that intersect to shape the experiences and beliefs of those students. Critical race theory and the theory of intersectionality informed this study about culturally competent leadership within schools.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is situated in a world view where racism is pervasive in our society and has a significant impact on the disparities that continue to face students of color in our schools (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez, 2003). Lopez (2003) stated about critical race theory (CRT) that "rather

than subscribe to the belief that racism is an abnormal or unusual concept, critical race theorists begin with the premise that racism is a normal and endemic component of our social fabric" (p. 83).

Six Tenets of Critical Race Theory

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first applied CRT as a lens to describe the inequalities for students of color in our educational system. They contended that race is an underlying cause of the injustices in education, and that these injustices cannot be eradicated without acknowledging racism and foundational biases upon which our educational system was built. Twenty years later, Capper (2015) analyzed CRT in the context of educational leadership literature and further proposed six tenets of CRT: "permanence of racism, whiteness at property, counternarratives and acknowledgement of majoritarian narratives, interest convergence, critique of liberalism and intersectionality," (Capper, 2015, p. 795). These tenets assist in defining CRT and its applicability to educational leadership and also serve in framing the theoretical framework for this research study.

Permanence of Race. Permanence of race is an underlying belief of CRT that assumes that racism exists within our country and is pervasive and interwoven through all areas of American life (Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez, 2003). Lopez (2003) contended that "racism is alive and well in this country . . . the only difference between racism today and of the past is that modern-day racism is more subtle, invisible, and insidious," (p. 82). It is imperative to understand that racism played a major role in the history of this country, but also that racism continues to permeate the economics, policies, and structures of our society which include education (Capper, 2015;

Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2003). Race has been a significant factor in the educational outcomes of students of color and will continue as such.

Whiteness as Property. Historically, White property owners were granted certain rights because of their Whiteness that were not afforded to people of other races (Capper, 2015). *Whiteness as property* is derived from the notion that owning property carries more rights than being human (Capper, 2015). Whiteness becomes *property* for White people because it means privilege, power, and access that is denied to people of other races just because they are not White (Capper, 2015). Ladson-Billings (1995) literally applied the tenet Whiteness as property to describe the inequities in financial resources to support education in economically disadvantaged communities of color.

Counternarratives and the Acknowledgement of Majoritarian Narratives. Capper (2015) described the acknowledgement of majoritarian narratives as a need to honor and listen to the narratives of people of color as they share their own personal experiences. Howard and Navarro (2016) also ascertained that the dominant narrative must be challenged to make room for the perspectives of those who are traditionally marginalized. Majoritarian narratives often represent privileged, predominately White, and middle or upper-class viewpoints, contradicting the counternarratives that arise from the lived experiences of people of color. Furthermore, Pollack and Zirkel (2013) stated that majoritarian narratives "justify, legitimate, and help to maintain the status quo of racial inequities," (p. 298). Counternarratives must be legitimized and honored, while majoritarian narratives must be acknowledged and recognized for the role they play in the perpetuation of racism (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Pollack & Zirkel, 2013).

Interest Convergence. Interest convergence refers to the notion that racial equality is a good idea only when it is mutually beneficial for White people (Capper, 2015). White people want to know what is in it for them, even though their White privilege has already afforded them more power than people of color. Several researchers caution against the use of interest convergence to address issues of inequity in schools, as it may not effectively challenge policies and practices that perpetuate racism in schools (Capper, 2015).

Critique of Liberalism. CRT calls for a critique of common liberal ideas such as meritocracy, color blindness, and the perceived impartial nature of policies and practices that perpetuate racism (Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Meritocracy is the idea that every individual achieves goals based on their merit and abilities to work hard (Gorski, 2013). Meritocracy is harmful to students of color because it fails to acknowledge that their opportunities because of race and other identities are not equal to opportunities afforded to students of more privileged backgrounds (Capper, 2015; Gorski, 2013; Howard & Navarro, 2016). A color blindness ideology is problematic, because it prevents educators from acknowledging how race matters individualistically and systematically (Milner, 2013; Tatum, 2017). CRT establishes that race matters in all areas of our society. Capper (2015) pointed out that this ideology is problematic because our public education system is built on and reflects White culture and values, and therefore, racist presumptions and beliefs are maintained.

Intersectionality in CRT. Intersectionality is acknowledging that the intersection of multiple marginalized identities matters (Capper, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989). Capper (2015) established intersectionality as a tenet of CRT in three important ways:

considering race across races; the notion that eliminating inequalities that result from racism can also support the eradication of inequities across other identities; and the traditional idea of addressing race by examining its intersections with other identities such as ability, gender identity/expression, sexuality, language, and social class. Applying the tenet of intersectionality to CRT emphasizes that educational leaders must be competent to address inequalities across identities, otherwise risking that some students would still experience inequity based on their identities (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016).

Theory of Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality provides an important lens to this study on educational leadership. Crenshaw (1989) asserted that intersectionality is the construct that an individual must be viewed through more than one identity, as those identities intersect to not only impact the individual's worldview and experiences, but also influences how the society views the individual. Intersectionality was proposed to explain why anti-discrimination laws did not sufficiently protect women of color. Crenshaw (1989) argued that women of color were not as protected by the laws because they belonged to two marginalized identity groups, female and Black, while Black men were only members of one marginalized group. Intersectionality is important if an individual identifies with a marginalized group (or several) within society. The interaction or intersectionality of these multiple group identities within one individual, such as low socioeconomic status, gender-nonconforming, LGBTQ, and person of color create additional barriers and structures that breed privilege, discrimination, and injustice (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Proctor, Williams, Scherr, & Li, 2017).

Both CRT and intersectionality have implications for this research study that explores how principals use cultural competence leadership to address student diversity in their schools. Principals must recognize that identity matters in addressing student diversity particularly where student identities intersect (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Proctor et al., 2017). CRT acknowledges that racism exists and is a foundational cause of the inequalities within the United States' public-school system (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez, 2003). Principals can use these theories to contextualize the diversity within their schools, as they reflect on their own cultural competence (Capper, 2015).

Leading for Equitable Systems and Inclusive Instructional Practices

To explore the topic of equitable systems and inclusive school practices, it is paramount to first understand the context of urban schools today and the backgrounds, lives, cultures, languages, and values of students who attend these schools. Diversity encompasses the varied identities that individual students bring to school based on race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, disability, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Howe & Lisi, 2020; Lindsey et al., 2019). Diversity should be celebrated in our schools; however, diversity is too often viewed through a deficit mindset, which can lead to negative beliefs about children, their identities, and their families and the communities in which they live (Gorski, 2013; Milner, 2013). While it is critical to understand the diversity in our schools, it is also important to understand that the educators in front of these children often have very different backgrounds, cultures, and values based on their own lived experiences (Milner, 2013; Musu, 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). School leaders must embrace cultural

competence, possessing the beliefs and skills to develop school cultures that promote equity and inclusion (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). This literature review explores how cultural competence supports principals to develop the *will* to lead, while addressing uncertainty and change, to promote equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in their schools.

Changing Student Diversity

In order to examine how culturally proficient leadership promotes equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in schools, it is important to understand the scope and scale of diversity in today's public schools and why context necessitates culturally competent leadership (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Today's educational leaders welcome many students into their schools who are burdened by the historical, political, and social forces of racism and segregation within their communities (Terrell et al., 2018). Even though many think that the desegregation of schools occurred with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in the 1950s, schools, especially those in the South, remained largely segregated up through the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Orfield & Lee, 2007). The 1970s brought some desegregation mostly in the cities in the South; but at the same time, White students who once lived in urban areas began moving to the suburbs or smaller cities, while Black and Latino students remained attending urban schools (Orfield & Lee, 2005, 2007). Additionally, resegregation was spurred by three Supreme Court decisions during the 1990s which limited desegregation orders, further segregating Black and Latino students in largely inferior urban schools based on teacher quality, pedagogy and curricula, graduation rates, and student achievement scores (Orfield & Lee, 2007).

Schools serving students who are primarily students of color and experiencing poverty developed by design from historical, political, and social forces (Orfield & Lee, 2005). "Segregation has never just been by race: segregation by race is systematically linked to other forms of segregation, including segregation by socioeconomic status, by residential location, and increasingly by language" (Orfield & Lee, 2005, p. 14). If students of color experiencing poverty are fortunate enough to attend more racially and socioeconomically diverse districts, these students can still be clustered or segregated into certain less diverse schools within the district or tracked into lower classes within schools that are more diverse (Frattura & Capper, 2015). Understanding these systemic inequities can shape how principals respond to diversity within their schools (Terrell et al., 2018).

Rabinowitz et al. (2019) investigated the shifts in demographics in the United States' public schools by analyzing the diversity and integration of public districts in the year 1995 and 2017, sorting districts into three categories: diverse (less than 75% of a single race), undiverse (75%-90% of a single race), and extremely undiverse (more than 90% of a single race). In 1995, they found that diverse districts were concentrated in large cities and in the South and 45% of students attended schools in diverse districts (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). In contrast, the remainder of the students attended districts categorized as undiverse or extremely undiverse; a third of all students attended school in rural districts with mostly White students. Their analysis of the diversity of districts in 2017 revealed some dramatic shifts in the data. Shifting into the diverse category were 2,400 districts located in smaller cities and suburbs, which had once been predominantly White. The other interesting finding of the investigation was that there were a number of districts who were diverse in 1995 but shifted to undiverse or extremely undiverse due to

disproportionately serving students of color (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). Whether it be linguistic, racial, ability, gender identity/expression, sexuality or social class, students bring many and multiple identities with them to school. Navigating diversity to ensure the most equitable and socially just outcomes for all students begins by understanding the backgrounds of the students attending public school. The students who attend public school in the U.S. come from increasingly diverse backgrounds and educational leaders must pay attention to these changes, embrace them and support the development of culturally competent cultures within their schools (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018).

Racial, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity

For the first time in U.S. history, by the year 2023, the percentage of White students enrolled in public school is predicted to fall to below 50%, making White students no longer the majority race attending public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The other minority races collectively (Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and multiracial) will make up the majority of students in the public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Based on the most recent census data from 2010, the immigrant population in the United States rose to 40 million, which is the highest number in U.S. history, which has impacted the number of students attending public school who are English learners (Camarota, 2011; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019c). There has been an increase in ELs over a 15-year period (2000-2015) and over three quarters of ELs students who were Hispanic in public schools were ELs in 2015 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019c).

More ELs are served by urban districts and attend school with higher populations of minority students (Sanchez, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). On the 2017 NAEP assessment, ELs proficiency rates across grades and subjects were well below the scores of non-Els, and graduation rates for ELs (2015-16) were 67% compared to the non-EL rate of 85% (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The national high school graduation rate for EL students was 63% compared to 82% for all graduates and only 1.4% of EL graduates participate in college entrance exams (Sanchez, 2017). Standardized assessment results for EL students vary across states suggesting that some strategies addressing policy or classroom instructional practices focused on equity might yield improved academic outcomes (Murphey, 2014; Scanlan & Lopez; 2012). Merely recognizing that students who are linguistically diverse need something different is not enough to address their educational needs; rather principals must also be knowledgeable about pedagogy and instructional frameworks to best meet student needs (Scanlan & Lopez, 2012).

Students Experiencing Poverty and Low Income

Students experiencing poverty or low income often encounter adverse educational outcomes, presenting an opportunity gap for these students in public schools (Gorski, 2013). In 2016, 19% of U.S. children attending public schools were experiencing poverty, with great variance among states (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019c). The poverty rates in 2016 for Black children under the age of 18 (31%) and for Hispanic children (26%) were much higher than the rates of White and Asian children living in poverty (both at 10%) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019c). However, when considering students from families with low income, the national average

jumps to 51%, which is just over half of the students in the U.S. experiencing poverty or low income (Suitts, 2015, 2016). Students experiencing poverty or low income show significant achievement gaps on national assessments compared to peers from wealthier backgrounds (Gorski, 2013; Hansen et al., 2018).

Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities served in our public schools are often marginalized into separate classrooms with less rigorous instruction, resulting in less educational opportunity (Frattura & Capper, 2015). In 2015-16, roughly 13% of the population of public-school students identified as students with a disability, which has remained a relatively stable rate since 2011 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019b, 2019c). Percentages of students with disabilities served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) disaggregated by race show that rates for students of color are slightly higher than average (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019b, 2019c).

Disproportionality in special education identification (both overrepresentation and underrepresentation) is evident based on race, socioeconomic status, and gender since subjectivity and bias play a role in the identification process (Cooc & Kiru, 2018; Morgan et al., 2015; Morgan et al., 2017; Shifrer, 2018; Shifrer, Muller & Callahan, 2011). Cooc and Kiru (2018) pointed out that students who belong to multiple student groups (i.e., Black, male, living in poverty) are over-identified based on their identification with multiple group identities. Students with disabilities also perform significantly below their peers on the NAEP assessment across all grades and subjects,

have lower graduation rates than students without disabilities, and these gaps have remained consistent over time (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019b, 2019c).

Student Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

Another identity that broadens student diversity in today's schools is sexuality, youth who identify as LGBTQ. Every year the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) conducts a national school climate survey to uncover and report on the school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth. Based on the GLSEN (2017) survey, almost 60% of students who identify as LGBTQ felt unsafe at school based on their sexual orientation, and the overwhelming majority of youth who identify as either LGBTQ or transgender have experienced harassment based on their identities. It is especially important for educators to note that the GLSEN survey revealed that 62.2% of students who identify as LGBTQ indicated they experienced LGBTQ-related discriminatory policies or practices at school (GLSEN, 2017). This survey sheds light on the experiences of youth who identify as LGBTQ and the lack of inclusive and equitable school policies that consider their identities and how these identities impact their school experiences.

Secondary Schools: Student Identity and Inequity

Identity development is an ongoing process but is highly relevant for humans during adolescence. According to Erickson (1963), the fifth stage of his psychosocial theory is known as identity vs. role confusion. This stage is characterized as a time when adolescents, middle and high schoolers ages 12 to 18, spend time searching for a sense of self and personal identity (Erickson, 1963). Therefore, identity development and self-perception are more susceptive during the high school years than when children are

younger. Given the data about students with marginalized identities and the staggering differences in educational outcomes and opportunities based on certain identities, one can speculate that these inequities actually shape student identities. Students likely emerge with new and different identities, shaped by the experienced inequities and marginalization present in schools.

Chen et al. (2020) found in their High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 that 57.3% of Black students and 52.5% of Hispanic students enrolled in remedial coursework compared to only 34% of White students. There are several inequitable practices that can contribute to students of color being more likely to need remedial courses when they enroll in post-secondary courses. One practice that begins in elementary school but becomes more pronounced at the secondary level is the use of tracking of students into different classes based on achievement. Karlson (2015) suggested that "adolescents revise their educational expectations consistently and in the predicted directions in light of the signals that their high school track placements send" and that prior experiences also impact how a student will view himself and his capabilities (p. 133). This research offers that students with a history of failure determine their capabilities based on their track and their beliefs are confirmed as they move into adolescence and are tracked into lower classes. Academic tracking suggests to students and teachers that some adolescents are not capable of the same rigorous coursework and academic achievement as higher achieving peers. In turn, these adolescents experiencing low track classes modify their own educational expectations based on these messages (Karlson, 2015; Shifrer et al., 2013). Tracking is a persistent problem for students of color and also for students with disabilities. Shifrer et al. (2013) found that students with learning disabilities start high school in lower level math and science courses often based on previous and poor past

performance and their poor academic records continue into high school. Not only do these tracked classes lead to changes in self-perception of ability but they also form homogeneous classes of students where some students are left with content that is not at grade level and delivered with pedagogy that is less engaging in a classroom with low expectations (Gorski, 2013).

Another practice and challenge in the secondary setting that can influence how prepared students are for postsecondary pursuits is the traditional scheduling models used in high school, which can marginalize some students. Most students experience having more teachers across the content areas and changing classes based on a bell schedule, adding to the logistics of supporting students who need access to strong core instruction, additional supports, and remediation of skills (Pisoni & Conti, 2019; TNTP, 2018). Teachers are often attempting to address wide skill gaps in their students, especially in the area of reading, as great variation may exist among the students based on less access to grade level assignments and instruction (TNTP, 2018). In fact, when classrooms containing mostly (>50%) students of color were compared to classrooms with mostly White students, classrooms with mostly White students received 1.5 times more grade appropriate assignments and 3.6 times per grade appropriate lessons (TNTP, 2018). When analyzing classrooms with primarily (>75%) students from low-income backgrounds, compared to classrooms with primarily students with higher-incomes, students with higher-income backgrounds received 2.1 times more grade appropriate assignments and 5.4 times more grade appropriate lessons (TNTP, 2018). Students who have had less positive achievement results might find themselves in remedial classes with peers who also lack successful academic experiences, with little hope of catching up

(Shifrer et al., 2013; TNTP, 2018). All of these scheduling pitfalls within traditional secondary school can lead to further marginalization of certain groups of students if they are not addressed (Pisoni & Conti, 2019).

Certain institutionalized practices that are common in most public high schools and additional factors related to more developed student identities bring up unique opportunities for addressing diversity at the secondary level (Pisoni & Conti, 2019). The response of the school culture to diversity can perpetuate or terminate the negative problems that exist by not addressing diversity such as low expectations, poor outcomes on standardized assessments, lack of use of engaging pedagogies, tracked classes, poor graduation rates, and grossly inequitable discipline practices (Chambers & McCready, 2011; Gorski, 2013; Madsen & Mabokela, 2013). These additional nuances at the high school level must be considered by principals as they look towards building equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices within their schools (DeMatthews, 2018).

Summary

These data describing the diversity of students attending U.S. public schools and the adverse educational impact that results for many students based on their identities underscore the importance of culturally competent leadership in our public schools. While schools have become increasingly diverse, America's public-school teachers remain predominantly White, female, and middle class (Musu, 2019; Rabinowitz et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). There continues to be an incongruence between the identities that children have and the backgrounds of the teaching force, resulting in a gap that is far and wide for diverse students (Milner, 2013; Tatum, 2017; Terrell et al., 2018). Milner (2013) suggested that this gap is one of many gaps"that we need to address if students

who are culturally diverse are ever going to have equitable educational opportunities and outcomes. Culturally proficient leadership allows principals to answer the call to support the development of culturally competent schools that value and respond to diversity (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Culturally proficient leaders assess the cultural knowledge within their schools in order to determine learning needs that make managing diversity conducive to improving educational outcomes for students (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018).

Valuing Diversity Through Cultural Competence

As the field of education continues to evaluate new ways to raise educational access and outcomes for all students, understanding the diversity dynamic in public-schools is necessary work for principals (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Principals must reflect inwardly to not only determine what and how they will address diversity within their schools; however, the most important reflective question is asking *why* (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2014; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). The journey of cultural competence begins within oneself and principals need to have a willingness to explore their own beliefs, assumptions, and core values about serving all students and meeting their needs (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2014; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Cultural competence can provide principals with "a framework for developing inclusive perspectives that empower educators and their students," and is a critical attribute for leading for social justice (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2019, p. 24). One important aspect of developing cultural competence is raising the level of consciousness of leaders to evaluate their implicit biases and privileges (Miller & Martin, 2015; Terrell et al., 2018). Once principals raise their level of awareness of their own bias and privilege, they can

then begin to influence others to embrace and develop equitable systems for students from diverse backgrounds. Theoharis and Haddix (2011) contended that all principals focus on equity for all students "to reduce the racially bound disparities in their schools" (p. 1333). School leaders need to understand their own identities first in order to begin to understand their students and develop a moral construct (their *why*) to lead for all students across identities (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2014; Terrell et al., 2018).

Defining Cultural Competence

Historical Context of Cultural Competence in Social Services. The term *cultural competence* first emerged in the literature of the 1980s within the field of social work (Cross et al., 1989; Gallegos et al., 2008). Cultural competence also has roots in counseling, psychology, and medicine (Gallegos et al., 2008). In 1988, a sub-committee, chaired by Terry L. Cross, with the assistance of the Portland Research and Training Center for Improved Services to Severely Emotionally Handicapped Children and Their Families, (funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, Child, and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP)) conceptualized and developed a monograph to describe culturally competent systems of care for minority children (Cross et al., 1989). While the systems approach to supporting children and families in the field of social work had been addressed in the past, Cross and colleagues (1989) proposed addressing the unique needs of minority children and their families through the lens of cultural competence. The cultural competence framework that emerged from this systems approach has formed the basis for culturally proficient educational leadership (Cross et al., 1989; Franco et al., 2012; Gallegos et al., 2008; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018).

Operational Definition of Cultural Competence/Proficiency. There are many ways to define cultural competence, particularly in the field of study where the research is conducted. According to Cross et al. (1989), "cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or amongst professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. 13). In other words, cultural competence refers to one's ability to interact effectively with people of different identities, backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs from oneself. In the field of educational leadership, cultural proficiency is defined as "a mindset, a worldview, a way a person or organization makes assumptions to effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that arise in diverse environments" (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 5).

Lindsey et al. (2019) and Terrell et al. (2018) discussed guiding principles of cultural proficiency in their publications on the subject. The guiding principles serve as a framework for educators to understand and define their own values as they relate to cultural proficiency, their understanding of the students in their schools, and how to best support and educate them; they were established in direct response to some of the challenges/barriers that are experienced in diverse contexts. They serve as guideposts for educators who are working to understand their own values and the values of teachers, school staff, students, and families in the context of the school. According to Lindsey et al. (2019) and Terrell et al. (2018), the guiding principles of cultural proficiency include:

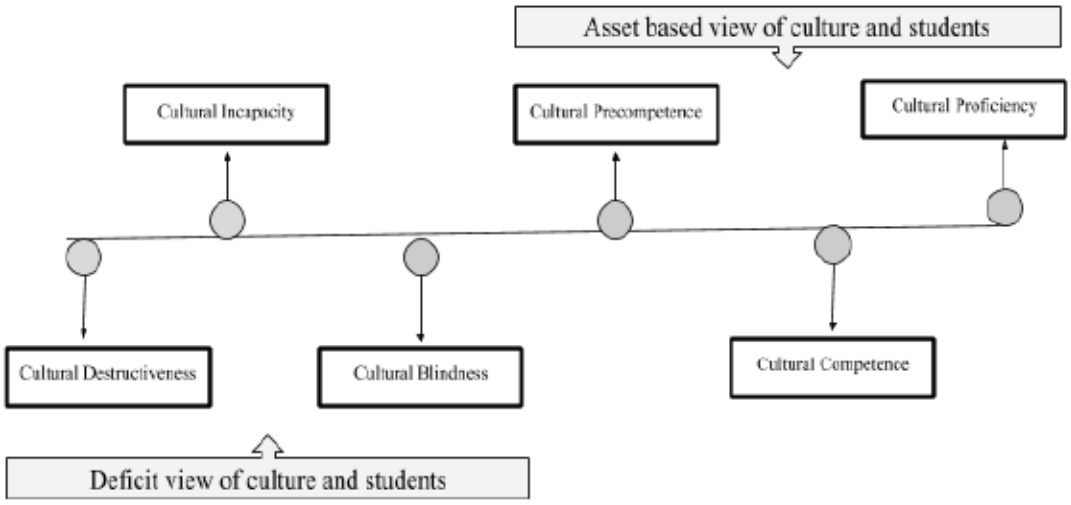
- Culture is a predominant force in society.
- People are served to varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- People have group identities and individual identities.

- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
- Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.
- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.
- The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.
- School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a distinct set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.
- Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to, and accepted. (p. 31; pp. 118-119)

Although defining the term cultural competence and its applicability to educational leadership is important, it is also necessary to discuss cultural competence in terms of the cultural competence continuum. Cross et al. (1989) proposed that cultural competence can be viewed along a continuum that could be used to describe a range of responses to cultural variability. The continuum view of cultural competence allows for self-reflection and understanding of what behaviors or actions promote or undermine the development of cultural proficiency. The cultural competence continuum offers six descriptors ranging from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency and describes characteristics for each category (Cross et al., 1989). The first three stages (cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness) represent unhealthy beliefs and behaviors lacking cultural competence. The other three stages (cultural pre-competence, cultural competence, cultural proficiency) imply action towards improving and promoting cultural competency (Cross et al., 1989).

Figure 1

Cultural Competence Continuum



Note. Cultural competence continuum depicting on the left side the stages of cultural competence that promote a deficit view of cultures and students. On the right side of the continuum are the stages of cultural competence that promote an asset-based view of culture and students. Adapted from *Towards a culturally competent system of care: A monograph on effective services for minority children who are severely emotionally disturbed* by T. Cross, B. Bazron, K. Dennis, & M. Issacs, (1989), pp. 13-18. Georgetown University Child Development Center.

Even though Cross et al. (1989) proposed these stages to apply to agencies and systems in the area of social work, other authors (Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018) have used the cultural competence continuum and applied it in the field of educational leadership. The left side of the cultural competence continuum represents reactive strategies in response to diversity focused on tolerance, whereas the

right side of the continuum is proactive and promotes principal and school transformation (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018).

"The points on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum represent the vast range of intercultural and intracultural interactions found in an educational setting--within one school or one person" (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 131). Educational leaders could use these descriptions to identify and define their personal cultural competency, that of their individual staff, and collectively of their school or district (Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018).

Essential Components of a Cultural Component System. Along with the cultural competence continuum stages, Cross et al. (1989) identified five components for developing a culturally competent system: valuing diversity, cultural self-assessment, dynamics of difference, institutionalization of cultural knowledge, and adaptation to diversity (pp. 19-21). Cross et al. (1989) emphasized that it is essential that all of these components function well at each level of the system. Valuing diversity refers to the recognition that diversity exists and should be accepted and respected, especially when the value and belief systems differ. The second component, cultural self-assessment, means that the organization/individuals can self-assess and reflect on its own culture, value system, and beliefs and determine current status as well as plan for the next steps based on the current assessment. Dynamics of difference is the third component and aims to describe the cross-cultural interactions that occur and how those interactions are managed. When people from different cultures and value systems interact, stereotypes, biases, and misconceptions can surface, so it is necessary for a system to anticipate and examine these dynamics at all levels of the system. Institutionalization of cultural

knowledge represents the concept that systems must regularly seek and incorporate new information about cultures and people into their practices and policies at every level, so these practices become the way the system operates. Finally, adaptation to diversity intends that the system will change and adapt based on ongoing education, self-assessment, and feedback. The system regularly evaluates and strives to continuously improve as new needs, information or situations arise (Cross et al., 1989).

The five components for developing a culturally component system can be applied to the development of any system that interacts and works with diverse groups of people. The components can serve as a foundation for developing the systems, procedures, policies, vision, and mission of the organization to ensure that each level of the organization is working towards cultural competence.

Culturally Proficient Leadership

While the need for cultural competence for principals has been established, defining what cultural competence looks like in practice for principals is equally important. In the most recent revision of the National Educational Leadership Program (NELP) Preparation Standards-Building Level by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2018), cultural competence is viewed as an essential leadership competency. Specifically, Standard 3: Equity, Inclusiveness and Cultural Responsiveness, defines cultural competence for future educational leaders. Standard 3 includes three component areas with identified content knowledge and educational leadership skills under each area.

NELP Standard Component 3.1 addresses how principals use data to design and evaluate an equitable and inclusive school culture which speaks to the equitable systems

they must construct to ensure consideration for students across identities when systems and structures are designed and evaluated. Principals need to know the aspects of a positive school climate including understanding the research, ongoing assessment of the culture and the condition, and strategies to enact changes to promote improved culture. NELP Standard Component 3.2 focuses on the student's equitable access to resources, technology, and opportunity both in educational success and well-being. This component also establishes the need to use data to identify where bias might exist in resource allocation and make equitable changes. NELP Standard 3.3 highlights the evaluation, advocacy and cultivation of equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive instructional practices and the need for inclusive instructional practices to be understood and utilized across the school setting (NELP, 2018). School leaders must have both knowledge and skills to promote the use of culturally responsive instructional and behavior support practices and their implications for use across the school and be able to understand how these practices can be used to address inequities that exist across the educational system. In addition, future principals need to be able to identify root causes of bias and inequity in their schools and develop school policies and procedures that address these inequities in a culturally responsive and unbiased manner. Finally, school leaders must advocate for the use of these practices and policies and support teachers and school staff to implement these equitable strategies (NELP, 2018).

The NELP standards acknowledge the importance of cultural competence both as a pre-service building leader and across the span of one's educational leadership career. School leaders can operationalize cultural competence based on five essential components for a culturally competent system: assessing cultural knowledge, valuing

diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge (Cross et al., 1989; Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Using the five components for developing a culturally competent system and the cultural competence continuum, Franco et al. (2013) developed a rubric to provide a framework of cultural competence for educational leaders. The rubric contextualizes cultural competence to the role of a building leader and provides examples and non-examples of cultural proficiency. Included in the rubric that Franco et al. (2013) developed is this statement,

> Leaders embrace risk, make decisions and take action, which may not be popular with dominant cultures. They anticipate criticism; persist in the face of criticism, inertia, barriers or reversals; and accept personal and professional consequences for their advocacy for underserved students and other stakeholders. (p. 102)

These authors underscore that cultural competence leadership can have "personal and professional consequences" such as facing the barriers of unpopularity, criticism and negative consequences situating leaders in challenging positions (Franco et al., 2013, p. 102). Cultural competence can sometimes be a lonely journey for principals as they navigate the challenges presented by the changes they wish to make in their schools (Theoharis, 2007). It is critical to remember that actualizing culturally competent is a developmental process, not only for the system but also for the individual (Cross et al., 1989; Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). It is a process that evolves over time and is a collection of small steps of self-awareness, self-reflection, and ongoing education, rather than a single experience, moment, or professional development session. Cultural competence, albeit aspirational, is a lifelong journey where educational

leaders who move through the world with their eyes, ears, and hearts wide open so they can see, accept, and celebrate the rich assets that their students bring to their schools every day. Recognition of these assets will ensure that students receive the best possible educational opportunities because they are worth it!

Bold Principal Leadership: Navigating the Change Process

Educational literature about leadership clearly identifies principal leadership as one of the most influential aspects of successful schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010, 2017; Theoharis, 2007). As principals engage in the work of transforming the cultures of their diverse schools through their leadership, bold leadership knowledge and practices are becoming increasingly important. Principal leadership in diverse schools can be explored both through leadership theory and systems change theory.

Transformational Leadership

An early educational leadership theory with applicability to promoting equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in schools is that of transformational leadership. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) conducted some of the early research on transformational leadership in schools, dividing transformational leadership behaviors (TLBs) into three categories: "setting directions, helping people, and redesigning the organization," (p. 181). Setting direction for any school would be important, but in a school, striving to be equitable and inclusive, setting direction is critical. Envisioning equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices may be challenging for some teachers and staff within the school because of the traditions, values, or beliefs. Transformational leaders, therefore, model values and practices to other teachers and

staff that are imperative to creating equitable and inclusive schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Notably, principals become transformational leaders as they value and honor students' identities and diversity. The change process necessary to create equitable school systems for all students establishes itself in principals creating a culture of learning, or intellectual stimulation about cultural competence (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Principals model learning and lead others through learning, recognizing the nuances of people's levels of mastery, need, and support. The transformational leader also models the improvement cycle of learning, doing, reflecting, and improving while teachers work in collaborative teams to accomplish this important change work (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Finally, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) cited "building productive relations with parents and the community" as another behavior of transformational leaders (p. 108). Considering that the needs of students who come from diverse backgrounds, building partnerships and strong relationships with families becomes a priority. Not only does this aspect of building relationships with families support student learning, it also provides an opportunity for the principal and school staff to build cultural competence. Transformational leadership theory provides a beginning framework for how principals can structure their vision towards cultural competence and recognize the need to support school staff to learn and adapt to fulfill the vision for an equitable and inclusive school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Transformative and Social Justice Leadership Theory

Theoharis (2007) argued that being a transformational leader is not enough to change schools Leaders must focus on employing the practices that recognize that marginalization exists for students based on their identities because leadership focused on

this marginalization can remedy the injustices faced by students (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Shields, 2010, 2017; Wang, 2018). Principals must examine inequitable practices in order to determine the necessary leadership actions that address both the creation of equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices and schools to promote equity for all students (DeMatthews et al., 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Shields, 2010, 2017). Shields (2010) described in her case study that principals need to view education as a lever for social change and cites that principals should adopt asset-based thinking when making decisions about school structures and resource allocation in light of individual student needs and identities.

Social justice and transformative leadership theory promote the importance of an asset-based view of diversity and students. Viewing diversity through an asset-based lens also involves recognizing and acknowledging that the school serves children and families whose identities and lived experiences are often very different from the dominant, White middle-class experiences of most educators in today's diverse public schools (Capper, 2015; Pollack & Zirkel, 2013). Common majoritarian stories, or misguided beliefs about students who are traditionally marginalized, explain and define why educators often ascribe a deficit mindset to the identities of children from diverse backgrounds. Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) indicated that while the process to enact equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in schools can be challenging, it is important work of the principal benefitting all students. With social justice and transformative leadership, there is a focus on valuing diversity, asset-based thinking, creating inclusive classroom cultures, and ensuring all students have access to strong core instruction with appropriate

differentiation (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Shields, 2010, 2017; Wang, 2018).

Systems Change Theory

To address inequities in our public schools, Pollack and Zirkel (2013) stated that "structural, pedagogical, curricular, or procedural change initiatives that are intended to correct identified disparities in educational opportunity or outcomes between groups of students" are necessary (p. 291). Principals must not only navigate internal changes and challenges, but also external reactions from the community to those institutional changes (Madsen & Mabokela, 2013). These changes are not only unpopular but can often uncover deep-seated bias, racism, or discrimination, whether intentional or unintended, that can be difficult for educators to acknowledge or face (Franco et al., 2013; Madsen & Mabokela; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). Knowing that great change must occur both in the structures and practices of schools to provide equitable outcomes for students, principals must support staff in navigating systemic change (Capper & Frattura, 2015; Fullan, 2011; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013).

Literature that discusses organizational change processes provides relevant information in regard to principal leadership. By fostering a culture of trust and collaboration, principals can direct energy toward creating learning organizations with their schools focused on student learning outcomes and guided by problem-solving structures (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013). Heifetz (1994) called this type of leadership, where the organization learns to solve its problems, adaptive leadership, because there is no clear solution to the challenge. In a school facing adaptive

challenges, such as issues of equity and inclusion, learning must occur within the school to develop the culturally competent culture to change the policies and practices of the school and its staff. A principal must ignite learning around the issue by asking difficult questions and keeping the focus on the challenge (Heifetz, 1994). In their most recent collaboration, *Coherence,* Fullan and Quinn (2016) outlined a framework for what they coined coherence making. Fullan and Quinn (2016) defined coherence as "a shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work in the minds and actions individually and especially collectively (p. 2). Their Coherence Framework outlined aspects of transformational leadership theory where the principal, at the center, driving learning and capacity building for staff throughout the system, chooses the right drivers for change. Likewise, keeping student learning at the center as the goal of the school, allows the school to solve challenges that are more adaptive in nature, which is the premise of the Coherence Framework (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013). Any change process defined in the educational leadership literature starts with the principal's ability to cultivate collaborative cultures that recognize individual strengths, but also assist educators in working together to get better, learn from one another, and build collective capacity. Collective capacity allows educators to deepen learning within the system to have the knowledge to be able to develop solutions to the school's most critical needs, such as creating equitable and inclusive schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013).

Navigating and leading any change process, particularly one as complex as promoting equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices to meet the needs of diverse students, is especially challenging. Drawing on the leadership theory and systems

change theory, principals can begin to understand the actions necessary for changing their culture to address the diverse needs of students, promoting equitable and inclusive schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013).

Summary

As schools become increasingly diverse, bold principal leadership is needed to develop schools that are focused on creating equitable systems so that inclusive instructional practices can be employed to meet the needs of students across and at the intersection of their unique identities. Because our teaching force in public schools does not match the changing diversity of the student population, inequities for students from marginalized groups exist (Capper, 2015; Musu, 2019; Theoharis, 2007). Milner (2013) pointed out that "when teachers operate primarily from their own cultural ways of knowing, the learning milieu can be foreign to students whose cultural experiences are different and inconsistent with the teachers' experiences" (p. 24). Likewise, building leaders need to lead through a lens of cultural competence, recognizing that the various identities of their diverse student population do in fact matter and influence the manner in which students engage in their learning at school. The principal's journey towards cultural competence starts first with themselves and their own learning and self-reflection which leads to the goal of supporting others on the journey towards cultural competence (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). While this work begins with principal self-reflection, principals also need to prepare to change and enact new policies and practices within their school that directly address the injustices that they are trying to prevent (Cooper, 2009; Scanlan, 2013). Principals have the significant task of not only positioning themselves as a culturally competent leader but also leading this change

within their schools by creating the conditions for schoolwide learning for all staff in order to be able to address and meet the needs of diverse student populations across identities (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007). Principals have a moral imperative as educational leaders to ensure that all students are afforded the most appropriate and just educational opportunities.

However, we know that not all educational opportunities are appropriate and just for all students. In fact, those students with the greatest chance of not having the same educational opportunities are those that are traditionally marginalized based on race, ethnicity, lower socioeconomic status, language, disability, gender identity/expression and sexual orientation. The systems and practices that are currently in place do not support all students and in many cases, perpetuate educational inequality for traditionally marginalized students. School leadership that focuses on dismantling these inequitable systems and practices must be realized through developing principal cultural competence and leading cultural competence learning at the school. These actions require self-reflection and strong leadership action on the part of the principal, a belief system focused on these ideas: diversity enhances the school, students are capable of achieving at high levels, and that the adults have the power to design structures and enact inclusive instructional practices within the school. While leading to change institutionalized structures and practices that are rooted in enduring systems of bias, discrimination and inequality can be overwhelming, it is the right and just thing to do. Principals, armed with strong convictions about students' diverse assets and abilities to achieve at high levels, can endure and transform their schools into learning environments that support all

students and raise achievement levels for all. There is a combination of cultural competence leadership and leadership know-how on the part of the principals that creates the synergy needed within a school to ensure all staff are becoming culturally competent and meeting all student needs. Understanding this combination of beliefs and leadership actions from leaders in the field who are leading diverse, urban high schools every day is the focus of this research study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Through this research study, the beliefs and experiences of three urban high school principals were examined using a qualitative, descriptive case study design. The use of a case study research design was determined to be the best design to appropriately capture the principals' beliefs about cultural competence and their leadership experiences that promote inclusive instructional practices and equitable systems in their schools. The research questions were designed to align with the constructs that surfaced from the literature review about cultural competence leadership, principal leadership and systems change theory (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007).

Data collection consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews with three urban high school principals who identified themselves as culturally competent leaders to understand their experiences in relation to their cultural competence leadership in diverse high schools. The researcher also utilized reflective journal prompts based on participant responses to cultural competence self-assessment checklists and document review to determine how these leaders demonstrate their culturally competent leadership actions in practice (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). Data were triangulated between the principal interviews, reflective journal prompt responses, and document review attempting to illuminate the participants' particular cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions that promoted equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in their schools. It was anticipated that the data collected would indicate that self-assessed culturally

competent, urban high school principals, leading diverse schools would be able to provide descriptions of their beliefs and leadership actions that promote the creation of equitable systems and use of inclusive instructional practices in their schools. These descriptions would provide insight for other urban high school principals also looking to support their diverse student population across and at the intersection of their identities to improve achievement and learning outcomes for all students.

This chapter provides an in-depth overview of the research study design including the rationale for choosing a qualitative, case study design and methodology for choosing the research participants. In addition, a conceptual framework is introduced. This conceptual framework defines cultural competence leadership, as a collection of both beliefs and actions. This framework served as a basis for the development of the research questions, data collection protocols and tools, and data analysis and interpretation. Further, an extensive overview of the sampling methods and the data collection procedures is presented, including descriptions of the data collection tools. Next a review of the data analysis methods is discussed including data coding and the use of other data collection techniques to ensure that the data collected aligned with the research questions. Finally, specific strategies for validation and reliability within study are shared and the limitations of the study design.

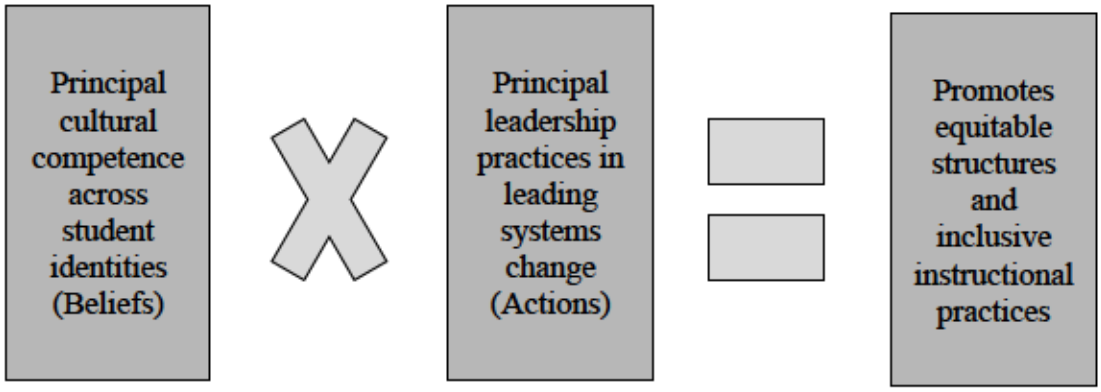
Conceptual Framework

In order to conceptualize the relationship between principal cultural competence, or beliefs, and principal leadership practices in leading through change and leadership actions, a simple mathematical equation illustrates the relationship between both principal cultural competence (beliefs) and leadership actions. Gough and Tunmer (1986)

created a multiplication equation to illustrate their Simple View of Reading theory, which describes reading comprehension as the product of word recognition and language comprehension. The researcher applied their equation idea to her own conceptualization of the promotion of equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in diverse schools. The use of a multiplication equation was intentional, because it illustrates that a principal must possess beliefs grounded in cultural competence as well as take the actions necessary to lead school staff through the change process to realize the implementation of policies and practices that align to their cultural competence beliefs. If a principal is missing the beliefs about cultural competence but is a dynamic leader, students with certain identities still might be left behind in the school improvement process. Likewise, just because a principal has beliefs and a lens towards cultural competence, she must also carry out the leadership actions to promote the development of equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices, leading staff through change that may be unpopular and uncomfortable. For this model to work, one must remember that the product of a multiplication problem with a zero in the equation is equal to zero. The researcher applied this same logic to the equation: if either side of the multiplication equation, principal cultural competence across student identities (beliefs), or principal leadership actions to lead through change is absent or a zero, then we can assume that there is no way that equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices can be cultivated within the school. This equation is illustrated as the following:

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework of Promotion of Equitable and Inclusive Schools



Note. Conceptual framework that combines cultural competence beliefs with principal leadership practices, noting that both sides of the equation must be present to promote equitable structures and inclusive instructional practices. Adapted from Gough & Tunmer (1986).

This equation, derived from the literature review and the researcher's interpretation about the interaction between cultural competence (beliefs) and principal leadership practices in leading systems change (actions), illustrates that both sides of the equation are necessary components to promote the creation of equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; NPBEA, 2018; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007). This study was designed to determine principal perceptions about what leadership actions based on their cultural competence they believe have been most impactful in promoting equitable and inclusive schools.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify what aspects of cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions do principals in diverse, urban high schools perceive promote equitable and inclusive schools. The study focused on uncovering urban high school principals' perceptions about which of their leadership actions supports the creation of inclusive and equitable schools. The study also explored the principals' perceptions of their levels of cultural competence across the student identities of race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, disability, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation and how their cultural competence influences decisions about equity, staff attitudes and beliefs, and overall school culture.

This study provided insight to current and future urban high school principals about the most effective leadership actions and aspects of cultural competence that promote equitable and inclusive schools. It also offered knowledge to urban district-level administrators about what leadership actions and cultural competence knowledge they should be fostering with their current principals, assisting district leaders in designing new structures and systems of support that promote culturally competent leadership of diverse schools. In addition, this study highlighted aspects of cultural competence leadership and could assist district-level administrators in defining candidate competencies when hiring new high school principals to lead in diverse schools.

Research Questions

When considering the development of a case study, the research questions become an important aspect of defining the case and need to be open-ended in order to facilitate the emergence of the data analysis and interpretation throughout the ongoing

data collection process (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The research questions were developed based on the literature review of cultural competence leadership including how principals respond to the diversity of students in their schools, how principals lead systems change, and the gestated conceptual framework that ties the two aforementioned constructs together. The researcher proposed that even when principals take actions as transformational leaders, they may still miss the opportunity to address issues of bias and injustice in their schools if they do not attend to equity and educational opportunity for all students. Principals need both leadership skills and cultural competence to lead through the type of transformation that is necessary to promote equitable schools and inclusive instructional practices. The research questions focused on understanding how urban high school principals in the context of their diverse schools perceive that their leadership actions and cultural competence promote equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in their schools. Specifically, the following research questions framed the study:

- What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in diverse, urban high schools?
- What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive instructional practices in diverse, urban high schools?
- What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in diverse, urban high schools?
- What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive instructional practices in diverse, urban high schools?

Research Design

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is the study of a social problem, grounded in theoretical frameworks, where research data are collected in a natural context and then analyzed for emergent patterns and themes. Qualitative research also allows for the explanation of complex problems in detail from the perspectives of those in the field that are experiencing the challenge, and to better understand the places and contexts in which the problem occurs and is addressed (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2003). In the area of qualitative research, Creswell (2013) suggested that there are several types of approaches to inquiry. Researchers select a particular method for conducting qualitative research based on the phenomena they are trying to describe. Qualitative research assumes that reality is not fixed and is based on the experiences of individuals within the world (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2002).

Case Study Design

The case study, which is a common inquiry approach, is described in different ways in the literature, and there is not consensus on the methodology and protocol for case studies (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). Merriam (2009) defined a case study as an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). The bounded system means that the case can be described based on the context or setting. Creswell (2013) suggested that a case study is a "methodology: a type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study as well as a product of inquiry" (p. 97). In other words, case study design is both a method of research, but evolves as the researcher engages in ongoing data collection and analysis. Further, case studies call for the researcher to describe the case or cases in a natural context through in-depth data

collection from multiple sources and provide an analysis of the emergent themes related to the challenge being investigated (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yazan, 2015).

There are several types of methodologies for conducting case studies discussed in the literature. Yin (2014) described three different types: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. Exploratory case studies serve as a way to conduct research to explore a particular circumstance in the data that may lead to a hypothesis and further research. When selecting a descriptive case study design, the researcher aims to describe the data that is collected within the context of the natural setting as it occurs. Finally, explanatory case studies are used to conduct in-depth data analysis and possibly test theories about the phenomena being studied (Yin, 2014). Each of these types of case studies have a purpose and are selected based on the particular purpose of the research.

This study utilized a descriptive case study design to understand the perceptions of urban high school principals about the leadership actions and cultural competence beliefs that promote equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices across diverse student populations and multiple student identities (Creswell, 2013). The researcher collected data from three high school principals who are currently working in diverse, urban high schools, which serves as a natural context and meets the definition of a bounded system and employed multiple data collection methods including semi-structured interviews, reflective journal prompts, and document review.

Role of the Researcher

An important assumption about qualitative research worth mentioning is that reality, the studied phenomenon, is complex and dynamic, unlike quantitative research

where the phenomenon is stable and objective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, validation checks in qualitative research are different from quantitative research and theories of validation in qualitative research abound (Creswell, 2013: Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell (2013) indicated that clarifying researcher bias is an important validation check and involves disclosing any bias at the beginning of the study that could impact the researcher's study design and interpretation of data. Qualitative research design includes acknowledging and describing one's subjectivity towards the area of research as an important step not only when considering validation, but also to provide others with the researcher's orientation to the study's subject, data, and data interpretation.

As a qualitative researcher studying how principal leadership actions and cultural competence promotes equitable and inclusive school systems and practices, it is important to disclose my subjectivity on this topic and any bias that I may have. It is important to start with information about my own background and experiences as an educator over the last 20 years. Currently, I work as a school improvement coordinator at a regionally based organization, part of the state's system of support, in the same geographic location where the principals in this study also work. Prior to my current role, I spent the first 10 years of my career as a speech-language pathologist and then four years as a special education consultant in a nearby urban district. In these positions, I collaborated with and supported teachers to develop strategies to make classroom instruction accessible to students with various learning needs because traditional methods of instruction often did not work for students with diverse learning needs. I believe that the best and most appropriate place to educate students with disabilities is in the general education classroom with various levels of support depending on student need.

Based on my extensive background in working with students with disabilities and a strong bias towards inclusive educational practices for all students, I have always had a specific passion for creating equitable structures and inclusive instructional practices in schools where students with disabilities were concerned. However, after a week-long professional learning experience a few years ago, I began to think more intensely about students across and at the intersection of their identities and how we support all students within our schools. Given this experience, I embarked on a much more intentional journey towards developing my own cultural competence through reading, watching, dialogue with colleagues, and self-reflection. My journey towards cultural competence taught me how to recognize my own privilege and bias and how it shows up in the world. I have worked to recognize my bias and judgment and suspend it as much as I can and reflect on it when it shows up unexpectedly in a situation. I believe cultural competence leadership should be the goal of every educational leader not only because the students matter, but because it is the right, moral, and just thing to do. My own cultural competence journey and beliefs about inclusive and equitable practices in schools bias my lens towards my research. However, my bias is also what drove me to select this topic as a basis for my research. I am extremely passionate about this topic with a curiosity to learn from other leaders in the field who are engaged in culturally competent leadership so I can share their practices with others.

Target Population

The target population of this study was diverse, urban high schools with more than 50% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged. In addition to the schools serving students with a high rate of poverty, the schools selected all had a

minimum of three student groups identified on the gap closing measure of the state report card, which could include any combination of the groups for race (other than White), students with disabilities, economic disadvantage, or English learners (Ohio Department of Education, 2019a). The final condition was that the school's enrollment data indicated that no more than 50% of the student population was White, non-Hispanic.

Sampling: Setting and Participants

This research study aimed to gather perception data from principals of diverse, urban high schools about their leadership actions and cultural competence that promotes equitable and inclusive schools. Sampling strategies are an important aspect of study design. In a qualitative research study, a purposeful sampling strategy is important because individuals are chosen based on the information they can share to help understand the research questions (Creswell, 2013). Merriam (2009) described several types of purposeful sampling including typical sampling, which is used because "it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 78). Typical sampling aids in ensuring that the insight that selected participants provide reflects the common experience in regard to the information sought based on the research questions, and that the most common information will be learned from the selected sample (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Criterion sampling is another type of sampling strategy that is useful if the researcher needs to ensure that all participants meet a particular set of criteria (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the researcher employed purposeful, typical, criterion sampling to select three urban high school principals leading in diverse schools.

In terms of specific number of cases in one study, Creswell (2013) recommended that only four to five case studies are included in a single study and Merriam (2009) stated that the number of cases should be selected based on what number will adequately provide enough information to answer the study questions. For the purposes of this study, the researcher selected three high school principals from diverse schools located in a midwestern state in urban settings. A specific set of criteria guided the characterization of urban high schools as diverse. To be deemed a "diverse" school, the school must meet the following criteria from the state school report card:

- Data are reported for a minimum of three student groups on the gap closing measure (could include race [other than White], students with disabilities, economic disadvantage, English learners)
- School details enrollment data indicate that more than 50% of the students at the school are economically disadvantaged
- School details enrollment data indicate that no more than 50% of the student population is White, non-Hispanic

In addition to leading a diverse, urban high school, the three principals in this study were also selected based on their responses to a cultural competences self-assessment checklist that was developed by the researcher adapted from the *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist* from Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children (n.d.). The adapted self-assessment checklist contained 11 statements about awareness of cultural competence and invited the participants to respond to each statement by checking the appropriate box (never, sometimes/occasionally, fairly often/pretty well, always/very

well). Scores were tallied for each column and participants with a majority of scores falling in the fairly often/pretty well and/or always/very well columns (70% or higher) were considered to have an orientation towards cultural competence.

It is important to develop a specific sequence of steps to determine the method for participant selection. A specific protocol guided the selection of participating principals and the steps included the following. Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Youngstown State University to conduct the research study about culturally competent high school principals. Prior to IRB approval, the researcher obtained letters of assurance granting permission for the recruitment of participants from two urban districts. The researcher investigated the Ohio School Report Cards of all the urban high schools in the two districts to determine which high schools fit the study's criterion of a diverse high school based on student demographics. The researcher defined diverse schools as the following: the student population has more than 50% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged; the student population has no more than 50% of the students identified as White, Non-Hispanic; and a minimum of three student groups are identified on the gap closing measure of the state report card, which could include any combination of the groups for race (other than White), students with disabilities, economic disadvantage, or English learners (Ohio Department of Education, 2019b). Next, school lists were compiled including the names of the principals serving those schools, and the districts in which these schools exist. School district websites were used to cross-reference contact information for each principal. Once the list of schools that fit the criterion was developed, there was a sample size of 21 schools that fit the criterion for the study as a diverse, urban high school.

An invitation and informed consent form was sent via email to the principals of the diverse, urban high schools inviting them to participate. Three urban high school principals, leading diverse schools who also identified as culturally proficient leaders, participated in the research study.

As with any research, ethical considerations are important when it comes to participant selection, particularly in the area of confidentiality and protection of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By following the procedures of the IRB at Youngstown State University and obtaining informed consent from each principal, assurances to protect the participants in this research study were utilized. The informed consent forms collected from the participants will be stored for three years in a locked file cabinet at Youngstown State University Beeghley College of Education. When the forms were obtained and throughout the study, the consent forms were not handled by anyone other than the researcher and the PI. The informed consent forms, even though they included the participant names/signatures, were not linked in any way to the data as they were recorded and analyzed. When participants completed the demographic questionnaire, each participant selected a chosen pseudonym to protect their anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher used the chosen pseudonym throughout the data collection and analysis process as the only identifier. Identifiers gathered from the demographic survey such as race, gender, years of experience, and professional experiences were generalized within the data analysis and reporting processes. All interview transcripts were saved in a secure data site using each participant's pseudonym. In addition, if a participant used their name, any other identifiers, or any other names during the interview, the identifying information was changed in all generated data

findings. Interview and journal prompt responses were reported anonymously so that no one participant could be identified.

Procedures

In order to collect data as part of the research study, three data collection methods, semistructured interviews, reflective journal prompts, and document review, were applied during the course of several months. An invitation to participate in the study and the informed consent form were sent to each study participant via email. Once the signed consent form was received back from the participants, a short demographic questionnaire and an awareness of cultural competence self-assessment checklist were sent via email (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). The demographic questionnaire included questions about their background, age, gender, race, years of experience as a principal, number of years at the current school and demographic questions about their school population. The awareness cultural competence self-assessment checklist contained 11 statements such as valuing diversity, knowing self, sharing culture, assumptions, stereotypes, awareness of privilege and social justice (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). For each item, the participant read the item and then checked the appropriate box based on their reflection about the statement by checking the corresponding box (*never, sometimes/occasionally, fairly often/pretty well, always/very well*), (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). In addition to the questionnaire and the self-assessment checklist, the researcher included a list of possible documents for the principal to consider, gather, and share for the purposes of document

review as part of data collection within the study. Participants received the document list to give them some ideas about what documents he/she might choose to share with the researcher as part of participation in the study. Upon receipt of the completed demographic questionnaire and the cultural competence self-assessment checklist, the participant scores were tallied in each column to determine if a majority (70% or higher) of each participant's scores fell in the *fairly often/pretty well* and/or *always/very well* columns to be deemed as having an orientation towards cultural competence (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). The questionnaire and self-assessment checklists were uploaded to a secure Dropbox folder to create the case study database that was used throughout the duration of the study. Then, the researcher contacted each participant via phone or video conference software to schedule a convenient interview date/time. These calls lasted between 10-15 minutes and served to establish rapport with each participant and to gather any documents from the participants as part of the data collection. Verbal information shared during the rapport building process was not recorded for data collection. However, any documents that were collected were added to the secure Dropbox folder for data analysis and receipt of the documents was recorded in the audit trail record. Three document sets were created, one for each participant, and the number of documents varied depending on how many documents were provided. After reviewing a document set, reflective field notes were recorded from each participant's set of documents for the purposes of data collection.

Creswell (2013) outlined a number of steps that qualitative researchers should employ when using interviews as a data collection method and many suggestions from

this text influenced the development of the interview procedures. Prior to the virtual interview, one participant asked for the interview questions ahead of time and the researcher shared the questions via email five days before the scheduled interview. The other two principals participated in the interview without reviewing the questions ahead of time. Fifteen minutes before each virtual interview, time was spent gathering the essential materials to engage in data collection including a writing implement, copy of interview questions, field notes protocol, and copies of the informed consent form that was completed prior to the interview. The recording equipment was checked to ensure that it was in good working condition and turned off prior to the start of each interview. Once logged into the Blackboard Collaborate, online video conferencing platform where the interviews occurred, the researcher waited for the participant to login.

At the beginning of the virtual interview, the researcher again introduced herself and inquired if the participant had any questions before the interview began, sharing the informed consent form again and reminding them of their privacy protections and right to leave the study at any time. Participants were also reminded that the interview would be recorded, field notes would be captured and were also informed when the recording device was turned on and field. The researcher used Microsoft Stream to automatically produce a written transcript of each interview. Finally, the semi-structured interview commenced where principals responded to a series of interview questions. Interviews lasted between 70-95 minutes each allowing for substantial time for participants to share and expand upon their responses. A semi-structured format allowed for the opportunity to seek clarification and explore topics further by asking prompting questions such as (tell me more; elaborate on, or explain how) which encouraged participants to elaborate on

information shared. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) discussed the importance of employing a probing process during the interview since it is difficult to know what participants will say in response to lead questions and certain information shared will elicit more questions as the interview progresses.

At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher announced that the interview recording was being turned off, field notes would no longer be recorded, thanked each participant for their time, and informed them that an interview transcript would be sent for their review to verify the accuracy of the information that was recorded. Within 24 hours after the interview, each participant received a formal thank you email.

While an interview transcript was automatically created during the recording of the interview, it was necessary to review the automatically generated transcript for spelling and grammatical errors and any identifiable information that needed to be changed and make those corrections. Once transcripts were reviewed and corrected, each participant received an email containing an analysis of their interview to give them the opportunity to review the content for accuracy. Within the same email sharing the interview transcript, the researcher included the three reflective journal prompts. These journal prompts asked principals to reflect on their responses to the cultural competence self-assessment checklists they completed addressing three domains: awareness, knowledge, and skills (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). The cultural competence awareness checklist was completed at the beginning of the study and each participant was emailed a copy of their completed checklist along with two more checklists addressing their cultural competence knowledge and skills. Once the participants completed the

knowledge and skills cultural competence checklists, then they were asked to respond to the three reflective journal prompts based on their self-assessment responses. The researcher emailed the directions regarding the expectations for the completion of this final phase of data collection with an expected due date. Upon receipt of the knowledge and skills self-assessment checklists and the reflective journal prompt responses from each participant, the researcher uploaded the data to the secure Dropbox folder, added receipt of the data to the audit trail record, and documented field notes to analyze the responses received from each participant. A final follow-up phone call or email with all participants provided the opportunity to gather any final reflections or insights about the experience.

Types of Data and Data Collection Methods

One of the essential aspects of case study design is the use of data from multiple sources which can include a wide range of activities conducted by the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Gathering data from multiple sources allows for the triangulation of data which enhances the validity of the case study (Gall et al., 2003). Data for this research study were derived through three methods including semi-structured interviews, reflective journal prompts, and document review. The researcher maintained confidentiality throughout the study, which included keeping the data secure and removing identifying information from the data by changing the names of participants to their chosen pseudonym. Each principal chose their own pseudonym, and these names were used throughout the data collection and analysis process to ensure complete anonymity. All data from the study with identifying information removed were uploaded and stored in a secure Dropbox file that was only

accessible by the principal and subinvestigators in the study. The only documents with personally identifiable information, the informed consent forms, with participants signatures will be stored in a storage room in a locked file cabinet at Youngstown State University Beeghly College of Education for at least three years. Finally, the researcher did not disclose any information to others that was discovered in the data collection phase, but data collected from individual participants were shared back with them as a means of member checking for validation purposes throughout the study.

Interviews

Researchers often engage in interviewing as a form of data collection in qualitative research and different types of interviews serve different purposes and must be considered in relation to the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviewing provides a means for the researcher to understand how the research participants feel, think, and interpret the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The semistructured interview approach includes structured and less structured questions and allows for the interviewee to probe for additional information as new ideas or insights emerge within the context of the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As part of this research study, the researcher conducted one interview with each of the three high school principals for a total of three interviews using a semistructured approach. The researcher recorded each interview using BlackBoard Collaborate and made automatic transcripts using Microsoft Stream. These interviews were 70 to 90 minutes in length. A list of interview questions is available in Appendix B, derived from the literature review on cultural competence leadership, including the NELP standards (building level), and principal leadership in leading through systems change (Fullan &

Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; NPBEA, 2018; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007). A study by Gray Gerhart et al. (2011) and a dissertation by Monogue (2015) also served as guides for the development of the interview questions. Both of these research studies provided insight and suggestions for interview question construction.

Reflective Journal Prompts

The use of personal documents as a means for data collection within a qualitative research study can provide insight into the participant's beliefs, actions, and experiences without disrupting the natural environment (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Personal reflective journal prompt responses completed by the participants can provide "a snapshot into what the author thinks is important, that is, their personal perspective" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 166). This research study sought to understand the personal journey of principals towards cultural competence leadership so employing a method of data collection that captured that perspective was important.

As part of data collection, three journal prompts were sent to each participating principal at the conclusion of the interview when the interview transcript was also shared. Participants completed two additional cultural competence self-assessment checklists, addressing their knowledge and skills (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). The self-assessment checklist that they completed at the beginning of the study about cultural competence awareness was also sent back to each participant (Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, n.d.). The journal prompt questions asked each participant to complete and then reflect on

the results of each of the cultural competence self-assessment checklists in a slightly different manner. These journal prompts were developed to uncover beliefs and perceptions about their cultural competence journey from the perspective of the participants. Once the cultural competence self-assessment checklists and the responses to the prompts were collected, the researcher reviewed and analyzed the responses documenting any field notes as part of the data collection process.

Document Review

The final data collection method for this study was document review. Documents provide an opportunity for the researcher to gather information to address the research questions that are authentic to the site, context, or person but not in a manner that causes the researcher to insert herself into the data collection process as in the methods for conducting interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2011) asserted that collecting and analyzing documents can provide insight into the values and beliefs of research participants.

For the purposes of this research study, the researcher elicited school-based documents from the participating principals to not only provide insight into the values and beliefs of the research participants but also their leadership actions. Each of the three participating principals were expected to provide documents such as the following: school vision and mission statements, school improvement plan, professional development calendar and agendas, building leadership team agendas and minutes, teacher-based team meeting agendas and minutes, school schedules, teacher collaboration schedules, and school newsletters. After obtaining each of these documents from each of the three principals, a document set was created for each principal so that no matter how

many documents were provided by each principal, the documents would be analyzed as a set. The field notes document provided the space to record descriptive and reflective notes about each document set and to identify which aspect(s) of leadership action and/or cultural competence might be demonstrated or aligned to the artifacts based on the content.

Data Tools

Developing specific data tools aids the qualitative researcher in being organized and ensures consistency in data collection across participants throughout the study. Creswell (2013) recommended the use of an interview protocol or interview guide when conducting interviews as part of the data collection process in a qualitative research study. The researcher created interview questions aligned to the literature review and the conceptual framework with a specific focus on the essential elements for culturally proficient leadership and the components of the coherence making framework (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 129; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010; Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33; Theoharis, 2007). This 15-question interview protocol served to dive deeper into the cultural competence beliefs of the principal across student identities and how those beliefs influence leadership actions and change processes within the school.

In order to organize the analysis of the reflective journal prompt responses and the document review, a field notes document was created (Appendix K). The field notes document provided space to record the date of receipt, date of review, type of document or reflective journal prompts, and participant pseudonym. Additionally, space was created to record both descriptive and reflective notes about the journal prompt responses

to analyze the responses for evidence of the elements for culturally proficient leadership and components of the coherence making framework (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 129; Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33). This tool provided a strategic and consistent method for analyzing the journal prompts and the document set provided by the principals as part of the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The amount of data that is potentially collected during any qualitative study, from interview transcripts to journal responses and multiple documents, can be quite voluminous. Fortunately, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) pointed out that one feature of qualitative research that garners consensus is that there is a preferred method for data analysis which is to analyze data concurrently as data are being collected. This process of data analysis involves deriving meaning from the data that are collected by "consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). Creswell (2013) highlighted three analysis strategies for interpreting data in a qualitative research study which include developing a systematic way to prepare and organize the data, employing a coding process to uncover common patterns or themes that emerge from the data, and finally, developing figures and narratives to represent the data.

Data collected from case study research, in particular, yield volumes of interview transcripts, field notes and documents and the data itself may be inconsistent and incompatible (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Managing and organizing data is an important first step of data collection and researchers can use a variety of methods for the organization; however, an organizational system is necessary (Creswell, 2013; Merriam

& Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) described this organizational system specific to the data from case studies as a "systematic archive of all of the data," (p. 238). Merriam and Tisdale (2016) emphasized that the importance of creating such a case study database allows the researcher to pinpoint certain data during the data analysis process. As part of the ongoing data collection process, the researcher used an electronic, secure Dropbox folder to store and keep an inventory of the data that was password protected and only accessible by the principal and sub investigators of the study. Each piece of data was organized by participant's pseudonym, date collected, and type of data collected. Engaging with the data in this manner also afforded the opportunity to correct interview transcriptions as soon as they were completed, write field notes based on journal prompts responses and document sets as they were obtained, assisting with ongoing data analysis while being simultaneously involved in data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After each interview, the researcher corrected the automatic transcription for spelling and grammatical errors and to change any identifiable information as soon as possible.

Category and Coding Methods

The next step in data analysis in a qualitative research study is to describe, classify and interpret the data through the process of forming and assigning categories or codes to the data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher's understanding and interpretations as well as the viewpoints and perspectives in the literature are used to inform the coding process (Creswell, 2013). The first type of coding that is important to use is open coding, which occurs when a researcher analyzes the data looking for bits of information that may be pertinent to answering the primary research questions of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This open coding process utilizes data based on three sources: the

researcher's interpretation of the data, transcriptions of data shared by participants, or sources of information from the literature review (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once a researcher has engaged in open coding with a data source, the researcher applies a second type of coding known as axial coding, which is the grouping of open codes into categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This systematic application of a coding process assists a researcher in data classification and interpretation.

To describe and interpret the data from the research study, a systematic coding approach was utilized. Initially, the researcher began the coding process with open coding to select relevant units of data that were significant to the research questions. Next, the researcher employed axial coding to combine units of data identified through open coding together into categories. The axial coding process assisted me in narrowing the scope and breadth of the categories created through the open coding process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During this coding process, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that researchers consider their bias throughout the coding process by examining and considering their positionality and experiences that the researcher might be projecting into the coding process. The researcher considered her own bias towards inclusive and equitable schools and reflected on her experiences in developing cultural competence throughout the data analysis process in an attempt to guard against bias impacting data interpretation.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), there are four criteria for categories, themes and findings. It is critical that the categories that are derived during the coding process actually serve to answer the research questions and the criteria is helpful in ensuring that the themes actually do address and respond to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The criteria set forth by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) include

that the categories must be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitive and conceptually congruent. This criterion guided the coding process to ensure that the coding process was yielding codes and themes that did address the research questions.

Interview Coding. The study yielded a wealth of participant interview data from semi-structured interview processes with the research participants. The researcher used both digital recordings with a mechanism for automatic transcription of the interview and wrote field notes during each interview which assisted me in ensuring accuracy of the responses that were captured. After reviewing and correcting the interview transcriptions, the researcher started the coding process by applying an open coding procedure. Once initial categories or themes emerged from the data, a second level of axial coding allowed for the combination and development of more focused themes built from the open coding process. Throughout the coding process, a list of ongoing notes, comments, and key ideas were developed in order to chronicle the important concepts that surfaced from the interview data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This coding process was repeated after every interview allowed for comparison constructs across the interviews.

Reflective Journal Prompts Coding. The research study included the collection of reflective journal prompt responses from each of the three principals. The field notes document supported the ability to analyze the responses for evidence of culturally proficient leadership and coherence making (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 129; Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33). Again, applying the coding process to analyze the reflective journal prompt responses much in the same way it was used to analyze the interview data included only one difference: the analysis of the reflective journal prompt responses data occurred after the coding process for interview data so the codes that were developed from the interview

data influenced the analysis and the assignment of codes when analyzing the reflective journal prompt responses. The researcher used both open and axial coding and compared the codes from the interview data. This ongoing process of data analysis while still engaged in data collection was important because it assisted in making meaning of the data as it was being collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Document Review Coding. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the process of coding in document review begins with some form of content analysis. Content analysis involves uncovering the contextualized meaning and underlying messages being communicated that surface from the document (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers need to ensure that the documents that are collected for data analysis actually can provide information to support answering the research questions. When initially inviting participants to enroll in the research study, the researcher included a list of possible documents for the document review process (Appendix F). The researcher collected a number of documents from each participant after the interview with each of them, creating a document set for each participant. In this first stage of coding with the document sets, the researcher applied open coding to determine emerging themes. In addition, the researcher returned to the document sets to conduct axial coding after completing completed the coding processes with the interview and reflective journal prompt responses. This process was used to determine if the document sets provided further confirmation of emerging codes and themes.

Evidence of Validity

When conducting any type of research study, the researcher must address reliability and validity within the research study. Reliability in qualitative research is

different from quantitative research; in qualitative research, the researcher ensures that the study results match the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In other words, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) contended that the researcher would aim for others to agree that the data collected matches the conclusions based on the data that were made by the researcher. Validity is another important aspect of qualitative research that assists in evaluating the quality of research. Merriam (2009) indicated that "internal validity or credibility deals with the question of how research findings match reality" (p. 213). An important assumption about qualitative research is that reality, the studied phenomenon, is complex and dynamic unlike quantitative research where the phenomenon is stable and objective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, validation checks in qualitative research are different from quantitative research and theories of validation in qualitative research abound (Creswell, 2013: Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin 2014). Researchers must address a variety of types of validity and reliability including construct validity, internal validity, reliability, and applicability. There are a number of strategies that researchers employ to address each of these areas of validity and reliability (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014).

Evidence of Construct Validity

Construct validity is strengthened within qualitative research studies by applying strategies such as collecting data from multiple sources and establishing an audit trail that sequences how and when data was collected (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Obtaining data from multiple sources helps to ensure that data are consistent and reliable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Developing an audit trail also supports construct validity because it establishes a timeline and description of the processes that the

researcher used while engaging in data collection, coding, and decisions that were made throughout the data collection and analysis process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To ensure construct validity within the research study, the researcher employed both the strategies of gathering data from multiple sources and establishing an audit trail. Data were gathered over a 6-week period through three data collection methods: participant interviews, reflective journal prompt responses, and document review. These data were analyzed, coded, and also triangulated to check for emerging themes. In addition, an audit trail chronicled each step of the data collection and analysis process and any reflections that surfaced based on the ongoing process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This audit trail served to keep track of the ongoing process assuring that the researcher was collecting data that were relevant in a consistent manner.

Evidence of Internal Validity

Internal validity is another important aspect of consideration in a qualitative research study. Qualitative Researchers use a number of strategies when controlling for internal validity (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The first strategy, triangulation, is gathering data from multiple sources with the intent of comparing and cross-checking data to look for evidence of a theme across data sources (Creswell, 2013: Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The second strategy is clarifying researcher bias which involves disclosing any bias at the beginning of the study that could impact the researcher's study design and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2013). The final validation strategy is member checking, which involves the researcher asking participants for feedback on the data collected to determine if participant agrees with the captured and recorded data (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher employed all three of these strategies within the research study to address internal validity. First, data were collected in three main ways: interviews, participant responses to journal prompts and document review which provided me with ample evidence to use triangulation as a validity strategy. The researcher looked for patterns and themes that emerged not only across the three types of data but also across the three research participants, which strengthened the validity of the data since multiple pieces of data were collected from multiple participants. Next, the researcher clarified her own bias by disclosing her position on the research topic. Not only has the researcher worked in an urban school district, the context for the research study, but has passion for equity and the use of inclusive instructional practices in schools, and bias against schools who have not addressed and considered systemic changes to make their schools more equitable and socially just. Finally, the researcher utilized member checking in the data collection process as an internal validation strategy where a transcript of the interview was shared with each participant to verify the accuracy of the data collected (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Any data that were deemed inaccurate or needed to be adjusted could be accomplished through the member checking process which allowed participants to reflect on what data were collected to see if any other relevant information to the study they had not shared, could be included.

Evidence of Reliability

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), reliability in qualitative research applies to how well the research findings can be duplicated. There are a number of strategies that qualitative researchers can utilize to enhance reliability within their research study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Creswell (2013)

added that collecting detailed notes that are recorded and then appropriately transcribed also adds to the reliability of the study. Yin (2014) cited that reliability, specifically within case studies can be addressed by developing a case study database that organizes all of the data and analysis documents for the research study. In addition, Yin (2014) suggested the development and use of a case study protocol to address reliability.

In addition to the strategies of triangulation through collection and analysis of multiple data sources, disclosing researcher bias, and creating an audit trail, the researcher also used detailed notes to strengthen the reliability of the research study. To address the collection of detailed interview notes, the researcher recorded all interviews, generated detailed notes during each interview, then transcribed the interviews appropriately adhering to the interview data collection protocols. The field notes document provided space to record detailed field notes to analyze the reflective journal prompts for inclusion in the dissertation. The researcher developed a case study database, storing all of the data and any documents created as part of the analysis process including transcribed interviews, detailed field notes, and list of codes/themes. In addition, the researcher employed an extensive case study protocol that outlined how research was conducted through each phase of the data collection process which was also documented in the audit trail.

Evidence of Applicability

External validity, or the generalization of qualitative research findings to other people and other places is limited. External validity is a particular challenge in qualitative research because of the highly contextualized data collection based on the cases that are part of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). External validity, particularly with case

study design, can be difficult to achieve because case study design relies on a holistic investigation of the case in the natural context and by nature is specific and nuanced (Yin, 2014). However, Yin (2014) offered that external validity can be strengthened by the use of theory throughout the data collection process. In addition, Creswell (2013) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that the use of rich, thick descriptions can be a strategy to support external validity. The researcher used the rich, thick descriptions strategy within the research study which included providing highly comprehensive and detailed descriptions of each school setting, each principals' perceptions about leadership, leading systems change and cultural competence, and their perceptions about how each promotes equitable and inclusive schools as well as the specific conclusions of the research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using this strategy to address external validity supported the transferability of the research findings to other urban schools and settings with other principals and district staff experiencing changes in student demographics. The researcher also applied the themes that emerged from the literature review on cultural competence, leading systems change, and principal leadership during the data analysis and coding process to enhance the external validity of the study.

Limitations

In qualitative case study design, the researcher serves as a "primary instrument of data collection" (Merriam, 2009, p. 52), which is viewed as both a strength and a limitation of the case study. While it allows for the researcher to uncover thoughts, feelings, and ideas of the research participants at a deeper level, there is also the possibility for bias, particularly in the analysis of the data. With any qualitative research study, there are limitations that limit the generalizability of the data to other contexts

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants were from diverse, urban high schools in one school district. While diversity in student demographics is shifting across the country in many settings, including suburban and rural public schools, there will be differences in these contexts from that of the urban district. The sample size for the study was small as it included three principals so the results are limited to those participants. The small sample size limits the generalization of the study's results to a larger context. Each of the principals in the study indicated that they had a disposition to cultural competence leadership and had made some changes within their schools to address equity and issues of social justice.

As a delimitation strategy, the researcher utilized purposeful, typical, criterion sampling to determine the three urban high school principals leading in diverse schools that participated in the research study. These participants shared their perceptions about cultural competence and leadership actions that promote inclusive and equitable schools. Even though the perceptions of these principals about their cultural competencies and leadership actions promoting inclusive and equitable schools may not be generalizable to all other principals of diverse schools, the data findings can provide principals leading diverse schools some foundational conclusions on which to support their own development and use of cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions. In addition, school district leaders could also use the data findings to assist them in developing, supporting and promoting cultural competence and leadership actions within their principals or to determine what dispositions and actions are necessary when hiring or selecting principals to lead diverse schools.

Summary

This study examined urban high school principals' perceptions of cultural competence and their actions to promote equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in their schools. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews, reflective journal prompt responses, and document reviews and applied triangulation of these data sources throughout the data collection and analysis process. In addition, validation and reliability strategies included member checking, intercoder agreement, detailed notes, and audit trail. A database was created to store all of the data (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014).

Additionally, the researcher ensured that the data collection protocols were aligned with the themes from the literature review on how principal cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions promote equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in schools. The intent was to determine whether or not beliefs and actions bolster the use of equitable systems and inclusive instructional practices in diverse schools. The results of this study may benefit the work of other principals who lead diverse schools and are searching for answers to meet the needs of their students. Additionally, school district leaders who want to develop systems of support for principals to develop cultural competence and lead diverse schools or need to focus on hiring and selecting principals with the right dispositions and leadership actions to lead in diverse schools can use these research findings to support their work.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study aimed to examine the cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions of urban high school principals leading diverse schools. Urban high school principals leading diverse high schools in Ohio participated in this study. These principals shared their perceptions of what leadership actions and beliefs they think promotes equitable structures and inclusive instructional practices.

This chapter outlines the results of the study based on the primary research questions of the study. The findings are organized by the cultural competence constructs that emerged from the literature review and noted an additional theme emerging through the data analysis process. This organizational system created a systematic way to share the three urban principals' perceptions about their cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions.

Recruitment Process

The recruitment process consisted of sending emails to superintendents of six urban school districts in Ohio to obtain letters of assurance to recruit principal participants from their districts. The researcher obtained letters of assurance from two urban districts and commenced recruitment for principal participants. The researcher used data from the Ohio School Report Cards to determine which buildings met a diverse high school's study requirements based on student demographics. The researcher defined diverse schools based on the following factors: the student population has more than 50% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged; the student population has no more than 50% of the students identified as White, Non-Hispanic; and a minimum of

three student groups are identified on the gap closing measure of the state report card, which could include any combination of the groups for race (other than White), students with disabilities, economic disadvantage, or English learners (Ohio Department of Education, 2019b).

While the Ohio School Report Cards website lists each principal, the researcher used the districts' websites to cross-reference contact information for each principal. A list of 21 urban high school principals emerged. From this list, each principal received an invitation letter approved by Youngstown State University Institutional Review Board and an informed consent form to participate in the study. Principals responded to these invitation letters with their interest in participating. The researcher communicated via email and phone to explain the research study and answer any questions. Once individuals agreed to participate, they signed the informed consent form. The researcher followed the procedures approved by the Institutional Review Board at Youngstown State University.

The following efforts were made to obtain three participants for this research study. The researcher provided principals who did not respond to the initial invitations multiple opportunities to participate through follow-up emails. Several principals did respond, sharing their appreciation for the invitation but declined participation, citing competing demands on their time. One principal responded with interest but did not return the consent for participation after multiple attempts. After leaving the recruitment process open for six weeks, the researcher decided to move forward with the study, including the three participants who had signed the informed consent form.

Participant Confidentiality

Throughout the research study, participant confidentiality was maintained, adhering to all guidelines and protocols specified by the Youngstown University Institutional Review Board. The researcher used the online system Blackboard Collaborate to conduct interviews with each principal, which assisted in maintaining participant confidentiality. Before each interview, the researcher reviewed the approved Youngstown State University Institutional Review Board informed consent form. Participants read and signed the informed consent form before scheduling the interview and collecting any documents, or reflective journal prompts.

All data were deidentified to protect the identity and confidentiality of individual participants, their schools, and districts. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study and within the final report to protect each participant's confidentiality and ensure that no schools or districts would be identifiable. During the data collection and data analysis phases, if a participant used any identifiers, including their name, the name of others, their school or district, the identifying information was changed or generalized for inclusion in the final report. Even though participants shared no information during the data collection process that could potentially harm future employment or their reputation in their school or district, the researcher took the noted precautions to safeguard the confidentiality of each participant.

District, Principal, and School Profiles

The following section provides a brief overview of the urban district where the principals who are part of the research study are employed and highlights the background information and personal characteristics of each participant. The researcher collected

school and student demographics for each participant's school. The demographic information came from a demographic questionnaire completed before the interview and information that each participant shared.

School District Background

The Lawrencetown City School District is an urban school district in Ohio. The district has many elementary, middle, and high schools. Lawrencetown City Schools enrolls a majority-minority student population, and 100% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged (Ohio Department of Education, 2020). The district has seen a steady and significant decline in student enrollment over the last three decades (Churchill, 2013). Disaggregated by race, the district enrolls over 50% Black students, over 20% White students, and over 10% Hispanic students (Ohio Department of Education, 2020). Both the populations of students with disabilities and English learners are under 20% in the district (Ohio Department of Education, 2020). Student achievement in the district ranks in the lowest 5% compared to districts across the state (Ohio Department of Education, 2020).

The city was founded in the early 1800s, and the first schools that would later form the foundation of the district opened between 1806 and 1830. The city has a large population and significantly more White residents than other races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Nearly 16% of the population speaks a language at home other than English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Almost 90% of the residents hold a high school diploma in the city, and nearly 37% have a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The city's poverty rate is at nearly 20% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The demographics of the city

do not necessarily mirror the demographics of the students who are enrolled in the Lawrencetown City School District.

Profile 1: Ray

Ray has been in the field of education for over 25 years and has held numerous administrative roles. His teaching license is in physical education, and the highest degree he held is a Doctorate in Education. Ray has been in his current position of high school principal at Maple High School for six months. Before this position, Ray held several principalships in other districts. Just before assuming the role at Maple High School, Ray was an area superintendent in a school district but indicated that he wanted to get back to the role of principal since it had been 10 years since he had been in that role. He is 40-49 years old and an African American male.

Maple High School is located on the East side of the city and has 850 students. All the students enrolled at the school are considered economically disadvantaged. Student enrollment by race includes 1% Asian students, 68% Black students, 16% Hispanic students, 20% multiracial students, and 3% White students. Seventeen percent of the students are identified with a disability, and 27% are English learners.

Profile 2: Jim

Jim has over 20 years of experience in the field of education. He began his career as a science teacher at the school he currently leads. After being a teacher and assistant principal at other buildings in the same district, he returned to Oak High School to serve as principal. Jim recalled that many of the teachers he began his teaching career with were still teaching at the high school where his career began. He has been in his current

position as principal for three years, and the highest degree he holds is a master's degree. Jim is 30-39 years old and a White male.

Enrollment at Oak High School is 713 students. Student enrollment by race includes 1% Asian students, 67% Black students, 14% Hispanic students, 5% multiracial students, and 10% White students. All students at the high school are considered economically disadvantaged. There are 20% of the students identified as students with disabilities, and 1% have 504 plans. It is unknown how many students identify as LGBTQ. Oak High School is located on the East side of the city.

Profile 3: Marie

Marie has been in education for 28 years and was a high school science teacher before going into administration. Marie has a Doctorate in Education and has held the positions of teacher, teacher on special assignment, and assistant principal at schools throughout the same school district. Marie's dissertation focused on issues of race and equity in schools. Marie has been the principal of Willow High School for the last six years. Marie is a white female and is 40-49 years old.

Willow High School has 1,046 students. When student enrollment is disaggregated by race, the student enrollment is 4.1% Asian, 25.9% Black, 25.8% Hispanic, 7.4% multiracial, and 36.5% White. One hundred percent of the students at the building qualify for free lunch. Students with disabilities make up 16.6% of the student population, and it is unknown how many students identify as LGBTQ. However, there are students at the school who identify as transgender. Willow is located on the southwest side of the city, which Marie described as tending to attract families with more diverse

backgrounds than other parts of the city, including racial, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity.

Summary of Results

The following section outlines the data collection methods used for the research study. It also provides an analysis of the data collected.

Making Sense of the Data

During this study, the researcher used three data collection methods: interviews, document review, and reflective journal prompts. The primary source of data collection was the interviews conducted via Blackboard Collaborate at a date and time convenient to each participant. The researcher recorded the interviews and created transcriptions using Microsoft Stream and saved them in a secure online Dropbox using the participant's chosen pseudonym. The researcher collected field notes during the interviews, and both the field notes and transcripts served to verify the accuracy of the information collected. The researcher asked participants to gather any documents that showed their commitment to cultural competence leadership before the interview to share with the researcher. A field notes document was used to analyze the data collected through the document review and the reflective journal prompt responses where descriptive and reflective notes were written (Appendix K).

The researcher analyzed the data as it was collected, comparing newly collected data to existing interview transcripts, documents, and reflective journal prompts. While several constructs were derived from the literature review regarding cultural competence leadership, including assessing cultural knowledge, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge,

the data analysis process led to discovering these emerging themes and one additional theme. Use of a constant comparative method guided data analysis. As soon as one piece of data was collected, it was analyzed and then compared with existing data to determine correlations and discrepancies among the data collected from each participant across data sources and participants. The constant comparative method allowed for identifying patterns from the participant's responses and other data collected as part of the study. After describing each data collection method, each of the emerging themes was discussed, citing examples from each of the data collection methods that illustrate the themes and categories.

Interviews

The interview questions used were derived from the literature review and research questions. One participant asked for the interview questions ahead of time, but all others participated in the interview without seeing the questions beforehand. Participants were given ample time to expand upon their responses to the interview questions based on their comfort level, providing anecdotes from their work that illustrated their ideas and thoughts related to the questions. The interviews ranged in length from 70 to 95 minutes, and participants appeared to enjoy sharing their experiences with the researcher. All participants thanked the researcher after the interview, citing that the experience helped them reflect on their leadership experiences related to cultural competence and made them consider other aspects and new directions for their work.

Document Review

Each principal shared at least one document they felt highlighted some aspect of their commitment to cultural competence leadership. Even though the researcher shared

the document review process before the interview process, most participants shared documents after the interview. In most cases, the participants mentioned an aspect of their work during the interview, and the researcher then suggested sharing documents based on information provided. Documents provided by participants included

- staff meeting agendas and professional development slides
- principal professional development slides
- Black History Month calendar
- teacher instructional practice reflective survey
- teacher feedback protocol
- school book club booklist

The documents were created by or under the participants' leadership. They reflected the themes of assessing cultural knowledge, cultivating collaborative cultures, navigating the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge. The document review aided the researcher in a deep understanding of the commitments of the participants to cultural competence leadership. The data from the document review were compared to the data collected through the interviews to provide a clearer picture of each participant's cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions.

Reflective Journal Prompts

When the interview transcript was sent back to each participant, the researcher also sent three reflective journal prompts. The reflective journal prompts were developed to gather the participants' perceptions and reflections of their ratings on a series of adapted cultural competence self-assessment checklists. These reflective journal prompts served to add context and insight into the participants' leadership actions and cultural

competence beliefs. The responses were compared to the interview and document review between and across participants to determine and further solidify the emergent themes.

Coding and Category Creation

The researcher made every effort to transcribe and analyze each interview after it was conducted to ensure the nuances and mood of the interviews were appropriately captured. Likewise, the documents and reflective journal prompts were also analyzed as quickly as possible to generate descriptive and reflective notes using a field notes document (Appendix K). After generating the transcripts, the researcher thoroughly analyzed each transcript through open and axial coding to determine the broad categories based on the cultural competence constructs derived from the literature review and other emerging themes. The researcher created many codes during the open coding process highlighting important themes the participants discussed during their interviews, illustrated through the documents reviewed, and reflected upon in their journal prompts. Most of the codes were shared across participants in the study. However, some of the identified codes pertained only to particular participants. The open codes were organized into the cultural competence constructs (assessing cultural knowledge, cultivating collaborative cultures, navigating the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge) derived from the literature review. An additional theme of a deeply personal journey also emerged.

To further solidify the coding process, the researcher analyzed each piece of data as it was collected. However, as new data were collected, the researcher went back to the earlier data collected and compared the newly collected data to previously collected data both from each participant and across participants. The researcher compared the codes

discovered in the analysis of the interviews, document review, and reflective journal prompts to the literature review to determine if the emerging themes matched the existing research on cultural competence leadership or if additional themes had emerged. This process allowed the researcher to determine if the data and the coding process analysis resulted in an accurate representation of the data. The researcher used this process to ensure that the resultant key themes and findings reflected these three urban high school principals' cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions.

Audit Trail

An audit trail was created and served to document the data collection and analysis processes used during the research study. The audit trail supported establishing a timeline for data collection and the procedures followed throughout the study. The researcher also utilized the audit trail to keep track of decisions made regarding data collection and analysis. The researcher developed the audit trail to be a dynamic document that allowed comparing and refining the emerging themes throughout the data collection and analysis process. The researcher's use of the audit trail also bolstered the validity of the findings in the final report. Finally, the audit trail ensured that the researcher could provide a thorough description of the data collection and analysis process.

Member Checking

The researcher also used a member checking process as part of the research study. The member checking process involved sharing the interview analysis of the interview, document review, and reflective journal prompts with the participating principals. Each participant was provided a copy of the complete transcription of their interview for verification and review. Additionally, a follow-up phone call allowed the researcher to

review the data analysis and verify the captured data with each participant was as intended to be conveyed and to ask any additional follow-up questions to clarify any data collected. Finally, the member checking process gave the participant one final opportunity to clarify or to share any insight or final reflections about their participation in the research study.

Key Themes

The following themes were established based on analysis of the interview transcriptions, document review, and reflective journal prompt responses to address the four research questions:

- What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in high schools?
- What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive instructional practices in high schools?
- What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in high schools?
- What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive instructional practices in high schools?

Predetermined themes provided the basis for the analysis of the interview, document review, and the reflective journal prompts: (a) assessing cultural knowledge, where principals reflected on both personal learning and the learning needs of their staff; (b) cultivating collaborative cultures including both shared leadership and shared decision making; (c) navigating the dynamics of difference through setting expectations, facilitating critical conversations and fostering emphatic relationships; (d) adapting to

diversity where principals reflected on lessons learned being a lead learner and their actions taken; and (e) institutionalizing cultural knowledge which derives from formal learning opportunities, evidence of culturally competent culture, staff responses and strategies, and system-wide strategies. In addition to the predetermined themes, one other theme surfaced from the data through inductive analysis: (a) deeply personal journey.

The following section describes both the predetermined themes derived from the literature review that formulated the basis for the interview analysis, document review, reflective journal prompts, and themes that the researcher derived through inductive analysis. Theme one highlights how principals reflect on both their learning and the learning of their staff about cultural differences. Theme two describes how shared leadership and shared decision making are components of cultivating collaborative cultures at their schools. Theme three highlights certain aspects of navigating the dynamics of difference identified by the participants, including setting expectations, critical conversations, and empathetic relationships. Theme four explains how principals adapt to diversity by reflecting on their role as lead learners and taking action in their buildings in response to the diversity of student needs. Theme five shows how the principals institutionalize cultural knowledge in their buildings through formal learning opportunities, creating a culturally competent culture, staff responses/strategies, and system-wide strategies. Theme six illustrates how each participant has a very personal journey and reason for pursuing culturally competent leadership as principals of diverse, urban high schools. After introducing each key theme, a chart linking the themes, categories, and examples from the data is shared.

Key Theme 1: Assessing Cultural Knowledge

Each participant in the study self-identified as a principal with a disposition towards cultural competence, evidenced by responses during the interview, journal prompt responses, and document reviews.

Table 1

Assessing Cultural Knowledge: Themes, Categories, and Examples From the Data

Theme	Category	Examples from Data		
		Interview	**Document Review**	**Journal Prompts**
Assessing Cultural Knowledge (Deductive)	Personal Learning	Recognition of perceptions of others based on being member of racial minority group; lived experiences of racism and bias; accused of being racist; being a Black male; Not racist because work in urban school; trusted colleague; intentional reading and learning; racist society; perspective change; own bias; reflective process; knowing self; self-care;	Black history; reflective process; proactive; implicit bias; define equity.	Racist society; perspective change; reflective process; knowing self; growth curve; reflection; proud; continued professional growth; deficiencies; awareness of privilege; learning about other cultures.
	Learning Needs of Staff	accused of being racist; recognizing racist behavior or words in others; contact time with those different than oneself culturally; student and family stories; proactive; staff bias; diverse staff; reflective process; modeling.	Staff bias; reflective process; modeling.	Modeling; growth curve.

Personal Learning

The participants demonstrated the ability to reflect on their cultural knowledge and staff learning both in the interviews and the reflective journal prompts. Each principal highlighted how important it is to know oneself as part of being a culturally

competent leader. During the interview, participants described both their learning journey towards and the learning needs of their staff towards cultural competence. All participants discussed recognizing and wrestling with their personal bias and the bias of others. Each principal shared their recognition of systemic racism that permeates every facet of life in America, particularly our educational system. As an African American, Ray shared first-hand accounts of the prejudice and bias he has experienced as a Black man and as a minority administrator in several school districts over his career. Ray recalled:

> You know, being stopped for having a hoodie on or being stopped because I had tinted windows and nothing else was wrong. And so, you know, just having that awareness has really shaped my views and beliefs on how I carry myself and then how I teach and educate others.

Ray shared that some affluent White parents did not want to interact with him as the school administrator based on his race and other characteristics of his appearance in one particular school district.

While Ray's experiences were different from the White principals interviewed, they, too, reflected on their experiences regarding bias and racism. Specifically, Jim shared his experience of being called racist by a Somali family during a student discipline situation and how that experience made him reflect on not wanting to be thought of as racist. Jim also indicated that he relied on conversations with a trusted colleague to support his learning and reflection. Finally, Jim recalled a past perception about a Black colleague, "he was very militant . . . in an, a Black man and so I just allowed myself to

believe what so many people who look like me would say about him was that he was just an angry black man." After sharing this reflection, Jim went on to say:

> And you know, now I have to revisit what I thought about someone 20 years ago, which was, you know, he's just an angry black man, but, that's not what it was, he was frustrated, and, I understand that frustration.

Marie shared in her interview that she feels honored to be invited to interact with families outside of school, stating this about her recognition of her privilege, "I feel so honored when I have a chance, and people welcome me because I know what I represent. I know the baggage that comes with me." She also discussed the importance of reading and learning on the principal's part, especially authors such as Lisa Delpit and Gloria Ladson-Billings. Marie also discussed the importance of self-care relating, "she (Dr. Amanda Kemp) talks about self-care, and if you are not right in here [points to her heart], it's really hard to behave or to understand the bigger picture and your role in it from a racial perspective."

Learning Needs of Staff

All the principals shared examples of how they have supported their staff in learning about their students' and families' experiences. The principals were candid about their interactions in confronting race and racism with their staff. They all shared the importance of modeling learning and reflection about interactions with people from different backgrounds than oneself. Another common thread among the responses was being diligent when assessing the learning needs of others by actively looking for opportunities to discuss race, racism, and bias. Ray offered that his own experiences shaped how he interacts with his students, sharing with them that they need to be mindful

of their interactions and how others might perceive them. He also recounted an interaction with a Caucasian male teacher who told Ray that "I just assumed that just because I'm teaching in an urban environment that I'm not racist." Ray then replied to the teacher, "oh my god, if you feel that way, who else feels that way?" Marie shared an experience where one of her teachers was called racist by one of her students and how she had to reflect on the teacher's learning needs to help her grow and learn from that experience. Marie added when sharing the story, "And it's so hard for White people, even though racism is so everywhere, for them to see how their actions and words can be perceived as racist, and we're so busy defending why that wasn't racist." When considering the learning needs of his staff, Jim shared this experience:

> I had a staff member participating in an equity PD and during the course of that PD, he indicated that he thought perhaps he was becoming more racist as a result of working in an inner-city school. Now, the activity did open up the floor for us to share, but that seemed like a call for help to me, so I actually referred that particular staff member for an employee assistance intervention, and he did some counseling.

Jim also shared that he aims to provide opportunities to give "contact time with those different from oneself culturally" to assess the learning needs of his staff.

Key Theme 2: Cultivating Collaborative Cultures

The second key theme, cultivating collaborative cultures (Table 2), was revealed as the principals discussed shared leadership and shared decision making.

Table 2

Cultivating Collaborative Cultures: Themes, Categories, and Examples From the Data

Theme	Category	Examples from Data		
		Interview	**Document Review**	**Journal Prompts**
Cultivating Collaborative Cultures	Shared Leadership	Encourages dialogue; judgement-free space; BLT develop plans; anyone comes to you with "I," run in the other direction; intention; roles; safe space; valued; norms; authentic relationships; difference.	Shared facilitation; norms; equity PD resource materials.	Staff conversations ; embracing diversity.
	Shared Decision Making	Parent advisory; student government or advisory; best interests of students; opportunity to speak mind; attendance plans; diverse group; seat at table; student voice; represent all students; norms; give input.	Group decisions; collaborative; norms; student reflection; teacher self-assessment; diverse student government.	

Within the interviews, all participants discussed the importance of their building leadership (BLT) teams in both leading improvement work and sharing in decision making. Marie shared about her BLT:

> We focused on the work of the BLT and creating a collaborative BLT where everybody has a say. It's a safe space. Um, you know, I really rely on them . . . even if I have to make a big decision. Typically, I'll call them together and say, okay, this is what I'm dealing with . . . I need your help, help me think through this, help me really problem-solve.

The principals spoke about the importance of encouraging open dialogue and providing judgment-free spaces. Through the interviews and the document review, there was evidence that setting norms for collaboration are an essential aspect of shared leadership. Ray, speaking about shared leadership in his building, said that he tells his staff, "if anyone comes to you with "I," run the other direction." Each principal discussed the importance of developing authentic relationships with staff, students, and parents to feel valued and heard as a foundation to shared leadership and decision-making. They also mentioned that these are intentionally built relationships as they will not happen otherwise.

Shared decision making was also evident related to cultivating a collaborative culture. Giving students a voice and a seat at the decision-making table was mentioned by all the principals. Both Marie and Ray spoke about student advisory committees that have been an essential part of their schools' decision making. As part of the document review, Jim shared a student survey to obtain feedback about their teachers' clarity about learning goals and expected outcomes. Marie beamed when she showed a snapshot of her student government on the screen, saying this is "a diverse group of students" that she works "very closely with . . . to provide input on some decisions" made at the school. Marie also discussed her principal parent advisory group meeting informally, monthly, over pizza at the school in place of a formal PTA meeting but had to be suspended this year due to COVID. From this group, Marie shared that she received feedback that changed practices at the school that resulted in decisions to improve equity for students. Marie went on to say that if she had not had this principal parent advisory group, she would have missed these valuable perspectives of her families that made the school better able to serve the

students and families. Ray and Jim outlined how they demonstrate shared decision making in their current support structure for students experiencing attendance issues. School staff, families, and their students come together weekly to discuss and develop attendance plans to support individual students.

Key Theme 3: Navigating the Dynamics of Difference

The interviews, document review, and reflective journal prompts revealed numerous examples of how these principals navigate the dynamics of difference related to diversity within their schools (Table 3). This theme is best illustrated through examples categorized by setting expectations, critical conversations, and empathetic relationships.

Table 3

Navigating the Dynamics of Difference: Themes, Categories, and Examples From the Data

Theme	Category	Examples from Data		
		Interview	**Document Review**	**Journal Prompts**
Navigating the Dynamics of Difference (Deductive)	Setting Expectations	Behavior expectations; when do I collaborate and when do I expect; non-negotiables; identifying student needs; no excuses; staff reflects students.	Non- negotiables; norms; commitments; other worldview; improving equity; inclusive classroom practices and discourse;	Equity kids deserve; future kids deserve
	Critical Conversations	Commitment rooted in bias; non-confrontational; discomfort to learn; adult-focused; student-focused; forcing conversation; supremacy; fragility; fair vs. equal; safe	Different lens; wanting to know more; definitive consequences if we choose to ignore students' lens.	Mental resources; race; resolute nature of racism; staff conversations about embracing diversity; authentic

		space; ethnocentric; White guilt; vetting assignments; address head-on; urgency; tough conversations; stand up and say something.		conversations; cultural competencies; implicit and unconscious bias; difficult conversations.
	Empathetic Relationships	Finding some of me; Listen; seek to understand; parent instinct; break bread; understand; space to share stories; intentional relationship building; modeling.	Empathetic space; all lenses valid.	Building relationships with students and parents; listening without assuming; pay attention to others' worldviews.

Setting Expectations

Setting expectations was one common category of navigating the dynamics of difference reported by all the principals. Ray talked about behavior being "the easiest component to change because you are setting the expectations, and you are planning a course of action to resolve the matter." Jim also discussed this notion of setting expectations by reflecting, "there's an important decision to be made between when do I collaborate, and when do I expect." Jim also reflected that he does not allow for staff excuses because there is always a way to solve the challenge they are experiencing. Marie also spoke of setting expectations when she discussed how important it is that her staff reflects her student body demographically and culturally. Every activity in the school (academic or otherwise) should reflect the student population and demographics of the school. These were two non-negotiables for Marie.

Critical Conversations

Critical conversations were a critical category of navigating the dynamics of difference. Each principal shared several specific experiences where they regularly had

critical conversations and attempted to create safe spaces for such work. When reflecting on these experiences, principals communicated a sense of urgency to swiftly handle situations involving bias and prejudice. Ray discussed having tough conversations and hitting the issue head-on with staff when situations arise. In one district, Ray shared how he had a crucial conversation with families of color about the redistricting proposed by the board that would have further segregated the students of color in the district. About this experience, he said, "You're going think things were taken away from you. You're going to ask why it happened, and I'm gonna say because you didn't speak up." When discussing critical conversions, Jim said, "what strategies work best for keeping, for making people as uncomfortable as possible but keeping them in that discomfort long enough to learn." Jim also shared that he believes in forcing conversations, but in a non-confrontational way. Marie shared her experience in explaining the notion of fair versus equal to staff. One example she shared was, "well, is it fair that, you know, somebody was born into abject poverty and haven't had the basic necessities met." Marie also discussed her belief about it being a disservice to a diverse student population if the school leader does not have a disposition towards cultural competence. She added, "if I was uncomfortable talking about any of these questions that you gave me, I really shouldn't be in this seat." Both Marie and Jim discussed how fragility, ethnocentrism, and White guilt are evident and often the basis for these conversations.

Empathetic Relationships

The participants touched on the importance of developing empathetic relationships that assist them in navigating situations that arise in their diverse schools. About a challenging situation with a parent, Jim shared, "I was looking for some of me"

in the way she was advocating for her son. Jim's staff uses the norm "all lenses are valid" when they have critical conversations. Ray shared that he has had good relationships with parents and families because he "listens and seeks to understand first." He also shared that he will continue to build relationships with students and parents. Ray said:

> parents may come in angry. They can be mad. But as we sit down and we break bread and we let everything get out, you know, it's a lot of, a lot calmer for us to address the matter at hand.

Marie discussed how she takes the time to model intentional relationship building with her staff to get to know them as people, hoping they will, in turn, develop the same types of relationships with their students. About relationships with her staff, she shared, "I want to know them as human beings and accept them for everything they bring to the table, biases, prejudices, racial tendencies, whatever, everything, because until they feel fully accepted, they're going to be defensive." Marie gives students and families space to share stories, especially about how they experience the world that may be different from the majority. Speaking about one particular video story that was recorded by a mom and her daughters who attend the school, Marie said:

> she just shared some really deep stuff, and for my staff to hear that was so important because how do you support people if you don't understand what they've been through? We've been very fortunate as a staff. Most of us have had, you know, safe homes to live in and food. We didn't have to worry about the heat. We didn't have to worry about those things, and we didn't have to worry about the violence. We didn't have to, you know, we're just living our lives while meanwhile, our kids and their families are going through it. And so, giving them a

> chance to hear those stories really resonates deeply. . . . It's hard to measure how these things, you know, impact in the long run. But hearing those stories gives my staff an opportunity when they interact the next time with a student. . . . It's there, it's there.

Marie also talked with pride about the times she has been invited to visit her students at their homes. She had the following to share about one student's mom who invited her to dinner, "I was just so amazed that she wanted me to come over for dinner and I went over there. . . I am always so honored just having a chance to be a part of our kids' lives and their families." Marie actively seeks these personal connections with her students and their families to build relationships and better understand their lives, dreams, needs, and challenges.

Key Theme 4: Adapting to Diversity

The theme of adapting to diversity was evident across all participants and within each data source. This theme is categorized into lead learner lessons and taking action (Table 4).

Table 4

Adapting to Diversity: Themes, Categories and Examples From the Data

Theme	Category	Examples from Data		
		Interview	**Document Review**	**Journal Prompts**
Adapting to Diversity (Deductive)	Lead Learner Lessons	Willing to say I don't know and willing to find out; unfair fight; serve not save; misstep; model; intention; disposition; attitude; students ostracized	Lead the learning; aligned practices with expectations.	Privilege; additional traction; knowing self; let people down; practice

		and not embraced; segregation.		makes perfect; exhausting; get it wrong and make it right; continual work; work at entire life; my culture; worth of others' cultures.
	Taking Action	recognizing barriers for students; taking personal responsibility; addressing equity; taking care of others; respond to feedback; respond to data; acceptance; vigilant; mutual respect; modeling.	Implicit bias; equity resources; book study; gather feedback; respond to feedback.	Fragility; insidious nature of racism; know/ understand various cultures; champion change.

Each principal's common points across data sources were about recognizing privilege, knowing oneself, modeling, and misstepping. Specifically, Jim shared in both his interview and reflective journal prompt that even though he does not always know or have all the answers, he is willing to find out and make it right, knowing he will make mistakes along the way. Jim also surfaced the notion of "serve and not save" and went on to share:

> well-intentioned White folks don't understand that you want to provide students with the opportunity to be as successful as any other student in any other school, but that doesn't mean you lower expectations. That doesn't mean . . . a dichotomy between home is bad and anything else is good. There are just so many ways to get this wrong that you have to really think about what your implementation looks like and does it honor or does it do something else? I'm always careful to kind of evaluate. Are we serving, or are we trying to save, you know, because I'm down with serving. Saving's not helping anybody, and we're not going to get any better that way.

Marie discussed that this work has to be done with intention and requires a particular disposition and attitude on the part of the principal.

Taking action in response to learning about students, families, and their cultures brought other ideas to light. The participants surfaced addressing issues of equity. Jim spoke about recognizing the barriers for students and taking personal responsibility to address those barriers as the building leader to "champion change." Marie discussed being vigilant in this work-sharing:

> You have to be extremely vigilant . . . whether you're super crazy busy or dealing with 12 other things at the same time, that has to take priority. You can't be like, well, I'll deal with that later, because it manifests and it snowballs and all of a sudden this culture you've been working so hard to create is completely . . . but it takes forever to build it up and takes next to nothing to destroy it. So it's very fragile when you have a diverse student population. . . . It requires constant vigilance and input into the system to keep it supported, and moving on a positive trajectory, 'cause if, even a split second you take your eye off the prize, you're all the sudden your whole course completely alters and getting it back on course is really challenging.

Modeling, having mutual respect, gathering and responding to feedback and data were mentioned in various ways by each principal.

Key Theme 5: Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge

The principals' responses under the theme institutionalizing cultural knowledge are divided into four categories (Table 5).

Table 5

Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge: Themes, Categories, and Examples From the Data

Theme	Category	Examples from Data		
		Interview	**Document Review**	**Journal Prompts**
Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge (Deductive)	Formal Learning Opportunities	Implicit/unconscious bias; professional development; identify staff learning gaps; fragility; lack of acceptance; blaming presenter; anger; racism; diverse perspectives; family/student stories.	Implicit/unconscious bias; professional development; student voice.	Staff will grow; some staff leave who don't grow.
	Evidence of Culturally Competent Culture	Open dialogue about race and diversity; shared power within/outside school; voices in the room; understand needs of students/families; critical conversations; student-driven decisions.	Norms for courageous conversations; challenge one another to consider other perspectives; critical conversations.	Safe place for Black and brown kids; long way to go; equity woven into the fabric of our school culture; growth curve; future kids deserve.
	Staff Responses/ Instructional Strategies	Making kids feel safe emotionally; connect with kids and recognize when they have needs; mastery learning; modification; accommodation; differentiation; co-teaching; technology; student choice; facilitate book club.	Use of instructional strategy; teacher clarity; teaching Black History; facilitate book club.	
	Systemwide strategies	Hiring practices; attendance committee; attendance intervention plans; school-wide use of equitable practices; 95% of SWDs core classes in general ed.;	Student survey; Staff learning survey; school-wide equity book club; equity PD resources.	

		addressed equity in TBT; best staff moved; academy structure; schedule changes; matriculation coach; Relay feedback and coaching model; equity book club; family/student stories; intention; reflective; early warning system; use data; natural proportions; student-chosen activities; equity PD resources.		

Formal Learning Opportunities

Every principal shared their formal implicit and unconscious bias staff professional development and how these sessions have helped them identify gaps in staff knowledge as they wrestle with issues of equity and diversity. Ray discussed starting this professional learning this year with staff, "those conversations started at the beginning of the year . . . the PD is helping out because it's the foundation for everything that we are trying to drive home, and how to address these matters." Jim shared that the implicit bias professional development "wasn't necessarily met with open arms. There was a lot of fragility . . . a lack of acknowledgment of white supremacy . . . character assassination . . blaming the presenter." Marie shared that having a more diverse staff brought the opportunity, "to have a dialogue come from a variety of members to say, I hear you, but here's how I've experienced it differently, and maybe you can see it from a different perspective, is so powerful." Marie also mentioned the use of student and family stories as part of the formal learning opportunities in their school.

Evidence of Culturally Competent Culture

Each principal acknowledged that while they have some evidence, they are developing a culturally competent culture, they wanted to clarify that there is still much work to do. One common component of a culturally competent culture mentioned by all principals was an open dialogue about race and diversity within their schools. Along with this open dialogue, they all mentioned critical conversations with evidence of norms for such conversations. Marie shared that in her building, because of the focus on increasing the diversity of her staff, "when we started a process of formally addressing unconscious bias, we had those voices in the room. And it was such a powerful conversation!" Jim mentioned his school being a safe place for Black and Brown kids and that they have made progress even though "we have a long way to go before the equity our kids deserve is woven into the fabric of our school culture." Another example from the interviews was understanding the needs of students and families and that there should be evidence of student-driven decisions.

Staff Responses/Instructional Strategies

The data revealed information about staff responses and instructional strategies to support students in a diverse school. Ray said it was important for staff to make kids feel safe emotionally. He also talked about the importance of connecting with kids and recognizing when they have needs. He went on to say:

> I tell my teachers the same thing. When you see a kid struggling, address the issue now. Let us know about it now, so we can put the proper support out there. Don't wait a week, two weeks, a month. By then, the kid could be already gone.

Jim discussed co-teaching, mastery learning, modifications, accommodations, and technology as particular supports for his students with disabilities. He also talked about the school-wide use of teacher clarity and how some staff in his building are facilitating school-wide book clubs with books on race and characters with diverse backgrounds. Marie added that a differentiation strategy her teachers use is offering choice to students about learning topics, use of resources during the learning process, and how students want to demonstrate what they have learned in the classroom.

Systemwide Strategies

The principals shared various system-wide strategies, and while the strategies varied, there were some consistently mentioned strategies across principals. Marie and Jim both reflected on their hiring practices, describing their focus on hiring diverse candidates representing and intentionally looking like their students. Marie said it was the number one leadership practice she employs. Marie shared about her hiring practices:

> When I have a hiring opportunity, I always look for a diverse candidate. I'll give you an example. And it's not easy because people want what they want. . . . And sometimes you have to disrupt that. And so we had a social studies position, and we had a White male who had done his student teaching here, and he had applied for the job. Well, great, another white male in the social studies position. . . . I told the team. I said look. I get it. We have a candidate, and he's qualified, but I think we can do better. I think that we have to look at this from a cultural standpoint and continue to grow our staff in that direction. And there was quite a bit of pushback on that. . . . Why are we waiting? We know him. We like him. He would do a good job. Well, I have no doubt, but at the same time, we have

another goal in mind, and we ended up hiring an African American male for that position . . . and he does a fantastic job!

Ray and Jim both discussed their use of attendance committees to meet with students and families and develop support plans to improve student attendance.

Jim shared that his equity journey started with changing practices for where students with disabilities receive instruction, noting that "95% of students with disabilities" at his building "take their core classes in a regular ed classroom." He also indicated that one of the data points they collect from teacher-based teams every week is their response to the question, "how has your team addressed equity this week with your work?" Jim shared other strategies were developing an academy structure, making schedule changes, hiring a matriculation coach, and using the Relay feedback and coaching model. Jim also talked about moving his best staff into positions where students need the most support, rather than leaving them with schedules they like the most or with classes they prefer.

Marie shared the importance of ensuring that every space in her school where students gather and learn should reflect the diversity of her student body, whether it be an AP course classroom, lunchtime in the cafeteria, or an extracurricular club meeting. She explained that students in any particular group should be a cross-section of the student body and that she monitors this expectation. She also talked about the importance of using data. She shared her success with a grant to develop an early warning data system for the school, which stores data and allows for the triangulation of student academic, behavioral, and attendance data broken down in real-time. Marie stated about their use of the data system:

> Last year we had a huge gap, first quarter with our behavior in our suspensions. My African American males were being suspended at 40% and my White males were at 26% and that's not reflective of our student population . . . that was a conversation I had with the BLT. When we're looking at that data, I said that's a system, we have a system in place that is creating that outcome right. That doesn't happen accidentally. . . . And so we saw that discrepancy and were very intentional both administratively and from a teacher's perspective. And I told my administrative team, I said teachers aren't suspending kids. Administrators are suspending kids. Teachers are writing kids up, and so if you're seeing a gap and how someone is treating their diverse students, that's a conversation that we have to have. You know, I'm noticing you're only writing up the Black boys . . . that's our responsibility to support our teachers in those understandings.

Marie went on to share:

> I would say that is probably the most significant system that we put in place . . . we look at it mid-term, and we look at the end of the quarter so we can look at those discrepancies . . . how we need to be reflective on our practices so that we can close those gaps.

Each principal shared several examples of the systemwide strategies they have used in their schools.

Key Theme 6: Deeply Personal Journey

The final theme developed through an inductive analysis process is that this journey is deeply personal for each principal (Table 6).

Table 6

Deeply Personal Journey: Themes, Categories, and Examples From the Data

Theme	Category	Examples from Data		
		Interview	**Document Review**	**Journal Prompts**
Deeply Personal Journey (Inductive)	Origin of commitment	Experiencing racism; minority; experiencing bias, Black male; harassment; emotional; in tears; daughter with disability; parent from another country; students take my last name; felt different; different traditions; no cannot be an answer; it's personal God's work; different terminology.		Work will get done; live to see it or not; lifelong journey.

Ray shared his experiences about being perceived differently as a minority in several school districts where he held leadership positions just because of the color of his skin and other personal attributes. New to his building this year, Ray reflected on the difficult conversations he must have with 18-19-year-old students who are not going to graduate: "I tell them (the students). I'm sorry that we failed you . . . because we should've addressed these issues whenever they happened, and maybe you wouldn't be where you are right now. I said, but I'm coming to the party late." Ray also shared:

> When you got segregation . . . you know a collection of kids that are basically ostracized, and they're not embraced into the school environment. I feel bad for kids in an urban environment that feel as they are being segregated. And I'm thinking, why do we treat one another like this? Why do we suppress?

Marie also shared similar deeply personal connections regarding her cultural competence journey. She stated that she "really embraced cultural understandings" because of her background since her mom is from another country. Marie said, "so even though she's White, I learned things differently than my peers. I used different phrases. I had different understandings, and so even as I was growing up, even though I looked like everybody else, I experienced life differently." Finally, when speaking about her passion for this work she offered:

> It's not negotiable. You have to have these skills and dispositions because, without it, you're actually hurting children in the long run. Well, even if it's unconscious or unintentional, you're still hurting children and their families, and you're not operating in their best interests . . . my hope is that we'll be producing more culturally competent leaders.

Jim also had a deeply personal story to share about his equity work. His staff's journey started with addressing inequitable practices for students with disabilities and access to core instruction because he has a daughter who also accesses special education services. However, his journey only began there. He offered:

> For me, it's very personal. My kids work against enough already, and I don't want them to leave my school feeling less than because of something that was said or done by a teacher who looks like me. And that's my fault for two reasons. That's my fault for letting it happen, and that's my fault for not teaching the teacher better. And if I can't teach the teacher better, then it's my fault a third time because I didn't get rid of that teacher. And so I take this work very seriously, very personally. Every single kid who transitions through the doors at my school,

their last name could be [Johnson]. That's the work that I do, and that's how important it is to me.

Each principal shared how their personal journeys influenced their work with cultural competence.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher shared the perspectives of three high school principals from an urban district, using interviews, document review, and reflective journal prompt responses to discover what principals believe about their cultural competence and how it promotes equitable structures and inclusive instructional practices. The data collected were deductively analyzed to determine the presence of themes of cultural competence leadership derived from the literature review: assessing cultural knowledge, cultivating collaborative cultures, navigating the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge. Additionally, one other theme, a deeply personal journey, emerged from the data through inductive analysis.

Findings revealed that all participants had more than 20 years of experience in education, and all had been administrators between 6-10 years. All of the participants' teaching experience was at the secondary level. Each had held assistant principal positions before becoming principals, and two of the principals have worked their entire career in the same urban district. One participant has been in four districts throughout his 25-year career. All participants had a disposition towards culturally competent leadership and are leading diverse, urban high schools. While their journeys towards cultural

competence started in unique ways, each has a deeply personal story that put them on this path as educational leaders.

In this study, each principal recognized and acknowledged that systemic racism exists and that their actions as leaders can either perpetuate or extinguish it. They are reflective about their learning for addressing their own bias and understanding their students and their families' experiences. They also consider the learning needs of their staff related to implicit bias and proactively address those learning needs. Each participant shared stories of addressing racism and bias with their staff and how modeling learning and reflection is a critical aspect of this work. Each principal also shared the importance of vigilance and purposefully seeking opportunities to discuss race, racism, and bias.

The participants shared examples of how they cultivate collaborative cultures within their school communities by encouraging dialogue and providing judgment-free spaces. They reflected on their use of formal collaborative teaming structures of the building leadership teams and teacher-based teams to engage in shared leadership and decision making. They shared that setting norms for collaborative discussions was is a crucial aspect of developing collaborative cultures. Principals reflected on how they foster authentic relationships with and among their staff, students, and families and how these types of relationships are the foundation of a collaborative culture. Regarding navigating the dynamics of difference, all principals discussed the importance of setting expectations for staff behavior. Every principal agreed that encouraging and facilitating critical conversations was paramount to being a culturally competent leader. It was urgent to have such conversations when situations arise about racism and bias in their school

communities. The participants noted that developing empathetic relationships has to be a top priority to navigate diversity issues with staff, students, and families.

Across principals in the study and data sources, they stated several skills necessary to adapting to diversity in their roles. These skills included recognizing privilege, knowing oneself, modeling and misstepping. All principals mentioned the skills of modeling, having mutual respect, gathering and responding to feedback and data as additional aspects necessary to take action and address equity and cultural competence as leaders. When considering institutionalizing cultural knowledge, four categories surfaced, including formal learning opportunities, evidence of culturally competent culture, staff responses/strategies, and system-wide strategies. Principals revealed a commitment to formal professional development experiences for their staff about implicit bias, using these sessions to determine additional and ongoing learning needs. While each principal said their work was in progress towards developing a culturally competent, they identified that creating spaces for open dialogue about race and diversity, guided by norms, supported the development of such a culture. The participants also underscored the importance of understanding the backgrounds and needs of their students and families. The participants shared various instructional strategies and staff responses to support the diverse student body, noting the importance of intentionally fostering these strategies. System-wide strategies to meet the needs of diverse students were also shared. Although the responses varied, some practices were mentioned by more than one principal, such as hiring candidates with diverse backgrounds and the use of attendance committees to support students and families. Other strategies mentioned by at least one

principal included scheduling shifts, putting the best teachers with the students with the most need, hiring coaches, and developing an early warning data system.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This research study proposed understanding the perceptions of urban high school principals about their cultural competence beliefs and leadership skills that promote equitable structures and inclusive instructional practices in the diverse schools they lead. Principal leadership is a significant factor in the success of schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson, 2013; Shields, 2010, 2017; Theoharis, 2007). Principals are instrumental in building school cultures that focus on cultural competence with an aim to create more equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007).

Principal Systemwide Strategies

The principals in this study identified numerous strategies they use in their buildings to enact more equitable and inclusive practices for students. Two participants identified recruiting and hiring diverse candidates that represent the demographics of their student population as one important systemwide strategy, and literature confirms that recruiting and hiring teachers with diverse backgrounds can reduce the obstacles facing students of color at school (Milner, 2013; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014; Tatum, 2017). Two principals cited weekly attendance meetings to establish intervention plans developed in conjunction with the student, family, and school staff to improve attendance and engagement in school. Jim shared his school's focus on equitable access to core instruction for students with disabilities citing this is where the journey towards equity began for his school. Providing access to rigorous core instruction for all students with a specific focus on students with disabilities is imperative to improve academic outcomes

for these students (Frattura & Capper, 2015). Jim also shared that he reassigned his most skilled and knowledgeable teachers to grade levels and courses where students had the most need. He reassigned his best math teacher to Algebra I when he had only taught the advanced math and AP courses. Another strategy to promote systemwide learning was the development of schoolwide book clubs. Led by teachers and other school staff, each book title selected centered on a theme of racial or ethnic diversity. Both teachers and students participated together in these book clubs. Finally, Marie developed an early warning data system where the building collects and triangulates student attendance, performance, and behavioral data to make data-informed decisions about the students' needs in the building. The building leadership team meets regularly to review these data to inform their ongoing school improvement efforts.

New Conceptual Framework

At the onset of this study, the researcher introduced a conceptual framework informed by the literature review to serve as a means to capture the essence of the research questions (Figure 2). The researcher suggested that culturally competent leaders need to demonstrate both the disposition (cultural competence beliefs) and principal leadership practices (actions). The original conceptual framework provided the researcher with a means to illustrate that leaders could lead change processes but not have a lens towards cultural competence across student identities and vice versa. Having a disposition towards cultural competence as a school leader does not automatically lead principals to take the leadership actions necessary to lead a culturally competent school culture. Both beliefs and actions are necessary to promote equitable and inclusive schools.

The data revealed that the principals described both a disposition towards cultural competence (beliefs) and shared leadership practices (actions) to promote equity and inclusion in their schools. The data also indicated that while these principals have made progress on building the types of cultures to support equitable and inclusive schools, they reflected that their work is developmental and always in progress based on input from their students and families and other data they collect. The original model may have communicated that building culturally competent schools is finite rather than incremental. Considering that the development of culturally competent systems is a developmental process requiring constant reflection on data, the researcher determined that the original model did not communicate this idea. The researcher revised the original conceptual framework to reflect four components that create a continuous feedback loop to develop a culturally competent school (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Revised Conceptual Framework of Promotion of Equitable and Inclusive Schools

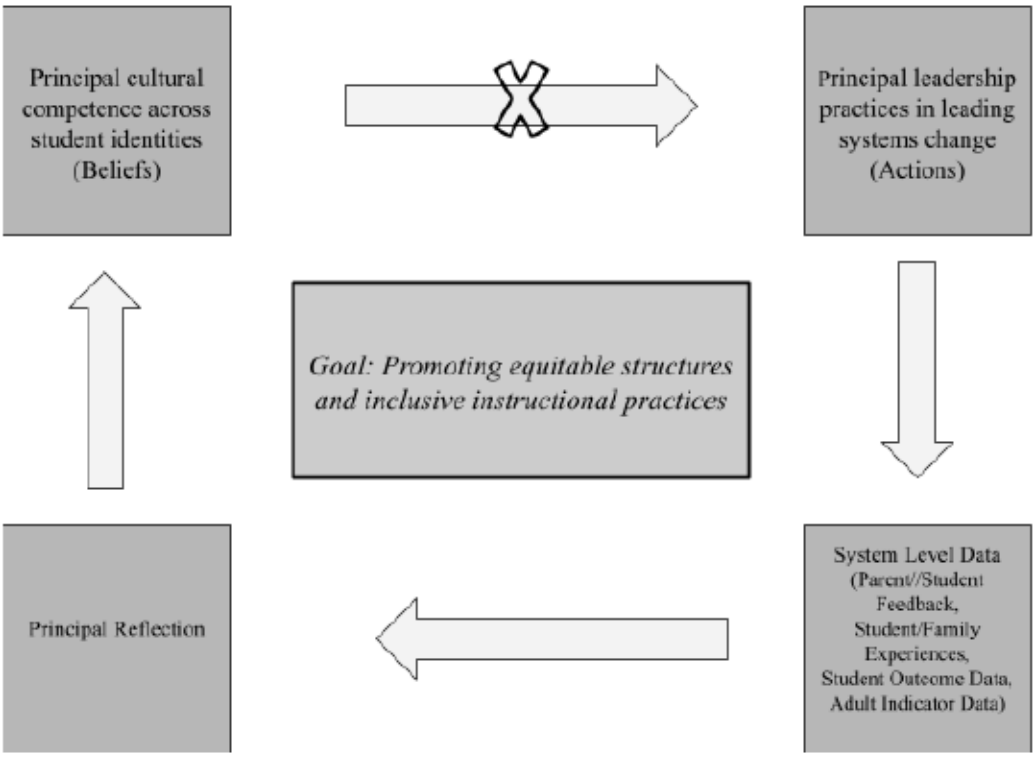


Figure 3 includes principal cultural competence across student identities (beliefs) and principal leadership practices in leading systems change (actions), which were part of the original conceptual framework but also now includes two additional components of system-level data (parent/student feedback, student/family experiences, student outcome data, and adult indicator data) and principal reflection. These four components operate to create a continuous feedback loop signifying that developing cultural competence is a continuous, developmental process that requires frequent assessment that informs continued change (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). A culturally competent system aims to promote equitable structures and inclusive instructional practices, which is depicted at the center of the figure.

Four research questions, derived from the literature review, guided the interpretation of the data. The data from the interviews, document review, and reflective journal prompts indicated that principals who participated in the study have a disposition towards cultural competence beliefs. They use those beliefs to make decisions in the best interests of the students in their schools. There were leadership actions noted across principals and data sources such as having critical conversations, developing empathetic relationships, modeling key values and reflection, and shared leadership/decision making, which addressed research question one. The second research question involved exploring leadership actions that impact the use of inclusive instructional practices. Findings related to this research question were setting expectations, taking action by responding to data and feedback, and providing professional learning opportunities for staff. Research question three considered what cultural competence beliefs principals perceive impact the creation of equitable systems. Two findings emerged: personal conviction and disposition and acknowledging their own privilege and bias. The final research question probed what cultural competence beliefs promote inclusive instructional practices, and the findings were holding high expectations for all students, building relationships with students and families, and identifying practices that negatively impact student learning.

This chapter discusses how the leadership experiences and beliefs of the principals who participated in the study compared to what the literature defines as important aspects of cultural competence. Underlying this research study are the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory and intersectionality, providing additional context to the challenges of leading diverse schools. The literature on Critical Race Theory (CRT) asserts "rather than subscribe to the belief that racism is an abnormal or

unusual concept, critical race theorists begin with the premise that racism is a normal and endemic component of our social fabric" (Lopez, 2003, p. 83). Implications of the findings and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Summary of Findings

In this section, each research question is examined in light of the themes that surfaced during the data analysis phase of the research study. As the researcher explains the findings, specific examples from the data are identified to understand how the themes address each research question. Connections are also made back to the cultural competence constructs in the literature review, the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory and intersectionality underlying the research study, and the conceptual framework.

Research Question 1

What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in diverse, urban high schools?

Implementing culturally proficient leadership requires principals to reflect on their beliefs and actions focused on changing practices to support and address diverse student needs (Gorski, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Scanlan, 2013; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Each principal reflected on and shared experiences about their leadership actions as culturally competent leaders. It is important to note that the experiences shared may have been different had each principal not been operating from a worldview that the challenges facing their students of color are a symptom of racism (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez, 2003). With this worldview, whether having experienced racism first-hand like Ray or

acknowledged their own Whiteness, bias, and privilege like Marie and Jim, this orientation to the work of leading for equitable and inclusive schools is critical.

Engaging in Critical Conversations About Race and Bias

As each interview unfolded, it was evident that each principal has a personal commitment to cultural competence and is comfortable talking about the topics that so many people find difficult: race, racism, prejudice, bias, and privilege. "Daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things" (Brown, 2018, p. 184). Marie shared, "if I was uncomfortable talking about any of these questions that you gave me, I really shouldn't be in this seat." Each principal shared numerous stories about their experiences with critical conversations with their staff. Every principal communicated a sense of urgency to have these conversations regularly and especially when situations arise in their buildings. Principals leading diverse schools should consider ways in which they can "model a non-defensive learner's approach to acknowledging and monitoring their biases" (Benson & Fiarman, 2020, p. 84; Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Jim added that he forces conversations in a non-confrontational way.

While the principals felt comfortable sharing their stories about difficult conversations, they also shared the challenges of creating such a culture. Both Marie and Jim used the terms such as fragility, ethnocentrism, and White guilt to describe their staff experiences. Jim shared similar sentiments when he described his staff's reaction to implicit bias professional development, including how one teacher thought he was becoming more racist since participating in implicit bias training. Ray shared a story about a White teacher who said there was no way he could be a racist White person because he worked in an urban school. All of these examples underscore the pervasive

belief by White people that if they have good intentions and are not intentionally mean, they are not racist. (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; DiAngelo, 2018). Considering racism as binary, where one is either racist or not, and only terrible people who commit overt acts of racism are racist, robs White people of the understanding that we have all been socialized in a racist society (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; DiAngelo, 2018). Racism escapes none of us and should be viewed on a developmental continuum (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; Capper, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018). These beliefs, along with White people not recognizing the power and privilege that comes with acknowledging 'Whiteness as property,' account for each principal's experiences regarding staff reactions to these difficult conversations (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; Capper, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018).

Marie acknowledged that her strategy of hiring more diverse staff has helped to alleviate some of this tension because "we had those voices in the room," which has put them in a better space to normalize conversations about race (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). All principals shared that establishing and utilizing norms for courageous conversations is crucial to their work. Cultures that encourage brave and difficult conversations must be intentionally created by principals who "recognize that leaning into discomfort strengthens rather than threatens a community" (Benson & Fiarman, 2020, p. 87; Brown, 2018; Franco et al., 2013). These conversations show a commitment to learning and growing within the school community focused on cultural competence. While these conversations can leave principals exhausted and come at a personal cost, each principal communicated the same sentiments in the interviews and across data collected. As Glen Singleton shares, "schools cannot achieve racial equity without explicitly naming race and exposing racism as central in the failure to effectively serve the students groups that

comprise the majority of the school population" (Benson & Fiarman, 2020, p. ix). These conversations are paramount to their work as brave, culturally competent leaders (Franco et al., 2013).

Developing Empathetic Relationships

The development of empathetic relationships surfaced as a key category under the theme of navigating the dynamics of difference. Aguilar (2020) says that empathy is the name of the game when it comes to conversations about equity, stating, "what you perceive as resistance is someone else's suffering. This doesn't mean that their actions are justified . . . activating empathy helps you find a place from which you can see their suffering and respond with patience" (p. 191). Each participant shared that developing empathetic relationships is essential in their work in diverse schools and applies to all relationships, staff, students, and families and among them. When Jim recalled a challenging situation with a family, he said, "I was looking for some of me" in how the mom advocated for her son. Jim's staff meeting norms evidence the importance he places on empathic relationships, and Ray described his approach to building relationships with families as empathic.

Marie intentionally builds relationships with her staff focused on accepting them for who they are. Marie models relationship building for staff, fostering the same type of relationships between staff and students. She also formally invites families and students to share their unique stories about how they experience the world based on their identities. About the impact that these stories have on her staff, she shared, "hearing those stories gives my staff an opportunity when they interact the next time with a student . . . it's there, it's there." Marie's modeling of empathic relationships is important because (a)

students tend to do better academically when they have a relationship with their teacher built on care and respect, and (b) while empathy is a hard skill to learn, it can be learned through modeling and practice (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; Brown, 2018; Robinson, 2013). Marie is also actualizing an aspect of critical race theory. By inviting students and families to share their counternarratives, she is legitimizing and honoring the stories and her students, which can combat the justification and maintenance of the majoritarian narratives that fuel racial inequalities (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Pollack & Zirkel, 2013).

Schools are encouraged to examine the relationships in their culture (staff to administration, staff to staff, student to student, staff to student, school to family) to see if bias exists for diverse students and families (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Schools should ask students about their racialized experiences at school, just as Marie has invited her students and their families to do (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Examining these data about the relationships in the school culture supports growth in cultural competence because it encourages everyone to view the world from the perspective of others (Brown, 2018). The literature on transformational leadership discusses the importance of building relationships with families to support student learning and grow the school staff's cultural competence, which Marie's example illustrates perfectly (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Modeling Key Values and Reflection

The literature review uncovered that modeling key values aligned to the development of equitable, inclusive cultures is an important aspect of the work of culturally competent principals since they are responsible for creating a culture where all students can learn (Lindsay et al., 2019). The literature about transformational leadership

also points to the importance of modeling expected values and practices by the principal to build an equitable and inclusive school culture (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). All participants shared the importance of modeling key values. It surfaced across the themes of assessing the cultural knowledge of their staff, navigating the dynamics of difference when developing empathic relationships, and adapting to diversity. Modeling was mentioned numerous times to support staff in developing their skills to interact with students with diverse backgrounds. The participants also shared that modeling reflection and encouraging reflective practices is important to their own learning and to support the learning needs of their staff.

Specifically, Marie shared that she intentionally models relationship-building with her staff, which she hopes will encourage staff to get to know their students personally. Modeling key values can be challenging because it requires making tough decisions to do the right thing (Brown, 2018). It is important to remember that developing cultural competence in oneself or a school is a developmental process that occurs over time through self-awareness, self-reflection, and ongoing education (Cross et al., 1989; Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). The principals discussed how their use of modeling key values and reflection had impacted their work towards their personal cultural competence and their staff.

Shared Leadership and Decision Making

As the categories of shared leadership and shared decision making emerged under the theme of cultivating collaborative cultures, the researcher expected this result since it is well documented in the literature as a key feature of transformational leadership (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013). Each principal spoke about how

they ensure shared leadership at their buildings through formal structures such as building leadership teams (BLT). Transformational leaders support the development of collaborative teams facilitating their use of an improvement cycle of taking action, learning, and reflecting (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Marie shared that her BLT helps her problem solve through situations, and she relies on their support. Shared decision making was evident when the principals discussed their work with student and parent advisory groups, attendance committees, and soliciting student feedback from surveys. Benson and Fiarman (2020) encouraged schools to use surveys to collect data from students about their experiences in the school to surface information that needs attention.

Hiring Practices

Each principal in the study leads a school building where most of the students enrolled are of a minority race. Because the majority of teachers in these schools are White and research gathered in the literature review suggests that White teachers often have difficulty relating to the racism and bias that their students experience, hiring staff from diverse backgrounds can mitigate the barriers some students of color experience at school (Milner, 2013; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014; Tatum, 2017). Both Marie and Jim reflected on their hiring practices within the interview and reflective journal prompts. Marie shared that hiring diverse candidates is the number one leadership practice she employs. Rivera-McCuthen (2014) found similar responses about hiring diverse candidates in her study of urban principals and their social justice practices.

Research Question 2

What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive instructional practices in diverse, urban high schools?

The intent of research question two was to determine principals' perceptions about how their leadership impacts the inclusive instructional practices used in the classrooms in their buildings. There were three areas of exploration (setting expectations, taking action by responding to data and feedback, providing professional learning opportunities for staff) that surfaced from across the data collected addressing research question two.

Setting Expectations

As it relates to leading change, leaders need to be able to communicate what they expect so people can move past doubt and fear about what they are doing (Brown, 2018). In other words, Brene Brown (2018) shared, "clear is kind and unclear is unkind" (p. 44). This notion is essential for leading people through change and, in case, building a culturally competent school and staff. As each principal reflected on how they navigate the dynamics of difference in their buildings, each shared different ways they communicate expectations to staff. Ray and Jim discussed the importance of setting clear expectations to change behavior. Jim said that he does not believe in excuses since there is always a solution to any challenge his staff presents. Brown (2018) discussed the importance of attending to fears and feelings, what Jim referred to as excuses, or leaders can expect to waste time later in managing unwanted behavior. Likewise, supporting the school to solve the problem is an important step to building collective capacity and cultivating a collaborative culture (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson,

2013). Marie spoke of two non-negotiables she has communicated with staff, (a) hiring a diverse staff that reflects her student body demographically and culturally, and (b) ensuring that every activity in the building, whether (academic or otherwise) should reflect the student population and demographics of the school. She should see students from a diversity of backgrounds participating. These leaders showed that they were not afraid to communicate expectations for staff about the behaviors they want to see. The research on leadership also says that communicating expectations while leading people through change is necessary (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013).

Taking Action by Responding to Data and Feedback

Taking action by responding to data and feedback assists in keeping student learning at the center of improvement efforts (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013). As principals working towards a culturally competent culture within their buildings, even though every leader was in a different phase of this work, they were all on the same journey depending on the amount of time they had been in their current building. Taking action by responding to data and feedback was something that each principal shared throughout the data collection process. Jim shared that his journey towards cultural competence at his building actually began with the inequities that students with disabilities experienced without having access to core instruction in the general education classroom. He was proud to share that 95% of the students with disabilities participate in core classes in the general education classroom while still acknowledging there is work to be done. Whether through Marie's early warning system that tracks attendance, behavior, and academic performance and helps them pinpoint student needs or the attendance committees that both Ray and Jim spoke of at their

buildings, these principals create a culture of responding to data to make changes in the system. These systems to address student needs would not be in place had the principals not recognized and addressed what the data (or lack of data) showed they needed. Likewise, these principals are modeling for staff the types of actions they expect in response to data and feedback as staff serve on these decision-making committees and work together (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013).

Both Jim and Marie highlighted how they assist teachers in learning more about the backgrounds and lives of their students, and Jim referenced the need to recognize the barriers that exist for them. By focusing teachers on being curious about the needs of their students, these principals can fuel learning on the part of the staff to improve learning conditions for students (Heifetz, 1994). Jim also shared that he and his administrative team are learning to use a new protocol to give teachers feedback about their instructional practices. Other things Jim has done include hiring a matriculation coach and changing student and teacher schedules to improve the conditions to impact student learning. Marie noted the importance of vigilance in this work since there is a constant need to monitor the systems in place.

Providing Professional Learning Opportunities for Staff

Noted in the literature on transformational leadership and leadership change, cultivating learning networks to foster collective capacity and efficacy becomes the way to improve any school (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013). All principals shared that they are actively pursuing formal implicit bias professional development for their staff. While the staff responses have not always been positive due to fragility and White guilt, the commitment these principals have to engage their staff in

these experiences has not wavered. Marie's intentional commitment to share the counternarratives of her students' lived experiences is another formal learning strategy already discussed.

There are also less formal ways that these principals infuse learning into their school cultures. They all utilize formal building leadership teams and teacher-based teams. Although these structures are formal, the learning is job-embedded and often organic within these teams as they respond to data (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, 2013). Jim shared that one of the data points they collect from teacher-based teams every week is about how his teams have addressed equity in their work. Jim also mentioned using a specific coaching and feedback protocol. These principals described how they had leveraged these structures to address the cultural competence of their teachers with the assumption that teacher learning will improve their use of inclusive instructional practices. Creating these conditions for schoolwide learning does make a difference for collective and individual teacher learning so they can better understand students and respond to their learning needs (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007).

Research Question 3

What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in diverse, urban high schools?

Research question three aimed to explore the nature and belief systems underlying cultural competence leadership from the principals' perspective. The researcher felt it was important to better understand how an orientation towards cultural competence influences how decisions are made to promote equitable structures. As the conceptual framework for

this study emphasizes, leadership actions matter, but so do cultural competence (beliefs). To move towards culturally competent cultures, principals must have the beliefs and make decisions aligned to those beliefs.

Personal Conviction and Disposition

The principal's journey towards cultural competence always begins by using self-reflection to learn about and know oneself (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). One emergent theme in the data was the notion that cultural competence is a very personal journey. While each principal shared a different origin story unique to their own life experiences, they each had a defined cultural competence path. Ray shared experiencing prejudice and bias as an African American male. Marie grew up with a parent from another country, so even though she had white skin, she did not experience the same traditions and used a different language than her peers in school. Jim shared that his daughter has a physical disability and receives support through special education. Each principal shared these stories very early in the interview, citing them as a foundation for the work they do now.

As the interviews progressed and through the other data analysis, it was evident that these principals have spent time in self-examination and self-reflection to learn more about their own bias and cultural competence. This critical work allows principals to position themselves to be lead learners about cultural competence (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007). Jim, Ray, and Marie all shared strong convictions about their cultural competence beliefs. Jim stated, "I take this work very seriously, very personally. Every single kid who transitions through the doors at my school, their last name could be [Johnson],"

referencing feeling like his students are his own children. Marie's sentiment was similar, "you have to have these skills and dispositions because, without it, you're actually hurting children in the long run." Ray's convictions can be summed up with his words, "And I'm thinking, why do we treat one another like this? Why do we suppress?" Conversations about race are challenging, so most people in society avoid the conversation altogether, and schools are no expectation of this social norm (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). However, these brave leaders have moved to a space of having these conversations about race because they did the important work as leaders to reflect on and develop their own dispositions towards cultural competence.

Acknowledge Own Privilege and Bias

The evidence is clear that students who belong to certain identity groups based on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language, disability, gender expression/ Identification, and sexual orientation experience bias more often than White students who do not have these identities (Cooc & Kiru, 2018; Frattura & Capper, 2015; GLSEN, 2017; Gorski, 2013; Shifrer, 2018; Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011; Theoharis, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Each school where these principals lead serves a majority-minority race student population who are all also experiencing poverty or low income. Some students may be identified as having a disability, and others are English learners. Principals who practice culturally proficient leadership are called on to unearth their unacknowledged bias and beliefs to recognize how they produce inequalities within school policies and practices (Cooper, 2009; Scanlan, 2013).

Recognizing, acknowledging, and examining beliefs, biases, and prejudices is necessary for educators to work with diverse students (Howe & Lisi, 2020). All

participants discussed recognizing and wrestling with their own personal biases. Being a member of a minority racial group as an African American male, Ray reflected more on being the receipt of bias in racialized experiences. As White principals, Marie and Jim's reflections on their privilege and bias were different. Jim said he experienced being called a racist by a Somali family over a discipline incident, which caused him to examine why they would think that to grow from that experience. Jim also shared his perceptions about a co-worker from early in his career and now he sees the situation for what it really was, fighting for equity. Marie acknowledged her own privilege when she shared about interacting with students and their families outside of school. "I feel so honored when I have a chance, and people welcome me because I know what I represent. I know the baggage that comes with me." The work to acknowledge, recognize, and address personal privilege and biases is a lifelong process (Howard & Lisi, 2020).

Research Question 4

What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive instructional practices in diverse, urban high schools?

Research question four was developed to investigate how principals' cultural competence beliefs might promote inclusive instructional practices within the school.

High Expectations for All Students

Holding high expectations for all students to learn matters. Low expectations for students of color are linked to poor learning outcomes (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Also, Karlson (2015) suggested that communicating low expectations to students who are tracked into lower classes in high school, in turn, cause these adolescents to adopt lower expectations for themselves. Jim shared that his school's goal is to provide an education

comparable to anywhere else, which includes setting high expectations for students. Data comparing the grade appropriateness of assignments and lessons in classrooms with mostly non-White students to White students showed that White students received 1.5 times more grade-appropriate assignments and 3.6 times per grade-appropriate lessons (TNTP, 2018). Jim also showed this commitment to high expectations by focusing on improving access to the general education classes for his students with disabilities. Jim shared his commitment to changing how teachers are assigned to classes based on their expertise to support students and not adult preference. He also shared how the school is moving to an academy model to address student needs. Ray stressed ensuring that students have the right support when they need it, proving that he acknowledges that a solution is out there. Marie highlighted her teachers' use of providing student choice as a way to communicate high expectations. Knowing these inequities exist makes it necessary for principals to address and communicate high expectations for all students directly. It is evident how the lack of those high expectations adversely impacts diverse student populations.

Building Relationships With Students and Families

Diversity is too often perceived as a deficit, perpetuating negative beliefs about children, their identities, and their families, and the communities in which they live (Gorski, 2013; Milner, 2013). Building empathic relationships was already addressed in an earlier section. This section about relationships highlights the difference between an asset-view versus a deficit-view of students and their cultures. Flipping the script from a deficit-view perspective can be challenging when one's mindset (and unconscious bias) suggests that some children are not as capable as others (Benson & Fiarman, 2020).

Principals lead the way in adopting and promoting this asset-based thinking, especially when decisions about resources are concerned (Shields, 2010). Marie beamed in the interview when she held up a snapshot to the screen of her diverse student government. She also proudly shared several stories about being invited to visit with students and their families in their homes. Marie recounted the times that her families have opened up and shared their stories which she, in turn, shares with staff that help everyone in the school better understand the lives of their students and the assets they bring from their culture.

Ray described his approach to building relationships with students and families. It is important to point out that considering diversity through an asset-based lens allows the school culture to recognize, acknowledge and legitimize the lived experiences of their students, which are often very different from the dominant, White middle-class experiences of most educators in today's diverse public schools (Capper, 2015; Pollack & Zirkel, 2013). Jim said it best, "that doesn't mean . . . a dichotomy between, home is bad and anything else is good." Using an asset-view approach allows principals to frame challenges around the school taking responsibility, rather than blaming students and their families (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). This approach fosters relationships, honoring students and their families (Benson & Fiarman, 2020).

Identify Practices That Negatively Impact Student Learning

Establishing inclusive instructional practices can be difficult, but principals must take the lead in this work if they are going to create more equitable and inclusive schools (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Within the interviews, these principals cited ways in which they addressed practices that negatively impacted student learning. For example, Marie shared how her team used the early warning data system to surface disproportionality in

how Black males were being disciplined compared to White males. She talked about how they had to address those practices immediately to determine ways to improve the system. Had Marie's building leadership team and the administrative team not addressed the data immediately, what additional negative outcomes would that breakdown in the system have had for Black males? Additionally, Ray cited how they focus on making students feel emotionally safe both within their school and in individual classrooms. Ray discussed the importance of recognizing student needs and not waiting to communicate those needs, so students get support. Ray shared that this year he had to apologize to students who are not on track to graduate because the systems that he is trying to enact in his building (as the new principal) were not in place when he arrived. Benson and Fiarman (2020) suggested that schools should use a root cause analysis process to support them in reaching a conclusion that is within the control of the adults in the building, forcing them to examine their own practices. Jim spoke about the barriers that exist for students. Under the leadership of a culturally competent principal, adults working in the school have the power to mitigate those barriers (Chambers & McCready, 2011; Gorski, 2013; Madsen & Mabokela, 2013).

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of urban high school principals about their cultural competence leadership practices and beliefs and how they promote equitable structures and inclusive instructional practices. The sample population for this study included three urban high school principals, so the results are limited to those participants. The small sample size hinders the generalizability of the study's results to a larger population. The participants were from one urban school district in Ohio,

which also limits the generalizability of the study results. The results of this study may not represent urban high school principals from other geographic locations in the state or country. The study results do not represent high school principals who work in rural and suburban districts or those that are building leaders in elementary and middle schools.

Implications of Findings

After analyzing the data from the participant interviews, document review, and reflective journal prompts, themes emerged that indicated that the participants accessed both leadership actions and culturally competent beliefs to move their schools closer to developing culturally competent cultures, which creates more equitable and inclusive schools. While the data did not point to one specific path towards cultural competence, commonalities existed among the study participants' reflections on their leadership actions and cultural competence beliefs that promote equity and inclusion in their schools.

Implications for Principal Leadership

Each principal in this research study is leading a school with a majority-minority race student population in an urban school district with the same demographics. Educational leaders must understand the historical context of desegregation and resegregation in these schools and across the country (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Rabinowitz et al. (2019) compared the shifts in district demographics from 1995 to 2017 and found that many diverse districts in 1995 shifted to undiverse or extremely undiverse in 2017 due to disproportionately serving students of color. Even though *Brown v. Board of Education* decision came in 1954 and many districts enacted plans to desegregate their public school districts in urban areas through the 1970s,

resegregation has occurred because of systemic practices that have kept disproportionate numbers of students of color in poverty in urban districts (Lindsey et al., 2019; Orfield & Lee, 2005; Terrell et al., 2018). Principals must understand that historical, political, and social forces intentionally produced the conditions present in their schools, serving students primarily students of color and experiencing poverty (Orfield & Lee, 2005). Understanding this historical context provides principals with additional information about the specific challenges facing them as they address systemic issues of inequity in their buildings.

The principals in this study were able to identify defining moments from their past that lead them to possess culturally competence beliefs. This information is significant for principals as leading to sufficiently develop culturally competent schools "begins and ends with a focus on one's self" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 9). Principals must model learning about the culture of their students in their schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). From there, principals must create the conditions that will facilitate learning and reflection in their staff related to culture through the development of data systems and put in place processes to analyze and respond to system-level data. These processes include building teaming structures to make data-based decisions through shared decision making about systems and practices that promote cultural competence (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Heifetz, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2019; Robinson, 2013; Terrell et al., 2018; Theoharis, 2007). Principals in the study described their use of these structures and practices. Their stories of the successes and roadblocks they have encountered can be guideposts for other school leaders committed to developing culturally competent schools. It is worth underscoring that cultural

competence is developmental and best represented on a continuum, meaning it takes many years to establish and is often a lifelong journey (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; Cross et al., 1989; Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018).

Participants in this study valued the opportunity to reflect on their own practices and beliefs as culturally competent leaders. Reflection is a key aspect of cultural competence leadership (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). While this study only involved three urban high school principals, any principal who seeks to develop their cultural competence leadership skills could benefit from reviewing the findings. Many aspects of cultural competence leadership surfaced by the participants are also supported in the literature. While these principals shared that they do not have everything figured out, their stories and insights provide other school leaders the opportunity to understand the complexity, nuance, and gratification of leading in diverse contexts. These principals bravely shared successes and challenges of their journeys, providing perspective to both pre-service and current principals.

Implications for Central Office Administrators

District-level administrators intent on building culturally competent schools in their districts and the systems of support that enable principals to engage in this transformational work could benefit from this information. It would assist them in understanding the triumphs and challenges of being a culturally competent leader. The results could also point to the types of supports that would benefit principals most, such as safe spaces to reflect on the risks they take to discuss race, racism, prejudice, privilege, and bias with educators who look different than their student body (Benson & Fiarman,

2020). Finally, this study could help district-level administrators define candidate dispositions and competencies when hiring principals to lead in diverse schools.

Implications for Educational Leadership Preparation Programs

Consideration for preparing pre-service principals to lead diverse schools is necessary given the diversity present in today's public schools (Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). This study aimed to capture the perceptions and experiences of culturally competent principals as they work in the field leading diverse schools. With the development of the National Educational Leadership Program (NELP) Preparation Standards-Building Level by the National Policy Board for Education Administration (2018) Standards, equity, inclusiveness, and cultural responsiveness are critical areas for principal preparation. However, social justice and equity are often absent as one of the key ideas discussed in the literature about educational leadership preparation program evaluation (O'Malley & Capper, 2015). Leadership that is focused on social justice requires both assessment of the system and activism to lead for equity and inclusion. Educational leadership preparation programs can design unique learning experiences to promote these actions in their candidates (O'Malley & Capper, 2015). Active recruitment of diverse candidates representing various backgrounds and identities should also focus on educational leadership preparation programs. School districts will be looking for school leaders who meet these specifications. Recruitment should begin with the leadership preparation programs since intentional recruitment to diversify the candidate pool can also enhance dialogue and perspective-taking when multiple voices are represented (Castro et al., 2018).

Educational leadership preparation programs should take care to design programs that "develop equity-focused school leaders committed to achieving excellence with and for students at risk of school failure by intentionally, emphatically, systematically, vigorously and effectively ensuring . . .that all students can and will develop to their full potential" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 140). Educational preparation programs may need to consider professional development for their existing faculty on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially the historical contexts and systemic nature of inequities that traditionally marginalized groups have faced (O'Malley & Capper, 2015). Participants in this study most often discussed diversity issues related to race from their leadership practices with little to no mention of specific student identities such as LGBTQ or linguistic diversity. Educational Leadership preparation programs should consider how course offerings expose candidates to information and dialogue about all student identities, including focused conversations about where these identities intersect (O'Malley & Capper, 2015).

Curriculum materials should be audited within courses but also across courses through the lens of culturally competent leadership. One specific consideration when auditing courses is to ensure that every course and all the learning experiences are designed based on the foundational belief that future principals need to be equity-focused first and foremost (O'Malley & Capper, 2015; Terrell et al., 2018). The principals in this study underscored the importance of dialogue and discourse about topics of social justice and equity and ensuring that the educational experiences for preservice leaders model and promote discourse about these topics is necessary so that future leaders can build the

disposition to normalize conversations about race/ethnicity, poverty, disability, gender expression/identity and sexual orientation (Benson & Fiarman, 2020).

Implications for Society

As Marie was reflecting in her interview about the traction that equity work is gaining, she stated, "it's exciting that there's quite a bit of momentum in this type of work because my hope is that we'll be producing more culturally competent leaders that they can serve our diverse populations." While Marie's hope may be aspirational, recognizing the dominant force that culture plays in society is fundamental if equitable and inclusive schools are to be realized (Terrell et al., 2018). Students experiencing schools built on the values of inclusion, equity, democracy, and justice can positively impact the students they serve (Wang, 2018). These foundational values foster an asset-based view of diversity. Schools that influence students to become culturally competent citizens with an asset-based view of diversity could have a substantial impact on society.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study aimed to gather the perceptions about cultural competence beliefs and leadership actions of urban high school principals leading diverse schools. While the study gathered evidence of the types of leadership skills and cultural competence beliefs these principals call on to perform their roles in their diverse schools, further research could be considered to delve deeper into some of the findings of this study.

Student and Family Voice

Expanding this research study to include student and family experiences and perceptions should be considered. While gathering perspectives of the principals about the impact they perceive their actions are having to promote equity and inclusion in their

schools is essential, gathering perception data and voice from students and their families experiencing the school are equally meaningful. The students and their families are the beneficiaries of the efforts to improve culture and ultimately promote equity and inclusion. Their perceptions are crucial to inform ongoing improvement efforts and ensure that the improvements are meaningful and causing the intended outcomes. School staff should gather student feedback formally and informally through various methods to inform the ongoing reshaping of the school culture (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). One form of informal feedback can be to audit relationships between students and staff both in academic and extracurricular activities (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Likewise, the research study could include formal family survey data and data gathered from informal meetings. Including student and family perceptions about the school culture would provide a broader scope of the cultural competence focus and the impact.

Teacher Perceptions and Inclusive Instructional Practices

Just as the study could be expanded to include central office administrators, it could also be expanded to gather teachers' perceptions about the cultural competence leadership of their principals. Understanding the perspectives of teachers who work with diverse students could address the practices that are all too commonplace in the classroom for students from diverse backgrounds, such as low expectations, lack of use of engaging pedagogies, and grossly inequitable discipline practices (Chambers & McCready, 2011; Gorski, 2013; Madsen & Mabokela, 2013). Likewise, gathering data from teacher interviews about their own cultural competence beliefs and implementing inclusive instructional practices could prove valuable. These data could be used to

provide a fuller picture of the critical aspects and nuances of a school culture that is truly equitable and inclusive.

Longitudinal Study to Examine the Development of Culturally Competent School

The researcher could prolong this study to investigate the development of a culturally proficient school culture over time. The researcher could revisit these school leaders at various intervals to document the journey towards equity and inclusion and compare data across multiple years. Because developing school cultures that promote equity and inclusion take years to develop and require continuous examination and reflection, examining the changes in principal leadership and beliefs and the school culture over time would be worthy of continued exploration (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; Cross et al., 1989; Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). A longitudinal study of this nature could assist the researcher in mapping actions across time that would be invaluable to principals as they employ cultural competence leadership.

Central Office Administration

Another extension of this study could be to understand cultural competence leadership from the lens of central office administrators. This study could be expanded to include interviews with key central office administrators who support these high school principals. Questions could focus on investigating what practices they employ to support principals in this work, what characteristics they look for in potential candidates to lead diverse schools, and how they foster collaborative relationships between principals doing the same work. Creating systems of support for principals to engage in this challenging yet important work might encourage more principals to have courageous conversations

about creating inclusive instructional practices and equitable structures within their schools. All principals should lead with a focus on equity, not just the courageous few (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011).

Urban Elementary and Middle School Principals

Consideration should be given to expanding the study participants to include urban elementary and middle school principals. By the time many students get to high school, it can be difficult to close the large learning gaps present for many students (TNTP, 2018). Likewise, students can have a long history of school failure, challenging to mitigate by the time students reach ninth grade. Investigating elementary and middle school principals' roles in creating equitable and inclusive practices could provide insight into addressing these inequities when children are young. Tracking children into low-track classes that can begin as early as elementary school leads to changes in self-perception of ability, below grade-level content, and less engaging pedagogy (Gorski, 2013; Karlson, 2015). These differences create the opportunity gaps that are large by the time students enter high school (Milner, 2013). Waiting until high school to provide the equitable and inclusive educational opportunities that all children deserve is often too late.

Strategies Specific to Student Identities

Most data collected from the interviews, document review, and reflective journal prompts centered on cultural competence related to race and socioeconomic status. However, the researcher recognizes that multiple student identities are traditionally marginalized in our public schools based on language, disability, gender identity/expression, and sexual orientation (Capper, 2015; Musu, 2019; Theoharis, 2007).

While students with these identities may have similar needs, there may also be strategies or considerations unique to that student group. Probing deeper into what strategies work best for certain student groups would yield further insight into how to develop a culturally competent school across all student identities. This information would also be worth exploration since intersectionality (when students belong to more than one traditionally marginalized group) could also contribute to certain student groups needing nuanced consideration and support (Capper, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Proctor et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Cultural competence is a necessary skill for all principals but imperative for principals leading diverse schools (Lindsey et al., 2019; NELP, 2018; Terrell et al., 2018). While each principal who was part of the research study acknowledged that their schools are still working on building their culturally competent cultures, they could identify what they believe impacts their ability to create equitable structures and inclusive schools. Cultural competence is represented on a continuum, is a lifelong journey, and takes a developmental approach (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; Cross et al., 1989; Franco et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2019; Terrell et al., 2018). Living into one's values is not easy (Brown, 2018). It takes courage, vulnerability, and heart to reflect on one's own biases, acknowledge one's areas of growth and make a personal commitment to take action.

These principals have answered the call to action necessary to lead in today's public schools (Terrell et al., 2018). However, public schools have a long way to go to be the institutions that support all students in equitable and inclusive ways, providing the education that all students, but especially those with marginalized identities, deserve

(Cooc & Kiru, 2018; Frattura & Capper, 2015; GLSEN, 2017; Hansen et al., 2018; Milner, 2013; Morgan et al., 2015; Morgan, et al., 2017; Shifrer, 2018; Shifrer et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Leading for equity and inclusion is the foundation of leadership for urban principals as the diversity that students bring to their schools must be embraced, understood, honored, and acted upon to improve educational outcomes for all students (Cooc & Kiru, 2018; Frattura & Capper, 2015; GLSEN, 2017; Gorski, 2013; Shifrer, 2018; Shifrer et al., 2011; Theoharis, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 2019). Without the adults in the system intentionally focused on the educational experiences and outcomes for students across identities, led by a principal with the commitment to equity and inclusion, the most vulnerable students based on their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, language, ability, and sexual orientation will continue to be left behind (Frattura & Capper, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2019). Student backgrounds and identities should no longer predict educational outcomes and should not be acceptable to anyone when educators have a significant amount of control over mitigating these inequities and a moral obligation to do so (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Gorski, 2013).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

HSRC #026-21

Diana Fagan <dlfagan@ysu.edu>

Sun 1/24/2021 9:36 AM

To: Lindsay J Slater <ljslater01@student.ysu.edu>

Cc: Jane Beese <jbeese@ysu.edu>; Charles B Vergon <cbvergon@ysu.edu>; ckcoy@ysu.edu <ckcoy@ysu.edu>; Karen H Larwin <khlarwin@ysu.edu>

Dear Investigators,

Your protocol "Towards Equitable and Inclusive Schools: Cultural Competence in Principals Leading Diverse Schools" has been reviewed and is deemed to meet the criteria of an expedited protocol, category #7.

The research project is now approved, and you can begin the investigation immediately. Please note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to report immediately to the YSU IRB any deviations from the protocol and/or any adverse events that occur. Please reference protocol #026-21 in all correspondence about the research associated with this protocol.

Good luck, Diana Fagan, YSU HSRC

APPENDIX B

CONSTRUCTS, DEFINITIONS, RESEARCH, INTERVIEW

AND JOURNAL PROMPT QUESTIONS

Construct	Definition	Research Questions	Interview Questions	Journal Prompts
Assessing Cultural Knowledge	"Leading the learning about others' cultures, about how educators and the school as a whole react to others' cultures, and about what you need to do to be effective in cross-cultural situations" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).	What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in high schools? What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive practices in high schools?	Tell me about your experiences as the principal of this school. How does your culture/ background influence decisions you make as the leader of this school? How does the cultures of your students and families impact your decisions? How do you and your staff learn about the cultures and needs of the students in your building?	After reviewing and reflecting on your responses to the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Awareness Domain), what are your thoughts about your level of cultural competence awareness?
Valuing Diversity	"Creating informal and formal decision-making groups	What aspects of cultural competence do	What comes to mind when you think about equitable and inclusive schools?	After completing and reflecting on your

	inclusive of people whose viewpoints and experiences are different from yours and from those of the dominant group at the school, and that enrich conversations, decision making, and problem solving" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).	principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in high schools? What aspects of cultural competence do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive practices in diverse, urban high schools?	What leadership strategies have encouraged diverse perspectives from students, staff and families in group decision making about policies and practices in your building? How do you address your own and your staff's bias, stereotypes and assumptions about students in your school and their families? Personally? Collectively as a staff?	responses to the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Knowledge Domain), discuss your areas of strength and growth as it related to your cultural competence knowledge.
Managing the Dynamics of Difference	"Modeling problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies as natural and normal processes within the organizational culture of the school and within the cultural contexts of the communities of your school"	What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in high schools? What leadership actions do principals	Describe a time when your work with a diverse group of students, families or staff caused you to rethink or adjust your decisions or course of action to meet student needs. What new information did you learn and what changes did you make?	

	(Terrell et al., 2018).	perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive practices in diverse, urban high schools?	What role does collaboration among staff play at your school with regard to meeting the needs of your diverse students? How do you foster this collaboration? Have you identified systems, processes, structures or practices in your school that result in inequities for some students based on their identities? If so, what have you done to change or disrupt them?	
Adapting to Diversity	"Being the lead learner at your school about cultural groups different from your own and adjusting to acknowledging others' cultural experiences and backgrounds in all school settings" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).	What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in high schools? What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive	Tell me about your experiences and relationships with students and their families from cultures or backgrounds different from yourself. Describe a time when you had to confront your own bias or stereotypes or those of a staff member. What did you learn from the experience? What do you feel are the most important aspects of cultural competence	

		practices in high schools?	leadership and how do they show up in your work?	
Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge	"Making learning about cultural groups and their experiences and perspectives an integral part of the staff's professional development. Establishing norms for a culturally proficient educational environment" (Terrell et al., 2018).	What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting equitable school systems in diverse, urban high schools? What leadership actions do principals perceive to be critical in promoting inclusive practices in diverse, urban high schools?	How do you consider, balance and support the individual learning needs of your staff and the collective needs of the entire school? What inclusive instructional practices do teachers employ to support students across identities? What structures and support systems do you have in place to ensure that students across identities have equitable opportunities at your school? students who are linguistically diverse? culturally diverse? Racially diverse? Have low SES? Have a disability? Identify as LGBTQ?	After completing and reflecting on your response to the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Skills Domain), what new insights have you gained about yourself as a culturally competent principal?

APPENDIX C

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Principal XXXX,

My name is Lindsay Slater, and I am a doctoral candidate at Youngstown State University. I am also a coordinator of school improvement for State Support Team 3, Cuyahoga County. I am currently working on my dissertation entitled*Towards Equitable and Inclusive Schools: Cultural Competence in Principals Leading Diverse Schools.*

I am seeking urban high school principals who are committed to culturally proficient leadership for my qualitative research study. I hope to learn what principals like yourself believe promotes the creation of equitable systems and the use of inclusive instructional practices within your schools. Benefits to participating in this study include the opportunity to reflect on your own culturally competent leadership practices and how they contribute to student success and to learn from your colleagues who are also doing this work once the data is finalized.

Participation in this study would take between 2.5 to 3 hours of your time and will include the completion of the following activities:

1. Complete demographic questionnaire and cultural competence self-assessment checklist (10 minutes)
2. Participate in a rapport-building phone call (10-15 minutes)
3. Participate in a one-on-one interview conducted virtually (90-120 minutes)
4. Complete three reflective journal prompts (30 minutes)
5. Participate in a follow-up inquiry by phone/virtual collaboration platform (5-10 minutes)

The interview will occur through the online system, Blackboard Collaborate, in a secure virtual room, at a date and time determined by you. Participation in this study is voluntary and confidential, as there will be no personally identifiable information about you in the study. Even if you agree to participate, you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. There will be no compensation to participate in this study.

Attached to this email is the informed consent form. Should you choose to participate, please let me know via email and attach the signed consent form. If you have any questions or would like further information about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Slater
xxx@xxxx
330-xxx-xxxx

Dr. Jane Beese
Dissertation Chair
xxxx@xxxx

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent for Participation in Research Study

1. I volunteer to participate in a case study research study conducted by Lindsay Slater from Youngstown State University. I clearly understand that the study will be gathering information about principal perceptions of cultural competence leadership that promote equitable structures and inclusive practices in schools. I agree to be one of participants that will be interviewed and provide responses to three reflective journal prompts. I also agree to share documents from my work as part of the research data that is collected as part of this study. I can decline to participate at any time during the course of this study.

2. I have a right to ask questions at any time during the research study about the study and about the data that is gathered as part of the study. If I feel uncomfortable at any point in the research study, I have the right to refuse to answer any question and may also end the interview immediately upon request. I also have the right to end an observation at any time and to request that any documents that are shared with the researcher be retracted at any time.

3. Participation in this study will encompass approximately 2.5 to 3 hours of time. During this time, field notes will be taken during the interview by the researcher. An audio recording of the interview will also be taken and a mechanism that will provide an automatic transcription of the interview will also be used. The researcher will also take field notes to ensure an accurate record of the interview content.

4. As a participant in this study, my anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured at all times. I will not be identified by name in any reports or publications. All data gathered during the study will be subject to standard data use policies which protect your privacy and personal information. Only the researcher will have access to the data gathered during this study. The data will be stored securely so that only the researcher has access and anonymity will be maintained at all times.

5. As a participant in this study, several benefits exist. One benefit will be the opportunity to reflect on my own culturally competent leadership practices and how my leadership contributes to student success, which is an important component of being a culturally competent leader. I may also benefit from learning about the practices of my colleagues as they also navigate being a leader of a diverse school, gaining new insight to address the challenges facing these leaders. The results of this study may support educational leadership programs to consider how to integrate and support the development of cultural competence within pre-service principals and also expand the existing research about how to create equitable and inclusive schools. The possible risk, harm, discomfort, or inconvenience to you from participating in this study is minimal. Although the researcher will take every precaution to protect my confidentiality, it is possible that my responses may identify me which may lead to various risks including adverse social and

professional consequences. Consequently, I am encouraged to only share the information I feel comfortable sharing.

6. I understand that this study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Youngstown State University.

7. I have read all of the above information about the research study in addition to my rights as a research participant. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form. If I feel uncomfortable at any point in the research study, I have the right to refuse to answer any question and may also end the interview and my participation in the study at any time.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of the Researcher: _____

Lindsay Slater
Youngstown State University

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research at YSU at 330-941-2377 or at YSUIRB@ysu.edu.

APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE AND CULUTURAL COMPETENCE

SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (AWARENESS DOMAIN)

1. Chosen pseudonym_____
2. Number of years in field of K-12 education_____
3. Highest degree obtained_____
4. Teaching area/s_____
5. Number of years as principal position at current school_____

   Please list any other positions held_____
6. Current school enrollment _____; By race_____;

   By SES_____; EL_____; Students with

   Disabilities _____; Students who identify as LGBTQ_____
7. Age range _____20-29_____30-39_____40-49_____50-59_____60-over
8. Marital status ___single_____married_____divorced
9. Children_____
10. Race/Ethincity_____
11. (Optional) Gender Identity

_____

12. (Optional) Preferred

Pronouns_____

13. Add anything else you would like to share:_____

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Awareness Domain)

This self-assessment tool is designed to explore your perceived cultural competence. Its purpose is to help you to reflect your awareness of yourself in your interactions with others and for me as the researcher to gauge your level of your awareness of cultural competence.

Read each statement and place a check mark in the appropriate column which follows.

Domain: Awareness		**Never**	**Sometimes/ Occasionally**	**Fairly Often/ Pretty Well**	**Always/ Very Well**
Value Diversity	I view human difference as positive and a cause for celebration				
Know Myself	I have a clear sense of my own ethnic, cultural, racial, class, gender, sexual identities.				
Share my culture	I am aware that in order to learn more about others I need to understand and be prepared to share my own culture.				
Be aware of areas of discomfort	I am aware of my discomfort when I encounter differences in race/ethnicity, language, social class, sexual orientation, ability, and gender identity/expression.				
Check my assumptions	I am aware of the assumptions that I hold about people of cultures and backgrounds different from my own.				
Challenge my stereotypes	I am aware of my stereotypes as they arise and have developed personal strategies for reducing the harm they cause.				
Reflect on how my culture/ background informs my judgement	I am aware of how my cultural perspective influences my judgment about what are 'appropriate', 'normal', or 'superior' behaviors, values and communication styles.				

Accept ambiguity	I accept that in cross cultural situations there can be uncertainty and that uncertainty can make me anxious.				
Be curious	I take any opportunity to put myself in places where I can learn about differences and create relationships.				
Aware of my privilege if I am White	If I am a White person working with students and teachers of color, I understand that I will likely be perceived as a person with power and racial privilege and that I may not be seen as 'unbiased' or as an ally.				
Aware of social justice issues	I am aware of the impact of the social context on the lives of culturally diverse populations and how power, privilege and social oppression influence their lives.				
Column Totals					

Adapted from: Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children. (n.d.) *Cultural competence self-assessment checklist*. http://rapworkers.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/cultural-competence-selfassessment-checklist-1.pdf

APPENDIX F

DOCUMENT REVIEW PROCESS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and share your experiences about your cultural competence leadership and leading a diverse, urban high school. As a participant in this research study, I am requesting that you provide some documents that you choose to share that you feel provides evidence of your commitment to cultural competence leadership and your actions that promote equity and inclusive instructional practices in your school. Please note that I will not be collecting any documents that have any identifiable information. Possible documents to share might include the following:

- School vision and mission statements
- School improvement plan
- Professional development calendar and agendas
- Meeting agendas
- School schedules
- Teacher collaboration schedules
- School newsletters
- Parent and community newsletters
- Parent and community meeting agendas

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW, REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPT AND DOCUMENT REVIEW PROCEDURES

1. Emails will be sent to superintendents of the urban districts in the state outlining the study details and request a letter of assurance to recruit participants and to seek permission to collect data from the participating principals in the form of documents that are not publicly available.
2. Once assurance letters have been obtained from the district superintendents, an invitation (Appendix C) and an informed consent form (Appendix D) will be sent to each study potential study participant via email.
3. Once the signed informed consent form is received from each participant, a demographic information questionnaire with cultural competence self-assessment checklist (Appendix E) will be sent via email to each participant to complete. In addition to the questionnaire, the researcher will include a document that explains the document review data collection process to each participant (Appendix F). This document will assist participants in determining what documents they may want to share that illustrate their cultural competence leadership.
4. Upon receipt of the completed demographic questionnaire, these questionnaires will be placed in a secure, password-protected Dropbox folder that is only accessible by the primary and sub-investigator in the study.
5. The researcher will contact each participant via phone or video conference software to schedule a convenient interview date/time. This conversation will serve to establish rapport with each participant, gather any documents from the

participants as part of the data collection process, and should last between 10-15 minutes. Information shared during the rapport-building process will not be shared or recorded for data collection. However, the documents collected will be used to create a document set for each participant and will be used for the purposes of data collection and analyzed at another time by the researcher, before the interviews.

6. At the end of the 10-15 minute rapport-building conversation, the researcher will upload any documents that principals choose that they feel provides evidence of their commitment to cultural competence leadership (Appendix F) to the secure Dropbox folder and note receipt of this data in the audit trail record. The researcher will review the document set (one from each participant) and will record reflective field notes based on the analysis.
7. Fifteen minutes prior to each virtual interview, the researcher will gather the essential materials including a writing implement, copy of interview questions, interview data collection protocol, recording device (turned off prior to the start of the interview process), and copies of the consent form that was completed prior to the interview.
8. The researcher will login to the online video conferencing platform where the interview will be conducted and wait for the participant to login.
9. At the beginning of the virtual interview, the researcher will again introduce herself and ask participants if they have questions before the interview begins. The interview will be recorded using a mechanism that will automatically produce

a written transcript. The researcher will also remind participants about their right to privacy and confidentiality outlined in the informed consent form.

10. After the formal introductions, the researcher will inform the participant that she is going to begin the recording device and collecting field notes. Principal participants will be asked a series of semi-structured interview questions.
11. The interview will be recorded using a mechanism that will automatically produce a written transcript. The transcripts will be saved using the participant's pseudonym and any identifying information will also be removed later for confidentiality purposes.
12. Ample time (no longer than 120 minutes as indicated in the informed consent form) will be given to allow participants to elaborate upon their responses. The researcher will use a semi-structured format, allowing for the opportunity to seek clarification and explore topics further, if doing so, will provide a more detailed understanding of the cultural competence journey of these principals.
13. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher will announce to each participant that the interview recording will be turned off and the collection of field notes will end. The researcher will thank each participant for their time and inform them that an interview transcript will be sent for their review to verify the accuracy of the information.
14. Within 24 hours after the interview, a thank you email will be sent to each participant (Appendix H).
15. An interview transcript will automatically be created during the recording of the interview; however, the researcher will have to review the automatically

generated transcript for spelling and grammatical errors and any identifiable information that needs to be changed and make those corrections. Once corrections are made, each participant will receive an email containing an analysis of their interview to give them the opportunity to review the content for accuracy.

16. At the same time, the interview transcript is sent, three journal prompts (Appendix I) will also be sent to each participant for a response with directions for completion. It is expected that it will take each participant about 30 minutes to develop responses to the three journal prompt questions.
17. Upon receipt of the journal prompts from each participant, the researcher will review and analyze the responses by documenting field notes as part of the data collection process and noting the receipt of the data in the audit trail and uploading the data to a secure Dropbox folder.
18. The researcher will conduct a final follow-up phone call/video conference with all participants to gather any final reflections or insights about the experience.

APPENDIX H

THANK YOU EMAIL

Dear_____,

Thank you for sharing your experiences about your culturally proficient leadership in a diverse, urban high school on _____. I appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule to meet with me. If you have additional thoughts, reflections, ideas or questions since the interview, please feel free to reach out and share any additional information with me via email or phone. My email address is ljslater01@student.ysu.edu and my cell phone number is 330-328-8126. Thank you again for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Slater
ljslater01@student.ysu.edu
330-328-8126

Dr. Jane Beese
Dissertation Chair
jbeese@ysu.edu

APPENDIX I

CULTURAL COMPETENCE SELF-ASSESSMENT (KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN, CULTURAL COMPETENCE SELF-ASSESSMENT (SKILLS DOMAIN) AND REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

As a final method of data collection for this research study, you will be asked to complete two more cultural competence self-assessment checklists. One checklist is about your cultural competence knowledge and the other is about your cultural competence skills. These checklists are brief just like the first one you completed at the beginning of the study on your cultural competence awareness. Please find each checklist attached.

These journal prompts serve as a method for gathering additional insight into your beliefs, practices, and experiences as an urban high school principal with an orientation towards culturally competent leadership. These journal prompts are intended to elicit additional reflective responses that allow you to elaborate on your beliefs and experiences. Your responses are appreciated and should take no longer than 30 minutes to compose. Please make every effort to email your completed checklists and your responses back to me by _____. The reflective journal prompts are as follows:

1. After reviewing and reflecting on your responses to the **Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Awareness Domain)**, what are your thoughts about your level of cultural competence awareness?
2. After completing and reflecting on your responses to the **Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Knowledge Domain),** discuss your areas of strength

as well as your areas of growth as it related to your cultural competence knowledge.

3. After completing and reflecting on your response to the **Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Skills Domain)**, what new insights have you gained about yourself as a culturally competent principal?

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Knowledge Domain)

This self-assessment tool is designed to explore individual cultural competence. Its purpose is to help you to *reflect your awareness of yourself in your interactions with others* and for me as the researcher to gauge your level of your awareness of cultural competence. Read each statement and place a check mark in the appropriate column which follows.

Domain: Knowledge		**Never**	**Sometimes/ Occasionally**	**Fairly Often/ Pretty Well**	**Always/ Very Well**
Gain from my mistakes	I make mistakes and will learn from them.				
Assess the limits of my knowledge	I recognize that my knowledge of certain cultural groups is limited and commit to creating opportunities to learn more.				
Ask questions	I really listen to answers before asking another question.				
Acknowledge the importance of difference	I know that differences in race, culture, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender expression/ identity, language and ability are important parts of students' identity which they value and so do I.				
Understand the influence culture can have	I recognize that cultures change over time and can vary from person to person, as does attachment to culture.				
Commit to life-long learning	I recognize that achieving				

	cultural competence involves a commitment to learning over a life-time.				
Understand the impact of racism, homophobia, ableism, classism...	I recognize that stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory actions can dehumanize, even encourage violence against individuals because of their membership in groups which are different from myself.				
Know my limitations	I continue to develop my capacity for assessing areas where there are gaps in my knowledge.				
Awareness of multiple social identities	I recognize that students have intersecting multiple identities drawn from race, ethnicity, language, disability, social class, sexual orientation, and gender identity/expression ethnicity, and the importance of each of these identities vary from student to student.				
Point of reference to assess appropriate behavior	I am aware that students and their families have a "culture" and my own "culture" should not be regarded as a point of reference to assess which behavior is appropriate or inappropriate.				
Column Totals					

Adapted from: Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children. (n.d.) *Cultural competence self-assessment checklist*. http://rapworkers.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/cultural-competence-selfassessment-checklist-1.pdf

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Skills Domain)

This self-assessment tool is designed to explore individual cultural competence. Its purpose is to help you to reflect your awareness of yourself in your interactions with others and for me as the researcher to gauge your level of your awareness of cultural competence.

Read each statement and place a check mark in the appropriate column which follows.

Domain: Skills		Never	Sometimes/ Occasionally	Fairly Often/ Pretty Well	Always/ Very Well
Adapt to different situations	I am developing ways to interact respectfully and effectively with individuals and groups.				
Challenge discriminatory and/or racist behavior	I can effectively intervene when I observe others behaving in racist and/or discriminatory manner.				
Communicate across cultures	I am able to adapt my communication style to effectively communicate with people who communicate in ways that are different from my own.				
Seek out situations to expand my skills	I seek out people who challenge me to maintain and increase the cross-cultural skills I have.				
Become engaged	I am actively involved in initiatives at my school, small or big, that promote understanding among members of diverse groups.				
Act respectfully in cross-cultural situations	I can act in ways that demonstrate respect for the culture and beliefs of others.				
Practice cultural protocols	I am learning about and put into practice the specific cultural protocols and practices which are necessary for my work as a principal.				

Act as an ally	My students and staff who are students or color or have other marginalized identities consider me an ally and know that I will support them with culturally appropriate ways.				
Be flexible	I work hard to understand the perspectives of others and consult with my diverse students, families and staff about culturally respectful and appropriate courses of action.				
Be adaptive	I know and use a variety of relationship building skills to create connections with people who are different from me.				
Recognize my own cultural biases	I can recognize my own cultural biases in a given situation.				
Act on my own cultural biases	I am aware not to act out based on my biases.				
Be aware of within-group differences	I am aware of within-group differences and I would not generalize a specific behavior presented by an individual to the entire cultural community.				
Column Totals					

Adapted from: Rexdale Women's Centre & Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children. (n.d.) *Cultural competence self-assessment checklist*. http://rapworkers.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/cultural-competence-selfassessment-checklist-1.pdf

APPENDIX J

INTERVIEW FIELD NOTES DOCUMENT

Construct	Interview Questions	Field Notes
Assessing Cultural Knowledge "Leading the learning about others' cultures, about how educators and the school as a whole react to others' cultures, and about what you need to do to be effective in cross-cultural situations" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).	Tell me about your experiences as the principal of this school. How does your culture/background influence decisions you make as the leader of this school? How does the cultures of your students and families impact your decisions? How do you and your staff learn about the cultures and needs of the students in your building?	
Valuing Diversity "Creating informal and formal decision-making groups inclusive of people whose viewpoints and experiences are different from yours and from those of the dominant group at the school, and that enrich conversations, decision making, and problem solving" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).	What comes to mind when you think about equitable and inclusive schools? What leadership strategies have encouraged diverse perspectives from students, staff and families in group decision making about policies and practices in your building? How do you address your own and your staff's bias, stereotypes and assumptions about students in your school and their families? Personally? Collectively as a staff?	

Managing the Dynamics of Diversity "Modeling problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies as natural and normal processes within the organizational culture of the school and within the cultural contexts of the communities of your school" (Terrell et al., 2018).	Describe a time when your work with a diverse group of students, families or staff caused you to rethink or adjust your decisions or course of action to meet student needs. What new information did you learn and what changes did you make? What role does collaboration among staff play at your school with regard to meeting the needs of your diverse students? How do you foster this collaboration? Have you identified systems, processes, structures or practices in your school that result in inequities for some students based on their identities? If so, what have you done to change or disrupt them?	
Adapting to Diversity "Being the lead learner at your school about cultural groups different from your own and adjusting to acknowledging others' cultural experiences and backgrounds in all school settings" (Terrell et al., 2018, p. 33).	Tell me about your experiences and relationships with students and their families from cultures or backgrounds different from yourself. Describe a time when you had to confront your own bias or stereotypes or those of a staff member. What did you learn from the experience? What do you feel are the most important aspects of cultural competence leadership and	

	how do they show up in your work?	
Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge "Making learning about cultural groups and their experiences and perspectives an integral part of the staff's professional development. Establishing norms for a culturally proficient educational environment" (Terrell et al., 2018).	How do you consider, balance and support the individual learning needs of your staff and the collective needs of the entire school? What inclusive instructional practices do teachers employ to support students across identities? What structures and support systems do you have in place to ensure that students across identities have equitable opportunities at your school? students who are linguistically diverse? culturally diverse? Racially diverse? Have low SES? Have a disability? Identify as LGBTQ?	

APPENDIX K

FIELD NOTES DOCUMENT

This document will be completed by the researcher as a means to analyze each document set and the participant journal prompts by recording the dates of receipt and analysis, a brief description of the document reviewed, which participant provided the document. There is space to record descriptive notes about the document and the researcher's reflective notes, both aligned to the constructs of the research study.

Date of Receipt		
Date of Review		
Document Description or Journal Prompt		
Participant Pseudonym		
Constructs	**Descriptive Notes**	**Reflective Notes**
• **Assessing Cultural Knowledge** • **Valuing Diversity** • **Managing the Dynamics of Difference** • **Adapting to Diversity** • **Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge**		

APPENDIX L

FOLLOW-UP EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear _____,

Thank you for participating in my research study. I truly appreciate the time you spent with me sharing your cultural competence leadership beliefs and experiences. Attached to this email is an analysis of your interview, reflective journal prompts and document review. Please review the analysis and check to see if I have accurately captured your responses. Please feel free to contact me with any additional thoughts, ideas, insights or reflections that you have regarding your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Slater
ljslater01@student.ysu.edu
330-328-8126

Dr. Jane Beese
Dissertation Chair
jbeese@ysu.edu