Leadership Practices That Support Marginalized Students: Culturally Responsive Discipline for African American, Hispanic, and Latinx Students

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LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT MARGINALIZED STUDENTS:
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE DISCIPLINE
FOR
AFRICAN AMERICAN, HISPANIC, AND LATINX STUDENTS

Dissertation

by

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Abstract

Traditionally, schools have suspended students of color at significantly higher rates than White students. Culturally responsive classroom practices have been found to reduce these disparities. This exploratory case study examined whether or not teachers with low discipline referrals for African American and Hispanic/Latinx students from a midsized urban Massachusetts district report using culturally responsive discipline practices, and how their principal fosters these practices. It was part of a larger group study that examined how school and district leaders support marginalized students. Data was collected over a four-month period using semi-structured interviews with two principals and nine teachers in two schools. Interview questions were based on the Double-Check Framework (Hershfeldt etl al., 2009) which identifies culturally responsive discipline practices. Data showed that teachers with low office discipline referrals might embrace culturally responsive practices, at least to a limited degree. Additionally, while principals reported that they provided culturally responsive professional learning activities for teachers, teachers interviewed did not attribute their practices to these efforts. Results suggest that school leaders should cultivate positive relationships between students and staff to reduce discipline disparities.

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Dedication

To my wonderful wife, Becky, for your love and support… as well as your tolerance.

I am a very lucky man.

To Robert, Sam, and Grace, thank you for keeping me humble and grounded.

Maybe someday you can call me "doctor" without using air-quotes when you say it.

To my father for instilling in me a strong work ethic, and my mother for helping me to

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sun, I would never have been able to logically approach this dissertation.

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CHAPTER ONE[1]

Introduction

School populations have become more diverse racially, ethnically, socially, as well as by sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability, language spoken, and cultural identity (Lopez, 2016). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) predicts that enrollment in U.S. K-12 schools will increase by almost 5 million students from 2000 to 2027 (NCES, 2019). Although NCES statistics show the number of Black and White students are expected to drop by 1 million and 6 million respectively, the number of students identifying as two or more races will increase by almost 2 million and Hispanic/Latinx students by 8 million.

Of concern is the fact that emergent bilingual, Hispanic, Latinx, and African American students have significant gaps in achievement in the classroom and on standardized tests (Allen & Steed, 2016; Matsumura et al., 2008). These students are overrepresented in special education (Artiles et al., 2010; Counts et al., 2018) and suspended more frequently and receive harsher punishments for misbehavior than their White peers (Allen & Steed, 2016; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Gregory et al., 2017; Skiba et al., 2014). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students also have higher rates of discipline and absenteeism and lower grades than other students (Kosciw et al., 2018). It is clear that districts and schools are struggling to meet the needs of all learners as our population changes and their needs diversify (Matsumura et al., 2008).

While students' race and ethnicity data have a more meticulous recording history, the statistics for LGBTQ students may be less accurate for three reasons: 1) researchers have

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[1] This chapter was collaboratively written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project. Authors include: Margarita Amy, Mark Pellegrino, Jaime Slaney, and Luis R. Soria

traditionally had difficulty operationalizing definitions of LGBTQ individuals; 2) some LGBTQ individuals are reluctant to self-identify; and 3) educational institutions and census information gathered at the state and federal levels did not collect demographic information related to the LGBTQ community until recently (Heck et al., 2016). The Massachusetts Center for Disease Control conducts an annual Youth Health Survey that asks students to identify their sexual orientation. Data reported from their bi-annual Youth Risk Behavior Survey reveals that Massachusetts students who identify as LGBT rose from 7.7% in 2015 to 9.6% in 2017 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017). When compared with heterosexual students, LGBTQ students have disproportionate percentages of being bullied, harassed, and threatened, as well as suffering from depression and suicidal ideation which indirectly contribute to circumstances that increase disciplinary outcomes and negatively affect grades (Kosciw et al., 2018). When student groups have higher victimization rates, they often have higher disciplinary rates as they receive punitive consequences for physically or verbally defending themselves. Additionally, students with mental health challenges struggle socially and battle chronic stress. These characteristics make it difficult for students to emotionally respond to stressful events. Inappropriate, emotional outbursts are often addressed through the disciplinary process.

We have illuminated the change in student populations in schools and surfaced crucial student needs that must be addressed. Next, we explore two essential elements for the study – how we define Marginalized Student Populations (MSP) and the importance of school leadership in supporting these student populations.

Marginalized Student Populations

Individuals and groups can be marginalized based on multiple aspects of their identity that may include race, gender, gender identity, intellectual or physical ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, sexuality, age, and/or religion (Veenstra, 2011). Marginalized student populations are often positioned at the fringes of a community and not allowed to have voice, choice, identity, or full engagement within the community (Crenshaw, 1989). Marginalized groups feel less important when community members of higher position or dominance target them with negative beliefs, behaviors, or judgments (Sue, 2010). As previously stated, marginalized student populations are at higher risk for low academic achievement (Kosciw et al., 2018), pessimistic social-emotional well-being (Dewall et al., 2011), and disproportionate discipline and suspensions (Poteat et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2010). Given the urgency to build, sustain, and measure school connectedness for marginalized student populations (Riele, 2006), and the need to address the impact of social exclusion (Woodson & Harris, 2018), this study focused on how specific categories of marginalized students are supported in school settings.

Leadership Matters

Schools are the primary social context where marginalized students spend a large portion of their day. The school setting can be a hostile environment where marginalized students are at risk to experience adversity such as verbal and physical harassment, institutional bias, and an exclusive school culture (Kosciw, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative that district and school leaders impact and guide how marginalized students are supported and included in the school setting. Indeed, school leaders can play an integral role in "creating schools that value individual differences" (Gardiner et al., 2008, p. 142). School building leaders can have direct influence regarding how schools design, improve, and sustain rigorous instruction and ensure the school

community is a safe space for all learners (Theoharis & Brooks, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2009). District and school building leaders influence policy, pedagogy, and professional learning that can inform and sustain equity, instructional practices, and safe spaces that affect students' sense of inclusion (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). There is increasing literature regarding how leaders advance equity (Theoharis, 2009), build student/teacher relationships (Pearson et al., 2007), influence students' sense of safety (Biag, 2014), and model agency (Johnson, 2007). Additionally, Khalifa et al. (2016) note the influence of school leaders' self-awareness, teacher preparation, school environment, and community advocacy as a critical means to support learners in school.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose

Given the increased diversity of student populations and their varied academic, social-emotional, and school-environment needs, it is imperative to examine how district and school leaders support traditionally marginalized students in school settings. Among school-related factors that impact student success, leadership is second only to teaching (Leithwood et al., 2004). Specifically, leaders and leadership are crucial to the success of marginalized student populations.

The purpose of our group research project was to examine how district and school leaders support and advocate for marginalized student populations. We sought to understand the ways in which districts might concentrate and sustain efforts to support these students through district and school leadership practices. Specifically, our research aimed to answer the question: In what ways, if any, do district and school leaders support marginalized student populations in schools? For the purposes of this study, the term *marginalized student populations* is defined broadly to

include students who identify as LGBTQ, emergent bilinguals, Hispanic/Latinx, and African

Americans.

Accordingly, the overarching research question for this study was: In what ways, if any,

do district and school leaders support marginalized student populations in schools? As such, our

research team members each applied a different lens to examine the role of leadership in the

participating district as outlined in Table 1.

Researchers' Focus Areas

Table 1

Individual Research Topics

Investigator	Research Questions
Margarita Amy	How do leaders perceive they are fostering teacher leadership which supports emergent bilingual and Latinx students? When working to develop teacher leadership, how, if at all, do leaders perceive they are setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization?
Mark Pellegrino	Do teachers with low discipline disparities necessarily embrace culturally responsive discipline practices? How, if at all, does the school leader promote culturally responsive practices of teachers in order to reduce disciplinary outcomes for African American and Hispanic/Latinx students?
Jaime Slaney	How, if at all, does the leader develop and maintain cultural awareness and self-reflection to support marginalized populations? What leadership practices does the leader enact, if at all, to engage teachers in cultural awareness and self-reflection?
Luis R. Soria	How, if at all, do district and school leaders' knowledge, attitudes/beliefs, and practices support LGBTQ youth?

Conceptual Framework

In this qualitative case study, we ground our conceptual framework in the work of

Khalifa et al.'s (2016) Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework and the

complementary ideas of Leithwood and Jantzi's (1990) Transformational Leadership

Framework. These frameworks guided our review of the literature and informed our study. Khalifa et al. assert that culturally responsive leaders simultaneously resist systems of oppression that exist and affirm cultural practices and identities of students. We merged these two frameworks, as we believe the underlying work of a culturally responsive leader (Khalifa et al., 2016) encompasses Leithwood & Jantzi's (1990) three leadership practices: setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. For the purposes of this study, we characterize *culture* through a "bottom-up approach" (Birukou et al., 2013) that begins with a set of traits of an individual person, recognizes transmission of ideas and communication as a relevant means of spreading the culture, and then expands to the group culture within a context. For this research, the individual characteristics of marginalized students and their interactions with non-marginalized students are examined within school contexts.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

For this study, culturally responsive pedagogy and its origins in multicultural education informed how we applied Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL). Originally, Ladson-Billings devised the phrase "culturally relevant pedagogy" in *The Dreamkeepers* (1994), a study of eight exemplary teachers of African American students. Ladson-Billings (1995) further developed her theory stemming from the work of anthropologists, sociolinguists, and ecologists. She examined teaching practices that align to the home and community cultures of students of color who had previously not experienced academic success in school. She established the need for a culturally relevant theoretical perspective. In her view, "culturally relevant pedagogy" would produce students who could obtain high achievement, understand and develop cultural competence, and obtain critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Gay (2002) built on Ladson-Billings' (1994, 1995) theory and made a case for improving the academic outcomes of underachieving African, Asian, Latinx, and Native American students through culturally responsive teaching. In order to do this, she further posits that teacher education programs must encompass the appropriate knowledge, beliefs, and skills toward cultural responsiveness. Gay (2002) defined culturally responsive teaching as pedagogy that uses "cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students to build bridges for teaching" (p. 106). Villegas and Lucas (2002) assert that a culturally responsive teacher:

> a) is socioculturally conscious; b) has affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds; c) is responsible and capable of bringing about educational change which will make schools more responsive to students; d) understands and embraces constructivist views of both teaching and learning; e) knows about students' experiences outside of school; f) builds on students' personal and cultural strengths while stretching them beyond the familiar" (p. 21).

Culturally relevant teaching and pedagogy provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Following the groundbreaking work of Gay and Ladson-Billings to create culturally responsive education, education reformers introduced the notion of the culturally responsive school leader (Johnson, 2006; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). While culturally responsive teaching is critical, it is imperative to ensure the entire school environment, not just the classroom, is responsive to the needs of marginalized students (Khalifa et al., 2016). Riehl (2000) contends, "a genuine commitment to diversity would require administrators to attend to

the fundamental inequities in schooling, to disavow the institutions which they purportedly lead, and to work toward larger projects of social and institutional transformation" (p. 58). In their synthesis of the literature on the topic, Khalifa et. al. assert culturally responsive school leadership is "the ability of school leaders to create school contexts and curriculum that responds effectively to the educational, social, political, and cultural needs of students" (p. 1278).

A culturally responsive leader intentionally engages in leadership behaviors to stop systems of oppression that continue to widen the gap for marginalized student populations (Khalifa, 2018; Riehl, 2000). Khalifa et. al (2016) define these behaviors as "practices and actions, mannerisms, policies, and discourses that influence school climate, school structure, teacher efficacy, or student outcomes" (p. 1274). The culturally responsive school leadership framework is based upon three assumptions and is characterized by four key leadership behaviors:

> 1) cultural responsiveness is a necessary component of effective school leadership; 2) if cultural responsiveness is to be present and sustainable in school, it must be foremost and consistently be promoted by school leaders; and 3) culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) is characterized by a core set of unique leadership behaviors, namely: a) being critically self-reflective; b) developing and sustaining culturally responsive teachers and curricula; c) promoting inclusive, anti-oppressive school contexts; and d) engaging students' Indigenous (or local neighborhood) community contexts (Khalifa, 2018, p. 13).

For this case study, we utilized two of the four identified behaviors from Khalifa et al.'s framework to guide our work. We focused on the leadership behaviors of being critically reflective and promoting culturally responsive inclusive school contexts as they relate best to our

study. These behaviors, paired with Leithwood and Jantzi's (1990) three transformational

leadership behaviors of setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization,

enabled us to further examine how leaders at the district and school level support marginalized

student populations. A visual of the applied frameworks is provided below (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Transformational Leadership Frameworks
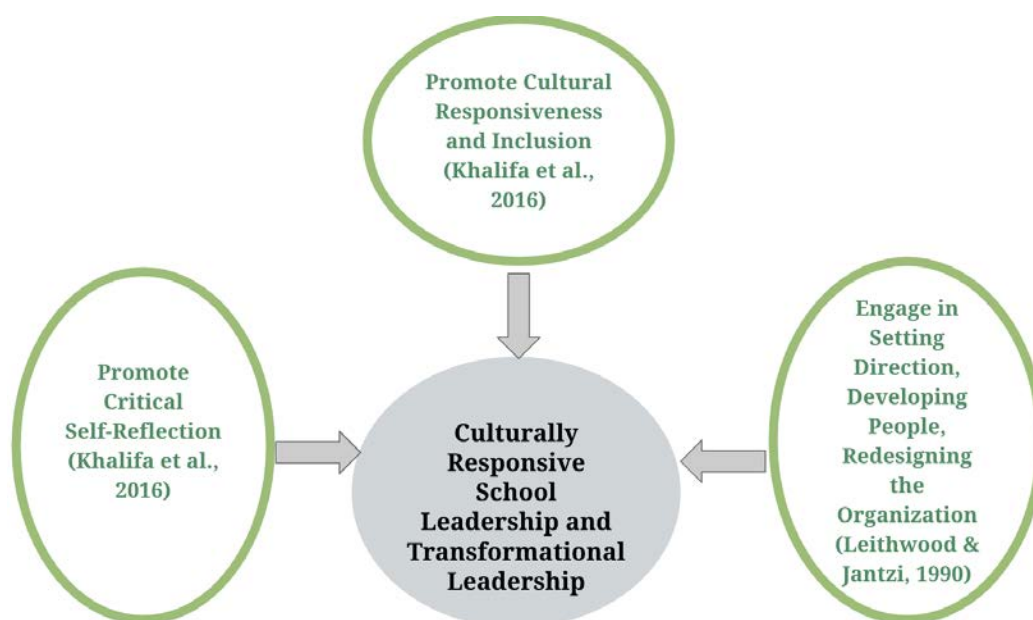
Critical Self-Reflection

Khalifa et al. (2016) posit critical self-reflection is a crucial first step to a leader's journey

of becoming a culturally responsive leader. Critical self-reflection includes the "deep

examination of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs" (Brown, 2004, p. 89). Once a leader

develops critical self-awareness and reflection they can become conscious of their own personal

biases, values, and assumptions that contribute to systematic patterns of oppression and

marginalized student populations' experiences in schools (Khalifa, 2018). Young and Laible

(2000) argue that "understanding our participation and then unlearning our patterns of thought

and action that support racism are necessary steps for dismantling the system of White racism

that exists in our society and in our schools" (p. 389). Without the leader developing critical self-awareness, any attempts at reform will only result in surface level change as opposed to systemic long-lasting reform (Cooper, 2009).

Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusiveness

A culturally responsive leader must actively protect and seek inclusion for marginalized student populations (Khalifa, 2018). In order to repeal systems of privilege and oppression that are embedded within the systemic structures of our educational system, leaders must express intentionality in their behavior to create culturally responsive and inclusive school environments (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Khalifa, 2011). These environments must provide cultural mirrors for students in order to create a culturally affirming school environment (Riehl, 2000). Leaders must be willing to have courageous conversations to combat inequities and to promote systemic change (Newcomer & Cowin, 2018; Khalifa, 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria, 2014; Singleton, 2015).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders promote leaders and followers to engage in a relationship of mutual respect and power-sharing interactions (Burns, 1978). Leaders who enact transformational leadership influence their followers by behaving in ways that motivate and inspire. They communicate their expectations, demonstrate a commitment to a shared vision and goals, seek new ideas from others, and promote the individual development of others (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders influence their followers. Additionally, these leaders actively solicit new ideas and promote supportive climates. More importantly, they promote the individual development of others (Danielson, 2007; Poekert et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016).

For this research study, transformational leadership theory was informed by Leithwood and Jantzi's research in schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Leithwood et al., 2004; Yu et al., 2002) which expands upon the work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985). Using this theory as part of our conceptual framework enabled us to further examine how leaders at the district and school level support marginalized student populations. This model describes three broad clusters of leadership practices: setting direction, developing people and redesigning the organization.

Setting Direction, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization

Transformational leaders set the organization's direction with the intent to create and promote a shared vision, develop consensus, and establish high-performance expectations (Garza et al., 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Transformational leaders develop people within the organization as they strive to provide individualized support, recommend high-quality professional development, and model important values and practices (Day et al., 2016; Poekert et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016). Lastly, a transformational leader redesigns the organization by developing a collaborative culture that promotes shared decision-making and structures to support this type of collaboration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990).

In summary, transformational leadership theory is an appropriate part of the conceptual framework of this study because leaders who employ transformational leadership practices can directly impact teaching and learning to support marginalized student populations. For this research study, we weave two theories into our conceptual framework, Khalifa et al.'s (2016) culturally responsive school leadership and transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). This conceptual framework guided our review of the literature and informed our study to examine how leaders at the district and school level support marginalized student populations in schools.

Literature Review

There are well-documented research findings related to changing demographics in student populations (NCES, 2019), marginalized students' academic and social-emotional well-being (Dewall et al., 2011), and leadership practices that affect students' success (Theoharis & Brooks, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2009). Additionally, there is a significant body of research related to the specific marginalized student populations that we examined for this qualitative case study. In our review of literature, we first illustrate relevant research on the disproportionality of marginalized students and next illuminate research findings regarding four marginalized student groups: LGBTQ, emergent bilinguals, Hispanic/Latinx, and African American students. We culminate our review of literature with research findings regarding leadership practices that support marginalized student populations that informed our qualitative case study of an urban district in Massachusetts.

Concerns Regarding Marginalized Student Populations

Disproportionality of Marginalized Students

Disproportionality is evident in educational outcomes when there is a significant difference found between marginalized and non-marginalized populations. Disproportionality can be defined as the under-representation of a particular subgroup of the population when measuring positive outcomes such as high academic achievement, feeling connected to school and feeling safe, or an over-representation when measuring negative outcomes including suspensions, special education identification, being bullied, and absenteeism (Bradley Williams et al., 2017). Historically, disproportionality exists in the U.S. educational system with regards to drop-out rates, academic achievement, and disciplinary consequences for several marginalized groups (Gastic, 2017; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). The disproportionality of

marginalized students' representation and subsequent academic and disciplinary outcomes brings to light a need for targeted advocacy in the school environment. The role of district and school leaders is critical in creating equitable opportunities to learn and ensuring a high-quality education for all student populations (Capper & Young, 2015). To discern the leadership practices that support marginalized students, it is necessary to examine the relevant research regarding the student populations that are featured in this study.

LGBTQ Students. There is expanded scholarship concerning LGBTQ youth experiences in the school setting (Heck et al., 2016). Studies reveal systemic and systematic disparities faced by LGBTQ youth regarding a hostile climate (Greytak et al., 2016) and harsh disciplinary actions (Poteat et al., 2014). Himmelstein and Bruckner's (2011) national longitudinal study of 15,170 students found significant differences between LGBTQ and heterosexual students' disciplinary consequences. Indeed, they found that nonheterosexual adolescents had greater odds than their heterosexual peers of experiencing sanctions. LGBTQ students were more likely to be suspended, arrested, or convicted of a crime. Subsequent research found that LGBTQ students are disciplined for conduct and actions that heterosexual students are not (Snapp et al., 2015). LGBTQ students reported being suspended for non-violent offenses such as public displays of affection, self-expression, and defending themselves from bullies.

Emergent Bilinguals. For this study, English Learners are referenced as emergent bilingual students. This terminology aligns to research that asserts "through acquiring English, these children become bilingual, able to continue to function in their home language as well as in English, their new language and that of school" (Garcia et al., 2008, p. 6). Emergent bilingual students are a fast-growing subgroup among student populations in the United States (Rhodes et al., 2005). The emergent bilingual student population is diverse due to differences in students'

experience with English, individual competence in their first language, and explicit literacy

needs (August et al., 2014). These differences, along with other social and environmental factors

such as socioeconomic status, influence students' ability to learn to read, write, speak, and listen

in English. To best support emergent bilinguals, educators must have a clear understanding of

their students' backgrounds, and must focus on providing personalized reading instruction, with

varying levels of support. When educators fail to become familiar with and recognize the

knowledge, experiences, and values of culturally diverse student populations, they engender a

culture of power that further marginalizes ethnic and linguistic minorities (Delpit, 2006). This

power imbalance further casts linguistic minorities and emergent bilinguals as deficient in

character, behavior, and academic ability (Nieto, 2007; Valenzuela, 2001).

      Discipline of Hispanic/Latinx and African American Students. As far back as 1975,

racial disparities in suspension rates for African American students have been well documented

(Edelman et al., 1975). Edelman and associates found that African Americans were suspended at

three times the rate of White students in elementary school and two times the rate in secondary

schools. Unfortunately, since that time, this gap has persisted and has been well documented by

researchers (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Gastic, 2017; Gibson et al., 2014; Huang & Cornell, 2017;

Mizel et al., 2016; Morgan et al., 2014). Though the amount of literature is not as expansive,

disparate suspension rates for students of Hispanic and Latin American ethnicity (Latinx)

students have also been a consistent finding in current research (Anyon et al., 2014; Cuellar &

Markowitz, 2015; Morgan & Wright, 2018). This same research has established a strong positive

correlation between school suspensions of students of color and incarceration. Dubbed the

"School to Prison Pipeline," this is reason enough to improve school support of Hispanic, Latinx,

and African American students. However, beyond prison, there are negative effects of school

suspensions that are broader reaching and are far less visible. Research has established links between school discipline and drug use (Hemphill et al., 2014), loss of institutional trust, and lower college enrollment (Yeager et al., 2017).

A crucial outcome of suspensions is the reduction in students' opportunities to learn as they miss valuable class time. Consequently, research has connected student suspensions to course failures, grade retention, and dropping out of school (Barnes & Motz, 2018; Ford et al., 2013; González, 2012; Pesta, 2018; Rocque & Snellings, 2018). One 3-year study of a large urban school district of almost 374,000 students found, in the first year of the study, that suspended students were three years behind non-suspended students on average in their reading ability (Arcia, 2006). Two years later, they were five years behind. This is particularly concerning as reading skills are foundational to all learning. Arcia (2006) made the connection of lagging reading skills with low student achievement and other negative academic outcomes. Ultimately, interrupting the "School to Prison Pipeline" by reducing the discipline of African American and Hispanic/Latinx students will support their immediate educational needs as well as change their lifelong outcomes.

Schools have attempted to address disproportionality in discipline over the years. Many have proclaimed that the disciplinary program School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) will eliminate the discipline gap. While there is an abundance of empirical evidence that demonstrates SWPBIS effectively reduces discipline rates for all subgroups in schools (McIntosh et al., 2018), McIntosh and associates (2018) also found that African American and Hispanic/Latinx students are still suspended at higher rates than White students.

We have illuminated research regarding marginalized student populations. Next, we explore school climate effects on marginalized students and then elucidate leadership practices that are paramount for their academic and social/emotional needs.

School Climate Effects on Marginalized Student Populations

As noted, there is increased literature regarding marginalized students' school experiences. Consequently, it is critical to explore intermediary factors that affect school climate and can impact marginalized students' academic success, emotional well-being, and safety.

Student Connectedness

Marginalized students are better able to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in school environments when they feel connected and safe in their school (Kosciw et al., 2014). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) defines school connectedness as students' belief that school staff and school peers care about their academic learning and about their personal wellness. Students' sense of belonging while at school impacts how they engage in school and is associated with a number of positive academic outcomes (Johnson, 2009). Studies encompass various terms to characterize student belonging such as connectedness (Joyce, 2015), relatedness (Connell & Wellborn, 1991), or belongingness (Finn, 1989). These terms can be analogous and have been researched in various ways including girls' reduced sense of victimization (Loukas & Pasch, 2012); safeguard against substance abuse, school absence, and suicide ideation (Resnick et al, 1997); and the development of sustained positive teacher-student relationships (Sulkowski & Simmons, 2018).

Belongingness

Students are able to perceive signs and cues from their school environment, educators, and peers that inform whether or not they have a sense of belonging (Okonofua et al., 2016).

These perceptions can affect marginalized students' success both inside and outside the classroom (Blad, 2019). Students who possess a sense of belongingness perceive that they are more competent with higher levels of intrinsic motivation than peers who lack a strong sense of belonging (Osterman, 2000). Conversely, students who perceive inconsistent treatment from their teachers due to their race or ethnic group may respond with defiance and misbehavior (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Social Exclusion

The World Health Organization (2015) defines social exclusion within a relational lens that is informed by disparate power relationships among peers resulting in the marginalization and exclusion of groups of people from social connections and experiences. When children experience social exclusion such as being denied rights, opportunities, and resources that are normally available to all children, their physical, emotional, and mental health wellness can be negatively impacted. Research suggests that aggression, anxiety, and depression have been observed when children have been excluded from their peer groups (Dewall et al., 2011).

Leadership Practices that Support Marginalized Populations

Leadership matters to the success of marginalized students (Khalifa et al., 2016; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Newcomer & Cowin, 2018). In the following section we explore specific leadership practices and behaviors that directly and indirectly support marginalized students in schools.

Building Relationships

Disproportionality in disciplinary outcomes for Hispanic/Latinx and African American students is a significant concern for the US educational system (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). Although there are promising systemic programs--such as the

three-tiered behavioral program, "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports" (PBIS)--that reduce disciplinary outcomes for all student subgroups, disproportionality persists (Allen & Steed, 2016). As Hershfeldt et al. (2009) note, "Problem behaviors among students are often a function of a lack of correspondence between the mainstream expectations for student behavior and the diverse cultural orientations students bring to their school environment" (pp. 13-14). Essentially, educators often do not understand how students' diverse cultural and situational backgrounds inform their behavior (Gay, 2002). Teachers often lack an in-depth understanding of their students' cultures and values as well as how to develop their culturally responsive skills (Hershfeldt et al., 2009). Hershfeldt and associates (2009) found that these discipline disparities were the result of negative student/teacher interactions. Likewise, most discipline referrals from classroom teachers (where most discipline begins), stem from poor student/teacher relationships (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009). In response to this relational disconnect, Hershfeldt and colleagues (2009) designed the Double-Check framework. At its core, this framework of culturally responsive practices is relational. The framework identified five separate but interrelated components: (a) reflective thinking about the children and their 'group membership,' (b) authentic relationships with students, (c) effective communication, (d) connections for students to the curriculum, and (e) sensitivity to students' cultural and situational messages. Simply put, educators need to better understand their own beliefs and biases as well as students' perspectives in order to communicate in a way that fosters positive interactions and relationships with their students. Yet supporting marginalized student populations in schools goes beyond relationships.

Instilling High Expectations

Culturally responsive leaders have high expectations for every member of the learning community (Johnson, 2007; Khalifa, 2011; Newcomer & Cowin, 2018). A number of studies

have suggested that without an intentional focus on having high expectations, the organization will continue with systems of oppression for marginalized student populations that surrender to the acquiescence of low expectations and low outcomes (Brown et al., 2011; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Khalifa, 2011).

For example, in a qualitative two-phase study, Brown et al. (2011) examined 24 state recognized "Honors Schools of Excellence." The schools were ranked, based solely on minority achievement, and then separated into two types of schools, small gap (SG) schools who kept achievement gaps between minority and White students to less than 15% and large gap schools (LG) who recorded achievement gaps of 15% or more between their White students and their minority students. Researchers found school principals of the small gap schools expected excellence from each and every student. Principals held the mindset that excellence was achieved by having high expectations for every student, regardless of their starting point or background. Small gap schools defined excellence with measurement of growth as compared to grade-level proficiency. In comparison, the large gap schools defined excellence in more vague terms, mostly by meeting grade-level proficiencies. Principals of large gap schools did not hold the expectation that every child could learn, no matter the circumstance. When asked about the concept that all children can be successful, one principal stated "I don't think we can guarantee that every child is going to be successful. But we need to provide them the opportunity to be successful" (p. 81). Researchers found that the difference in expectations contributed to the difference in achievement for minority students.

Khalifa (2011) further supports the importance of the culturally responsive leader having high expectations to support marginalized student populations. In his case study examining a principal's response to teacher acquiescence, the leader's belief in having high expectations was

crucial to combating low teacher expectations. The principal in the case study enacted an approach to challenge teachers' behaviors through conversations, both individually and as a collective staff. In additional to challenging teachers' deficiency perspective, the principal developed teachers' understanding about race, discrimination and specifically, the impact of the teacher's behavior and low expectations on the student. Due to the leadership practices of upholding high expectations, engaging in critical conversations, and imparting professional learning, teachers improved their practices and supports for students.

In contrast to the above studies, in Gardiner and Enomoto's (2006) qualitative analysis of the practices of six urban principals, researchers found only two of the six principals engaged in the practice of holding high expectations for all students. The other principals demonstrated more of a deficit perspective and focused on what the students lacked (i.e., language, shelter, immigration challenges). The principals in all of the above studies who held high expectations for all were able to challenge stereotypes and systems of oppression for marginalized student populations in order to support students.

Developing Teacher Leadership

Developing teacher leadership has increasingly become a strategy for educational improvement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). York-Barr and Duke suggest "teacher leadership is the process by which teachers individually influence their colleagues, principals and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices" (p. 288). Their study revealed that successful teacher leadership relies heavily on the evidence of specific school conditions to be in place. These conditions include: collaborative and encouraging school culture, roles and relationships (i.e., the establishment of trust), and structures (i.e., access to each other, professional development).

Building on research that underscores the importance of teacher leadership, Anderson (2008) explored the rural school context and argued that teacher leaders influenced these schools, and in some cases, transformed the entire organization. Anderson's research presents a valuable new focus on teachers as leaders beyond their traditional roles. Danielson's (2007) extensive writing regarding teacher leadership divides teacher leader roles into two different categories: informal and formal. Formal teacher leader roles are positions designed and appointed by building or school leaders and recognized by the school community (i.e. department chair, master teacher, instructional coach). Informal teacher leaders are not selected. Instead, "they take the initiative to address a problem or institute a new program. They have no positional authority; their influence stems from the respect they command from their colleagues through their expertise and practice" (Danielson, 2007, p. 16). Her research posits several conditions that can promote teachers to become leaders: (a) a safe environment for risk-taking, (b) administrators who encourage teacher leaders and (c) opportunities to learn leadership skills. Danielson also asserts that administrators must be proactive in their commitment to cultivate teacher leaders.

Promoting Inclusivity

Culturally responsive leaders can create and sustain school cultures that are inclusive (Khalifa et al., 2016; Newcomer & Cowin, 2018). Indeed, school leaders can explicitly maintain safe and inclusive school environments via their actions and practices. Khalifa et al. (2016) posit that leaders can model cultural responsiveness when they interact with and among school staff (Tillman, 2005), recognize and name inequities toward marginalized students (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012), and challenge the status-quo of exclusionary practices (Khalifa, 2011). Theoharis (2007) asserts that leaders enact inclusivity when they eliminate exclusionary practices that discriminate and segregate students such as tracked levels of class placement.

Engaging in Critical Self Reflection

Culturally responsive leaders must be aware of and be able to reflect upon their own cultural identity and the identity of the context in which they lead (Cooper, 2009; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; Newcomer & Cowin, 2018; Capper et al., 2006; Young & Laible, 2000). It is only after the leader engages in the iterative process of personal cultural awareness and self- reflection that they are able to recognize and combat inequities within the schools they lead (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Khalifa, 2018; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). The leader's personal cultural awareness and self-reflection assists in the probing and challenging of assumptions and practices within the school that promotes inequitable practices (Cooper, 2009; Khalifa, 2011; Khalifa, et al., 2016; Santamaría, 2014). This leads to transformative action that will result in equitable practices and contexts to support marginalized students (Shields, 2010).

Conclusion

The research we have reviewed indicates that there is an existing opportunity and academic gap for marginalized student populations in schools. We have reviewed literature on the specific populations for this study: LGBTQ, emergent bilingual, Hispanic/Latinx, and African American students to discern the impact of leadership practices to support marginalized student populations. We then explored the impact of leadership on marginalized student populations, with a focus on culturally responsive school leadership and transformational leadership practices. While there is an abundance of research on the disparities and systems of oppression that marginalized student populations face, there is still a relatively smaller body of research on how district and school building leaders can positively impact and change the outcomes for these students. As a result, we constructed a study to answer the research question: In what ways, if any, do district and school leaders support marginalized student populations in

schools? We collected and analyzed data from our study to inform further research studies and

provide guidance to district and school leaders to create equitable school systems for all students.

CHAPTER TWO[2]

Methods

This qualitative descriptive case study examined whether and how district and school leaders model, encourage, and sustain culturally responsive practices that support marginalized students. The sections below describe the overall study design and procedures for data collection and analysis.

Study Design

A qualitative, descriptive, single-case study design was applied to answer the group and individual research questions. The descriptive case study design was chosen to uncover and describe the phenomena of leadership within specific, unalienable contexts (Yin, 2018). We identified, examined, and described the relationship between school leaders' beliefs and practices, and the culturally responsive systems, structures, and practices that support marginalized student populations. Through semi-structured interviews, document reviews, observations, and field notes, the team gathered evidence to describe this relationship in the context of a mid-sized urban Massachusetts school district.

Site Selection

The study site selection criteria included: 1) a mid-to-large-sized K-12 urban district in Massachusetts; 2) inclusion of a diverse student body, with at least fifty percent representing marginalized students populations-specifically, LGBTQ, emergent bilinguals, Hispanic/Latinx, and African American; 3) inclusion of school leaders who self-identified (and/or who were recognized by their district leaders) as being culturally responsive; 4) recognition by GLSEN of

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[2] This chapter was collaboratively written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project. Authors include: Margarita Amy, Mark Pellegrino, Jaime Slaney, and Luis Soria

Massachusetts as a district committed to culturally responsive ideology through policy, practice, and professional development regarding LGBTQ students; and 5) access to at least two of the district schools. Site selection also required a district that had demonstrated efforts and leadership practices in support of marginalized students.

After engaging in demographic data analysis, several Massachusetts districts aligned to our site selection criteria. To make the final selection of the research site, we examined six GLSEN recommended districts. We reviewed each of the recommended district and school websites for evidence of practices, policies, and/or initiatives in support of marginalized students, with a focused lens on LGBTQ students. We also communicated with local- and state-level professionals who were familiar with the districts and the district superintendents to determine if the leaders demonstrated culturally responsive practices and beliefs. Bayside Hill School District (pseudonym) was ultimately chosen as the focus of the study.

Contextual Background of Bayside Hill School District

At the time of this study, Bayside Hill School District, located in Massachusetts, had a racially and linguistically diverse population (see Figure 2). Of the approximately 950,000 students in Massachachusetts public schools, 21.6% are Hispanic/Latinx, 9.2% are African American, and 10.8% are English Learners, and 57.9% White. In comparison, Bayside Hill Public Schools has a more diverse student makeup. The Hispanic/Latinx population at Bayside Hill is eleven percentile points higher than the state's percentage, and the emergent bilingual (defined by the state of Massachusetts as English Learners) population is fifteen percentile points higher. Figure 2 highlights how the student demographics have shifted at Bayside Hill School District over the last ten years. The Hispanic/Latinx and emergent bilingual student populations have continuously increased during the last five years. Additionally, the White student

population decreased nineteen percent over the past ten years. This shift in population simultaneously occurred with an increase of 1000+ district students. Contrasting this shift in students' racial makeup, the staff demographic has relatively remained White. Research has demonstrated that it is beneficial for schools to have a staff population that mirrors the racial makeup of the student population (Wilder, 2000). However, only 1% of the teachers in the district are African American, while 7% of the students are African American. Likewise, 10% of teachers in the district are Hispanic/Latinx, while 32% of the students are Hispanic/Latinx. This difference in the makeup of the two populations can contribute to disproportionate outcomes for students (Wilder, 2000).

Figure 2

Student Demographic 10-Year History of Bayside Hill School District
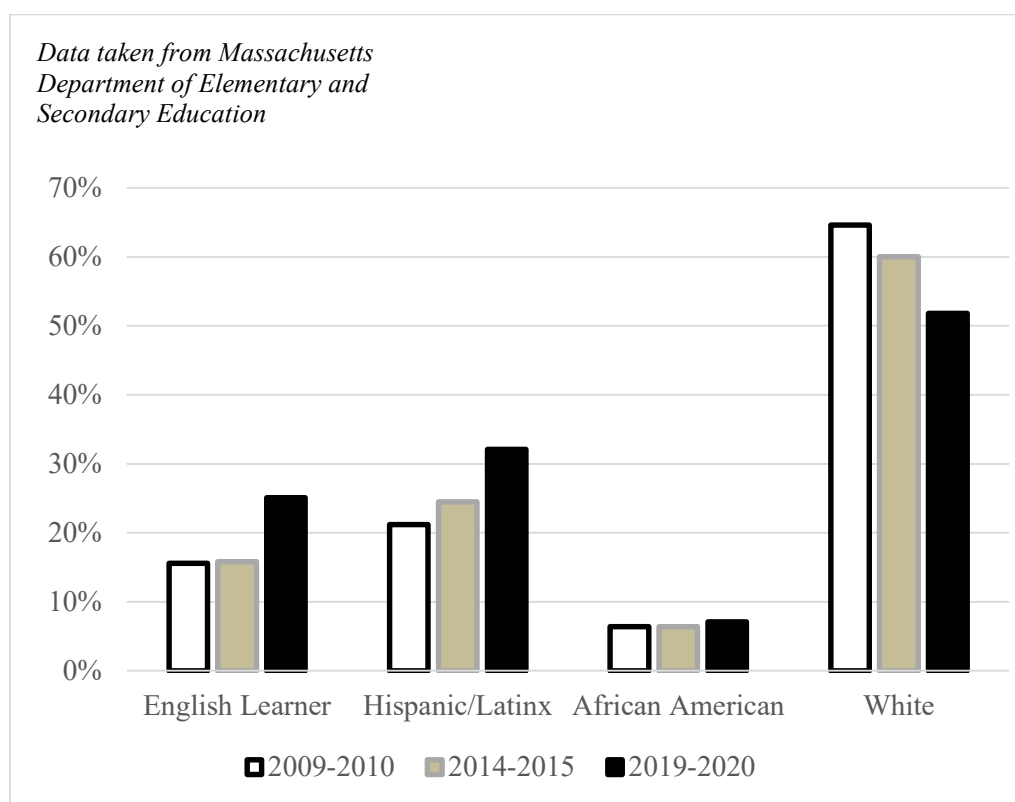
The superintendent has been in his position for three consecutive years. The district has fourteen schools, with only one currently identified by the state as "requiring assistance" under the state's accountability measures. During the time of our research, three schools were following a state mandated Turnaround Plan as a form of dramatic and comprehensive intervention, since they were identified as schools also "requiring assistance." According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, schools classified as "requiring assistance" have low graduation rates, low overall performance on statewide assessments, or have low participation on the state mandated assessments.

When interviewed, the superintendent identified equity as a driving force for Bayside Hill Schools. He described the context of the school system, the city itself, and inequities that exist. The superintendent explained student educational outcomes is highly correlated with a student's address. He shared:

> This city is kind of divided with the North/South... Predominantly our students live on the south side. [The south side] has more concentration of housing. There is state and federal low income housing in the South Side. And the north side is very affluent, much more than the south side... So you see it in the performance of students who live on the north side or attend north side schools. We've been really trying to adjust for that marginalization, whether it's by skin color, or income, or by making sure we had an equity model in our schools, and our funding formula.

The superintendent expressed that until recently, inequities evidenced in specific geographic areas in the school district have been largely ignored.

At the time of the research, the district was engaged in implementing a lesson plan mandate, which required teachers to come together and co-plan lessons using a prescribed

template. Co-planning occurred twice a week for math and English language arts. The

expectations for co-planning were for all elementary schools, where the teaching teams submit

weekly lessons which include both content and language goals. This new mandate harmed the

relationship between the teachers and the district leaders. Consequently, teachers felt that this

was a top-down mandate and an example of the lack of trust that exists within the district and has

resulted in less sharing of practices. Although the district's intent was to increase collaboration

among teachers, teachers' perceptions were that they had no time to collaborate or share ideas.

As will become apparent in Chapter 4, this initiative was a frequent theme in many interviews.

Data Collection

Research data was collected via semi-structured interviews, document analysis,

observations, and field notes to understand whether and how district and school building leaders

support marginalized student populations. Case study data was collected from August 2019

through February 2020. The research team collaboratively gathered data to support the

overarching question for the larger case study, as well as for the four individual studies that

contributed to the larger research.

Interviews

In order to understand how leaders modeled, encouraged, and sustained practices that

supported marginalized students, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants

from the district. Participants included district leaders, school building leaders, teachers, and

teacher leaders. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) assert, "Interviews are necessary when we cannot

observe behaviors, feelings or how people interpret the work around them" (p.108). The

relationship between the interviewer and the respondent is a partnership (Weiss, 1994). Each

participant was interviewed individually for 30-60 minutes. Interviews were conducted in person, recorded, and finally, transcribed using the web-based program, Rev.

Study Participants

Purposive, nonprobability sampling was used to select study participants in order to discover and gain insight into a specific phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this collective study, each researcher sought participants for their respective study informed by their specific criteria and research questions. Participant selection is further discussed in each individual Chapter Three. The following paragraphs describe the criteria we utilized to seek participants for the overarching group study.

Four senior district-level administrators, seven school building leaders, and eighteen teachers were interviewed to explore their individual and collective beliefs toward supporting marginalized students (See Table 2). The Bayside Hill superintendent and assistant superintendent identified a number of building leaders who, in their opinion, demonstrated efforts to meet the needs of the marginalized students.

Each school building leader identified between 1 and 6 teachers who met the criteria for each individual study. In total, eighteen teachers participated in the study. The identified teachers were interviewed to examine their beliefs and practices to support marginalized students. Additionally, teachers were asked whether and how their respective school building leaders support marginalized student populations. Table 2 details the gender and race of each of the participants in the group study.

Interview Protocols

Interview protocols were designed to discover and probe for leadership practices, decision-making, and beliefs in support of marginalized student populations in Bayside Hill

Table 2

Participant Self-Identified Demographics

Organizational Level	Gender		Race/Ethnicity	
District Level Leaders	Female	2	African American	1
	Male	2	White	3
Building Level Leaders	Female	5	White	7
	Male	2		
Teachers	Female	13	White	16
	Male	5	Hispanic/Latinx	2

Public Schools. Questions were created based on relevant literature on the topic. Interview

protocols were designed for district and school leaders, teachers, and teacher leaders (See

Appendix A which details questions for each participant group). Protocols were piloted with

conveniently available educators who were not candidates for the study to ensure the questions

were understandable and produced useful data.

Document Review

Purposive sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used to select documents related to

leadership practices to analyze whether and how district and school building leaders support

marginalized student populations. The documents included district- and school-level policies,

websites, professional learning agendas/presentations, problem solving protocols, school

schedules for co-planning, and communications to families and teachers. One researcher

reviewed a student organization mission, vision, and value statements, and agendas/minutes of

the student organization meetings. We also analyzed the Bayside Hill district's strategic plan

(2017), equity plan (2018), and budget (2019).

Observations

Observations were conducted in three schools to provide our team with firsthand examinations of leadership knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices (See Appendix C for protocol). We observed interactions between leaders and students, teacher leaders and students, and among students. We also observed planning meetings and dual language classroom instruction. For two of the individual studies, observations were conducted to provide "knowledge of the context and specific incidents, behaviors, which can be used as reference points" (Merriam & Tisdell 2016, p.139). These reference points allowed us to triangulate the information gained from interviews and other sources.

Field Notes

Field notes were an additional data source for this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe field notes as "the written account of the observation, which are also analogous to the interview transcript" (p. 149). Field notes provided knowledge of the context and specific behaviors observed during the time of the interviews and informal observations. The field notes were "reflective," as noted by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and included "feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculations and working hypothesis" (p. 151). The field notes included but were not limited to interactions with school, district and teacher leaders, teachers and students. The content of the field notes included verbal descriptions, direct quotations and other running narratives based on the observers' comments. A sample of our field note protocol is included in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Data was collected and uploaded to Dedoose, an online qualitative software, to facilitate coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As transcripts and other sources of data were added to

Dedoose, each individual researcher determined and applied a priori codes (Miles et al., 2014) aligned to categorical themes and that related to individual conceptual frameworks. Data was analyzed through these themes to identify specific words and phrases (Creswell, 2012). This process was iterative and allowed the researchers to modify, clarify, or enhance these themes as the study progressed and data was gathered. In other words, the team, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), had "a conversation with the data" (p. 204). Additional emergent coding cycles were completed by all researchers. These cycles were designed to create a more narrowed thematic organization of the initial coding (Saldana, 2013). The team completed pair checks to review each other's coding cycles to further build trustworthiness of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Positionality

Our research writing reflects our individual interpretations informed by cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics also referred to as "positions" (Creswell, 2012). This research team acknowledges that our research writing can be positioned. For this reason, to minimize potential biases, as a team, we developed interview protocols, coded interview samples in pairs, and maintained a process memo. The research team for this study is composed of four Massachusetts public school administrators. The group has a range of educational experiences in both public and private schools. These experiences include teaching at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Collectively, research members have also served in various roles such as teacher leader, director of instruction, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent in various schools and districts. The team is evenly divided between two women and two men. Of the four researchers, two identify as Latinx and two identify as White. In addition, one researcher identifies in the LGBTQ community. The members of the team

identified their roles and school district affiliation to the participants in the study. The team also

shared with each other their unique perspectives and positionality throughout the research

process.

CHAPTER THREE[3]

Individual Study

Introduction: Problem and Purpose

Dr. W. Edwards Deming, the famous pioneer in continuous organizational improvement, is famously quoted as saying, "Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets." Unfortunately, the U.S. educational system has disheartening results for certain groups. Students' race, language spoken, special education needs (Bradley Williams et al., 2017), gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, (Greytak et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2013) and familial income level (Plata et al., 2017) often dictate the quality of their educational experience. Schools marginalize specific groups of students through institutionalized policies, practices, and rituals that support dominant groups and push these disenfranchised groups to the margins (Greytak et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2013) . The system often ignores their needs and undermines their progress directly or indirectly, in blatant or subtle ways.

The reasons for these differences in educational experiences for different groups are well-researched, but not always clearly linked causally (Ahram et al., 2011). One explanation that permeates all levels of educational organizations is that educators have their own biased beliefs and often do not know why students are not performing well academically, behaviorally, or emotionally (Ahram et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2018; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). Biased beliefs influence how teachers support and respond to diverse populations, creating different outcomes for different populations (Agne et al., 1994). It is a moral imperative for our educational system to support all students to achieve equitable outcomes.

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[3] This chapter was authored by Mark J. Pellegrino

Our group's research project focuses on how, if at all, school leadership supports marginalized student populations. The specific marginalized populations researched include Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ) students, English Language Learners or Emergent Bilingual learners, and African American, and Hispanic/Latinx students in Massachusetts. "Schools as presently organized are much better calibrated to serve privileged groups than groups placed on the margin" (Deschenes et al., 2001, p. 20). Students of color, specifically African American and Hispanic/Latinx students, have historically and are currently overrepresented in schools' disciplinary outcomes and often receive harsher punishments for similar offenses when compared with their white peers (Gregory & Mosely, 2004a; Skiba, 2002; Skiba et al., 2014). Disproportionate discipline rates demonstrate institutional discrimination that unfairly marginalizes these groups. When students are suspended from school, they miss valuable classroom instruction time which can greatly impact their academic achievement (Skiba et al., 2014).

Further, as Skiba et al. (2014) note, "Suspension is often the first step in a chain of events leading to short- and long-term consequences, including academic disengagement, academic failure, dropout, and delinquency" (p. 2). Negative educational outcomes related to student discipline include increased likelihood of dropping out of school, being referred to special education, and having low academic achievement (Arcia, 2006; Barnes & Motz, 2018; Bradley Williams et al., 2017; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; DeMatthews et al., 2017; Gregory et al., 2010).

Outside of educational consequences, more recent research has linked student suspensions with adult depression and drug use (Cammarota et al., 2012; Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015; Ford et al., 2013; Mizel et al., 2016; Rocque & Snellings, 2018). Additional long-term consequences include adult unemployment and incarceration (Okonofua et al., 2016). Whole

groups of students, then, are systematically marginalized through the disciplinary structure espoused and practiced by schools. The severe educational and life-long consequences of marginalized students make it imperative that schools address this inequitable disciplinary system. Leaders in our educational institutions have a moral obligation to make positive changes to their schools.

Research Questions

There is a great deal of research that has supported the postulate that culturally responsive classroom practices reduce disciplinary outcomes for African American and Hispanic/Latinx students (Parsons, 2017a). However, this lens does not question whether or not culturally responsive practices are necessary to have lower classroom disciplinary outcomes for students of color. Simply put, the research has consistently found that when culturally responsive practices are present, schools and teachers will be less likely to have discipline disparities; however, there is little research that attempts to answer the question: Do teachers with low discipline disparities necessarily embrace culturally responsive discipline practices? This individual research study addresses this gap in the research. Further, this research study explores how, if at all, these teachers believe their principal fosters and supports culturally responsive practices.

Ultimately, this individual study strived to answer two research questions: (1.) Do teachers with low discipline disparities report that they embrace culturally responsive practices? and (2.) How, if at all, do teachers perceive that their school principal promotes culturally responsive practices in order to reduce disciplinary outcomes for African American and Hispanic/Latinx students?

How the Individual Project Relates to the DIP Team Project

Marginalized student populations include groups based on several variables such as race, gender, sexual orientation, income levels, special education, and native language. The focus of our group study was to learn how, if at all, school leadership supports marginalized populations. Members researched leaders' perceptions of their intentional practices to develop teacher leaders who support marginalized populations; how the leaders engage in critical self-reflection to become culturally responsive; and what knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices leaders embrace to support LGBTQ students. My individual research project focused specifically on the discipline disparities of students who are marginalized due to their race. As previously stated, African American and Hispanic/Latinx students are suspended between two and three times more than white students. To explore the discipline gap, in the following literature review I will describe existing discipline gaps, why they happen and ways in which schools have attempted to address these gaps; explore culturally responsive practices that reduce the disproportionality of discipline outcomes; and finally, describe how principals might promote culturally supportive disciplinary practices. I begin with an explanation of the Double Check Framework (Hershfeldt et al., 2009), which was used as a lens in this study to assess teachers' practices with regards to discipline.

Conceptual Framework

Double-Check Framework

The Double Check Framework was created as a professional development tool to promote culturally responsive practices by facilitating reflection and self-awareness. As "a framework of cultural responsiveness applied to classroom behavior" (Hershfeldt et al., 2009, p. 2), the Double-Check framework illuminates foundational culturally responsive classroom

practices. It is a 26-question survey that asks teachers to self-report their classroom practices and beliefs. Bottiani and colleagues (2012) designed this framework specifically to help school staff "identify cultural inconsistencies in disciplinary practices, and develop and maintain culturally responsive practices that facilitate improvements in student behavior" (p. 2). It was designed on a four-point Likert Scale which questions the teacher with regards to practices in five culturally responsive areas: (1) Reflective Thinking About the Children and their "Group Membership"; (2) Efforts Made to Develop Authentic Relationships; (3) Effective Communication; (4) Connection to the Curriculum; and (5) Sensitivity to Students' Cultural and Situational messages. Using this framework's survey items as the basis for my interview questions helped to ensure that I asked questions regarding all facets of a comprehensive approach to culturally responsive classroom practices. I utilized this framework as a lens to assess teacher practices in order to answer the first research question: Do teachers with low discipline disparities report that they embrace culturally responsive practices?

Culturally Responsive Leadership Framework

In answering the second research question, the Double-Check framework aligns with Khalifa's Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) framework described in Chapter 1 (Khalifa, 2018). Specifically, the elements of the Double-Check Framework align with Khalifa's CRSL Frame of "Promoting a Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment." The CRSL framework requires that leaders foster teacher practices to 1) accept indigenized populations; 2) build relationships with students, reducing student anxiety; 3) use student voice; and 4) acknowledge, value, and use indigenous cultural and social capital. Each of the Double Check Framework elements aligns with at least one of these practices. Using the CRSL framework

helped address my second research question: How, if at all, do teachers perceive that their school building leader promotes culturally responsive practices?

Relevant Literature

This section will describe disciplinary disproportionality and its consequences for African American and Hispanic/Latinx students; delve into why disproportionality exists; highlight strategies designed to address it; and finally underscore culturally responsive disciplinary practices that are promising solutions to this very important issue.

As previously stated, the research clearly demonstrates that African American and Hispanic/Latinx students are suspended at a much higher rate than white students. Historically, this disproportionality has existed in the U.S. educational system regarding drop-out rates, academic achievement, and disciplinary consequences for African American, Hispanic, and Latinx students; where disproportionality can be defined as the under-representation of a particular subgroup of the population when measuring positive outcomes, or an over-representation when measuring negative outcomes (Artiles et al., 2010). Artiles et al. (2010) provide examples of disproportionality such as African American and Hispanic/Latinx students' over-representation in school discipline and special education and under-representation in gifted/talented programs and high academic achievement. Over the past fifty years, researchers have investigated why these disparate outcomes are happening and how schools can and should respond (Gibson et al., 2014; González, 2012; Morgan & Wright, 2018). Although changes have resulted in moderate gains in disciplinary outcomes in some states, our school system still marginalizes these students.

This continued over-representation with regards to school discipline is particularly troubling as African American and Hispanic/Latinx populations in the United States are growing.

In 2015, U.S. schools were comprised of 49% White students (NCES, 2017). It was the first time in our history that the majority of students were NOT white. By 2027, White students are projected to account for only 45% of the student population. While the percentage of African American enrollment in public schools is expected to plateau at 15% from 2015 to 2027, the Hispanic/Latinx population will grow from 26% to 29% (NCES, 2017). Additionally, while multiracial children comprised less than 1% of the students enrolled in public schools in 2005, this group's enrollment is expected to increase to 4% of all students enrolled. In brief, the United States educational system is becoming more diverse (NCES, 2017). Our schools need to respond by disrupting the power of the dominant culture and ensure that we support the cultural needs of all students. As this individual research study specifically focused on the disproportionate disciplinary outcomes for Hispanic/Latinx and African American students of color in Massachusetts, we will now take a closer look at Massachusetts' disparities.

Massachusetts' enrollment follows the national trend of increased diversity (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019). However, data detailed on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) website show that Massachusetts schools continue to marginalize the growing African American and Hispanic/Latinx populations by suspending them at much higher rates than White students. In response, the Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education instituted Chapter 222 of the Acts of 2012, An Act Relative to Student Access to Educational Services and Exclusion from School. This Act was specifically designed to reduce disciplinary outcomes for students--especially for students of color. Suspensions for all subgroups dropped since this legislation was enacted (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019). From 2014 to 2018, the percentage of students disciplined has reduced for African

American students from 11.55% to 8.72% and Hispanic/Latinx students from 9.71% to 6.76%.

However, the suspension rate of White students during that same period was considerably lower:

from 3.35% to 2.91% respectively. This data from DESE underscores the disparities. In 2018,

Hispanic/Latinx students were still 2.5 times more likely to be suspended out of school than

White students and African Americans were still more than three times as likely. Massachusetts

schools need to change their practices to reduce the suspension gap for African American and

Hispanic/Latinx students.

The participating district in this study (Bayside Hill Public Schools) has also become

more diverse. Over the past two decades, the percentage of students of color in the district has

gone from approximately 30% to 45%--a growth of 50%. Like so many school districts in

Massachusetts, Bayside Hill Public Schools has reduced suspensions. Looking at the schools

studied, Bayside Hill High School has reduced discipline specifically for African American and

Hispanic/Latinx Students, while their percentage of suspensions for White students has remained

relatively the same for the last six years (see Figures 3 and 4). Similarly, the middle school has

seen a dramatic decrease in the suspension of African American students, virtually eliminating

their discipline gap. However, Hispanic/Latinx students are suspended 2.5 more often than their

white peers (see Figure 2). Although the Bayside Hill Public Schools has made gains in reducing

some disproportionality in the district, the issue still persists.

Addressing Disproportionality

These negative disciplinary outcomes for African American and Hispanic/Latinx students

have created a sense of urgency for educational leaders, researchers, and legislators to find a

program that will reliably and effectively address inequitable practices. Unfortunately, there has

not been one clearly established direct causal variable as to why African American and

Figure 3

Bayside Hill High School Suspension Rates by Race
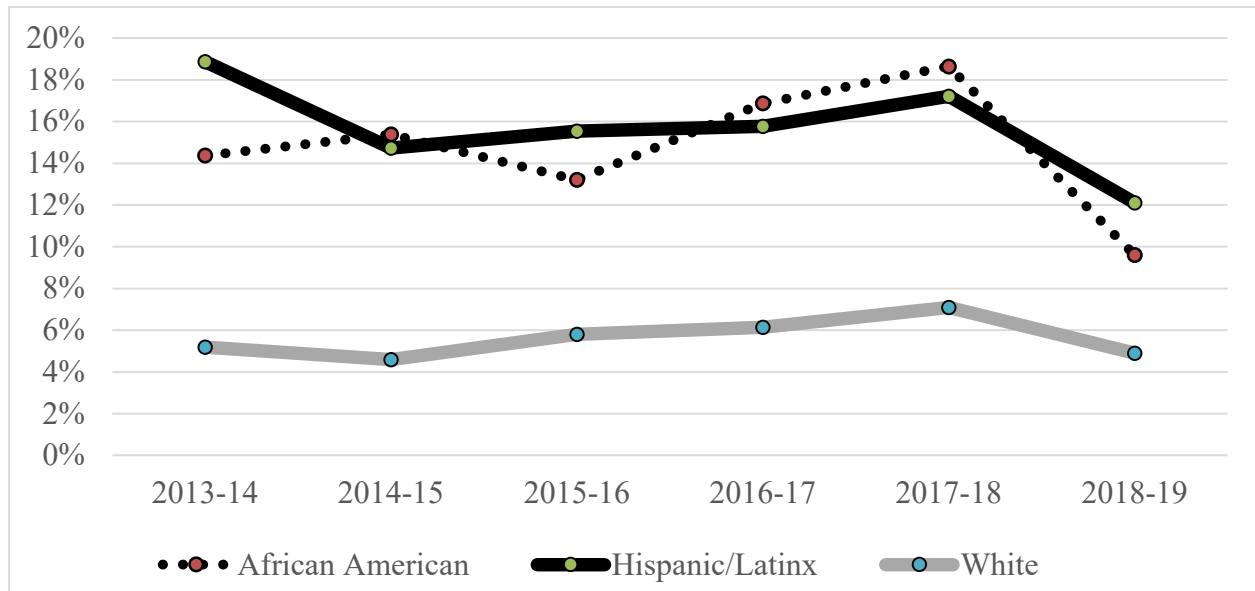
Figure 4

Bayside Hill Middle School Suspensions by Race
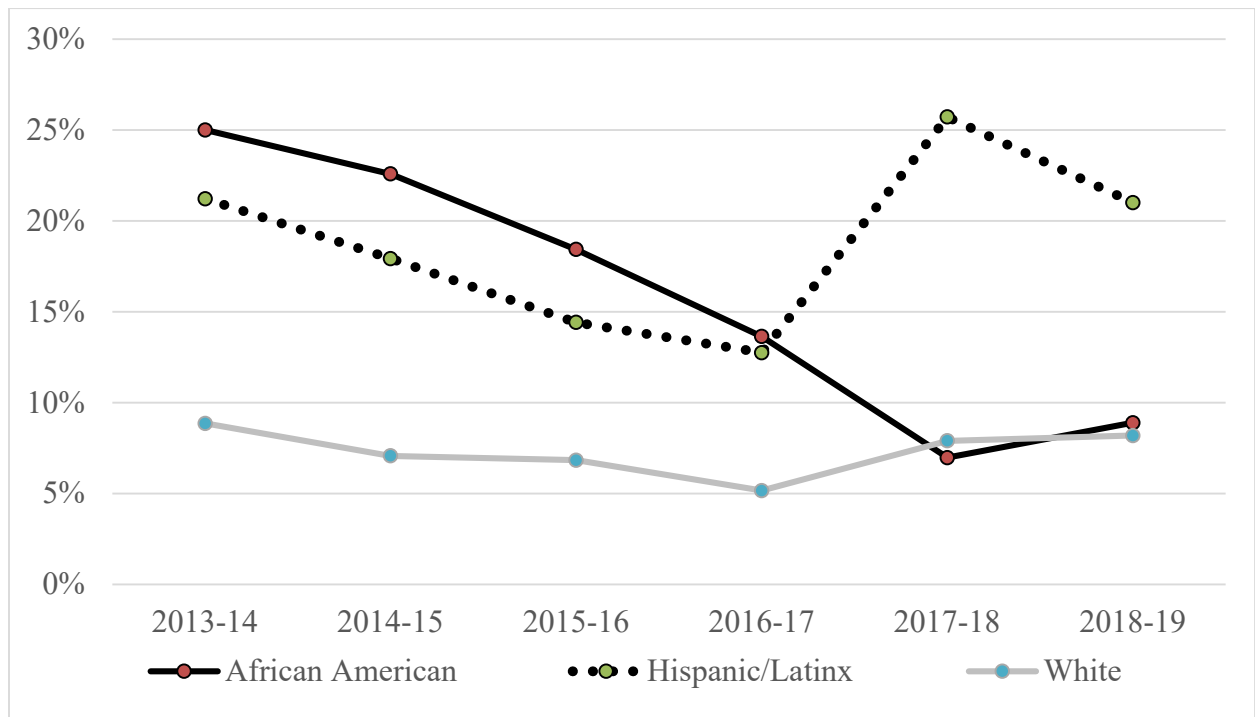
Hispanic/Latinx students are suspended at higher rates than White students (Leone et al., 2000; Noltemeyer et al., 2015). However, it is clear that African American and Hispanic/Latinx students are often suspended for different reasons than White students (Anyon et al., 2016; Bradley Williams et al., 2017; Bradshaw et al., 2018; Parsons, 2017a; Williams, 2011). While both White students and students of color are suspended for aggressive, violent, and criminal offenses, students of color are disproportionately suspended for subjective reasons--such as disrespect, classroom disruptions, defiance, insubordination, and noncompliance. This disproportionality is predicated on differences in teachers' interpretations of subjective behaviors of African American and Hispanic/Latinx students as opposed to the behaviors of White students (Agne et al., 1994; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Plata et al., 2017). Knowing this, practitioners and researchers have identified some school-wide strategies to respond to student misbehavior equitably. I will review some evidence-based practices that reduce disparate outcomes in school discipline.

Culturally Responsive Interventions

Allen and Steed (2016) recommend five key research-based, culturally responsive, relational practices to address disproportionality: "(a) investigating one's implicit bias, (b) learning about others' cultures, (c) embedding culturally supportive practices in classroom routines, (d) developing and implementing policies that support equity, and (e) evaluating the effectiveness of practices on measures of cultural responsiveness" (p. 168). There are evidence-based programs that have been effective in reducing discipline in schools by addressing the practices listed above, including: Empathetic Discipline (Okonofua et al., 2016); Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Vincent & Tobin, 2011), and Restorative Justice (Gregory et al., 2016). The notion that each of these interventions focuses on

developing positive relationships between teachers and students and aligns with Allen and Steed's recommendations listed above drove the focus of my individual study and research questions. I will now describe the relational disciplinary practices of Culturally Responsive SWPBIS, Empathetic Discipline, and Restorative Justice.

Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Supports (CR-PBIS)

The Positive Behavioral Support (PBIS) system was originally developed over twenty years ago by the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education, in collaboration with the University of Oregon, in response to high suspension rates (Simonsen & Sugai, 2013). The program's design was informed by longitudinal national school discipline data. Unfortunately, PBIS systems are not enough to address disproportionality for diverse populations (Allen & Steed, 2016). According to research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), PBIS programming was found to reduce the overall suspension rates significantly for all students and subgroups, but does not drastically reduce disproportionality by race (McIntosh et al., 2018). This programmatic deficit has led schools to blend "culturally responsive practices within a PBIS framework to fully address issues of racial bias within the discipline system in schools and to align practices with diverse backgrounds of children and families" (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009, p. 179). Essentially, Fox and Hemmeter posit that programmatic disciplinary interventions benefit from a relational component, which is particularly important with culturally diverse populations. Wallace et al. (2008) argue that systems, routines, policies, and practices are not enough; for a school to address the discipline gap, cultivating culturally responsive relationships between teachers and students is imperative.

Empathetic Discipline

Much of the current research characterizes the root causes of the discipline gap as "the result of punitive discipline policies (e.g., zero-tolerance policies), teachers' lack of interpersonal skills, or students' lack of self-control or social-emotional skills" (Okonofua et al., 2016, p. 5221). Okonofua and associates (2016) focused their investigation on teachers' mindsets about discipline. They conducted three experiments in five different middle schools to see: (1) if school leaders can effectively help teachers to embrace an empathetic response to student misbehaviors, (2) if students would be more likely to follow rules in the future if a teacher responded to their misbehavior as empathetic (rather than punitive), and (3) if there would be a reduction in suspension rates over an academic year. Their findings were promising. After reviewing an article that encouraged empathetic responses to student misbehaviors and recommended this approach as "good teaching practice," teachers held onto this belief and utilized it in the classroom over the course of five years. These same teachers had an immediate and an annual 50% drop in suspensions resulting from their disciplinary referrals. Additionally, they found that students had more respect for teachers who demonstrated empathetic responses than teachers who demonstrated punitive responses. Further, they found students to be more motivated to follow the teacher's rules for empathetic teachers rather than punitive.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

Another effective intervention that is designed to reduce discipline rates and has been found to be culturally responsive is Restorative Justice (Gregory et al., 2016). Restorative Justice is designed as a prevention and intervention to student misbehavior, focusing on how students and adults interact to create a positive school climate. The central theme of restorative practices is to repair relationships. As an intervening measure utilized after an incident, all who

were affected by the incident, including the student who misbehaved, collaborate to mend the relationships of all involved. In order to be proactive and preventative in nature, the teacher must: 1) use affective statements which explain the impact of negative or positive events in the classroom and school; 2) hold weekly circles to discuss how to build community; 3) engage students in decisions; 4) model restorative practices when engaging with other adults; and 5) provide a framework to guide interactions. Gregory et al. (2016) note that "Restorative Practices elements, as a whole, may be effective at eliciting teacher-student cooperation, fostering constructive conflict resolution, and working toward equitable disciplinary practices" (p. 330). The RJ process honors student voice, which has been proven to support and positively engage African American, Hispanic, and Latinx students. Gregory and associates found that teachers who had implemented RJ practices with fidelity had an average daily referral rate for African American and Latino students of 2.92 and 0.77 for White and Asian students. Although this still demonstrates a gap, there was much greater disparity for teachers with low RJ implementation. Specifically, teachers with low RJ implementation had an average daily referral rate of 9.13 for African American and Latino students and 1.69 for White and Asian students. Although research on RJ as a culturally responsive, behavioral intervention is in its infancy, these results are promising.

Summary

The highlighted research underscores the importance of teachers cultivating positive relationships with students as a culturally responsive intervention. Teachers who are culturally **un**responsive demonstrate implicit bias, micro-aggressions, and an inability or refusal to see race as an issue (Carter et al., 2017). Carter et al. (2017) report that these three well-researched practices contribute to negative classroom interactions between teachers and students that

ultimately result in disciplinary actions. Each of these reasons informs teacher interactions with their students and elucidate their beliefs. The fact that most disciplinary outcomes are initiated in the classroom (Gregory & Mosely, 2004b; Parsons, 2017b; Skiba, 2002), are the result of negative teacher/student relationships (Skiba, 2002), and that relationships are the focus of most effective culturally responsive interventions, helped to focus my research project on fostering positive student/teacher relationships.

Methods

In this section, I describe the site selection and study design including protocols for the individual, semi-structured interviews of three middle school and six high school teachers, as well as interviews with their middle and high school principals in the Bayside Hill Public Schools district. Teacher participants were identified by the principal as having low rates of discipline referrals as well as low disparities for African American, Hispanic, and Latinx students compared with their White peers. I chose an explanatory case study design method that included a review of disciplinary referral statistics and face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

Site Selection

For the group study we chose a medium sized school district in Massachusetts with a diverse student population (35% African American and Hispanic/Latinx) of slightly less than 9000 total students. The chosen district was identified by our dissertation mentor (a former Massachusetts superintendent who mentors novice superintendents throughout the state) and a cursory review of online documents as a district that has attempted to implement culturally responsive practices, programs, and policies. For the purposes of anonymity, the district will be referred to as the Bayside Hill Public Schools.

Case Study Design

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' low disciplinary referral rates and culturally responsive practices. Though it is well-evidenced that employing culturally responsive practices reduces office discipline referrals (ODRs), there is a dearth of research exploring whether or not teachers with low discipline referrals *necessarily* employ culturally responsive practices. Case studies are an effective design model when there is little research in the area of research (Yin, 2018). Finally, I examined teachers' perceptions of how, if at all, actions by the building leaders support and/or foster culturally responsive discipline practices.

Sampling

This project centered on a purposive sampling of three middle school and six high school teachers with low ODRs and minimal disparities between students of different races. I also interviewed the principals of these two schools to triangulate data. I emailed teachers identified by their principals as having low discipline referrals. The nine teacher participants who volunteered for the study had an average of between zero and three ODRs annually. Their middle and high school principals were also interviewed for this study. Four participants self-identified as White and male, and seven identified as White and female.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview questions were adapted from the Double-Check Framework (Hershfeldt et al., 2009). The first nine interview questions were designed to answer research question one, soliciting responses about how teachers' cultural awareness can reduce disciplinary referrals for African American and Hispanic/Latinx students and how these understandings might inform their actual practices (Appendix A). Interview questions were designed to elicit responses that require teachers to explain what they did to support marginalized

students in detail. The interviewer asked follow-up, probing questions to understand how the teacher's practices aligned with their stated beliefs.

Additionally, in order to answer the second research question, I asked teachers, "How does your principal and/or the district help support your thinking and practices to support diverse learning populations?" I followed up with relevant probes and follow up questions as necessary. For example, if they simply answered, "I don't know any practices," I would ask, "Do they provide any professional learning activities?" Our research team conducted in-person interviews, with follow-up questions through email, of the two principals of the schools to which the teachers belonged: Bayside Hill Middle School and Bayside Hill High School. The researchers asked principals open-ended questions about how they handle disciplinary actions for marginalized students and how they support teachers in learning and improving culturally responsive practices, as noted in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I read the transcripts of each of the interviews in their entirety, and then completed three cycles of coding: preexisting codes based on the elements of the Double Check Framework; examples of promoting an inclusionary environment; and finally teachers' perceptions of how, if at all, the school leader supports marginalized students.

Double Check Framework

First, I coded teachers' responses using the five domains of the Double Check Framework: Reflective Thinking (6 elements), Authentic Relationships (4 elements), Connection to the Curriculum (2 elements), Effective Communication (4 elements), and Sensitivity to Situational and Cultural Messages (1 element). In every interview, participants' stated beliefs

and practices matched, and were ultimately inextricable, supporting the notion that teachers' self-reported practices aligned with their stated beliefs about culturally responsive teaching.

Khalifa's Culturally Responsive School Leader (CRSL) Framework

Next I coded how each of the elements of the Double Check Framework intersected with Khalifa's CRSL Framework. To accomplish this, I compared each Double Check element with the components under the CRSL "Creating an Inclusive Environment" frame. Each of the Double Check elements matched the following CRSL Framework components: 1) accepting indigenized populations and building relationships with students in order to reduce student anxiety; and/or 2) acknowledging, valuing, and using indigenous cultural and social capital. This intersection of the two frameworks helped me to elucidate patterns in the data regarding research question one. Additionally, this framework helped connect leadership and the elements of culturally responsive discipline practices.

Findings

In this section, I first attempt to answer the question of whether or not teachers with low discipline disparities report that they embrace culturally responsive practices (Research Question 1). As all study participants had low discipline referral rates, and the Double Check Framework clearly articulates culturally responsive discipline practices, I address Question 1 by reviewing whether or not the teacher participants described how their own practices align with the Double Check Framework. I will then describe whether or not teachers believe that the principal supports culturally responsive discipline practices by comparing teacher responses to the CRSL Framework (Research Question 2).

Do teachers with low discipline disparities embrace culturally responsive practices?

After coding teacher responses using the Double Check Framework, two patterns emerged and framed my findings for Research Question 1: 1) I noticed that all teacher participants provided statements that addressed eight of the seventeen elements of the Double-Check Framework, and 2) four teachers described their own practices that addressed all seventeen elements. Although there was no significant difference in the number of office referrals between any of the teachers,[4] patterns in teacher responses seemed to indicate two distinct groupings of participants. In order to understand these patterns better, I compared each of the elements of the Double Check Framework with the components of the CRSL practices that support inclusionary environments. Specifically, they aligned with: 1) accepting indigenized populations and building relationships with students, reducing student anxiety; and/or 2) acknowledging, valuing, and using indigenous cultural and social capital. After associating each of the Double Check elements with these CRSL practices, more generalizable characteristics of both groups became apparent (See Table 3).

Teachers that Accept Indigenous Groups and Build Relationships

All nine teachers interviewed shared eight elements from the Double Check framework. Interestingly, as Table 1 demonstrates, all eight of these elements aligned with both CRSL framework indicators of 1) accepting indigenized populations, and 2) developing positive student relationships to reduce student anxiety. As previously stated, positive relationships between teachers and students help reduce discipline in the classroom. These elements, while important foundational practices for cultural responsiveness, are generalizable social skills that can apply to any student, from any population. Although utilizing these practices demonstrates some level of

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[4] All teacher participants averaged between zero and three referrals annually.

Table 3

Double-Check and CRSL Culturally Responsive Practices—Patterns of Participant Responses

Culturally Responsive School Leadership: Inclusive Practice(s)	Double Check Practices	Teacher Participant Self-Reported Practices
Accepts indigenized populations **AND** **Builds positive relationships with students, reducing student anxiety**	Understands background & life situation informs behaviors.	All nine teachers interviewed self-reported that they utilize these practices.
	Understands behaviors are a way to communicate	
	Understands different contexts have different behavioral expectations	
	Considers how circumstances affect behavior	
	Consistently professional, credible, civil, and respectful	
	Limited judgmental verbal interactions	
	Listens to student rather than reacting to behavior	
	Warm, caring, and trustworthy	
Acknowledges, values, & uses indigenous cultural & social capital, celebrating cultural differences	Tries to reach out and understand differences	Four of the nine teachers interviewed self-reported that they utilize ALL of these practices. Out of the other five teachers interviewed, few (between 0 & 2) self-reported that they utilize each of these individual practices.
	Aware of own and others' culture, identity, and history	
	Teacher & Students focus on standard mastery	
	Provides positive attention to student	
	Shows interest in student's activities and life	
	Understands culture is important	
	Examines how teacher bias impacts relationships with students	
	Articulates positive and constructive views of difference	
	Cultural images displayed or taught	

cultural responsiveness, as the teacher must be aware that there are different cultural and life

situations that impact students' perspectives and behaviors, they do not necessarily require the

teacher to tailor their practice—or response to misbehavior—to particular students or groups, nor

do they necessarily seek out those differences. Instead, these practices only require that the teacher adopts a general approach to working with students that helps develop positive relationships with any child. To embrace these practices, teachers do not seek out differences to gain deeper understanding and insights that vary from the majority world-view. For example, teachers must "maintain professionalism," "refrain from making judgmental comments," and "understand that life situations and culture impact behavior." (when students are misbehaving). One teacher put it this way: "Sometimes, as teachers, we pick the wrong battles at the wrong time, almost like a pride thing. It's like 'you are interrupting my lesson' or 'by doing this, this is directly disrespectful to me.' And it's not." This comment exemplifies the belief described by almost all of the participants: teachers, in general, cannot "take student misbehavior personally." This statement describes an understanding that behaviors displayed by students may be the result of who they are, or a response to what they are experiencing—or had previously experienced— outside the classroom; they are not purposely directed at the teacher.

This understanding helps teachers relate to students in a positive way, even when the student is misbehaving. For example, every teacher stated that they responded to concerning behaviors with a question, such as: "Is there something wrong?"; "Are you OK?"; or "Do you need a break?" This relational practice helps foster positive rapport, and is generalizable to any student. Another teacher described his professional demeanor: "The calmer that I am, and the more understanding (I have), and the less I am to puff out my chest and be this domineering male father figure, it just doesn't work for everybody, or for anybody." This statement demonstrates how a teacher avoids posturing as an authority because he recognizes that some students do not respond well to this approach. He modifies the way he communicates to be more effective with students.

Understanding, patience, and professionalism are all important when trying to develop positive relationships with students. One teacher summed up these practices well by describing how she develops positive relationships with students when she stated:

> …it's really, really easy to get yourself riled up and get personally offended. Like, 'How dare this student speak to me this way; or the way that they act is a reflection of me and they hate me; or things like that. I definitely think that nothing can be taken personally, so I try to keep that in mind. That's how I keep my head and keep patience, is that this is how they're reacting right now, but it's not because they hate me, it's not because they hate whatever. There's just something going on in their lives.

I should note that four of the nine teachers interviewed provided statements that contradict the CRSL practice of understanding and celebrating differences. Instead, their generalized practices are a one-size-fits-all approach to student discipline. For example, when asked how she might handle a situation when an LGBTQ student may demonstrate atypical misbehavior for that student, one teacher from this group stated:

> I try to treat them the same. If I know that they're LGBTQ, I may try to refer them to counseling, but I'm trying to think is that any different from the student who kept on doing similar behavior who was not LGBTQ.

First, this teacher quote aligns with the culturally responsive practice that the teacher recognizes that the student may be different, but runs counter to the culturally responsive practice of acknowledging and using differences to build cultural and social capital. She demonstrates a generalized approach that will work with any student. Although this approach does not require knowledge of the student or understanding of the issues of difference, it helps the teacher reduce disciplinary outcomes for any and all students. The teachers operating at this level do not

necessarily embrace ALL of the culturally responsive practices of the Double Check Framework.
In order to do so, teachers need to do more.

Teachers that Acknowledge, Value, and Use Indigenous Cultural and Social Capital

As demonstrated in Table 1, there were four teachers interviewed who go beyond general
practices that can help foster positive relationships with any student. These four teachers
described their own practices that aligned with all seventeen of the elements of the Double
Check Framework. They embrace the CRSL practices that acknowledge, value, and use the
cultural and social capital of indigenous student groups to inform their practice; they embrace
practices that seek to understand and respond to students' individual and collective cultural
identities.

Whether or not they celebrate differences is an important distinction when evaluating the
cultural responsiveness of teachers' disciplinary practices. Teachers who do not acknowledge
and value social and cultural differences accept students for who they are, but believe differences
are irrelevant. For example, one teacher who does not celebrate differences stated that he
consistently tells his classes, "It doesn't matter who you are, what you've been through. If you're
in this classroom and you're doing solid work, I don't care about any of that stuff. I care about
you progressing in your skills." This teacher does not celebrate the differences in students.
Another teacher stated, "I can't get to know 24 students in a 50-minute period. I stopped trying."

In contrast, teachers who celebrate differences get to know their students, actively seek
out differences, and celebrate the positive attributes and perspectives of marginalized students.
One such teacher explained how he seeks out differences regularly:

> I understand what that means, to be a straight, White man, and the privileges that come
> with that. But I also think that, in understanding that privilege, I understand what it means

to, both call attention to that privilege, and understand it in a way that, I think, maybe people don't try to. But I also think that, even though those are the ways that I see myself, I also make it a point to try to find other perspectives.

This teacher shares his own possibly biased perspective because of his positionality, while encouraging students to share and compare their own perspectives with his. Another teacher that celebrates differences stated, "But hearing from my students… within our Brazilian population, different families from different parts of that country, the different things that they do and then hearing what we do, it kind of creates a little community." This teacher proactively develops cross-cultural understanding within her classes to create a sense of community. These practices require teachers to get to know individuals and their cultures in order to understand students' perspectives. Another teacher described this related practice:

"We're reading 'To Kill a Mockingbird' and I do always preface it with 'I'm a White, heterosexual, not even middle-aged male, so my perspective is going to be a lot different than a lot of my students.' I am very open about that and I let students know that is a challenge for me because my perspective, my life experience, is not going to mirror a lot of what we see in the book… my ancestors would not have had this horrible experience and I try to always let my students know that I am always trying to learn; and especially because of my background that it forces me to take different perspectives…"

Using this book to help him and his students learn about others' perspectives allows the students to embrace culture as part of the curriculum. He is also able to model that, although he has his own perspective, learning about others' perspectives is important.

In summary, evidence-based practices that effectually address the discipline gap faced by so many of our marginalized students touted relationships as the key strategy. Systems, routines,

policies, and practices are not enough; for a school to address the discipline gap, cultivating culturally responsive relationships between teachers and students is imperative (Wallace et al., 2008). Culturally responsive discipline requires, at a minimum, that the teacher develops positive relationships with students and responds to misbehavior in professional and supportive ways. Some teachers demonstrate a higher level of cultural responsiveness by acknowledging and celebrating the cultures of the different students. These findings, then, support the current research, as all teachers in this study credited their ability to relate positively with all students as the key strategy they employ to reduce classroom discipline.

How, if at all, do school leaders support culturally responsive teaching practices?

School Building Leader Perspective

When asked, both school building leaders indicated that they supported culturally responsive practices in five ways. First, during staff meetings, they had conversations with staff to foster culturally responsive practices and clarify the leader's expectations. The conversations were topical and would address current issues. As an example, one school building leader stated,

> I did talk with the staff at the last faculty meeting about… they [students] use the N word… and the great concerns that I have when that word is used in the school community and my expectations about all adults in the building responding immediately and stepping right into that and addressing it in the moment.

Extensive utilization of student voice is a second strategy both school building leaders employ to support culturally responsive practices. For example, one leader provided opportunities for students from the Gay/Straight Alliance, Student Immigration Movement, and the Black Student Union to present information regarding their cultural and social perspective at faculty meetings.

Thirdly, both principals reported having to confront teachers who demonstrated a lack of culturally responsive practices. For example, one principal uses Problem Solving Meetings—a Restorative Justice program—to help students and teachers understand each other's perspective. During these meetings, which happen at the request of the student or faculty member, the school building leader, the teacher, and the student meet to discuss the intentions, the actual incident, and the personal impact behaviors had on each other. According to the leader, eight out of ten teacher participants report better understanding of the student to inform future interactions.

Finally, there is an after school course available to any faculty member. The course is called "Racial Equity in the Classroom" and is intended to help racial disparities, implicit and systemic bias, and an understanding of cultural proficiency.

Teacher Perspective

Although several of the teachers interviewed acknowledged that they feel supported by their building leader, they reported that professional development in the district has a constantly shifting focus, and does not provide adequate support for the teachers to learn and incorporate practices into their classroom. One teacher explains how her principal supported her when she was having difficulties with behaviors in her class and was not moving through the curriculum as quickly as usual:

> So I think (the principal) is extremely supportive, just from a principal standpoint, and I was having a lot of insecurity last year, where I was saying ... Especially the first six weeks, I was like, "I feel like we haven't really done much, because it's been a lot of just focusing on the relationship stuff and kind of dealing with the behaviors." (The principal) was like, "That's okay. You need to do that in order for it to be successful the rest of the year." Once I felt kind of that support from (administration), I was able to feel much

more confident, and my classroom ran way more smoothly the rest of the year, because I was able to do all that groundwork in the beginning.

The following quotes describe how teachers feel about professional learning opportunities in their schools. They align with several quotes from teachers saying that professional development in the district is not embedded, sustained, or supportive of classroom specific practices. One teacher explains that they get introductory training only, but it is not sustained:

> I feel like, district-wide, they keep saying or introducing new things, but then don't give any of the appropriate training for it. So they've brought Restorative Justice just now to the district. They're like, "Oh, you guys can start doing circles," and we had ... I mean, (my building leader) tried to do an introduction, where we modeled it as a whole staff, but then there's been no training otherwise.

Another teacher explains that training is not embedded into a district or school approach:

> So it can be frustrating, because it feels like things are just thrown at us, instead of taking the time to really develop whole school philosophies or whole district philosophies and train us on the things that we all agree that we want to do. I think people are open to something like Restorative Justice. But then, when we're just told to do it without any training, it feels like another thing that teachers are just told to do that's rolled out and then we're over it in three years.

Yet another teacher speaks to the fact that there is no support and training that carries over to the classroom:

> There's no follow-up, yeah. So there'll be one meeting or one PD where it's implemented or whatever, and then we're never ... People don't check in with us on a regular basis, and

it's not continually sort of worked on throughout the year. Our PDs maybe should be

focused on one or two things throughout the year, rather than doing every single possible

thing that we see in the research or out there.

Sometimes the message from the school building leader is clear, however, the teachers in

this study did not relate that message to culturally responsive teaching. For example, the

principal had training to remind teachers that it is important to hold all students to high academic

standards. Believing that all students can learn at a high level is a culturally responsive belief in

Khalifa's CRSL Framework. The message from the leader went on to say "it is our responsibility

to provide the necessary encouragement, supports, and differentiated instruction to support

students' learning." However, the following quote is from a teacher who was frustrated about a

recent professional development experience that was confusing. She stated:

So we have very limited knowledge and no official training that's actually useful to

implement in the classroom. Then the recent thing with high expectations, which are

important, they had us read something and do some activity where high expectations

means having the same high expectation for all students. …which is meeting every

student where they're at and having high expectations for their growth, right?

The principal made it clear that the focus of the professional development was designed to

encourage teachers to help all students meet high expectations. However, she also felt that the

facilitators did not adequately define what they meant by "high expectations" for all students.

Discussion

Research has demonstrated most misbehavior that results in a suspension begins in the

classroom (Gregory & Mosely, 2004b; Parsons, 2017b; Skiba, 2002) and stems from negative

teacher/student interactions (Skiba, 2002). In order to address the root cause of suspensions then,

schools need to address teachers' classroom practices. Employing culturally responsive classroom practices has proven to be an effective way to reduce suspensions (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009). There has been limited research, however, that has questioned the relationship between culturally responsive practices and classroom discipline. This study attempts to address this question.

The teacher participants for this research study were invited to participate because they had minimal office discipline referrals. The research has been clear, a relational component to classroom management is essential if teachers wish to reduce discipline in the classroom (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009). Aligning with the research, all of the participants' self-reported practices included a relational approach to misbehaving students with the teacher: framing the reason for the student behavior as external to the classroom and not a personal attack on the teacher; communicating with the student with a professional, non-judgmental demeanor; and allowing student voice to inform the teacher's supportive response. A key finding of this study is that all teachers believed that embracing this relational approach to misbehavior is the key practice that results in low levels of classroom misbehavior. Although understanding and celebrating differences, as well as building and using cultural and social capital are important culturally responsive practices, the results of this study suggest that some teachers who have low discipline referrals may embrace these elements of cultural responsiveness, while others do not. Further research on this topic is necessary before more definitive claims can be made.

A second research topic of this study relates to school leaders' support for teachers to adopt culturally responsive discipline practices. A relevant finding on this topic is that school building leaders were providing culturally responsive professional development on an ongoing basis to address timely issues related to racial tensions or the need for more culturally responsive

teaching practices. These trainings support Khalifa's Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices as the building leaders strive to develop teachers to embrace culturally responsive teaching practices (2016). Although this type of training was offered, teachers interviewed often did not relate this training to culturally responsive discipline practices, or felt that the training was too cursory with little follow-through to ensure fidelity of practice. Although additional training sessions, specifically advertised as Equity in the Classroom, were offered after school as an elective for teachers, it was not a mandatory program as an expectation for all staff. The implication for districts is to ensure that leaders explicitly cite how the training is related to cultural responsiveness, and to follow up with continued support to ensure a robust school-wide initiative. Finally, one principal responded to the need to repair relationships between teachers and students when these relationships have been fractured due to classroom misbehavior. This Restorative Justice approach to discipline aligns with the research previously mentioned for evidenced-based practices. Ultimately, the two building leaders have demonstrated several behaviors that align with Khalifa's CRSL Framework, supporting the proliferation of culturally responsive classroom practices.

CHAPTER FOUR[5]

Discussion

This overarching study explored how district and school leaders supported and advocated for marginalized student populations. As such, our research team examined the ways in which the district initiated and sustained efforts to support these students through district and school leadership practices. Soria (2020) examined district and school leaders' practices in support of LGBTQ students. Pellegrino (2020) examined culturally responsive practices in relation to discipline. Amy (2020) examined perceptions of school and district leaders about fostering teacher leadership, specifically to support emergent bilingual and Latinx students. Finally, Slaney (2020) examined the leadership practices engaged in to develop both the leaders' and the teachers' cultural awareness and self-reflection. Collectively, these individual studies contributed to answering our overarching research question: In what ways, if any, do district and school leaders support marginalized student populations in schools? The collective data was analyzed through the lens of leadership practices. Specifically, we utilized both the culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016) and the transformational leadership frameworks (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990) to ground our research.

Four central findings emerged from our collective data analysis and synthesis of the individual case studies. First, the majority of the leader participants were critically aware and self-reflective about their own race, gender, social identity, positionality, culture, worldviews, and potential biases. Second, this self-awareness propelled leaders to take transformative actions in efforts for equitable access, programming, and policies for marginalized student populations.

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[5] This chapter was collaboratively written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project. Authors include: Margarita Amy, Mark Pellegrino, Jaime Slaney, and Luis Soria

Third, leaders engaged in varied actions to develop people to better support marginalized students. Finally, we found divergent levels of trust between leaders and teachers in the Bayside Hill School District.

The following sections will discuss these findings and their implications for both practice and research. First, we discuss the findings. Next, we provide recommendations for practice that can be used to guide the future efforts of leaders seeking to support marginalized students. Lastly, we discuss the limitations of this study and provide recommendations for future research.

Awareness of Self and of Inequitable School Factors

According to Khalifa et al. (2016), awareness and critical self-reflection are crucial first steps to a leader's journey of becoming a culturally responsive leader. Eight out of the 11 leader participants demonstrated awareness and critical self-reflection about their cultural identity evidenced by comments about one's own race, gender, social identity, positionality, culture, worldviews, and potential biases. One White leader recalled her journey to awareness when she started to question her own beliefs and positionality, "it's a place where you start to question things that you were raised to believe and you start to question and re-examine and say, is that really what I think?" In addition, all eight of these participants were aware of inequities that existed for marginalized students within the school system.

While awareness is essential to a culturally responsive leader, in order to stop systems of privilege and oppression that exist within schools, leaders must purposefully and intentionally engage in actions and leadership practices to create and sustain culturally responsive and inclusive school environments (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Khalifa, 2011). The following two

sections will describe both actions and leadership practices participants engaged in to create more equitable schools.

Transformative Practices

Most of the district and school leader participants enacted transformative practices to create conditions to support marginalized students. These transformative actions are essential for sustained change (Gooden & Dantley, 2012). The next section discusses transformative practices that district and school building leaders demonstrated to promote equity within the district.

Responding to Stakeholder Voice

Data analysis revealed that the voices of students and community members matter in the Bayside Hill district. Leaders reported formal and informal structures and systems that provided opportunities to learn stakeholders' concerns, ideas, and solutions that in turn influenced the leaders' actions. As a result of their intentional interactions with various district and community stakeholders, district- and school-level leaders shared their explicit and sustained efforts to create responsive actions to support marginalized youth. Aligned to previous research, Bayside Hill leaders described their collective and individual leadership practices to enable their students to thrive socially and emotionally, and to feel connected and safe in their school (Kosciw et al., 2014). Additionally, district and school leaders reported how they established affinity groups with a culturally responsive lens (Khalifa et al. 2016). Participation in the affinity groups enabled students to discover their voices, awaken their critical thinking, and have a hand in decision-making to challenge exclusionary practices (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012).

Student Voice and Community Voice to Inform Leadership Actions. District and school leaders explained their efforts to use student and community member voice to propel transformative actions. At the district level, both senior leaders reported their sustained efforts to

seek and respond to student and community member contributions when making critical decisions to address LGBTQ policy issues, develop programming for emergent bilingual learners, and denounce exclusionary speech. The superintendent and assistant superintendent engaged in sustained listening tours to hear directly from students, families, and community members. They reported that their primary goal was to understand the stakeholders' perspectives and concerns in order to respond to them with the intent to make improvements in Bayside Hill Public Schools. For example, in reference to students who identify as transgender, the superintendent shared,

> The impetus for the transgender athlete policy was when we were trying to support a student-athlete who had transitioned. We felt that we were unprepared and that in order to shift the culture in our programs we needed to commit our beliefs to formalized language. As a result, our policy has become a model for many communities.

This statement led to the groundbreaking Inclusive Sports Participation Policy in Massachusetts that outlines explicit definitions for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression for the district. The policy also makes clear the endorsement to ensure full inclusion of students participating in Bayside Hill athletics in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity.

Regarding programming for emergent bilingual learners informed by stakeholder voice, the assistant superintendent reported:

> We had a meeting with families that are in the two-way programs who advocated for the need to build more of a culture of inclusiveness within those programs, to focus more on building holistic needs of language learners. It led to the development of a parent advisory committee for a dual language program, a student advisory committee for those programs and increased effort to build curriculum around Latin American culture and

heritage.

Engaging parents in the decision-making process regarding contributions for district and school improvement ties well with previous studies (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). Bayside Hill district leaders are utilizing parent and student voice to develop positive understandings of students' and families' perspective to inform next-level strategies for the emergent bilingual programming and cultural curriculum design.

Additionally, after listening to students and community members, the assistant superintendent referenced future goals to establish a contingent of Equity Ambassadors and a district Equity Committee consisting of Bayside Hill administrators, teachers, parents and students. He noted, "Essentially I'm trying to create a cohort, or an army of individuals, who have some knowledge or expertise that we're constantly working to enhance and support that can also be resources to each other." In fact, these individuals would include "an expert in LGBTQ, an expert in terms of race, an expert in terms of people who are able-bodied or people with a disability, because all of those different lenses or perspectives can be resources for other people." In short, this senior level district leader described future efforts to transform how in-district talent will lead equity actions for Bayside Hill.

Practices for responding to student voice were also enacted by the high school and middle school principal participants in this study. The high school principal revealed her efforts to meet with high school student affinity groups such as the Black Student Union (BSU), Student Immigration Movement (SIM), and Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA). This practice, to listen, enabled students to design and implement student-led activism that influenced the beliefs, attitudes, and awareness of others. The high school principal shared:

Talking to the students and hearing their views and their opinions and seeing the school

through their eyes helps me be a better principal. It helps me continually refine our

school improvement plan and my vision based on what the students are saying we need.

But you have to put yourself with the students.

Likewise, the middle school principal reported her continuous, intentional efforts to meet with students, particularly LGBTQ members of the middle school GSA, to implement their input for anti-bullying efforts, visibility, and self-identity disclosure. Both teacher leaders in the high school and middle school concurred with their respective principal. The teacher leaders reported students' consistent access to the school leaders. Regarding the high school principal, the teacher leader divulged, "My (GSA) officers say, 'We want to see if she will be okay with this.' I send them to her. No matter what she's doing, she finds time to sit down with them. She talks it out."

Building Leader Voice and Teacher Voice to Inform Leadership Actions. Our data analysis confirmed findings that Bayside Hill district and secondary level building leaders enacted structures and systems to listen and respond to *student* and *community* voice to support marginalized students. However, there is less evidence that *school building leader* and *teacher* voices are informing district leadership practices. Indeed, during initial and subsequent interviews, the district leaders disclosed very few efforts to learn directly from building leaders and teachers regarding their espoused equity efforts for Bayside Hill Public Schools.

Several participants shared that there was less buy-in for Bayside Hill improvement strategies such as the district effort regarding required lesson plans. District leaders and some building leaders have not fully built consensus regarding district and school improvement goals and priorities across different levels of the Bayside Hill district. One school building leader shared her perspective regarding district decision-making:

I feel like the people who are closest to the work need to have a voice in the decision

making process. They need to have the power to be part of the process of leading and

directing where the school is going and I think that's how you get long systemic change. I

mean, you can mandate change from the top down but it's not sustainable, and

I don't think that's how you get real buy-in.

Similarly, when asked about teacher contributions to district improvement strategies, one teacher

leader responded, "The district doesn't listen to us." Another teacher reported her frustration that

"things are just thrown at us, instead of taking the time to really develop whole school

philosophies or whole district philosophies and train us on the things that we all agree that we

want to do." Likewise, regarding professional development, several teachers reported frustration

that the district improvement strategies are constantly shifting with little instructional support for

teachers in the classroom. At this stage of understanding, we believe that these building leader

and teacher frustrations are informed by their perceived lack of voice and contributions to

decision making.

Equity Oriented Policy

Bayside Hill has developed and implemented an inclusive sports participation policy in

an effort to provide equitable access to athletes who self-identify in the LGBTQ community,

particularly transgender students. The Bayside Hill policy is aligned to the Code of

Massachusetts Regulations: Access to Equal Educational Opportunity (Massachusetts DESE,

2018) that includes explicit language regarding anti-discrimination protections for students on

the basis of gender identity. Bayside Hill has also created and implemented innovative LGBTQ

advocacy guidelines and expectations that serve as a model for other school districts. In addition

to protective measures that include comprehensive terminology regarding sexual orientation,

gender identity, and gender expression, the district is making definitive decisions and taking action regarding the establishment of gender-neutral bathrooms for all students.

Equity Driven Budget and Staff Positions

Senior district leaders described the previous budget structure and the dispersion of resources as "disparate" between schools resulting in inequities for students in need. For fiscal year 2019, the Bayside Hill superintendent advocated for and implemented a budget structure with "equity" and "access" as the primary budget levers. One district leader described, "We've created a model where schools…our poorest school who had been one of our most underperforming schools, it is kind of lifting up now. But we put four times the investment in that school than we did in the more affluent school." The new budget structure redirected resources to marginalized students who had previously had inequitable access to resources.

The change in budget structure and mission precipitated the creation of new positions within the district. These positions included an Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Diversity, a bilingual curriculum coordinator, some English Language Development (ELD) coaches, native speaking tutors, and an equity consultant. These positions were reported as an invaluable support to both teachers and to students. Indeed, one teacher described the impact of the support, "We have an English language learning coach who is also present (at PLCs). She's really helping us look through the lens of language objectives and helping meet those needs." Further, a district leader shared how instructional coaches change practice to support learners, "Coaches lead professional development, they model lessons and also help guide the co-planning sessions." In short, the newly funded positions supported equity and access for marginalized students.

While leaders have made concerted efforts to allocate funds to address inequities, the district is still faced with concerns. The number of emergent bilingual students has risen

dramatically in recent years and the district is facing challenges to meet their needs. The superintendent described the dramatic shift in demographics in the district, "Our percentage of English Language Learners over the last 10 years has increased. We are at about 3,500 out of 10,000 students that their first language is not English." Another district leader illustrated the inequities with staffing for emergent bilinguals, "Anytime you have a caseload of six students per ESL teacher, that's not being an effective teacher at all... I have a school where there are 360 English learners in a school of 550 kids, and only 7.5 ESL teachers. So that's very inequitable." The increase in numbers of emergent bilingual students across the district has drawn attention to district, building, and teacher leaders to advocate to add more ESL teachers to schools.

Equity Audit

Engaging in equity audits is a way to engage the learning organization in conversations regarding inequities to promote cultural awareness and reflection (Skrla et al., 2004). In the fall of 2019, Bayside Hill School District invested $50,000 in a year-long equity audit through a consultant. The Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Diversity described the equity audit goal to "get a focused area about where we can start to target some of our resources towards." He asked, "Where are we seeing larger inequities and how can we develop strategies around those areas?" He further explained that the audit findings will inform the district strategic plan for the next three years.

Dual Language Programs

According to Sanchez et al. (2018), "Dual language education has been accepted as the only way to continue to have bilingual education programs that are not remedial or transitional in nature." Over the past two years, the district increased the dual language programs from one to four. One district leader spoke of the value of supporting students' native language development

and viewing emergent bilingualism as an asset rather than a deficit. She explained, "I think when you're looking at some of that decision-making around English learners, we're looking at opportunity and access." The district phased out the Transitional Bilingual Education programs, a reductive model of language acquisition, and replaced them with the dual language programs in Spanish-English and Portuguese-English. One building leader said, "I feel pretty strongly that they are better supported than when they're in English-only programs, and there's of course a lot of research to back that up." The increased access to the district dual language programs sent a strong message to students, their families, and the community that Bayside Hill values their home languages.

Developing People by Promoting a Shared Vision

Transformational leadership in schools is invaluable as it fosters the collective development of a shared vision (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997). Leithwood & Jantzi (1990) define a transformational leader as, "One who helps build shared meaning among members of the school staff regarding their purposes and creates high levels of commitment to the accomplishment of these purposes" (p. 254). District and school leaders who are invested in establishing transformative change for marginalized student populations develop people toward a shared vision regarding culturally responsive practices (Khalifa et al., 2016). Therefore, the leaders must provide opportunities to engage all educators in professional development to further establish, understand, and enact the shared vision.

Bayside Hill district and school leaders implemented professional development opportunities regarding culturally responsive practices. However, the opportunities were reported by school building leaders and teachers as top-down directed, sporadic, and lacking a shared vision. Additionally, several of the PD opportunities were described as "elective" to district

personnel. As a result, culturally responsive practices were not fully embedded in schools. Data analysis revealed less evidence regarding leadership practices to build a collective vision to promote culturally responsive practices between and among levels of the organization.

Professional learning regarding race and culture that is embedded within existing collaborative structures has a lasting impact (Brown et al., 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Newcomer & Cowin, 2018; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). Bayside Hill has implemented some structures, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for ESL teachers, to develop educators and enable them to share instructional practices. Additionally, the district provides after-school elective PD opportunities for teachers to learn and implement culturally responsive practices. However, these courses were underutilized by teachers. Indeed, one teacher leader disclosed that PD topics were often scattered and insufficient. She reported the need to engage in deep conversations regarding cultural responsiveness, rather than receiving cursory level information. "One day devoted to whatever topic is not deep enough or useful enough to immediately bring back into practice or to skillfully present it to everybody."

Developing Leaders

Transformational leaders create and foster opportunities to develop people by engaging them in professional learning experiences to support a shared vision and promote organizational change (Danielson, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Quin et. al., 2015; Wilson, 2016). Professional learning regarding race and culture must be ongoing, frequent, meaningful, and embedded within the school practices (Newcomer & Cowin, 2018; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). Further, professional learning must engage educators in an ongoing examination of the intersectionality of their own race and culture and that of their students (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Newcomer & Cowin, 2018; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). Bayside Hill district and

school building leaders created opportunities to develop people via professional development (PD). For example, senior district leaders reported that they engaged in PD provided by external consultants to develop their collective understanding regarding culturally responsive and inclusive practices. Additionally, they partnered with community organizations to support their ongoing learning. One district leader stated, "We work with a parent organization called Free Bayside Hill Families for Racial Equity." He further explained that this organization has met with the leadership team to discuss the "prison pipeline, looking at institutional racism and structural racism, and having deeper conversations about that."

District leaders also reported providing professional learning opportunities for school building leaders regarding equity and inclusion. For example, building leaders were required to participate in monthly equity meetings with a district leader. During this professional learning, district and school leaders engaged in conversations related to the presentations. They were asked to reflect on the professional learning content and consider parents' perspectives. This led to authentic discourse regarding initial efforts toward a collective vision for cultural responsiveness. However, when interviewed, building and teacher leaders were unable to articulate the district's vision for professional learning to promote cultural responsiveness.

Developing Teachers

Data analysis revealed that building leaders developed teachers through professional learning, staff meetings, district-wide PD, and after school elective options. However, most of these opportunities were not driven by a shared decision-making process. They were mostly directed by building leaders or offered as the aforementioned electives. One elementary building leader designed a book group for her staff to discuss the book *Disrupting Poverty*. She shared, "This is really important thinking we need to be doing as a school." Another building leader

implemented PD regarding culturally responsive teaching. Her staff participated in a book group to read and discuss *Culturally Responsive Design for English Learners*. These leaders were interested in supporting teachers to improve their instructional practices, specifically regarding how they discipline students and how they interact with marginalized student populations.

Isolated workshops and disconnected training do not lead to the development of comprehensive knowledge (Fullan, 1993). Fullan further asserts that sustained and measurable instructional change must be precipitated by in-depth knowledge. In the Bayside Hill district, participation in culturally responsive PD was not universal and did not lead toward extensive knowledge. The district-led PDs were typically offered as electives or mandatory only for a small group of people. One senior district leader described the PD as "pockets of electives" where teachers opted into the professional learning with no mechanisms to ensure their participation in the PD sessions resulted in changing instructional practice. For example, when teachers participated in PD regarding the new ESL scope and sequence, only a small portion of teachers were mandated to attend yet the entire staff was required to implement language objectives into the mandated lesson plans.

Trust

Leaders who expect to manage adaptive change in their organizations must cultivate a sense of trust with those who will make the change happen (Brown et al., 2011**;** Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2014; Newcomer & Cowin, 2018; Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Organizational members traditionally resist change, usually out of fear (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Whether rational or not, fear can impede the implementation of even the most positive organizational changes. District and school leaders must proactively and intentionally build a sense of trust with and among their charges in order to support them as the organization navigates the intended

changes (Bryk & Schneider; Cosner, 2009; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Newcomer & Cowin, 2018).

High Levels of Trust Exist Within, but Not Between, the District and Schools

District leaders reported their intent to make instructional practice changes in order to create and enact more equitable outcomes for students. To facilitate change, district and school leaders must design professional learning experiences that enable staff to learn individually, and then collectively share and align their instructional practices. The professional learning tenets of collaboration, reflective dialogue, and shared social resources require trust (Bryk et al., 1999). Additionally, Bryk et. al. (2009) found that these professional learning tenets combined with trust create an efficient cycle for instructional change. For example, when educators work collaboratively, trust grows. This, in turn, increases collaboration, therefore trust subsequently grows again, and so on. This cyclical process reinforces the notion that leaders must structure and support a culture that imbues collaboration, reflection, and shared social resources in order to drive and foster the changes they intend to make. We next examine where trust exists in the district, and where trust needs to be further developed.

High Levels of Trust Exist Among District Leadership Team Members. District level leaders reported that they have strong, trusting, working relationships with each other. They work in an environment that fosters a sense of safety, encouraging vulnerability and critical reflection. Several comments were made by district leaders that evidenced this trust. For example, one district leader reported, "We are fine to push each other; to make sure that we're not bringing bias into the room… And if a comment is made that maybe isn't inclusive, challenging each other. Like (saying) 'Okay, but …'" These critical conversations encouraged

team members to challenge each other's beliefs and reflect more deeply about their own beliefs and practices.

High Levels of Trust Exist Between Building-Level Leaders and Teachers. Data analysis also revealed a high level of trust between teachers and their school building administrators. Relational trust is essential for teachers to feel safe and be vulnerable with their supervisor (Liou & Daily, 2014). Trust enables teachers to respectfully hear feedback and change their instructional practices. In the Bayside Hill district, teachers across various school buildings confirmed the existing trust between school leaders and teachers. "(My principal) has been supportive. I feel like we're living a dream. We do have all the support we need here…" Another teacher reported, "She's unbelievably, personally connected with everyone, and you can feel that. That's just kind of the administrative presence she brings... a sense of caring."

Relational trust allowed building leaders to conduct difficult conversations with teachers and challenge the status quo. For example, one teacher described trusting her building leader's competence and understanding of marginalized students' needs:

> My administration here in this building is very supportive and conscious of everything that's going on... But they've all been in the district for a really long time, and understand the population, and understand the families, and the parents, and the community, and what needs to go into helping students be successful.

At one school, relational trust enabled teachers to engage in problem-solving meetings designed to solve behavior issues in the classroom. Essentially, if a teacher experienced concerns with a student, they requested a meeting with the student and principal. The principal then facilitated a discussion to enable the teacher and student to share their feelings regarding the situation, brainstorm mutually beneficial solutions, and ultimately repair the relationship. Trust is

essential for this process to work well (Liou & Daily, 2014). As a case in point, one teacher who asked for a restorative meeting, consistently struggled to hear 'student voice' in situations that often led to disciplinary action. The leader shared,

> She's very much a black and white person. She's very much either right or wrong. She's having trouble seeing the gray, and I don't know if it's just more her personality. She's kind of that way in all of her interactions with students. So it's just interesting to me. And so when she requests these problem solving conferences, now we have to really sit down and prep her (so) she can then hear what the kids are saying.

This leader had built relational trust with the teacher which allowed these conversations to occur. Another building leader described how he provided individualized support to help teachers acquire the confidence they needed to support marginalized students. He explained, "I think for some of them, it happens organically, but others need a little bit more of a push."

Less Evidence of Trust Between District-level and Building-level Leaders. In Bayside Hill there is a sense of trust within the district leadership team. There is also evidence of trust between and among principals and teachers at the school building level. However, data analysis suggests that there is not yet a trusting relationship between all school building leaders and the district leadership team. One district leader disclosed:

> I think there needs to be a level of trust between (district & school) levels of the organization before you can truly engage in these conversations. I think there needs to be a huge unpacking of the why… Why is this important for all kids? Why is this important for all individuals?

Less Evidence of Trust Between District-level Leaders and Teachers. Trust between building leaders and teachers is paramount. However, trust between teachers and district level

leadership is also essential. Adams and Miskell (2016) found that trust between teachers and the district can be enhanced or diminished based on teachers' perceptions of the district leadership with regards to benevolence, competence, openness, honesty, and reliability. Though less impactful than trust between building leaders and teachers, trust between teachers and the district leadership should not be ignored.

In the Bayside Hill District, there was evidence of some discord between the district and teachers. One example centered on a lesson planning expectation that was set by the district. The district leadership designed this initiative to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum; in turn, this data would inform the design of the professional learning experiences provided for teachers and increase collaborative efforts among teachers. Alternatively, teachers felt that this was a top-down mandate and an example of the lack of trust that exists within the district. Teachers felt that they had more time to share practices before the mandate, and the lesson planning initiative actually reduced collaborative efforts. The superintendent described the intended purpose for the initiative:

> We're looking for what standards (the teachers) are teaching. We're asking to know how that curriculum lives in that standard, and lives through the content and language objective. … (And without this) I can't provide feedback as an instructional leader.

However, as previously stated, that is not how teachers perceived the district-led requirement to write and submit lesson plans. Teachers reported their belief that the lesson planning initiative emerged from a bureaucratic decision that ultimately reinforced a perceived lack of trust from the district level leaders. Public comments from a Bayside Hill Teachers Union leader summarize teachers' responses regarding the lesson planning initiative:

Top down regulations and initiatives tie (teachers') hands rather than empower them with the freedom to run their own classrooms. She said that micromanaging staff carries the effect of disengaging the staff, and makes the staff feel unappreciated and not trusted to do the work, and is considered one of the top three reasons why employees resign. (School Committee Meeting Minutes, September 18, 2019)

Recommendations for Practice

Data analysis and findings from the four individual research studies informed the following collective recommendations for future Bayside Hill Public Schools leadership practices. The recommendations are informed by the theoretical frameworks of transformative and culturally responsive leadership practices. At the core of our recommended leadership practices, we contend that district and school leaders must design, implement, and assess systems and structures to communicate the "why" of their leadership practices. These systems should be iterative and include stakeholder voice, a practice that leaders currently do well with Bayside Hill students. For example, district leaders can build on their efforts to embed school leader voice regarding *how* improvement strategies can be implemented across the district. Likewise, school leaders can expand their efforts to include teacher voice. Next, we recommend that district leaders intentionally deepen their systems to develop people. When school leaders and teachers better understand the why and how of the improvement strategies, we assert that they will more willingly engage and thrive in professional learning that aligns to the district vision and impacts instructional pedagogy. Lastly, we recommend that district and school leaders further develop trust between and among leaders and teachers. Absent strategic efforts to accelerate resolute trust regarding Bayside Hill improvement strategies, stakeholders may resist

and dissuade endeavors toward the implementation of the strategies. These interconnected recommendations are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Related Recommendations
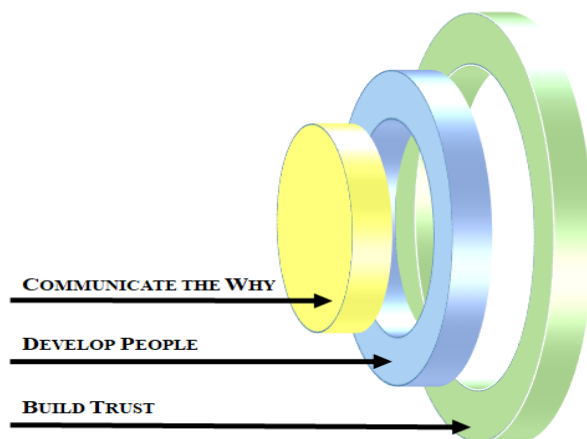
Communicate the Why

Data analysis revealed that Bayside Hill district leaders have designed and implemented systems for district and school improvements. The systems included leadership practices in support of marginalized student populations such as responding to district and community voice, conducting an equity audit to inform district improvement initiatives, increasing access to Dual Language programming, and revamping the district budget process. We assert that these efforts can be more impactful when they are fully communicated for short- and long-term visioning to all district stakeholders. Data analysis of participant interviews and document review revealed that district leaders have communicated the "what" of their actions. However, there is less evidence regarding explicit communication regarding the "why" of their decisions. Additionally, stakeholders revealed their perception that improvement strategies were happening to them, not in partnership with them. Before moving forward with the design and communication of the next

multi-year strategic plan, district constituents would benefit from hearing the superintendent tell the story of his "why" regarding his leadership practices.

Therefore, we recommend that Bayside Hill district leaders intentionally communicate the *intent* of what has been designed and implemented thus far regarding district vision, strategies, and actions for equity and cultural responsiveness. We also propose that district leaders seek and implement contributions from stakeholders regarding *how* improvement strategies are implemented. The "why" factor for *future* district decision-making can be facilitated via explicit efforts to design and implement systems to learn the *collective* "how" for overarching district improvement strategies. We recommend that district leaders build on their current practice to learn from each other and replicate their intentional conversations regarding district inequities across the district with building leaders, teachers, students, and community members. During several interviews, district leaders shared compelling narratives and revelatory intentions regarding what inspires them toward leadership practices of equity and cultural responsiveness. However, these conversations occurred less frequently across other district levels. Systems to engage in these discussions must occur between district and school leaders. They must also occur between district leaders and teachers in order to garner more buy-in for the district initiatives. Bayside Hill stakeholders would benefit from creating and communicating their collective beliefs regarding district and school supports for marginalized student populations and improvement strategies.

Develop People

Data analysis revealed that professional learning was less systemic across the district and in some cases sporadic. Interview participants disclosed their perceptions that professional learning lacked teacher voice. Therefore, we recommend that district leaders ensure that relevant

stakeholders, including building leaders and teachers have voice regarding the what, how, and why of professional learning. Additionally, to ensure this professional learning is meaningful, we recommend that district leaders embed stakeholders' voice in planning the professional learning. Bayside Hill district leaders can build on their current professional learning systems to enhance school leaders' and teachers' capacity to buy into the district vision. This must include their PD efforts for students who may have been marginalized due to race, ethnicity, or language. During interviews, district leaders revealed their efforts to reflect on and respond to the needs of students who have been marginalized. They reported a vision to promote culturally responsive practices. However, Bayside Hill can benefit from including building leaders and teachers for this vision. To make this happen, rather than offer optional electives, all teachers must provide voice and then engage in professional learning regarding support for marginalized students.

The first step is to develop people through professional learning regarding culturally responsive teaching practices. This professional learning must be ongoing, frequent, embedded in current structures, and meaningful to the educators. It is important for all teachers and building leaders to participate in professional learning where they build joint understandings regarding marginalized student populations and how to support them. They would benefit from engaging in sustained and comprehensive professional learning toward cultural responsiveness that includes increasing awareness, teaching, collaborating, and sharing practices to build each other's collective instructional practices. A focus to develop educators to move across the Cultural Responsiveness Continuum (from color-blindness to relational to responsive) in efforts to build strong relationships can be impactful. Additionally, professional learning can be embedded within the structures of the school day and implemented via the district PD days, staff meetings,

and PLCs that currently exist. Engaging building leaders and teacher leaders as thought partners in this work is critical for the district to consider.

Ultimately, the goal for professional learning at the Bayside Hill School District can enable all educators to engage in practices that support marginalized students. A commitment to develop people should be reflected within all schools, instead of pockets across the district. For this reason, we also recommend that school leaders and teachers establish a shared commitment to incorporate this acquired knowledge regarding culturally responsiveness into their schools and classrooms. District leaders, school leaders, and teachers can name the measurable and observable instructional practices that support marginalized student populations and then determine how to build on them.

Build Trust

Trusting environments are an imperative precursor to building collaborative professional learning communities and to facilitate change. Study participants revealed varying degrees of trust in the Bayside Hill School District across different organization levels. We recommend that district and school leaders intentionally build a sense of trust across the district to bolster the improvement change efforts and to embrace the initiatives regarding support for marginalized students.

We posit that a crucial leadership action toward building trust is to recognize and verbalize that varying levels of trust exist within Bayside Hill. Across interviews, participants openly shared their beliefs regarding where trust was established and where trust was lacking in the district. It is recommended that district leaders bring these conversations to the forefront and communicate this trust phenomenon directly with staff. First, district leaders are urged to directly recognize the perceived lack of trust to acknowledge their awareness of this concern and its

potential impact regarding stakeholder buy-in. Next, district and school leaders can specifically ask teachers where they believe varying levels of trust exist. Finally, the leaders can explicitly communicate their desire to repair and set trust-building as a priority.

Trust is built when educators work collaboratively and engage in a culture that imbues collaboration, reflection, and shared resources. This level of trust was evident among the senior leadership team where members actively engaged in continuous conversations and collaborations that pushed each other's thinking and resulted in shared learning. Trusting relationships were established by meaningful professional dialogue. Therefore, the district is encouraged to replicate this trust-building mechanism across the district. We encourage senior level district leaders to provide opportunities for educators across Bayside Hill such as district leaders, building leaders, and teachers to learn and implement professional discussion protocols. District stakeholders can benefit from utilizing collaborative protocols to collectively build trust among and between district levels. These efforts can occur during the established collaborative structures that already exist such as the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

Lastly, data analysis revealed that Bayside Hill district and school leaders listened and responded to student and community voice regarding support for marginalized students. Their voice was valued and heard which resulted in transformative actions to support LGBTQ students and emergent bilingual students. This leadership practice further established high levels of trust. The district is encouraged to build upon the structures that have already been implemented for voice and expand it to include building leaders and teachers to further establish trust.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

We acknowledge four limitations for this research. First, this qualitative case study is not longitudinal. Given the six-month timeframe, we examined a bounded system for a short period

of time that may not be representative of the attention, support, and advocacy of marginalized students in the district.

Second, qualitative case studies are not widely generalizable. The probability that the collected data is representative of larger populations is low. This study explored one school district in Massachusetts making the sample size small and idiosyncratic. Additionally, for this study, we were dependent on volunteer participants which resulted in researching seven of the fourteen district schools. This small sample size may have impacted our findings as leader perceptions, practices, and beliefs were obtained from only half of the district schools.

Third, study participants may have had a bias toward marginalized students. The possible bias could have influenced the findings regarding whether and how the district supports marginalized students. Additionally, participant perspectives may have impacted awareness and sensitivity toward culturally responsive support for marginalized youth. More than one participant from each stakeholder group, such as teacher, teacher leader, building leader, district leader, was included in the study when triangulating the collected data to mitigate potential bias.

Lastly, we acknowledge that this study did not examine or measure marginalized students' academic achievement. Although prior research indicates that being safe in school can impact student achievement, we did not explore whether or how district/school leaders strived to enact policies or practices that were explicit to support academic improvement.

Regarding future qualitative case studies informed by this research, we recommend an examination of all district leaders and teachers in the district rather than a small sample size. This would allow researchers to have a larger sample size to inform their findings. Additionally, a longer time span for the research would facilitate longitudinal findings. Furthermore, including more than one district would allow for more generalizability of the findings. Lastly, future research should seek to better understand how students' academic achievement and social

emotional development are impacted by culturally responsive leadership practices, which can be both transformational and transformative.

Conclusion

District and school populations continue to become more diverse racially, ethnically, socially, as well as by sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability, language spoken, and cultural identity. For this research, we sought to answer the research question: In what ways, if any, do district and school leaders support marginalized student populations in schools? Findings from this case study identified leadership practices that support marginalized student populations. These findings emerged from the collective data and analysis of the individual case studies. First, leaders who were critically aware and self-reflective about their own race, gender, social identity, and potential biases attempted to create equity through actions. These transformative actions included efforts for equitable access, programming, and policies for marginalized student populations.

Next, we found leaders engaged in actions to develop people to better support marginalized students. These actions were more developed at the senior leadership level and less developed among other levels of the organization. While professional learning existed, it was not universally ongoing, frequent, embedded in current structures, or meaningful to the educators.

Finally, we found varying levels of trust between the different levels of Bayside Hill School District. A possible catalyst for this lack of trust was that district leaders often communicated the "what" of their leadership actions and rarely communicated the "why" for the district vision, strategies, and actions for equity and cultural responsiveness. This study illustrated the importance of culturally responsive school leadership and its impact on creating equitable schools for marginalized students.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Intro to the interview:

- Thank you for taking the time to speak with me/us. This will be a 45-60-minute interview. At the end of these minutes, we are hoping to learn more about *your* perspective regarding how leaders support marginalized students in your school district.

- We will be recording this interview.

- At any time during this interview, you can request that I turn off the recording device.

- After collecting our data, we will ensure that schools and/or leaders are not being identified individually.

- The data we collect from this research project will eventually be shared with your central office. However, at no time will your individual responses be shared with anyone in the central office or your district's school committee.

- All interview questions are optional.

- At any time during the interview, you can request to end the interview.

Introduction Questions

- Tell me/us about your role.

- How many years have you been in this role?

- This research focuses on marginalized students and includes race, gender, culture, language spoken, and sexuality. If comfortable, what are the ways in which you identify?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol- Superintendent

- When you think about the student populations in the district, which would you consider to be student populations who are marginalized?

- Tell us about a situation or incident in the District regarding students that involved an inequity based on race, culture, gender or sexuality? What were the district's responses?

- How do you use data to guide your practices and your decision making to support diverse learning populations? Can you give me an example? Have you made any changes in the schools based on this data?

- What professional learning activities has the District engaged in to support diverse learning populations? Has there been any professional learning for principals about cultural responsiveness?

- What opportunities for teacher leadership have surfaced in your school district? Are there particular principals who have been able to successfully foster teacher leadership in their schools?

- What types of professional development have district personnel, including school staff, received regarding LGBTQ students? What would be examples of further professional development that you think district personnel need?

- What are the ways that LGBTQ students are supported in the district?

- What are the non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies that explicitly protect LGBTQ students and how are they manifested in schools?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol- Leadership Perceptions when Fostering Teacher Leadership

District Leaders:

- What motivated you to become a leader?

- What experiences shaped your leadership? Who or what supported you in your leadership journey?

- Can you talk to me about experiences with teacher leadership that you may have had?

- What opportunities for teacher leadership have surfaced in your school district? Are there particular principals who have been able to successfully foster teacher leadership in their schools? Can you give me an example?

- How seriously are teachers' opinions considered? How do they participate in the decision-making process?

- How does the district encourage teachers to experiment with sharing best practices with colleagues?

- How often do your teachers have structured times to meet or engage in professional development? Who sets up this calendar?

- (Probing questions: Ask for examples throughout this entire section.)

- How are teachers being developed in the district? What structures and systems have you put in place to develop the capacity of teachers?

- This research focuses on marginalized students and includes LGBTQ, Emergent bilinguals, Hispanic/Latinx, and African Americans. How, if at all, do you relate to this topic?

- When you think about the student populations in the district, which would you consider to be student populations who are marginalized?

- What are the ways that emergent bilingual students are supported in the district?

- How do you use data to guide your practices and your decision making to support emergent bilingual students? Can you give me an example? Have you made any changes in the schools based on this data?

Principal and Teacher Leaders:

Purpose: To understand, when working to develop teacher leaders, how leaders perceive themselves as setting directions.

- How do teacher leaders contribute to school goals and the decision-making process?

- In relation to everyday practices, how do teacher leaders promote the school vision?

Purpose: To understand when working to develop teacher leaders, how leaders perceive themselves as developing people.

- How are you identifying and developing teachers as leaders?

- How do you support teachers in identifying their strengths?

- How do you plan professional development for teachers?

Purpose: To understand when working to develop teacher leaders, how leaders perceive themselves as redesigning the organization.

- How do you motivate teachers to seek new ideas and new information that are relevant to the school's development?

- How do you stimulate teachers to constantly think about how to improve the school?

- How do you help teachers talk about research-based practices through inquiry?

Additional Questions for Teacher Leaders:

- What motivated you to become a teacher?

- What experiences have shaped your leadership as a teacher?

- What opportunities for teacher leadership have surfaced in your school district?

- How seriously are teachers' opinions considered?

- How do you encourage teachers to experiment with sharing best practices with colleagues?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol- Culturally Responsive Discipline

Building Leaders:

- If an African American, Hispanic, or Latinx student began demonstrating atypical behavior that required disciplinary action, how might you handle the situation differently?

- How have you supported teachers' learning to improve culturally responsive practices?

- How do you support teachers in embracing culturally responsive practices specific to discipline? How do you hold them accountable for these practices?

Teacher Questions:

- How do teacher behaviors de-escalate or escalate student behaviors? Can you give an example of each from yours or another teacher's experience?

- How do you learn about other cultures and student groups? How does that information inform your lesson planning?

- How do you communicate high expectations to your students? Can you give me an example?

- What are your priorities in establishing a classroom environment for students?

- Tell me about a time you developed a positive relationship with a hard-to-reach student. What were your behaviors that allowed you to do that and what was the outcome? What interests did the student have outside of school? What were his/her talents and strengths?

- If an LGBTQ student begins to demonstrate atypical behavior that requires disciplinary action, how would you proceed? What might be different for them? Thinking about the student's intersectionality, how might race further impact disciplinary actions?

- What role does culture play in your relationship with students? Describe a time you learned about a student's culture and used that understanding to foster a positive relationship.

- How do life situations impact learning? What do you do to proactively and reactively respond to students facing these situations?

- Have you adapted a lesson or activity to better fit the culture or life situation of a student? If so, how? What was the outcome?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol- Cultural Self-Reflection and Awareness

Principal Questions:

- How would you describe the racial and cultural makeup of your student body? Of your staff?

- Tell me about a situation or incident at your school that involved an inequity based on race or culture? What did you do?

- Do you consider your own race to inform decision making? If yes, how?

- Has there been an instance when you have demonstrated leadership or commitment to equity in your work?

- How do you use data to guide your practices and your decision making to support diverse learning populations? Can you give me an example? Have you made any changes in the school-based off this data?

- How do you support teachers and staff with training or professional development to meet the instructional needs of diverse learners?

- How do you encourage and/or provide opportunities for teachers to engage in self-reflection and self-examination elation to race and culture?

- What do you do to help expand your teachers' knowledge of diverse learning populations?

- Have you ever had to handle a situation in which someone made a sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise prejudiced remark? What did you feel? What did you do?

Teacher Questions:

- Tell me about a situation or incident at your school or in your classroom that involved an inequity based on race or culture? What did you do? What did your principal do to help and support you?

- What professional learning activities has your school engaged in to support diverse learning populations?

- How and what data do you use to guide your practices to support diverse learning populations?

- Has the school leadership encouraged and provided opportunities for self-reflection and self-examination among staff in relation to race and culture? If yes, how?

- Has there been a person or event that has increased your personal awareness of race and culture?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol- District and School Leaders' Support for LGBTQ Youth

Principal and Teacher Questions:
- What are the observable behaviors and practices that make this district/school a visible ally to LGBTQ students?

- If a student were to come out to you as LGBTQ, what would be your first thought?

- How, if at all, does your curriculum include information about LGBTQ people, including LGBTQ people of color, history, and events?

- How, if at all, do non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies explicitly protect LGBTQ students?
- When you consider the supports that currently exist for LGBTQ students, what is working well? How do you know? What supports can be strengthened for LGBTQ students?

Appendix B: Field Note Protocol

Setting: _____
Observer: _____
Date of Observation: _____
Start time of Observation: _____ End Time of Observation _____

	Observations	Observer Reflections/Comments
Physical Setting		
Participants		
Activities Observed		
Interactions Observed		
Conversations Observed		
Other		

Adapted from (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

Appendix C: Meeting Observation Protocol

Meeting Observation Protocol		
Date: Start Time: End Time:		
Location: # Members Present:		
Meeting Leader and Role/Title:		
Description of who attended the meeting:		
Meeting Format: (one person leads, group facilitation, group conversation)		
Meeting Objectives		**Was this objective accomplished?**
Discussion Topics		
Participation & Representation	**Comments**	
Do all members actively participate?		

Are multiple viewpoints represented	
Does the meeting setting encourage participation and interactions?	
Is conflict productive?	
Are members willing to take risks?	
Organization & Structure	Comments
Are objectives clear and understood?	
Does the meeting have clear objectives?	
Do participants contribute to the objective and outcomes?	
Communication	Comments
Are members open and communicate what they think?	
Do members encourage and support each other?	
Results & Actions	Comments
Is an agreed upon decision-making or problem-solving method used?	
Are the next steps and action items clear?	

Adapted from: Faribault, Martin and Watonwan Counties Statewide Health Improvement Program

Appendix D: Structured Abstract for Margarita Amy's Individual Study

Leadership Practices that Support Marginalized Students:
How Leaders Support Teacher Leadership for Emergent Bilingual and Latinx Students

Background:

Demographic shifts in public schools in the United States are continuing to increase the diversity within our student populations in schools. These changes have required leadership at every level in schools in order to create positive learning experiences for students who have been sidelined because of their ethnicity and language diversity. For this reason, leaders have to inspire change in key stakeholders throughout the *entire* organization. Teachers are critical stakeholders in schools and can support powerful changes in school improvement efforts.

Purpose and Research Questions:

The purpose of this individual case study was to identify the perceptions of school and district leaders about fostering teacher leadership, specifically to support emergent bilingual and Latinx students at a public school district in the state of Massachusetts. There are still many unknowns as to how principals encourage teachers to become leaders. My work extended the literature in an effort to understand the transformative aspects of leadership and how it functions across schools within a district. Conversely, there are a lack of studies that explore the perceptions of leaders at the district and school level about fostering teacher leadership, and its incorporation into practice, particularly, in supporting emergent bilingual and Latinx students. This study answered the following research questions: How do leaders perceive they are fostering teacher leadership which supports emergent bilingual and Latinx students? When working to develop teacher leadership, how, if at all, do leaders perceive they are setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization?

Methods:

This study utilized a qualitative case study methodology in order to explore leaders'

perceptions about teacher leadership within a bounded system; namely a Massachusetts school

district. The most recent model of transformational leadership developed from Leithwood's

research in schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) served as the conceptual framework. This

framework enabled me to refine the research questions, review the literature, develop interview

protocols; and served as the foundation for sorting, coding, classifying, and analyzing data to

understand the role of the leader in setting direction, developing people and redesigning the

organization as an invaluable agent of change in schools. Data collection included 13 individual

semi-structured interviews with district, building and teacher leaders as well as field notes and

document reviews.

Findings:

Findings indicated that school and district leaders perceived they support emergent

bilingual and Latinx students through formal and informal leadership practices. The results of

this study also found a discrepancy between district leaders, building leaders and teacher leaders'

perceptions about opportunities for teacher leaders to engage in sharing best practices,

collaborate in a shared decision-making process, and participate in quality professional

development. Top-down approaches impacted the development of teachers as leaders, creating

barriers and challenges in each of three components of transformational leadership (setting

direction, developing people, redesigning the organization). Recommendations include

establishing a collective vision for promoting teacher leadership and for developing teachers as

leaders.

Implications:

Future research could be designed to better understand how teacher leadership is enacted to support issues around equity and social justice, and how we might encourage more teacher leadership among underrepresented groups. Additionally, building on the research of Anderson (2008), studies aimed at identifying teacher leaders and their capacity to be transformational over time are worth pursuing.

Appendix E: Structured Abstract for Mark Pellegrino's Individual Study

Leadership Practices that Support Marginalized Students:
Culturally Responsive Discipline Practices to Reduce Disparities for
African American, Hispanic, and Latinx Students

Abstract

Background: Over the past forty years, schools have suspended African American, Hispanic, and Latinx students at significantly higher rates than white students. Culturally responsive interventions that foster positive relationships between marginalized students and educators have been found to be effective. School leaders are called to foster these practices.

Purpose: This individual study examined whether or not teachers with low discipline referrals for African American and Hispanic/Latinx students from a midsized urban Massachusetts district report using culturally responsive discipline practices described in the Double-Check Framework (Hershfeldt etl al., 2009); and how, if at all, they perceive their principal fosters these practices. It was part of a group study that examined how school and district leaders support marginalized students.

Participants: Two schools in the participating district and their principals were identified because they agreed to be in the study and were able to identify teachers with low incidence of Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs). Two white, female principals; four white, male teachers; and five white, female teachers participated in the study.

Research design: The research team used an explanatory case study design.

Data collection/analysis: Data was collected over a four-month period using semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers in two schools as part of the group qualitative case study. Interview questions for teachers were based on a framework designed to identify culturally responsive discipline practices called Double-Check (Hershfeldt etl al., 2009). Questions for the principals were open-ended and asked them to describe how they support teachers in developing

and embracing culturally responsive practices. Interview data were coded and analyzed through

the Double-Check framework and Khalifa et al.'s (2016) culturally responsive school leadership.

Findings: This research, though limited by its size, scope, and duration, supported the notion

that teachers with low office discipline referrals might embrace culturally responsive practices, at

least to a limited degree. Additionally, while principals reported that they had provided culturally

responsive professional learning activities for teachers, teachers interviewed did not attribute

their discipline practices to these efforts. Recommendations for practice and future research are

included.

Appendix F: Structured Abstract for Jaime Slaney's Individual Study

Leadership Practices that Support Marginalized Students:
Cultural Awareness and Self-Reflection

Background: The student population in our schools is becoming increasingly more diverse and marginalized. The increasing diversity in our schools demands our attention and requires a change in our approach to educating all students. Culturally responsive school leadership is essential to meet the needs of marginalized students and to close both the achievement and opportunity gaps that persist in today's schools. Critical self-reflection is an essential culturally responsive school leadership behavior to disrupt inequities in schools and transform schools to become culturally responsive.

Purpose and Research Questions: The purpose of this qualitative research study was to address the research gap that exists related to leadership practices that establish culturally responsive schools related to the development of cultural awareness and self-reflection among leaders and teachers. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions: How, if at all, does the leader develop and maintain cultural awareness and self-reflection to support marginalized populations? What leadership practices does the leader enact, if at all, to engage teachers in cultural awareness and self-reflection?

Methods: To address these questions, I utilized a descriptive, qualitative, case study of a mid to large sized urban district which had a diverse student body population where at least fifty percent represent marginalized populations of LGBTQ, emergent bilinguals, Hispanic/Latinx, and African American students. Khalifa et al's (2016) culturally responsive school leadership behavior of critical self-reflection was used as a conceptual framework to guide the study. It's four tenets for leaders include: having an awareness of self and the context in which they lead;

be willing to probe personal assumptions, their own and others, about race and culture and impact on the school; having an awareness of the inequitable facets that negatively affect marginalized students' potential; and finally, to use awareness to transform and create a new equitable environment for marginalized students. Methods included semi-structured interviews, a review of documents, and field notes as data to determine leadership practices that engage the learning organization in critical self-reflection and awareness.

Findings: First, the study found that almost all of the leader participants exhibited cultural awareness and reflectiveness. This awareness was enacted through either feeling marginalization themselves, childhood experiences, and through professional experiences. Second, leaders utilized a variety of leadership practices to maintain their awareness and to engage in self-reflection. Third, leaders utilized their awareness to create more equitable environments for marginalized students. Lastly, although leaders utilized leadership practices to increase teacher awareness, practices were not consistent, embedded, or persistent.

Appendix G: Structured Abstract for Luis Ramirez Soria's Individual Study

Leadership Practices that Support Marginalized Students:
District and School Leaders' Support for LGBTQ Youth

Background: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are a marginalized student population in school settings. LGBTQ students are susceptible to suicide ideation, substance abuse, discrimination, bullying, and harassment. District and school leaders can affect practices, policies, pedagogy, and professional learning that advance equity and support for LGBTQ students in schools. Agency for LGBTQ students can be affected by how leaders promote inclusivity, build relationships among and between students and teachers, challenge exclusionary policies and behaviors, use student voice, and model culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Purpose and Research Questions: The purpose of this study was to examine whether and how district and school leaders' knowledge, attitudes/beliefs, and practices regarding LGBTQ students affected the espoused and enacted school policies for advocacy, anti-discrimination, and proactive care for this marginalized population. Accordingly, this study explored the research question: How, if at all, do district and school leaders' knowledge, attitudes/beliefs, and practices support LGBTQ youth?

Methods: I conducted a qualitative case study of a Massachusetts urban school district. Data for the research was collected from semi-structured interviews, document review, and observation of a student organization meeting. For each data source, I analyzed and coded the data to identify patterns that supported or contradicted culturally responsive leadership in support of LGBTQ youth. I utilized multiple cycles of coding, starting with initial codes that surfaced regarding leaders' knowledge, attitude/beliefs, and practices.

Findings: Data analysis from this study revealed four themes. First, leaders created and sustained safe environments in schools for LGBTQ youth. Second, leaders' made efforts to urge the normalization of LGBTQ advocacy and discourse. Third, leaders afforded opportunities for LGBTQ student-led activism. Lastly, district and school leaders need to further their systemic efforts toward establishing and implementing inclusive LGBTQ curriculum and instruction.