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ANTI-RACIST EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS: LATINX EDUCATIONAL LEADERS: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP

Dissertation

by

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Abstract

This qualitative case study of a single district explored how Latinx educational leaders made sense of their practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and our nation's recent racial reckoning. The district in this study claimed a commitment to anti-racist practice through their mission, vision, and public commitment. To respond to the research question, a culturally responsive leadership conceptual framework from Khalifa et al. (2016) and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth theory adapted from critical race theory was used. Who is in front of students matters—their identification with teachers and school leaders can have a significant impact on their outcomes (Ladson Billings, 2021; Tatum, 2017). In Massachusetts, Latinx students make up over 21% of the population, yet only 3% of educators identify as Latinx (NCES, 2018).

To respond to the research question, qualitative methodology was used to collect data through six semi-structured interviews of educational leaders who identified as Latinx. The participants in the study held a variety of impactful yet non-traditional leadership roles within their schools and district. Findings revealed two important distinctions in the analysis of the data: (a) the challenges Latinx leaders face in their practice compares to national trends; and (b) participants were leading from classrooms

and across the organization beyond traditional leadership roles. Furthermore, all participants had a clear understanding of the equity-centered initiatives and efforts put forth by the district to promote the district's anti-racist commitment. This provided commonality in language across all six interview participants when making sense of their practice within the context of their work in the district. Nonetheless, incongruencies persist in how these educators perceived the impact of their leadership practice—specifically during the last two years—which exposes a disconnect between the district's stated commitment to equity and the participants' understanding of their practice. Additionally, a critical finding suggested that each interview participant identified strongly with their diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds as assets to supporting students. Understanding the experiences of these Latinx educational leaders—namely their challenges, biases, and microaggressions—can help develop culturally responsive schools and districts and build educators' skill sets around supporting Latinx students.

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Dedication

To my loving husband, Fidencio, and beautiful trio, Emilia, Joaquín, and Mateo.

To LW and the Karp family for their immense generosity.

Our stories need to be told by us and about us. We can alter the narrative.

To my beautiful abuelas, abuelos, and the ancestors whose joy I feel.

Para Coco.

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Chapter 1

Anti-Racist Educational Leadership in Times of Crisis[1]

Anti-racist leadership is more important now than ever before. During the first COVID-19 summer, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery were instrumental in forcing the nation to acknowledge its relationship with systemic racism. By the winter of 2021, anti-Asian hate came to the forefront of the nation's media (Cabral, 2021). Throughout the pandemic, Black people, indigenous people, and other people of color (BIPOC) have carried disproportionate burdens: the COVID-19 infection and death rates affected Black and Latinx populations at a higher rate than White communities (Ladson-Billings, 2021), more BIPOC students were in fully remote learning environments by choice and/or by circumstance, and Asian students faced the fear of physical and psychological violence as the scapegoat for the pandemic (Balingit et al., 2021).

The emergence of racism, however, is not limited to high-profile racial incidents covered in the national media. In fact, racism can be described as the "smog in the air" (Tatum, 2017, p. 86); the ever-present air that we breathe. As institutions that often mirror society at large, America's schools are not immune to the effects of racism. Racism emerges in education in multiple ways at every level and often exists when an organization's policies and practices, unintentionally or by design, negatively impact a particular group of people based on race. A school's culture, habits, symbols, and rules can also contribute to institutional racism. Symptoms of racism in schools can be found

[1] This chapter was jointly written and reflects the team approach of this project by the following authors: Stephen Dacey, Laniesha Gray, Cicy Po, Thomas Smith, Ana Tavares.

in the disproportionate representation of students of color in disciplinary matters, special education, and lower-level classes (Diem & Welton, 2020). Additionally, individual and structural racism has resulted in lower expectations for students of color, especially from White teachers, and these expectations lead to lower academic outcomes (Gándara, 2015; Khalifa, 2011; Tatum, 2017).

This research, in addition to the impact of the global pandemic and the increased awareness of structural racism in our society, suggests a dire need for school leaders to enact anti-racist leadership practices in their schools. Anti-racist educational leadership, which includes attitudes and beliefs about race and racism, policies and practices aimed at dismantling structural racism, and system-level commitment to anti-racism, provides an effective response to racism in schools which has been amplified by the current crises. In this complicated time when states across the country are moving to ban racial education from public schools (Covarrubias et al., 2018; O'Kane, 2021), an anti-racist approach informed by theoretical elements of Critical Race Theory is a necessary approach to understanding how racial inequities emerge in education.

For example, it has been suggested by Welton (2018) that anti-racist practices can disrupt systemic racism by looking at the learning of both students and educators, acknowledging and maneuvering in the context of resistance to anti-racism in our majoritarian White culture, and looking at systems of organizational change towards greater equity. As explored in more detail in the literature review below, Diem and Welton's (2021) contemporary work on anti-racist leadership in practice has recognized that school leaders need targeted preparation and professional development on how to be anti-racist. This research, however, has tended to stop short of naming specific strategies

for how school leaders, in the present moment, can engage in anti-racist efforts in multiple contexts.

In this study, we hope to fill this gap in the research on anti-racist leadership practices by investigating how educational leaders make sense of anti-racist leadership, as well as how educational leaders perceive the limitations and support for anti-racist leadership in their schools or districts, especially in the current context of the global pandemic and racial reckoning. Our study intends to identify the actions that leaders have taken in response to this moment of crisis and to identify how anti-racist leadership practices have been supported or limited within a single district.

Therefore, this dissertation-in-practice presents a qualitative case study of a single district in Massachusetts that has a stated goal of creating an anti-racist school community. In this study, we directly respond to Diem and Welton's (2021) plea for research that focuses on how leaders "ensure their everyday actions are drawn from anti-racist orientation" and the practices they need to employ to purposefully address "social, political, and educational oppression" (pp. 3–4). Thus, our dissertation in practice research questions are:

1) In what ways, if at all, do educational leaders enact anti-racist leadership practices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and this moment of racial reckoning in their schools or districts?
2) What are leaders' perceptions of the limitations or supports for anti-racist leadership practice as they navigate leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and this moment of racial reckoning in their schools or districts?

Throughout this dissertation, we provide answers to these questions by presenting five

studies that take up distinct but related questions stemming from these two group research questions. Table 1 provides details about each members' research questions, conceptual framework, and methodology, demonstrating the conceptual connection across the studies, as well as the thematic connection between the individual studies and the group study.

Table 1

Investigator's Individual Research Questions

Researcher	Research Question (RQ) Conceptual Framework (CF)	Unit of Analysis
Dacey	1. How, if at all, do school leaders support their White teachers in developing their anti-racist White racial identity? CF: White racial identity development as an anti-racist leadership practice	Educational leaders at multiple levels (principals, assistant principals, deans, department chairs, etc.)
Gray	1. How has Black leadership been affected by this current moment of racial reckoning? 2. What aspects of community cultural wealth, if any, do Black leaders leverage in their practice? CF: Community cultural wealth as a specific part of anti-racist leadership practice	Black educational leaders at multiple levels (principals, assistant principals, deans, department chairs, etc.)
Po	1. How do Asian Women school leaders perceive their navigation of leadership during the COVID 19 pandemic and racial reckoning? 2. In what ways do the racialized or gendered experiences of Asian female leaders inform their instructional practice? CF: Sympathetic Instructional Leadership	Asian female educational leaders at multiple levels (principals, program leaders, department chairs, etc.)
Smith	1. In what ways, if at all, do educational leaders perceive or make sense of the emergence of anti-racism in predominantly White schools? 2. What are the conditions that support or constrain the enactment of anti-racist practices in predominantly White schools? CF: Emergence of anti-racism in schools through attitudes and beliefs, policies and practices, and school-level commitment (Welton et al., 2018)	Educational leaders at multiple levels (principals, assistant principals, deans, department chairs, etc.) in predominantly White schools (defined as >70% White student body).
Tavares	How do Latinx educational leaders make sense of their leadership practice during this moment of racial reckoning and the COVID-19 pandemic? CF: Culturally Responsive Leadership and Community Cultural Wealth	Latinx educational leaders at multiple levels (teacher leaders, program directors, department chairs, etc.)

As shown in this table, each of these studies provides insights into the anti-racist leadership practices enacted by school leaders in this current moment. These studies also illustrate the supports and the constraints for the enactment of anti-racist leadership. In the remainder of this chapter, though, we describe the theoretical and conceptual lenses and empirical research that collectively informed all five studies and allowed us to better make sense of our group research questions. To familiarize the reader with the prior research that informed our study, we then review relevant literature on leadership in times of crisis, as well as anti-racist leadership in schools.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This group study was informed by complementary theoretical and conceptual perspectives related to the practice of anti-racism in schools: Critical Race Theory (CRT), for its emphasis on the acknowledgment that racism is endemic to society, and a framework for anti-racist leadership initially developed by Welton et al. (2018), for its implications for educational leaders in their advancement of anti-racism in their schools or districts. Specifically, to make sense of questions related to anti-racism in education, we drew on two tenets of CRT in combination with an adaptation of a conceptual framework for anti-racism from Welton et al. (2018). The tenets of CRT provided specific lenses through which researcher-practitioners analyzed and made sense of the effects of racism in education. In particular, the permanence of racism and counternarratives are particularly useful across each of our individual studies and our collective study.

Critical Race Theory

Emerging from critical legal studies, CRT argues that racism is and always has been "endemic in U.S. society," happening all the time at the individual, institutional, societal, and epistemological levels (Tate, 1997, p. 234). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) were among the first scholars to apply CRT to analyze the inequities built into our society's educational system. In subsequent research, Capper (2015) applied CRT specifically to educational leadership and distilled six primary tenets that can be used by school leaders in their efforts to mitigate the effects of racism. Those tenets are the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, counternarratives, interest convergence, critique of liberalism, and intersectionality (Capper, 2015). Two of the tenets, the permanence of racism and counternarratives, were particularly useful across each of our individual studies and our collective study, they are outlined below.

Permanence of Racism

According to Capper (2015), understanding that racism is part of the fabric of our society can help educational leaders recognize that they are complicit in racism (Khalifa et al., 2014). Furthermore, all schools and districts perpetuate racism through the culture, organization, policies, and practices they utilize (Capper, 2015). Within the context of educational leadership, CRT has been useful in highlighting how the permanence of racism has impacted the experiences and outcomes of both teachers and students of color (Capper, 2015). Therefore, in this study, we used the permanence of racism tenet to help us identify instances of overt racism, subtler forms of racism like microaggressions, as well as impacts of structural racism, as shared by our participants.

Counternarratives

Critical race theorists describe the importance of the personal narratives of people of color "as a way to communicate the experiences and realities of the oppressed" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58). Legitimizing the counterstories of people of color allows educational leaders to recognize daily microaggressions and the societal and institutional racism that people of color experience (Capper, 2015). It also provides a counter-narrative to popular beliefs, such as meritocracy, so often held by people in majoritarian groups. BIPOC educators also carry cultural wealth that uniquely helps diverse students succeed (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Therefore, in this study, we used the tenet of counternarratives to provide an opportunity for our participants to be heard as they shared their experiences and perceptions of working in the district of our study.

Anti-Racism in Schools

As mentioned above, this study was premised on the centrality of an anti-racist approach to school leadership being able to interrupt the reproduction of systemic racism in schools. Anti-racism is the system of thoughts and practices, at the individual and system level, that aim to confront and eradicate racism and promote ideologies and practices for racial and ethnic equity (Blakeney, 2005; Diem & Welton, 2021). The anti-racist leadership conceptual framework used in this qualitative case study was adapted from Welton et al. (2018) because it provides practical implications for school leaders to engage in anti-racist work. These researchers frame anti-racist leadership as encompassing attitudes and beliefs, policies and practices, and system-level commitment. This three-pronged framework anchored our investigation.

Attitudes and Beliefs

A critical first step in cultivating an anti-racist school environment is addressing the race-neutral and colorblind ideologies and assumptions often held by teachers and parents. Diem and Welton (2021) find that some educational leaders avoid discussions about race by offering superficial initiatives such as "multicultural programs and celebrations, or one-off diversity workshops or professional development that was never applied to practice" (p. 30). These superficial celebrations fail to interrupt racism because they are self-congratulatory without leading to any real change. Colorblind assumptions discredit the acknowledgment of racism, thereby bypassing the need to address racism directly or at all (Utt & Tochluk, 2020). Anti-racist leadership according to Diem and Welton (2021) acknowledges race as a factor in schools and that racial awareness must be raised. They critique neoliberal approaches that involve color-evasive mindsets and promote policies that take critical aim at persistent patterns of academic achievement related to underserved students of color.

Policies and Practices

The enactment of anti-racist policies and practices specifically designed to dismantle structural racism in schools is also critical for anti-racist change. Examples of anti-racist policies and practices might include de-leveling courses or incorporating racial content into the school curricula. One critical anti-racist practice is culturally relevant pedagogy, which asserts the importance of the socio-political context in education (Ladson-Billings, 2021). When considering the communities most impacted by policies and practices aimed at dismantling historical inequity, educational leaders must connect with their students' present-day concerns, such as the unequal consequences of the

COVID-19 virus in BIPOC communities so that students can mitigate the impact they are experiencing within their communities (Diem & Welton, 2021; Freire, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2021). It is important for members of a marginalized group to feel understood by others who share in the experience of marginalization in order to build resistance (Delgado Bernal, 2012). As part of this anti-racist conceptual framework, there is a need for asset-based approaches that contextualize the multiracial, multiethnic, and multilingual communities within a sociohistorical context that moves away from a majoritarian approach that pathologizes communities of color (Covarrubias et al., 2018). An anti-racist leader promotes a learning environment that affirms the identities of students in order to combat systemic forms of racism (Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

System-Level Commitment

Individual work on race consciousness is necessary but insufficient by itself. Therefore, Welton et al. (2018) state that to enact system-level anti-racism, educators must create an anti-racist environment for all community members, develop an anti-racist curriculum, recruit, and retain diverse faculty and staff, welcome all perspectives and have difficult conversations, and bring a network of equity organizations to support the work of schools and the district. Diem and Welton (2021) also posit that educational leaders need to dismantle racist ideologies, structures, and processes, such as school choice, standardized testing, data-use practices, and school funding protocols that perpetuate racism.

Connections Between CRT and Anti-Racist Leadership Perspectives

The permanence of racism and the importance of counternarratives, in combination with Welton et al.'s (2018) conceptual framework for anti-racist leadership, gave us the tools to ask educational leaders about their enactment of anti-racist practices, as well as their perceptions of limitations or supports for anti-racism in their schools. This conceptual framework gave us scholastic acknowledgment that racism is everywhere and ordinary and embedded historically and systemically. It provided the perspective, language, and framework to uncover how educational leaders see themselves as complicit in racism, as well as how their schools, by culture, policy, and practice perpetuate structural racism. It helped us make sense of how educational leaders at all levels engage in issues of race and racism, particularly in the current crises of the global pandemic and current racial reckoning.

Review of Empirical Literature

We began this study by reviewing empirical scholarship to connect our study to previous research on anti-racist leadership. First, we describe recent research on how crisis and crisis response impact the role of school leaders because the global pandemic and recent racial reckoning represent a moment of crisis for educational leaders. Next, we present our review of empirical studies on anti-racist leadership practices at both the individual and institutional levels, as well as obstacles school leaders encounter when trying to enact anti-racist policies and practices since we are asking participants about their enactment of anti-racist leadership.

Research on Leadership in Times of Crisis

Literature on leadership in times of crisis was essential to our collective work. The research is still growing, addressing post-pandemic recovery and planning as schools grapple with meeting the diverse needs of students (Ladson-Billings, 2021a). Nonetheless, recent literature on the role of schools found that the majority of the literature focused on disaster preparedness, but very little on disaster response and recovery (Fortuna et al., 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021a). Crisis leadership and crisis management are considered two related aspects of dealing with crises that affect an organization (Mutch, 2015). According to Boin et al. (2005), effective crisis leadership entails identifying new threats, developing plans to meet those threats, and putting resources in place to absorb negative impacts while working to stabilize and return to normal.

Moments of crisis disrupt routines, create an atmosphere of ambiguity, and cause leadership uncertainty (Morrison, 2017). All too often, because of a lack of crisis leadership training, school leaders inadvertently misstep in their crisis response, thus complicating the situation and prolonging the recovery of communities (Morrison, 2017). Crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted for educational leaders a gap in teacher pre-service programs and professional development programs for adapting to changing and uncertain circumstances. Three recent crises, the September 11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina, and Hurricane María, provide insight into those leading schools during times of crisis from educational leaders who supported their communities through these crises.

The research on school leadership in times of crisis for the past decade or so perceived their leadership roles as managerial and static (Portin et al., 2006). Superintendents and principals made sure that their schools functioned effectively and efficiently by maintaining schedules, responding to the needs of parents and students, and focusing on performance and outcomes (Harris, 2020). These educational leaders were ultimately accountable for their actions and while ideas of distributed leadership or shared leadership were increasingly part of the leadership discourse, most studies of school leadership still tended to focus on the role of the superintendent or the principal as managers (Leithwood et al., 2020). Crises like COVID-19 and national racial reckoning have dramatically changed perceptions of leadership and leadership practices within schools (Ladson-Billings, 2021b). Principals and superintendents are leading schools and districts in innovative ways that are more reliant on technology (Harris, 2020). As educational leaders support students and families from the COVID-19 pandemic and the national racial reckoning they must also contend with evolving leadership practices in response to the current moment.

Research on Anti-Racist Leadership

According to the conceptual framework described by Welton et al. (2018), anti-racist practices emerge in an educational institution primarily through attitudes and beliefs, policies and practices, and system-level commitment. Each of these categories informed our investigation, as we explored anti-racist practices in schools as perceived by educational leaders through the lens of our conceptual framework. We review relevant literature and research within each of these areas below, starting with attitudes and beliefs.

Attitudes and Beliefs

Research has consistently shown that anti-racism is most effective when teachers have personally reflected on their own racial identities while developing self-awareness around race and privilege. In qualitative studies of both pre-service and veteran teachers, research has shown how teachers' limited information and limited experience can negatively impact anti-racist pedagogical efforts, ultimately leading to perpetuated stereotypes and reinforced hegemonic ideologies (Davila, 2011; Graff, 2010). Similarly, in a study about how educators can personalize cultural and political knowledge to cultivate anti-racist practices, Seidl (2007) described the importance of teachers' acquisition of a "more sophisticated understanding regarding the history of racism and race relations and its impact and influence on our current relationships and in our teaching lives" (p. 177). Dlamini (2002) discovered that teachers' underlying beliefs and assumptions regarding race often go unresolved, limiting substantive action and change.

Studies have shown that many faculty and staff are at best neutral on issues of race in their schools and often avoid considering how race and racism impact them and their communities (Allen & Liou, 2019; Lewis, 2001; McMahon, 2007; Swanson & Welton, 2019; Welton et al., 2015). Many educators are very uncomfortable talking about race, and often divert the discussion to the education of the "whole child, not just their race" or saying things like "we can't do anything about that – we're here to help kids learn" (Brooks & Watson, 2019, p. 644).

Other qualitative case studies demonstrate how teachers actively resist equity-centered, anti-racist actions. In one study of a large, comprehensive high school in California, researchers found that White educators tend to blame society when students

do not reach their potential, often referring to concepts such as the school-to-prison pipeline to make broad assumptions about students and their families (Allen & Liou, 2019). Similarly, in another study, Swanson and Welton (2019) found that some teachers even refuse to participate in equity-centered professional development programs, demonstrating "conflicting understandings" about race-conscious improvement efforts (p. 747). These colorblind, race-neutral ideologies, coupled with White fragility and active resistance, cause principals to revert to "safer, racially neutral" discussions around equity (Swanson & Welton, 2019, p. 748).

Political tensions also arose in the research as a significant obstacle to anti-racism in schools that maintained racially inequitable conditions. Teaching faculty who embraced an anti-racist approach clashed with those who resisted it, which caused administrators to compromise the major tenets of anti-racist leadership. Similarly, some parents often pressure school leadership into maintaining the status quo. Rather than confront the tension and conflicts surrounding issues of race, school leaders sought to maintain "an institutional culture of harmony" (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Solomon, 2002, p. 188).

Knowledge from the review of these studies helped us recognize the obstacles that educational leaders face when trying to enact anti-racist practices. Findings from these studies also helped us create more meaningful questions as we interviewed our participants.

Policies and Practices

Most of the research on anti-racist teaching practices falls into three main categories: 1. including racial content and inequality in course content, curricula, and

activities, 2. teaching from an anti-racist pedagogical approach, and 3. anti-racist organizing within the school community (Kishimoto, 2018). We will discuss the first two components here and will address the third component in our discussion of system-level commitment.

There is a growing body of empirical research on how teachers incorporate content, activities, and discussions that confront racism into course curricula. Most of the studies investigated how teachers challenged Eurocentrism by including racial content in the syllabi, course materials, course activities, and curriculum (Kishimoto, 2018; Solomon, 2002). Outside the classroom, teachers also established race-based heritage groups, such as the Black Heritage Club, and have tried to bring in professionals from racial minority communities to speak to students (Solomon, 2002). Unfortunately, these efforts are often superficial in nature and do not directly investigate serious issues of racism, race consciousness, and racial identity development that are crucial to anti-racist practices (Miner, 2009; Solomon, 2002).

Beyond introducing inclusive course content and creating heritage groups, classroom discussions are particularly relevant activities in anti-racist pedagogy. In a study of how European American and African American students responded to classroom discussions about historical racism, Hughes et al. (2007) found that "European American children who learned about historical racism had more positive and less negative views of African Americans than did children who received similar lessons that did not include information about racism" (p. 1701). Classroom discussions on race are one way that anti-racism can be enacted at the classroom level.

Similarly, Roberts et al. (2008) used observations and focus groups to examine how students "talked about race and racism while participating in a curriculum that introduced the analytic lens of story types: stock stories, concealed stories, resistance stories, and counterstories (p. 334). The researchers found that "students yearn for spaces and curricula that provide the context and history within which they can ground their experiences and analysis" (p. 350). Additionally, when teachers focus on issues of race and racism and seek to incorporate the students' perspectives, the authors reviewed found "everyone involved can engage in more thoughtful and creative analysis of the system of racial oppression in which we live to develop the tools to change it" (p. 350). Equally important to understand is the impact an anti-racist pedagogical approach provides beyond course content and curriculum. In particular, it challenges assumptions, develops students' awareness of their own privilege, decenters authority in the classroom, and creates a community of learners (Kishimoto, 2018).

Research has demonstrated the importance of how teachers question and elicit answers, describe and address students, value what students have accomplished outside of school, connect the lives of the students to the curriculum in a meaningful way, and validate and elevate marginalized cultures (Ladson-Billings, 2003; Lee, 1998). Even further, qualitative case studies have also offered evidence that pedagogy "acknowledges the importance of racial and cultural identities, teaches through collaboration and dialogue, examines power and oppression, examines discrimination as systemic, critiques traditions of schooling, and advocates for social action" are all effective strategies in developing an anti-racist approach to teaching (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 409).

This research demonstrates how individuals adapt their pedagogy to make their curricula and classroom practices more anti-racist. The findings from these studies helped us make sense of how educational leaders enact anti-racist practices in their schools and aided our investigation as we collected and analyzed data from our participants.

System-Level Commitment

Research has shown that "systemic level anti-racist change never actually happens," as scholars and practitioners are "bogged down with individual commitment" and often "neglect the larger institution" (Welton et al., 2018, p. 6). Although individual anti-racist work is critically important, research shows that there must be a system-level commitment to ensure that the entire school community is working towards creating an anti-racist environment (Welton et al., 2018).

Previous systemic level commitment research has focused primarily on school policies and practices that attempt to create an anti-racist environment for all constituencies, with particular emphasis on school discipline and the recruitment and retention of minority faculty and staff, as "numerous scholars and commentators have held that there is a growing mismatch between the degree of racial/ethnic diversity in the nation's student population and the degree of diversity in the nation's elementary and secondary teaching force" (Ingersoll & May, 2011, p. 40). Specifically, national data show a gap that continues to exist between minority students and teachers in the U.S. school system. For example, a recent study showed that "41% of all elementary and secondary students were the minority, but only 16.5% of all elementary and secondary teachers were minority" (Ingersoll & May, 2011, p. 40).

Research studies have attempted to explain the shortage of minority teachers, most often finding that particular school conditions are strongly related to minority teacher departures (Ingersoll & May, 2011). The most important factors in retaining minority teachers are "the levels of collective faculty decision-making influence in their school and the degree of individual instructional autonomy held by teachers in their classrooms" (Ingersoll & May, 2011, p. 43). Other factors, such as pay scale, opportunities for professional development, and school resources had much less impact on minority teacher turnover.

Another school-wide effort in anti-racism enacted by educational leaders is equity audits, whereby administrators "systematically collect and examine data to identify equity gaps," often done in stages (Diem & Welton, 2020a, p. 138). Community-based equity audits have also been employed to go beyond the school as the unit of analysis. In addition to equity audits, equity-centered policy analysis models have also been established that can be used to determine whether a policy is just and ethical (Diem & Welton, 2020a).

Like the findings from studies on policies and practices, the research on the system-level commitment to anti-racism helped us make sense of how educational leaders enact anti-racist practices at a broader scale. This knowledge aided our investigation as we asked our participants about how they viewed anti-racist practices at the organizational level.

Conclusion

The five studies of this research explored anti-racist leadership practices, as well as the educational leaders' perceptions of the supports and constraints related to anti-

racist leadership. The individual studies of Gray, Po, and Tavares also explored the ways in which the positionality of educational leaders impacted their enactments of anti-racism and their perceptions of how this moment of history impedes or creates opportunities for anti-racist leadership.

Chapter 2 describes the qualitative methods used across all five studies. It includes the criteria for the study's site and participant selection, interview protocols, document review, and focus groups. The methods of data collection and analysis are also reviewed in this section, along with the positionality of the researchers and the limitations of this study.

The first study, conducted by Steve Dacey, investigates the role that White racial identity development plays in informing anti-racist leadership in the district. The second study, conducted by Laniesha Gray, looks at how community cultural wealth informs Black leadership during this moment in history. The third study, conducted by Cicy Po, investigates the perceptions of Asian Women leaders as informed by their racialized and gendered experiences. The fourth study, conducted by Tom Smith, investigates anti-racist leadership in predominantly White schools. And finally, Ana Tavares conducted a study on how Latinx educational leaders make sense of their leadership during this moment in history, using culturally relevant leadership as a frame.

This dissertation concludes with Chapter 4, a synthesis of all five individual studies that describe the themes and tensions that arose as our participants advanced their mission to work for anti-racism.

Chapter 2

Methods[2]

This group study employed qualitative methodology to explore the ways in which educational leaders enacted anti-racist leadership practices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and this moment of racial reckoning in their schools and developed a detailed understanding of the leaders' perceptions about the limitations or supports for anti-racist leadership practice in their schools. The phenomenon of anti-racist leadership was best studied using qualitative methods because we were interested in collecting the perceptions of multiple educational leaders with a variety of experiences based on their different roles and racial and ethnic identities. This allowed us to "achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives…and how people interpret what they experience" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Our qualitative research took the form of a case study of a single district, which was a valuable way to explore a contemporary phenomenon, like anti-racist leadership, situated in the real world (Yin, 2018). A case study of a single district was chosen for this study because it allowed for practical implications for district leaders in the field. Our case study was informed by CRT and analyzed using Welton et al. (2018) and Diem and Welton's (2021) anti-racist framework to explore the ways in which anti-racist leadership practices were enacted, if at all.

[2] This chapter was jointly written and reflects the team approach of this project by the following authors: Stephen Dacey, Laniesha Gray, Cicy Po, Thomas Smith, Ana Tavares

Site Selection

Our selected school district for this case study met several criteria that allowed the researchers to gather evidence for each individual study. The district had the following criteria for the study: (a) was a large K-12 district in Massachusetts serving 8 to 12 schools, which provided the researchers the greatest possible variation in participants; (b) had multiple schools in which White students represented over 60% of the student body; (c) had diverse school leaders who were recognized by their district leaders as being concerned with equity work; and (d) was committed to equity as identified by their mission, vision, and strategic plan, which helped to ensure that our participants were information-rich and able to respond to our interview protocols.

In order to identify a district that best met these criteria, we first consulted the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website, particularly student, faculty, and staff demographic data. In looking through these data, we analyzed districts with representation from Black, Latinx, and Asian communities in positions of leadership, as well as predominantly White student populations. We presented a list of potential districts to our group mentor, who was able to connect us with the superintendent of a district that met our criteria. This district will be referred to as the District throughout this dissertation.

Once we had established our relationship with the superintendent of the District, we began to recruit participants that met the individual criteria of our individual studies, as described in more detail in the respective Chapter 3 methods sections. The following section will briefly describe how participants were generally selected for the individual studies.

Participant Selection

An initial screener interview with the district superintendent, not used as part of the data collection process, was conducted to identify key leaders involved in anti-racist work, as well as leaders who identify as White, Black, Asian American, and Latinx. The superintendent gave us the names and contact information of principals, assistant principals, directors, and teacher leaders across these demographics. We then used snowball sampling, in which we asked participants to recommend other individuals to be sampled, to account for any potential biases from the superintendent choosing our participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

The superintendent first emailed the initial list of participants, inviting them to participate in this study. We then contacted the participants directly to describe the purpose of our study and formally invite them to participate. All our participants were identified by district leadership as committed to anti-racism in their schools and identified as Latinx leaders, Black leaders, Asian American women, leaders who work in predominantly White schools, or leaders who work with predominantly BIPOC students. Our participants included principals, assistant principals, other members of the administrative team(s), as well as other personnel who may have had an impact on the creation and enactment of school policies and practices. Therefore, participants also included teacher leaders, school counselors, and other support staff with relevant experience within the school(s).

Data Collection

Our data collection methods included interviews, document review, surveys, and a focus group to answer our research questions. These qualitative methods allowed us to

construct knowledge and understanding by exploring how educational leaders enacted anti-racist leadership practices, as well as how they perceived their environment supported or constrained their efforts.

Interviews

To explore anti-racist leadership practices, as well as to understand perceptions of the supports and constraints related to anti-racist leadership, our study utilized interviews. In our study, interviews were semi-structured, meaning there were some specific questions asked of all respondents, but most of the interviews were guided by a few pre-determined questions to be explored, as well as issues that arose during the conversation. In the unstructured portion of the interview, neither the questions nor the order in which the questions were asked were predetermined, which allowed us to flexibly respond to the participant as their thoughts and ideas developed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Our research team conducted 26 interviews of school personnel leading specific areas of anti-racist work; these interviews were approximately 60 minutes in length. This number of interviews allowed us maximum variation across schools and roles. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using a transcription service.

As described in more detail in each of our chapter three methods sections, the interviews were designed to discover what educational leaders were doing in response to this moment of crisis during a time of racial reckoning and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the perceptions of the limitations or supports, as described by educational leaders, that allow for impactful anti-racist leadership practices. The interview questions were categorized by elements of our conceptual framework and literature review. For example, we had questions about attitudes and beliefs regarding anti-racism, anti-racist policies and

practices, system-level commitment to anti-racism, as well as leadership in times of crisis. Our individual interview protocols are included in Appendix A. We acknowledge the emotional and personal risks assumed by the participants in our study, as we asked questions about anti-racist practices. Our consent forms were designed to ensure confidentiality following BC IRB processes.

Document Review

For our study, we selected documents that responded to our research question on how issues of race and racism in the school and the larger community were prioritized, responded to, or discussed. Our goal was to use the qualitative data collected from documents to reinforce or challenge our understanding of educational leaders' perceptions of anti-racist leadership in response to the current crises.

Documents were used in the same manner as data from the interviews in that "the data can furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories of hypotheses, offer historical understanding, and track change and development" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 182). Documents offered the advantage of stability over interviews and focus groups because the presence of the investigator did not alter what was being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). We also recognized that documents were not created for the study and therefore it required some resourcefulness on the part of the researchers to locate and analyze the data.

The documents were grouped into several categories: district-level, school-level, public, and non-public. Documents were further categorized based on three elements of our conceptual framework: attitudes and beliefs, policies and practices, and system-level commitment.

We searched for relevant public documents on the district's website, which contained information on the district's mission and values, as well as its goals and objectives related to anti-racism. The website contained anti-discrimination and anti-bias policies. We searched for these documents using keywords such as anti-racism, racism, bias, discrimination, etc. to identify documents that contained information about our research questions. The district website also contained links to individual school websites, which were examined for relevant public documents, such as equity plans and communications to families.

After gathering as much public information as possible, we then collected relevant non-public documents such as professional development program overviews from individual schools and departmental email communications related to anti-racism. A list of all documents that were reviewed can be found in Appendix B.

Survey

We issued a district-wide survey (Appendix C), adapted from the National Latino Leaders/Principals Survey (Appendix D) to survey the general trends in the District and to query how respondents perceived the impact of this historical moment of the pandemic and racial reckoning on their leadership for anti-racism. The National Latino Leaders/Principals Survey is a validated survey as part of a study of leaders across the country, led by Frank Hernández, Elizabeth Murakami, and Sylvia Méndez-Morse; these researchers studied and reported their work in 2015 on how these leaders/principals described their schooling experiences, how their racial/ethnic backgrounds opened opportunities or constrained their work as school leaders, and what their challenges and successes have been. The survey included general school information, perceptions of

school performance, professional development, experience and training of the respondent, perceptions of race, gender, successes, obstacles, and background questions. These survey questions helped us understand trends in the district as they related to work for racial equity, a stated purpose of the district. The participants included district and school-based educators, student support staff, and leaders. Recruitment of participants happened with the Superintendent's support and was issued through district communication channels. These survey respondents were recruited as already being involved in anti-racist work in the district.

Focus Groups

Our study utilized one focus group that contained two participants that explored anti-racist leadership practices, as well as understood perceptions of the supports and constraints related to anti-racist leadership. The number of focus groups was limited by participant availability. Morgan (1988) explains that "the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (p. 12). Cresswell and Guetterman (2019) further explain that focus groups are useful when participants are hesitant to provide information and given the sensitive nature of discussions about race and racism the group environment, rather than an individual interview, seemed to provide a degree of comfort that encouraged the participants to provide information related to the anti-racist leadership actions in their school and district. The focus group participants were self-selected in response to an open invitation sent via email by a building administrator to the entire building staff. The focus group featured school leaders in order to gather data about their perceptions of anti-racist leadership practices and their response to the global

pandemic and racial reckoning. A sample protocol for focus groups is included in Appendix E. Again, we acknowledge the emotional and personal risks assumed by the participants in our study as we asked questions about anti-racist practices. Our consent forms were designed to ensure confidentiality following BC IRB processes.

Data Analysis

Because our individual studies were loosely coupled within our overall study, much of the data was collected as a group but analyzed individually. Our data analysis started with a preliminary exploratory analysis to get a general sense of the data, and this was followed by establishing a coding process to make sense of the data (Cresswell & Guetterman, 2019). A detailed explanation of each investigator's coding processes can be found in our individual Chapter 3s.

Positionality

Given the focus on issues of race and racism in this study, it is important to note the role that positionality played in our research. Our work reflects the positionality of each researcher within our diverse group. The researchers in our group have both educator and district-level leadership experience in public, charter, Catholic, and independent schools, serving elementary, middle, and high schools. Among this group is an Assistant Principal, Director of Equity and Inclusion, Dean of Teaching and Learning, Elementary Superintendent, and a Head of School. The research team includes two White men, a Latina, a Black woman, and an Asian-American woman. As research practitioners who are simultaneously researching anti-racist practice and continuing our commitment to equity in schools and our systems, we recognize that the questions we asked and the inferences we drew from our findings are influenced by our racialized experiences as

well as our respective culture, class, and gender (Creswell, 2012). Knowing this, we checked for bias by developing interview protocols jointly, maintaining process journal entries, and collectively reviewing interview transcripts while looking for patterns and themes. Each researcher identified themselves to the participants in the study by role and home school or district, as well as their self-identification by the social constructs of race and gender.

As a dissertation-in-practice group, we've seen each other through academic challenges, family illness, the birth of two children, and other life stressors as we've simultaneously led our respective schools through this pandemic. We acknowledge the significant emotional labor required to both research and work for racial equity. As we co-constructed knowledge together, we've woven processes into our meetings to ensure we remain connected to both the mission of our work and each other. We committed to negotiate and balance the emotional labor—with the recognition that so often this burden is carried by people of color—by beginning most meetings with check-ins and closings with a pluses and deltas protocol that addressed both successes and growth. Finally, we offer additional details of our positionality in the individual studies in chapter 3.

Limitations

As with any qualitative case study, the methodological choices we made in our inquiry came with some limitations. Our qualitative investigation was a snapshot of educational leaders' perceptions at a specific moment in time. In addition, the relatively small sample size made it difficult to generalize some of the findings to the entire district or other districts in Massachusetts. The makeup of our group of researchers, which consisted of three women of color and two White men, was also a limitation. Although

our interview protocols were created and reviewed collectively as a group, it is possible that the race and/or gender of the interviewer impacted the responses of the educational leaders being interviewed. Upon reflection, however, none of the group members felt that the interviews were compromised or negatively impacted by the race or gender of the interviewers, but it is impossible to know for sure. One great asset of our group, however, was our ability to discuss the data and findings in great detail as a racially mixed group of women and men.

Despite these limitations, the perceptions of our participants will certainly add value to those looking to better understand anti-racist leadership and the conditions that support or constrain the enactment of anti-racist practices, especially in the current crises of the global pandemic and racial reckoning.

Chapter 3

Latinx Educational Leaders: Culturally Responsive Leadership[3]

The perspectives of Latinx educational leaders are critical to addressing current disparities in education impacting opportunities and access at a national level. Specifically, the Latinx population is one of the fastest-growing and diverse groups in the United States at about 18% of the total population of 60.6 million people per the 2020 U.S. Census (NCES, 2018). Additionally, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the number of Latinx school-aged children entering pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 is approximately 14 million, or almost 30% of the projected 50.7 million public school students (NCES, 2018). Nonetheless, Latinx students are growing in number and their opportunities to succeed, academic outcomes, and graduation rates compared to their White counterparts are woefully disproportionate. Unfortunately, the opportunity gap is growing (Covarrubias, 2017; Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Taggart, 2018).

NCES's most current data demonstrates the number of Latinx educators in leadership roles is not meeting the growing population of Latinx students. This scarcity of Latinx leadership in K-12 settings has remained consistent for the last four decades and was also evident in the district covered in this study. Therefore, understanding how to best address the disparity in academic achievement for Latinx students may benefit from an in-depth review of the research on Latinx educators and their leadership trajectories.

[3] This chapter and study presents the individual intellectual contributions of the author: Ana Tavares

Scholars have called for a reset of current practices and a consideration of teaching through a culturally responsive lens to improve the learning outcomes of their students (Gándara, 2015; Tatum, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Simultaneously, educators are being asked to consider the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to address long-standing disparities within their classrooms and schools (Fortuna et al., 2020; Khalifa, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Understanding the experience of Latinx educational leaders may add a critical data point to better address the ever-growing disparity impacting Latinx students. To further understand this phenomenon, this individual qualitative study considered the following research question: How do Latinx educational leaders make sense of their leadership practice during this moment of racial reckoning and the COVID-19 pandemic?

Equally important to consider, most published studies of Latinx educational leaders have focused on urban settings working with students who are predominantly Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) or on Latinx students in predominantly White schools (Hernández & Murakami, 2016; Martínez & Mendez-Morse, 2021; Rodríguez et al., 2016). Scholars in the field warn that disparities of any kind disrupt the teaching and learning of students and educators; for example, denying full access and contributions of Latinx students causes deficits to all learners (Bernal, 2002; Darder et al., 2012).

As stated in Chapter 1, in response to the growing awareness of the importance of leadership in K-12 settings and the importance of equity-centered policy and practice, this individual study is situated within a group study. Specifically, the group study considered educational leaders' anti-racist practices as a disruption to systemic racism

and looked at system-level levers for equity. The two research questions of the larger study are:

1) In what ways, if at all, do educational leaders enact anti-racist leadership practices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and this moment of racial reckoning in their schools/districts?
2) What are leaders' perceptions of the limitations or supports for anti-racist leadership practice in their schools/districts as they navigate leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and this moment of racial reckoning in their schools/district?

To respond to the research question, this individual study included a qualitative case study. Data collection included six interviews of Latinx educational leaders who hold a variety of leadership roles and responsibilities within their schools and across the district beyond the principalship. Their leadership was impactful while their title was less significant. Due to the small number of Latinx educators in the district as well as the void of Latinx principals, their stories became counternarratives to the prescribed ideas of leadership and representation, these educators lead critical work as teachers, assistants, and directors (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Additionally, their stories are supported by the research collected for the studies across all members of the Dissertation-in-Practice (DIP) team which upholds the imperative contributions of educators of color and the importance of White identity development (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Tatum, 2017). Anti-racist practice is the responsibility of all members of the District.

Within this larger context, this study is focused on the gap in the research on the experiences of Latinx educational leaders within a predominantly White and affluent

public school system committed to anti-racist work. In this chapter, I present findings in response to the individual research question which revealed that Latinx educational leaders in this district demonstrated a clear understanding of the equity-centered initiatives and professional development focused on anti-racist practices put forth by the district. Nonetheless, these leaders also experienced inconsistency between how they perceived the impact of these initiatives and their experience as educators or their leadership practice. Furthermore, the interview participants identified strongly with their own diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and racial backgrounds as people of Latinx descent naming their positionality as influential to their leadership practice. They also revealed the support and challenges they face while navigating their district. In response to the research question, understanding the experiences of these Latinx educational leaders provides an opportunity to develop culturally responsive schools and districts in addition to offering recommendations for leadership preparation programs. Accordingly, this individual qualitative study contributes insight into how Latinx educational leaders—and the communities they serve—can provide critical guidance to navigate systems that have historically underserved communities of color.

For this study, it is also essential to address the decision to use the term Latinx and how this term may or may not capture all the intersections of these ethnically and racially diverse people. Latinx is a term that emerges from scholars and is not as commonly used in communities outside of academia (de León, 2018; Morales, 2018; Torres, 2017). In other words, scholars discuss the complexity of the use of the Latinx as a descriptor within academia and pontificate on its origin and linguistic prowess (DeGuzmán, 2017). While within Latinx communities, there is a lukewarm reception to

the term Latinx. For example, it is not easily pronounced in Spanish and is considered elitist and disconnected from the same communities the term refers to (de León, 2018). I have chosen to use Latinx when referring to the educational leaders in this study to capture their experience as multi-racial people, as well as the generations of newly arrived and multi-generational people of Latin American and Caribbean descent. In addition, Latinx also acknowledges the non-binary identities of the people within and outside of the study (Guidotti-Hernández, 2017). Finally, the Latinx population is not a monolithic group. Latinx people include all races, multiple languages, diverse ethnic influences, differing documentation statuses, and differing immigration timelines. Nonetheless, there are sufficient commonalities within the cultural and linguistic context of Latinx people to support the assertion that there are some similar experiences across an ever-growing school-age population (Amos, 2018; Darder, 2012; Yosso, 2005).

Finally, in this chapter, to respond to the research question, there is first a review of three bodies of literature beginning with scholarship on Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL), Latinx leadership through Latina/o/x Critical studies (LatCrit), and research on leading in moments of crisis. Second, methods for this qualitative study focused on six interviews of Latinx educational leaders using purposeful sampling to identify those who led initiatives focused on equity-centered practice and identified as Latinx. Third, the positionality of the researcher is discussed as stated by Khalifa et al. (2016) as a critical component of the research process, the researcher as well as the educational leader must begin their leadership from their positionality because it allows for a deeper understanding of one's responsibilities for challenging oppressive structures within schools and districts. Fourth, a review of the findings in response to the research

questions details how Latinx leaders make sense of their practice in a time of crisis. Lastly, the discussion section illuminates how to address the need to build educational leaders' skill set around culturally responsive practice to address opportunity gaps for both students and colleagues experiencing racism as members of a historically marginalized group.

Literature Review

This study was informed by three bodies of literature: (a) scholarship on Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL), (b) Latinx leadership through Latina/o/x Critical studies (LatCrit), and (c) research on leading in moments of crisis. While much of the literature reviewed in this chapter is from peer-reviewed academic publications, it is essential to note that there is an ever-growing body of scholarship and research on Latinx educational leaders found in unpublished dissertations and emerging academic work offering insight into the leadership practice of this small and growing group of leaders (Agosto, 2013; Alarcon et al., 2011; Bordas, 2015; Méndez-Morse & Mártinez, 2021). Therefore, given the need for more scholarly work on this growing population of Latinx educational leaders, this study seeks to add to the gap in the literature.

Research on Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL)

In this study, focusing on culturally responsive leadership (CRL) supports "culturally proficient leadership, culturally relevant leadership, culture-based leadership, cultural competency, multicultural leadership, and leadership for diversity" which supports the need for culturally responsive educators leading schools and districts (Johnson, 2014, p. 148). CRL has been used to inform culturally proficient pedagogy and leadership in diverse contexts to create a framework for culturally responsive leadership.

Johnson (2014) further describes leaders who embody this work and understand the "collective uplift of their communities" as central to their work (p. 159). Similarly, Khalifa et al. (2016) recognize the need to consider a diverse form of educational leadership to enact CRL practices across schools and districts (Genao, 2021). For example, Khalifa et al. and Genao (2021) speak about the importance of teacher leaders, principals, and district-level leaders, among others, making up a complete ecosystem of leadership, all of whom are critical to addressing systemic racism in educational settings. The scholars also share sub-categories within the four tenets of CRL. Khalifa et al. posit that a critically responsive leader is self-reflective and challenges the systemic inequities based on race and centered around White racial constructs against which BIPOC leaders and students are measured. For this study, when considering Latinx leaders and their position as people of color within education, their sheer existence as leaders is an enormous challenge to the status quo when considering their low numbers within positions of leadership (Agosto et al., 2013; Alarcon et al., 2011; Méndez-Morse & Mártinez, 2021). A few exceptions exist across states such as California and Texas, where the population of Latinx communities is much larger (Ayala, 2012; Fry, 2006). Yet building culturally responsive leadership and sustainable practices is a challenge for Latinx leaders even in larger districts that have a significant number of Latinx colleagues and students (Agosto et al., 2013; Delgado Bernal, 2002).

In a review of over two decades of literature on social justice-centered leadership, Sarid (2020) speaks to the complexities for leaders, who also face cultural discrimination and marginalization along with the communities they support. Latinx Leaders in many ways experience similar discriminatory actions familiar to their students (Alarcon, 2011;

Bordas, 2015; Covarrubias et al., 2018; Méndez-Morse & Mártinez, 2021). Sarid (2020) attributes the work of scholars of CRT and CRL as responsible for promoting and advocating for social justice from a critical lens in educational leadership within the field.

Therefore, CRL contributes to the study by supporting the growing understanding within the scholarship of how Latinx educational leaders make sense of their leadership practice. CRL sheds light on how Latinx leaders use their funds of knowledge to face mounting challenges during the global pandemic and respond to the national, racial reckoning. To note, the research on CRL has helped set up this study by providing the framework for responding to the research question, as well as how the findings from this research have been used.

Research on Latinx Educational Leaders through a LatCrit Lens

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and more specifically for this study, Latina/o/x Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) challenges traditional interpretations of cultural capital (Agosto et al., 2013; Amos, 2018; Bernal, 1998, 2002; Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019; Hinojosa & Melendez, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; López, 2020). CRL and CRT/LatCrit have explicit connections in the ways they shift the research lens regarding a deficit view of cultural knowledge of communities of color, void of cultural substance and filled with disadvantage, toward one filled with "cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Therefore, CRT, as defined by scholars Taylor et al. (2009), "offer[s] critical perspectives on race, and the causes, consequences, and manifestations of race, racism, inequity, and the dynamics of power and privilege in

schooling" and help us examine the leadership practices of educational leaders in urban public settings committed to social justice and equity.

As previously stated, CRL and CRT/LatCrit have explicit connections in how scholars define the cultural knowledge of communities of color as assets. Empirical studies on Latinx students, their triumphs, and their challenges across the last twenty years, are readily accessible in scholarly journals and published studies (Amos 2018; Ayala, 2012; Gándara, 2015; Gándara & Contreras, 2020; Ocasio, 2014; Taggart, 2018). Perhaps the exponential growth of students of Latinx descent creates the urgency to understand how to support their learning. As previously stated, empirical research is growing, focusing on the contributions of Latinx educational leaders in urban K-12 settings beyond unpublished dissertations and anthologies (Alarcón et al., 2011; Amos, 2018; Bordas, 2015; Darder et al., 2012; Mártinez & Méndez-Morse, 2021). For example, for the past forty years, Méndez-Morse, one of the researchers most cited across the literature in this study, has contributed to research on Latina principals and superintendents and Latinx educational leaders at all levels of public education. Méndez-Morse began publishing scholarship on the impact of the principalship for "at-risk youth" in the early 1990s joining researchers' understanding of the impact of school leaders as critical to leading instruction and not just managing schools (1991 & 1992). Building on the work of Gándara (1982) and Ortíz (1982), Méndez-Morse focused her research on Latinas in educational leadership roles specifically focusing on the principalship (2000 & 2015) and the superintendency (1997 & 1999). Méndez-Morse found the "perspective into the discourse of leadership, gender, and ethnicity" regarding Latina educational

leadership as pivotal to understanding leadership attributes that break away from the single narrative of the majoritarian and White-centered perspective on educational leadership (p. 595, 1991).

Within this study, scholarship on the impact of the current crises—the COVID-19 pandemic and pervasive systemic racism—on Latinx leaders is supported by a Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology. Leadership assets are derived from "cultural intuition" as defined within "an evolving concept that allows for experiential knowledge, subjugated knowledge, embodied knowledge, and relational knowledge" within the research process (Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 567). Delgado Bernal (2016) also expands the criteria for leadership to include "cultural intuition [which] requires Chicana/Latina scholars to understand ourselves in relation to our bodies, sexualities, place, communities, current socio-political realities, and a commitment to social change" (p. 567). Additionally, Khalifa et al. (2016) align Chicana/Latina epistemology with a culturally responsive approach to leadership that emphasizes "critical self-awareness" and the "educational, social, political, and cultural needs of students" (p. 1278). Finally, cultural intuition through a culturally responsive approach aligns with conceptualizing Latinx educational leaders as possessing community cultural wealth.

Research on Leading in Moments of Crisis: Lessons from Hurricane María

For this study, reviewing moments of crisis provides opportunities for educational leaders to deepen their learning and leadership practice. This branch of literature is essential to review because recent history has been marked by a series of crises: the cholera pandemic of 1910, the flu pandemic in 1918, the impetus to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, and catastrophes due to climate change, to name just a few. Each

had differences yet they were interconnected in defining the human experience within the interplay of power and powerlessness (Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019). When we think about moments of crisis, we consider the cause and effect of the crisis. Literature on crises within the last couple of decades also includes natural disasters and socio-political and socio-cultural phenomena that destabilized communities and their schools, for example, the catastrophic Hurricanes Katrina and María. For this study, considering Latinx leaders' linguistic and cultural proximity to the bilingual and multicultural context of Puerto Rico, the leadership lessons learned post-hurricane Maria provides unique insights. Hence, the recent restructuring of schools in Puerto Rico post-Hurricane Maria provides a case study that supports framing and parallels analysis to the current pandemic and its disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities of color (Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019). The recent restructuring post-pandemic and the lessons learned from the restructuring post-hurricane María coincide with the need for the field of education to better understand Latinx educational leaders and "how [they help lead] marginalized communities build solidarity and respond to and resist dominant culture, laws, and policies that perpetuate inequity" when faced with the impact of the pandemic on communities of color (Delgado Bernal, 2012, p.363).

This body of literature provides an opportunity to probe assumptions about how Latinx leaders navigate culture, race, language, and class post-recovery. For example, Bonilla and LeBrón (2019) wrote how Hurricane María revealed: "centuries of colonialism, decades of economic crisis, and deep forms of structural and infrastructural neglect" that had already existed in Puerto Rico before the storm (p. 26). In addition, scholars Melendez et al. (2017) consider the impact of depopulation of school enrollment

in Puerto Rico and the uptick in enrollment in the state of Florida highlighting the impact of the hurricane as far-reaching. The communities on the mainland of the United States are contending with how to best support the students and families fleeing the island. In some ways, the COVID-19 pandemic could also be considered less of "a shock doctrine", referring to colonialism and slavery, but rather a trauma doctrine, highlighting long-standing inequities across political and social systems (p.22). In other words, Hurricane María's devastating impact mirrors the impact of colonialism on the island. These challenges arising from the crisis directly impact BIPOC students and Latinx educational leaders grappling with the intersectionality of language, place of origin, and generational impact of poverty.

Reviewing this leadership in crisis literature, considering the impact in Puerto Rico post-Hurricane María, has entailed figuring out the experiences of Latinx leaders—leading from and through the shared generational experience of colonialism and slavery. This body of literature provides an opportunity to probe assumptions about culture, race, language, and class post-recovery. The lessons learned from trauma recovery underscores how "the way to healing is to give people agency" (Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019, p. 34). We can use this knowledge of recovery efforts from Hurricane María to deconstruct how Latinx educational leaders make sense of and engage those most impacted at the school and community level to participate in the recovery planning post-pandemic.

Methods

For this study, a qualitative research design was used to respond to the research question focusing on Latinx educational leaders' practice within a mid-size predominantly White, and affluent public school district. A qualitative case study allowed

an interpretive approach to understanding how Latinx educational leaders made sense of their leadership practice during the last two years while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and the most recent national racial reckoning. Data was collected from six semi-structured interviews. The following sections describe the sampling and types of data collection followed by how the data were analyzed.

Site and Participant Selection

The site for the study was a mid-sized public school district with a predominately affluent and White student body and staff. As described in chapter 2, this individual study is part of the larger case study of a single district. A screener interview with the district's superintendent supported this individual study by identifying Latinx educational leaders whose leadership supported the district's commitment to racial equity.

Due to the limited number of Latinx educators in the district, the definition of leadership roles was expanded beyond traditional roles to include Latinx educational leaders who are highly participatory in district initiatives, for example, to include educators who led projects impacting students and schools within their given responsibilities. In addition, the years of experience and time working in the district ranged from twenty or more years to entering their third year. Lastly, the participants shared exposure to the Spanish language from native speaker level to emergent bilingual. To determine participants, purposeful sampling was used to ensure the participants could respond to the research question and identified as Latinx. The superintendent supported the initial identification of Latinx educators within the organization. Participants included teacher leaders, curriculum and assessment directors, school counselors, program

directors, and other support staff with relevant experience within the schools and district who were also acknowledged as "leaders" by the superintendent.

Snowball sampling was also used—where participants were asked to recommend other individuals to be interviewed—to ensure that participants were viewed as equity-centered in their practice by supervisors, peers, colleagues, and or community members they directly supervise, work with, or support (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019). The study participants, therefore, supported access to other Latinx leaders across various roles within the district. Often, the names of participants were shared or repeated by the participants themselves during the interview process. Briefly, the participants recommended Latinx colleagues that spanned the leadership roles from their positions as teachers, coaches, assistant directors, administrators, and support staff.

Five out of the six participants identified their race as either "White presenting," or "Afro-Latino/a," and one participant identified themselves as "indigenous." Participants also identified their roots from several areas within the Latinx diaspora, specifically within the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Three of the six participants also identified one parent as non-Latinx and White. Lastly, two of the six identified as Afro-Latino/a.

Data Collection and Analysis

The general approach to data collection and analysis was to understand the phenomenon through a qualitative approach. Data collection included six semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai software which included a highlight summary. The interview questions protocol was guided by the

study's conceptual framework as shown in Appendix A. Below are details of the semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured Interviews

The interview questions were categorized around the four tenets of CRL: critical self-awareness, culturally responsive curricula and teacher development, culturally responsive and inclusive school environment, and engaging students and parents in community contexts (Khalifa et al., 2016). Additionally, probing questions provided an opportunity to include specific cultural references specific to the participants' intersectionality. For example, a participant who immigrated to the U.S. as a young adult included their experience in education from their country of origin, which influenced their current leadership style providing a perspective that they identified as a cultural asset. While the interview questions were predetermined, the wording and order of questions were flexible. As mentioned, the probing questions were also organically built from each participant's response in the study.

Preparation Pre- and Post-Interview

Influenced by the research question, the body of literature, and the interview process as the "only way to get the data" preparing the interview protocol was an important first step (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 109). Otter.ai was used as a transcription software that allowed notetaking and highlighting sections during and post-interview. Because each interview transcript was available within a couple of hours, each interview was immediately reviewed. Most of the participants were bilingual and used both English and some Spanish in their responses which were translated for the notes. In addition to the transcripts and notes, details were added to a process memo for organizing

the data and initial analysis. An equally pivotal component of the process was reviewing and calibrating initial findings with members of the dissertation in practice (DIP) team.

To further inform my individual study, a review of the interviews conducted by DIP group members provided a deeper analysis or contextualization of the experience of educators from different backgrounds across the district of study. The survey data was collected by two DIP group members. The survey data included the perspectives of participants across racial identities and other intersections experiencing some similar district-level experiences that also informed my analysis and findings. This triangulation of the data and research team approach to the analysis increases the internal validity of both our overall study and each of our studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Analysis

Once the collection of data from interviews began, the following steps were followed: first, reading through the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings more than once to be immersed in the data and mark the transcript with notations. Second, the initial round of coding focused on deductive codes that came from the literature such as (a) professional assets/barriers, (b) self-awareness, (c) systems of support, (d) cultural wealth, (e) impact of a global pandemic, and (f) racial reckoning. Third, the next round of coding focused on inductive codes, gathering information from the data garnering codes, for example, connection to the place of origin and sense of service for the community. The themes were created from the codes with the highest frequency and that cut through all six participants, which were reflected in the literature. Then a schematic was developed to look at the themes as they emerged within and across the six participants. The themes served as a basis for the findings. Analysis was also aided and deepened

through weekly conversations with DIP members in which we shared our process and progress thereby providing an opportunity to improve one another's studies.

Limitations

This study had some limitations regarding data collection and interviews since the research process began during a pandemic. The gradual removal of restrictions altered how the data was collected, we'd planned to conduct interviews in person, all the interviews for my individual study were conducted via the Zoom platform. Secondly, the low number of Latinx educators in general and more specifically in leadership positions was challenging. The small sample size provides an outlook on the phenomenon particular to this group of educators. In addition, some of the Latinx educators knew one another or knew one another's work which further limited any generalizations. In other words, they each spoke about their unique experience in a predominantly White district that became familiar with how their experiences as people of color contend with organizations built without them in mind even though they were also unique experiences for each participant.

Finally, acknowledging the complexity and emotional cost of discussing racism by Latinx educational leaders held challenges. When considering the constant media coverage of the public and violent murders of Black community members, the participants themselves or their families shared similar experiences and spent time expressing their pain and worry during the interview. The impact on both the participants themselves as they shared their experience with micro and macro aggressions in and outside of their workspaces while also negotiating racism in support of their students may have caused participants to grapple with uncomfortable feelings

and possible vulnerability. The full impact may have been unknown during the interview.

Researcher Positionality

Khalifa et al. (2016) believe educational leaders must begin their leadership from their positionality because it allows for a deeper understanding of one's responsibilities for challenging oppressive structures within schools and districts. Nonetheless, schools and districts like the one in this study have a majoritarian professional culture, which is often White middle-class heteronormative. The literature reveals the challenges faced by BIPOC educational leaders when navigating the unspoken rules of interaction that replicate racialized systems (Khalifa et al., 2016). Within this context, at the core of my research interest is the inexhaustible drive to support students and leaders whose trajectory through educational settings mirrors my own. As a first-generation college student, myself, I struggled to make sense of a system that consistently attempted to erase my culture and language, a form of oppression that caused dissonance for the first few years of schooling. Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) write about an "apartheid of knowledge" that speaks to the "devaluation of the epistemological knowledge of people of color" through expected assimilation into the dominant culture, English-speaking and White (López, 2003). My story is the story of many bilingual and bicultural people, those who developed forms of resistance without diminishing our identities. Instead, we found ways to tap into our knowledge and cultural intuition which includes the collective experiences of a resilient community that despite systemic oppression, thrives under the harshest circumstances (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

Nonetheless, my story is not the majority story. What about those students who

were unable to cut through systemic forms of oppression? I saw too many of these experiences within and outside of my own family. Identifying ways of resisting racial inequality (any form of inequality) drives me still to continue working in urban public schools with communities of color. My current position provides an incredible opportunity to build resistance among historically marginalized communities with like-minded educational warriors. Khalifa (2020) reminds us of the importance of critical self-reflection. Therefore, the research problem begins with a personal experience as well as part of a collective experience. What could have diminished my educational opportunities became the fuel that propelled my vocation to dismantle all forms of exclusion that fail to acknowledge assets such as race, culture, beliefs, gender, ability, and other identifiers or intersections including "the everyday experiences, structural realities, and resistance of Communities of Color" (Covarrubias et al., 2018).

Additionally, our dissertation in practice group discussed our understanding and self-identification in relation to our intersectionality: race, gender, and class, including our diverse leadership experiences. For example, currently, we hold the following positions: assistant principals, principal, dean of students, and school superintendent. We all identify as equity-centered leaders and are committed to critical self-reflection, which demands continuous learning of cultural knowledge and context (Khalifa et al., 2016). Finally, we self-identify as an Asian American woman, an African American woman, a Latina, and two White men, further providing multiple lenses from which to conduct our study.

Findings

Four clear themes emerged from the data in this study grounded in the context of the last two years, understanding the impact of the evolving global pandemic and the public reckoning of pervasive systemic racism entering learning spaces. The first finding explores the relationship between self-awareness and representation. The second considers how educational leaders make sense of the curricula and their own development as leaders when enacting and leading anti-racist practices. Thirdly, a review of educational leaders' understanding of their influence on the school environment when enacting culturally responsive practice and building inclusive spaces for learning is considered. Lastly, the understanding of leadership in times of crisis.

Self-awareness and Representation

Self-awareness and representation, focusing on the intersections educational leaders bring to their practice, relate to the research question by centering cultural knowledge as critical to leaders attempting to lead inclusive schools and districts. Additionally, representation relates to the research question by challenging disparities found in leaders' lack of racial and ethnic diversity specifically of Latinx descent. In the following paragraphs, data from interviews will demonstrate how respondents made sense of their leadership practice through a culturally responsive lens and their identity was and is integral to their leadership.

Consistent with the literature on LatCrit, these six respondents made sense of their identities as Latinx people in leadership roles regarding their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and place of origin as integral components of their identity. Complimentarily, in the CRL literature, the three components of responsive leadership include identifying oppressive

context, willingness to name one's privilege, and developing responsive schools, which reflected the participants' experience and emerged from the six interviews. They did not separate these tenets from who they are or their influences on their current position. Specifically, the participants were aware of the District's efforts toward anti-racist practice even though they were among the small number of BIPOC educators in their system. Additionally, several participants named their race as "white presenting" which provided some privilege and erasure of their ethnic and linguistic intersections. Finally, the participants identified their sense of responsibility for creating inclusive spaces for their students. The Latinx educational leaders connected with their intersectional identities as influential to how they make sense of their anti-racist practice from their proximity to marginalized communities.

Each interview respondent identified as Latinx. However, when asked: Could you describe your background, how you identify, and what languages you navigate personally and professionally? Most described their family's country of origin or place of origin[4] as the first response to how they identify, which connects with the LatCrit literature highlighting the importance of naming their intersectionality. For example, participants spoke directly about their families' influence in the development of their cultural identity and in navigating their experience as students which has directly impacted their current choices as educators.

> And there is a lot of pride in their heritage. Like my mom, she enforced speaking Spanish at home, like she said, you know, en la casa se habla español. She

[4] Puerto Rico is a commonwealth and an unincorporated U.S. territory. Several of the educational leaders in this study named Puerto Rico as their family's place of origin.

> wouldn't let us speak in English at home. And, you know, when a teacher told her that she should stop speaking in Spanish to us at home, she was like, this is America. I can speak whatever language I want to speak.

The combination of knowledge from home fortifying and expanding the knowledge they were receiving at school provided an opportunity for them to consider their cultural wealth as an asset to their learning experience. Additionally, participants referred to their parents as playing a pivotal role and some used the word “activists” when describing their parents, at least one parent of a participant explicitly named the responsibility they held as teachers for their community, the participant felt a responsibility to continue to lead with the expectation placed on them by their parent. This strong sense of cultural awareness influences their practice as educators. This sense of responsibility beyond themselves elevates their sense of responsibility toward their students.

Additionally, the leaders' responded with whether they were first or second-generation and their connection to the Spanish language as components of their identity, and how they make sense of their professional practice. A response from a leader often began with where their family roots are from, for example, “...so my mother is Puerto Rican, my father's American, White American” their identities include place. Another respondent shared, “I identify as Latin American, and my background is biologically Peruvian and Puerto Rican. However, I was raised by a single Puerto Rican mother, and have only been raised in that culture.” Their identity is defined within a U.S. context. However, they also identified their ethnic and cultural roots in their families' land of origin and racial identities.

Participants expressed their awareness of their identity as Latinx people versus how they are perceived by White colleagues or by White families. For example, one participant stated, “I think one thing about us is, in general, we tend not to have a speech pattern that ends in a question…just speak firmly, like if I feel a certain way I say it.” What is not always understood is the differences or nuances across cultural norms because the expectation is to interact in and with White cultural standards.

The respondents also shared that they participate in a variety of ways with the district’s offerings for professional development focusing on anti-racist practice to maintain their critical self-awareness as educational leaders. For example, they supported colleagues who led workshops or led professional development opportunities that focused on anti-racist practice. Even though the participants named actively pursuing development opportunities, there was a gap in sustaining the learning or enacting the learning.

> Sometimes there's, you know, a hole where there should be some system in place to support the community. And, and sometimes there's, you know, even if we recognize the hole, there's no support, whether physically or with positions or systems to figure out how to help to meet those needs. And we're getting better, you know, you ask about the district, I think the district is starting to get better at it.

Findings indicate that Latinx educational leaders were recognizing the attempts by their colleagues and the district to create opportunities for discussing issues of race and racism. The responsibility or burden of addressing disparities was no longer the sole responsibility of BIPOC educators.

Making Sense of Curricula and Leaders' Development

Making sense of curricula and leaders' development relates to the research question by speaking to the impact of the materials placed in front of students as tools for advancing social equity as well as validating the experiences of leaders and students beyond a White experience. In the following paragraphs, data further illustrates the components that contribute to an inclusive school environment and acknowledges the importance for both SOC and White students to learn from diverse perspectives.

The second major theme responds to the research question by considering the materials used for teaching and learning and their intended or unintended impact on students. The participants shared their struggle to maintain their students' access to materials that are representative of who they are as students of color (SOC) with "genuine stories" representing many perspectives. The participants did not want students to experience what they had experienced as a student or as adults who are judged or profiled by their racial presentation:

> I do consider it [identifying as Latinx] an asset…But it wasn't until recently that I really came to understand that, oh, that's my identity as a Latina coming out and understanding that that's my own background and values really being reflected. So I think that it really has been an asset to me as an educator, because that really is kind of, at the core of my work as an educator. I think that I was somebody who presents as white and who and, you know, unless somebody…other Latinx…recognize [said Spanish surname] is probably a Latina name…I feel like there's always that kind of erasure of that part of my identity and throughout my whole life. So as an educator, I think that that struggle is there and you know, that

> conscious or subconscious choice of how much do you know, put myself out there and self-identify.

The educator acknowledges ways in which her intersectionality both ethnically and culturally informs the choices she makes to support students. As an educator, she is addressing the lack of representation through the materials she shares with her students.

> …books are a perfect way to introduce our students to others' experiences. They are tools for building empathy and understanding of other people's cultures, their life in this world. And it is my responsibility as an educator to make sure they are having access to books that are representative of them.

As an educational leader, she is aware of her role as a critical force needing to take purposeful action to ensure CRL moves beyond the theoretical and implemented purposefully into practice. As a result, ensuring the materials and texts students are provided are representative of who they are.

Creating Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Spaces for Learning

Creating culturally responsive and inclusive spaces for learning relates to the research question by illuminating the leadership moves of the respondents and the challenges they faced. The participants in the study reflected on their own experiences as BIPOC students and how their experience supports their urgency for building inclusive learning spaces. In the following paragraphs, respondents reflect on the importance of engaging with their students' current experiences and acknowledge the importance of representation among leaders in their District.

The Latinx participants in this study were attempting to create spaces for learning that were culturally responsive by using CRL practices; however, they faced additional

challenges when implementing these practices. Participants shared learning from their students, "...I was asking this kid to comply to the majority rule, and how much I was hurting him...and thereby erasing his experience dealing with racist slurs…because it wasn't my experience" emphasizing how being Latinx requires understanding the different experiences of students by race, ethnicity, class, and other intersections not always shared by members of the Latinx diaspora. When the student felt comfortable and trusted his teacher, he revealed the degrading language he'd been exposed to, and his trust allowed there to be a change in approach and better understanding from the educator. When the educator removed her experience and created a space for learning from her student and his experience trust became possible and allowed for vulnerability.

These interviews respond to the research through the leaders' influence on the school environment when creating culturally responsive and inclusive spaces for learning. As leaders in education, there is privilege inherent in the power dynamic of a teacher, an administrator, or any other leadership role over a student and their family within a school or district context. More so if the student and their family are part of a vulnerable population. Understanding this privilege allows the educator to directly address anti-racist practices (Noguera, 2008; Gándara, 2015). In the present study, all six participants spoke about a clear understanding of their influence in creating learning spaces that are affirming to their students and their families. This was evidenced when a participant shared their decision to maintain their Spanish surname, "my name should match my face" wanting students and their families to be able to identify with them as Latinx or as a teacher of Color before they even interact. They also wanted students to identify with them as one of their own like their "grandmother or mother" meaning in a

familial way to disrupt their experience with the majority White teaching staff. Students encounter few teachers that reflect who they are since they are in a district with a disproportionately low number of teachers, counselors, or administrators of color.

Throughout the interviews, respondents shared their experiences as students. The diversity of experiences and identities among the study participants influence how they make sense of their work and how they address racial disparities.

> I went to [graduate school]...they reached out to me, they had several applicants, and they said to me, You are who we want because you are Hispanic, and I felt it [was] wrong I don't want to get that spot because I'm Hispanic, I want to get the spot because I deserve the spot…I didn't understand the politics behind the racialized structure within the U.S. [vs her country of origin]. But it was a [red] flag at that time…now I find myself carrying the flag constantly. Because if I don't, there are no voices for us at the table.

The educational leader speaks directly to the complexity of understanding the socially racialized construct in the U.S. and how she decided to understand how it impacts her students. CRLP requires educators to purposefully challenge institutions and their colleagues to be critical of their practice and reflect on their explicit and implicit biases that maintain the status quo. This can be a burden on educators who are attempting to change oppressive practices while they are themselves experiencing the racism of such practices. The six participants named this particular skill, navigating through racism, as one of the most challenging. Their respective schools and the district have structures they each identified as supporting CRLP while also identifying the challenges they also face by who they are and how they are identified by colleagues. For example, a district

administrator shared the challenge of confronting racism and oppressive practice in the schools they support.

> I don't think I'm right about everything, I have tons to learn, I learn every day. But I don't speak like I'm unsure of myself. So I'm passionate. I talk with my hands as we do...I've been told in the past that I'm aggressive and I'm, like, I'm passionate. So I think sometimes, some of the challenges are being misread.

Educational leaders in the study model and maintain their identities in schools and across the organization by acknowledging their multifaceted identities as educators and BIPOC leaders who bring intellectual, cultural, political, and relational assets to their practice (Amos, 2018). By not allowing themselves to be diminished the leaders also model to their students that their ways of being and who they are are critical to their growth, thereby affirming their student's identities as well.

Building culturally responsive districts and schools require critical self-reflection from many levels of the organization including within and among the educators responsible for implementing CRL. The commitment of the district and White allies, educators committed to critical self-reflection, must include opportunities for naming and dismantling biases that inherently exist within public school systems. For example, in district-level meetings, a respondent reflected on how they are aware of their minority status.

> If there are ten White people and one person of Color in the room and the person of Color says something and the White people don't agree with it to be like, well, she's only one person, she doesn't know what she's talking about.

A concern expressed by most of the interview participants reflected the experience of the educator who faced ingrained systemic racism whether in this example through implicit biases or explicit exclusion of colleagues of color. Representation matters, "...if I don't [speak up], there are no voices for us at the table" the responsibility to ensure students and colleagues were represented in all spaces was also identified as critical by all six participants. Given the reality they face as Latinx educators with little to no representation beyond themselves at their school or district, this also mirrors the national shortage of Latinx educational leaders, whose individual voices go beyond the moment they are speaking. In other words, Latinx educational leaders understand their impact and responsibility goes beyond themselves or individual students or a school, they represent a community and hold the responsibility of uplifting a generation (Amos, 2018).

Leadership in Times of Crisis

Leadership in times of crisis relates to the research question by contextualizing the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis that has similarities to phenomena that have historically impacted communities and by highlighting disparities and inequities that already existed due to systemic racism. In other words, some of the ways in which educational leaders have struggled to meet the needs of students and families from marginalized and vulnerable communities challenge the idea that all people are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic in the same manner. According to the literature on moments of crisis, who you are by race, class, ethnicity, place of origin, documentation status, and other intersectionality matters. Some of the lessons learned by educational leaders leading through crises can be found in communities that grappled with catastrophic natural disasters. In addition to the viral pandemic, the media coverage and

public witnessing of the murders of Black citizens in the United States also highlighted the impact of systemic racism. In the following paragraph, the participants shared their experiences as Latinx educational leaders supporting students through the COVID-19 pandemic while they experienced the impact personally and professionally. In addition, participants also made sense of their role as BIPOC educators as they navigated the public mourning of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery to name some of the murdered Black citizens at the hands of law enforcement or vigilantes.

The ongoing response by leaders in education to the impact of the global pandemic informs how Latinx leaders make sense of their practice in times of crisis. The District in this study explicitly names racism and how they are committed to establishing systems and structures supporting "all students to thrive" by addressing the impact of inequity on teaching and learning by the global pandemic and the most recent racial reckoning. The collective understanding of the six participants in this study supports the statement made by the District. For the most part, every educator interviewed had similar inclusive language when describing the commitment to equity shared across the district. Nonetheless, all six also shared varying examples of how challenging the implementation of the District's equity goal was, specifically as it was experienced by both educators of color and students of color.

> ...the challenge is not so much something that I could point to, but the fact that there's nothing I could point to that we're all still figuring it out, you know, and the fact that we're all still figuring it out means that sometimes there are missteps, that hurts the community.

There is a recognition of how responding to the pandemic and the racial unrest has benefited the school communities and the district at large. Nonetheless, the concern is steeped in worry about sustainability and follow through for a few of the participants that were interviewed who have been part of the district for over two decades. In response to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives:

> Quite a few years ago, I would say maybe my seventh year in teaching at...I co-facilitated a workshop of SEED (Seeking Educational Equity & Diversity) for staff, and admin in...and I did that for several years. And I had many co-facilitators, I tend to have been like the one who was the anchor. And that too, sort of lost its funding...And, yeah, so a lot of other initiatives took precedent in the system. So that kind of fell away.

The educator is referring to an initiative, SEED, from almost fourteen years ago. Even though the participants ranged in their experience in the district from less than five years to more than 30 they all expressed ambivalence around the sustainability of the district's efforts while simultaneously expressing hope. Bonilla and Lebrón (2019) speak about how to sustain lessons learned from crises by ensuring those most impacted become full participants in building responsive schools for both the educators and the students with the full support of the community.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how Latinx educational leaders made sense of their practice during the crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the national racial reckoning due to the most recent public murders of Black citizens in the United States. Responding to the research question for this study further emphasized that leading

these last two years required leadership that identified threats, developed plans to meet those threats, and placed the resources necessary where needed while recalibrating the levers for social justice (Ladson-Billings, 2021). In other words, leading during the last two years and now requires a commitment from all members at all levels across the field of education to learn and adapt while sharing new skills.

The literature in the last decade or so has addressed the importance of school leaders' influence in enacting equity-centered policy and practice, placing the principal at the center of solving inequities. The current gap in research highlighted in the literature presented three possible areas for further study: (a) a need for further research on Latinx school leaders; (b) a need to better understand the trajectory to leadership for Latinx educators; and (c) a need for additional research on leadership roles at varying levels in schools and districts. In other words, what other roles are Latinx educators currently in that may influence culturally responsive practices? Additionally, there is urgency due to the rise in the numbers of Latinx students in our classrooms because as the population grows so does the opportunity gap for Latinx students. In the following sections, a review of what the study revealed includes implications about the answers to the research question and contributions to research along with remaining questions for future studies are further explored.

The study revealed the importance of responsive schools which require educators to take on a collective approach to their responsibility for their students (Khalifa, 2018). For example, the participants in this study shared their keen awareness of how few educators in the district were Latinx while also acknowledging the small but growing number of students of Latinx descent and students whose families are not White.

Providing support for BIPOC students and staff becomes beneficial to all members of the school and district community.

In other words, families, students, teachers, counselors, principals, and district administrators must all become full participants in creating and making tangible the culturally responsive practices they wish to see implemented in schools beyond traditional approaches that only address instructional outcomes for students. The study is supported by scholars Rodríguez et al. (2016) who state, to directly address the opportunity gap for Latinx students, educational leaders in public school systems will need to understand and build their skill set. Participants in the study spoke about their work with students and families specifically, the opportunities they purposefully sought to support BIPOC students. Ladson-Billings (2021) and Tatum (2017) also tell us that who is in front of students matters and their identification with teachers and school leaders can significantly impact their outcomes. Focusing on Latinx leaders in this study may contribute to understanding how we support and prepare educational leaders charged with supporting this growing Latinx population and addressing competencies in leadership preparation programs to mitigate the existing opportunity gap.

There is a need for further research on Latinx educational leaders. As the findings in this study have shown, the data on Latinx school leaders demonstrates the low numbers of principals or district leaders in comparison with the ever-rising numbers of Latinx students. Current research established principals and district leaders as linchpins for change at the policy and practice level. Participants in the study did not directly name themselves as linchpins however, many participate in professional development opportunities focused on anti-racist practice, or they mentor BIPOC colleagues new to

the profession, or they volunteer their time for anti-racist work led by the district. More research is needed to understand how to support Latinx educational leaders' trajectory. This study's focus on Latinx leaders provides an opportunity to delve into the scholarship to find research that supports the urgency for understanding the importance of Latinx leadership coupled with the urgency to address the pedagogical needs of an ever-growing population of Latinx students in this country. The opportunity gap among Latinx students is widening, which illuminates how any unaddressed disparity will continue to grow and multiply injustice.

This individual study on Latinx educational leaders is intrinsically connected to the other four studies focusing on a diverse leadership force attempting to enact anti-racist practices that influence policies and practices specifically designed to dismantle structural racism in schools and across districts. As stated in chapter one and throughout this study, the scholarship supports the critical need for anti-racist practice and culturally relevant pedagogy, which asserts the importance of the socio-political context in anti-racist education (Ladson-Billings, 2021). The Latinx leaders in this study confirmed the importance of ensuring a person is understood to be part of a shared experience in a community, marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance. As leaders whose roles did not have direct power or influence in their given title, as detailed in the study described in Chapter 1, the participants did have great influence in supporting anti-racist efforts in their practice in tangible ways with students and colleagues. Important to note, participants were leading from classrooms and across the organization beyond traditional leadership roles such as a principalship. Their leadership was impactful while their title was less significant. Research supports the need for asset-based approaches that

contextualize the multi-racial, multiethnic, and multilingual communities within a sociohistorical context that moves away from a majoritarian approach that pathologizes communities of color. A Latinx anti-racist leader promotes a learning environment that affirms the identities of students and taps into their cultural wealth to combat systemic forms of racism. As detailed in the findings of this study, there are clear connections between the CRLP tenets and the participants' experience in the District.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing research on Latinx educational leaders. Specifically, focusing on the strengths in their leadership practices that are developed from both their cultural capital and their experience mitigating racism. For example, participants described their latinidad or identity as people of color as a driver to becoming an educator. In addition, findings also revealed direct connections between their strong identification as Latinx people with their commitment to anti-racist practice. The perspective on leadership practices by Latinx leaders provides an opportunity for aspiring leaders to learn from while developing or improving their practice. The findings in this study emphasized the attributes of culturally responsive leaders who are critical and reflective practitioners. Essentially, Latinx educational leaders in this study shared their struggles and their triumphs, consistently embodying both as a minority in numbers in the District while also being a part of a growing national population who were navigating the challenges of the last two years. Their struggles included their experience as people of color in a majoritarian White organization that was also grappling with the national racial reckoning.

The findings in this study clarify the capabilities and unique assets of Latinx educational leaders. The data also revealed the ever-present challenges Latinx leaders

face as the minority in numbers within the district in this study as well as their low representation in leadership roles on a national level. There are too few educational leaders who are Latinx in leadership positions given the large number of Latinx students in this country. Additional research is needed overall focused on Latinx principals, superintendents, and other traditional leadership roles in public school systems. Furthermore, there is a need for reviewing non-traditional leadership roles such as teacher leaders, counselors, and assistant directors among others. It is imperative to understand the contribution of Latinx educational leaders, they hold knowledge that is critical to challenging the opportunity gap Latinx students are facing across our nation.

Chapter 4

Discussion and Recommendations[5]

Despite decades of reform since the Civil Rights Era, racial disparities persist in schools. Students of color are projected to increase in our schools and leaders of color remain underrepresented. Anti-racist leadership is more important now than ever before. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how educational leaders engage in anti-racism in a single District in Massachusetts that is committed to anti-racist practice and how these same leaders perceived limitations or support for anti-racist initiatives. To make sense of the perspectives of leaders in this District at a time when their current professional context has been defined by a global pandemic, we sought to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1 In what ways, if at all, do educational leaders enact anti-racist leadership practices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and this moment of racial reckoning?

RQ2 What are leaders' perceptions of the limitations or supports for anti-racist leadership practice as they navigate leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and this moment of racial reckoning?

Across our five studies, we found evidence of anti-racist leadership practices, ranging from policy and practice changes to individual actions and initiatives, some of which responded to racist incidents during the pandemic. Across all five studies, participants spoke about their efforts to engage teachers, parents, and students to better support anti-racist initiatives aimed at dismantling structural racism within their school

[5] This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project. Stephen Dacey, Laniesha Gray, Cicy Po, Thomas Smith, Ana Tavares.

communities. In Dacey, Gray, Po, and Smith's studies, findings showed extensive professional development initiatives dedicated to anti-racism, including racial identity development in the District; all studies found benefits to the formation of staff affinity groups, as well as time provided within the school day to meet in these affinity groups. In Tavares and Po's studies, participants shared about opportunities initiated by individuals to help the District advance anti-racist work and about the ways that they and others advocated with those informal decision-making roles. In Tavares's study, participants' responses illuminated the commitment needed from all educators at all levels across the District to effectively lead in order to enact anti-racist practices. In Po and Smith's studies, participants identified the intentional changes to policies and practices aimed at dismantling structural racism in their schools, such as more equitable grading policies, multi-level classes, a less Eurocentric curriculum, eliminating weighted grade point average calculations, and prioritizing the hiring of diverse faculty and staff.

As can be seen from these and other examples we presented in our individual dissertations, school and system leaders in this District could point to significant anti-racist leadership work happening across the District and perceived that this work was consistent with the District's anti-racist goals. Our findings suggest that outside of district-wide or school-sanctioned anti-racist initiatives, the District was also supportive of individual school leaders attempting to implement anti-racist initiatives that support racial equity and justice. As shown in more detail in Dacey's dissertation, some participants' perceptions of support included having a presumed license from the central office to promote their own racial equity initiatives; there was a sense that no approval was needed from the District hierarchy for launching initiatives such as book clubs or

human rights councils. Other participants, as found in Tavares and Po's study, did advocate for funds to run racial equity programs or were given class responsibility reductions to do building-level or District-level anti-racist work. Still, other participants felt support through the creation of affinity groups and in the efforts made to hire more diverse candidates. Therefore, the fact that the District intentionally supported the work of individual leaders who sought to accomplish anti-racist practices suggests that formal and informal leadership could be leveraged in this district to advance systemic anti-racism. This is consistent with research on change in organizations requiring work from all levels of an institution, and that individuals are dynamic agents (Bonilla & Lebrón, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

However, in looking across all five studies, a consistent finding was that school and system leaders perceived several limitations in the pursuit of anti-racist leadership practice. According to the District survey and as described in more detail in Gray, Tavares, and Po's dissertations, while it was generally felt that this moment in history has opened up opportunities for anti-racist work through heightened media attention to racism, district leaders also expressed that the pandemic hindered the advancement of the work across the District.

Similarly, our findings also identified several other limitations to the enactment of anti-racist leadership practices. One such limitation is the noted lack of Black Indigenous people of color (BIPOC) voices in leadership roles supporting anti-racist initiatives. As described in Tavares's dissertation, the six Latinx educators in the study noted that there was little to no representation beyond themselves at their school and specifically, no Latinx principals. In addition, Dacey found opportunities for staff to engage in White

racial identity development relied on informal conversation and discussion amongst White colleagues; there was a noted lack of formal opportunities designed specifically for White racial identity development, likely being obstructed by various forms of resistance exhibited by White educators in the District. Po and Tavares's dissertations found BIPOC leaders reported the isolation and little support when confronting daily or peak incidents of racism themselves. The work of some BIPOC leaders in the District felt unrecognized as found in Tavares's study. Across both Po and Tavares's studies, participants reported that only a small fraction of the work is acknowledged through formal structures, and despite the Districts' vocal support of anti-racist work, there is fatigue among those in the trenches. Finally, the ability to enact anti-racist leadership practices was limited by the lack of mandates from leadership to require staff to engage in anti-racist practices such as racial identity development work and equitable grading practices. So while anti-racist practices existed, we also found that the opportunities for anti-racist work were limited by the lack of BIPOC voices, lack of formal structures for White racial identity development, and resistance to systemic changes. Navigating these constraints is critical to creating anti-racist change.

Ultimately, in looking across and making sense of these findings, there is some evidence to suggest that leaders working to advance the work of anti-racist leadership in this District are often forced into navigating a set of fundamental tensions in the District. One tension is illustrated by the District's desire for systemic change and the need for an authentic engagement at the individual and interpersonal levels. Although there were significant small group efforts to dismantle structural racism, systemic anti-racist change was not institutionalized. According to participants, universal buy-in from constituents

did not develop, and as a result, there was a disconnect between policy and practice. Secondly, leaders of color developed greater leadership capacity as a result of the racialized challenges that they faced but remained challenged by the consistent experience of racism they endured.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, we will provide more detail about each of these fundamental tensions, including how our findings led us to make sense of these tensions in the District, as well as the implications for research, practice, and policy that we have noted as a result of these tensions. Our goal in the remainder of this dissertation is, in taking stock of how educational leaders enacted and perceived anti-racist leadership practices in their roles within this District, to consider the significance of findings as it points to new directions in institutional change and care for human resources to deepen understanding of anti-racist educational leadership. Throughout these remaining sections, we have included implications that District and school-level leaders within and outside the District may consider when attempting to pursue anti-racist practice, as well as suggestions for areas of future research grounded in our findings and conclusions.

The Tension Between Small Group Efforts and Systemic Change

Findings from our studies demonstrate that there is significant tension between school leaders' desire to create systemic anti-racist change and the need for an authentic engagement at the small group or individual level. As seen in Dacey's and Smith's studies, school leaders did not mandate specific anti-racist practices, such as more equitable grading practices and multi-level classes, for fear of resistance and teacher burnout. The lack of mandates not only resulted in inconsistent implementation of anti-racist practices but also allowed teachers to resist or avoid engaging in anti-racist work

and placed disproportionate burdens on teachers who were dedicated to the advancement of anti-racism in their schools. The lack of mandates also created gaps in the District's anti-racist programming.

As seen in Tavares' and Po's studies, there was significant anti-racist work done by individuals and small groups in this District who had been permitted by District leaders to experiment with anti-racism in their respective roles. For example, Tavares spoke to one educator who addressed the lack of BIPOC representation in the texts given to students by their supervisors which led to purchasing materials they could share with their students so that they could read text that was representative of who they are. Similarly, Po's research revealed several effective small group anti-racist efforts. For example, one of the most consistent themes across all of the participants' stories was the important role of mentorship. One elementary educator leader was grateful for the strong mentorship within her building and noted that the presence of another Asian leader had supported her during her most challenging times. This same leader took the initiative to secure funds to support race literacy, which allowed her to purchase books with diverse voices to put in front of kids. Another example included lead teachers writing a script that could be used for phone calls home to support Asian families during some of the most trying days of the spring of 2021.

In addition, Smith's study found that school leaders in the District feared that mandates for anti-racist work would lead to disengagement among the mostly White faculty. As a result, many of the anti-racist changes were not universally implemented. For example, a department chair felt that school leaders would lose buy-in and engagement if they tried to mandate specific grading practices. According to Dacey,

another participant shared that White faculty were not ready to engage in mandatory professional development around White racial identity.

Across the five studies, we also found that teacher fatigue and burnout were also major constraints on school leaders' ability to mandate anti-racist practices. For example, one vice principal shared that one of their biggest challenges is to push forward with anti-racist work without burning everyone out. Another school leader lamented that the current school year might be even more challenging than last year, which was in the middle of the pandemic. Ultimately, both White and BIPOC school leaders were unable or unwilling to ask teachers to do anti-racist work in addition to what they were already doing with several other programmatic changes underway.

Smith found that, without mandates, there was a fear amongst the participants that individual anti-racism would be counterproductive. According to participants, this inconsistent implementation led to disparate experiences for the students, whereby some teachers employed anti-racist practices while others did not. As reported by Smith, because of an inability to hold teachers accountable, some teachers prioritized being passionate teachers of their content over instructional ownership of engagement of students and the belief in their educability. This differential prioritization overburdened teachers who prioritize anti-racist education with having to be the pioneers for advancing how to make high rigor accessible to heterogeneous students.

Dacey and Smith's dissertations demonstrate that school leaders experienced resistance from teachers that came in the form of not having enough time to focus on anti-racism, as well as fear of losing autonomy. When a school leader was planning professional development for faculty, she had to change the plan at the last minute to give

faculty time to adjust to a new school schedule. Anti-racist work was put on hold to give teachers time for other new initiatives. Another participant relayed a response from one of her teachers who said they would retire if they were forced to teach multi-level classes. This resistance highlights the dilemma faced by school leaders as they tried to create systemic anti-racist change in their schools.

Other forms of resistance emerged as avoidance or shielding. For example, Dacey found that some White staff identified with a marginalized group that was not necessarily based on race or ethnicity, thereby masking their Whiteness. One participant stated that White faculty will often bring up other forms of their identity to avoid talking about race. As a result of feeling overlooked, these faculty did not fully engage in the racial identity work. These findings illustrate the fundamental tension felt by school leaders in how to enact systemic anti-racist change without making mandates that teachers might avoid or actively resist.

Implications for Research

Findings from this study are consistent with prior research that describes the obstacles that educational leaders must negotiate in making systemic anti-racist change. First, as stated in Chapter 1, research has shown that most practitioners are too "bogged down with individual commitment" to make anti-racist change systemic and often "neglect the larger institution" (Welton et al., 2018, p. 6). Although individual anti-racist work is critically important, research shows that there must be a systemic level commitment, to ensure that the entire school community is working towards creating an anti-racist environment (Welton et al., 2018); the findings of this study suggest that one systemic level commitment can manifest as ways to hold individuals accountable.

Participants across all five studies shared their perception that the District has not quite done enough at the organizational level to make a substantial and long-lasting anti-racist change. Our study provides further evidence that even in a District that is publicly committed to anti-racism, making systemic anti-racist change is incredibly difficult.

Second, research has shown that "for change to occur system-wide, institutions need to address change at multiple levels of scale, especially the individual, interpersonal, and organizational levels" (Welton et al, 2015, p. 10). The findings from our study indicate that this District has made extensive changes with its anti-racist work at the individual and interpersonal levels, even if some of the results have been mixed. It is at the organizational level where this District has not yet made third-order changes that will have system-wide impacts. For example, one change that has been described by Oakes et al. (2005) as a necessary organizational change is the deleveling of classes. While this District has done significant work in creating multi-level classes, it has yet to de-level its curriculum. Our study suggests more research is needed about what kinds of system-wide changes are likely to be successfully adapted and what change is more likely or more sustainable when approached at school levels and then replicated.

Third, research has also shown that school leaders must navigate the resistance from teachers that inevitably arises when attempting anti-racist work. The resistance found in this study most often came in the form of White educators thinking they are experts, White educators' desire to focus on content, White educators shielding themselves, and White educators believing that the timing is not ideal for anti-racist work. According to participants, this resistance caused educational leaders to change their approach to the enactment of anti-racist leadership. For example, omitting Whiteness

from the racial identity professional development workshops for faculty was a capitulation made by school leaders to encourage buy-in from White faculty. This is consistent with the research of Solomon (2002), Swanson & Welton (2019), and Theoharis & Haddix (2011), who found that school leaders are often forced to compromise anti-racist principles to overcome the resistance from White faculty. Therefore, our findings suggest that future research should ask questions like what happens when anti-racist leadership does not compromise and includes White racial identity development in the professional development plan?

Last, research on schools engaging in strategic anti-racist improvement has largely found that, despite good intentions, efforts to dismantle systemic racism rarely lead to fundamental anti-racist change (Castagno, 2014; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Welton et al., 2015). Findings from our study confirm that there are often unintended consequences of supposed "common sense" policies and practices that could be one reason that fundamental anti-racist change fails to develop. For example, the inconsistent implementation of anti-racist practices was an unintended consequence of school leaders' policies allowing teachers the freedom to experiment with anti-racist work. To this end, they could ask questions about how school leaders should examine the outcomes of well-intentioned policies they put in place to advance the anti-racist work in their schools.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Our findings suggest several implications for practice that this District, or a District like it, could consider reaching its goal of creating systemic anti-racist change. These implications include how to capitalize on the small group efforts being made in the District, consideration of mandates for anti-racist practices, how to navigate the

resistance and avoidance that arises from teachers, and an examination of the relationship between policy design and policy outcomes.

The findings suggest that school leaders consider how individual initiatives for District goals can spread through collaboration across the institution. The literacy specialist gaining budgetary authority over selecting books by authors of diverse voices is a good example of a building practice that could be implemented across the District. Attention to diverse voices in the purchasing of books is the sort of anti-racist initiative that needs to become a District-wide practice, and it can't wait for a motivated volunteer to write a grant to make this change across the District. Likewise, an English teacher was able to bring a network of tens of thousands to do a book study and to bring the author to the District's virtual campus; however, this massive one-time effort was not mandated across the District as a practice to advance anti-racist education.

Although most, if not all, participants in our study strongly believed in the anti-racist work being done in the District, they also acknowledged the resistance they encountered from faculty and staff in the implementation of anti-racist policies and practices. This resistance contributed to the disconnect between the purpose and design of school policy and the experiences of people of color in the District. Therefore, the District could continue to develop an understanding of anti-racist practices for all members of the organization. This may include mandates for the implementation of certain anti-racist practices so that faculty and staff will less likely be able to avoid addressing the structural racism that exists in their school community. In addition, consider mandatory professional development for all faculty and staff on topics such as White racial identity development and culturally responsive teaching.

Our findings suggest that District leaders focus on the analysis of policies and outcomes so that they could "carefully diagnose the causes of specific outcomes in their schools and engage in purposeful design and redesign of organizational routines to facilitate different outcomes" (Lewis & Diamond, 2015, p. 176). As part of this process, school and district leaders could consider the effective collection of evidence documenting disparate experiences and outcomes, disaggregated by race. As part of this evidence collection, how schools engage with BIPOC students, families, faculty, and staff in the creation of feedback loops for the design and redesign of policies and practices may provide additional data to further the anti-racist work at the systemic level.

The District should feel encouraged because research asserts that race and equity need to be a part of our daily lives for anti-racist practices to be effective (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). Therefore, our studies suggest that even in a White, affluent, anti-racist District, anti-racism is not a checkbox, but an ongoing, never-ending process. Therefore, educational leaders should find hope in the many small-group anti-racist efforts demonstrated throughout the studies and consider ways to operationalize these small group efforts to make them systemic. The most significant message for educational leaders and policymakers in the District is to keep going.

The Tension Between BIPOC Leaders Leading through Racism and as a Result, Gaining Increased Capacities

Educational leaders of color share experiences of racism working in public school systems. Many BIPOC leaders develop a greater capacity to lead as a result of their racist experience. BIPOC leaders mitigate the experience of racism for students and colleagues while mitigating it for themselves; furthermore, these BIPOC leaders are

leading within systems that perpetuate racism. The different challenges include working through micro and macro aggressions, doubts by others of their competency, cultural isolation, stereotyping, and pigeonholing as the people who should solve racism in schools, to name a few impacting their leadership path. The data from interviews of the District's BIPOC educational leaders indicate leadership strengths developed directly from their experience of leading in predominantly White spaces. Through these challenges, BIPOC leaders have developed capacities from their positionality as influential to their leadership practice. These capacities include the use of cultural intuition to connect with communities of color; the use of navigational capital and critically negotiating with colleagues; the use of social capital and growing alliances and networks; and lastly, to persist in anti-racist work.

BIPOC leaders named their cultural intuition and their proximity to marginalization as assets that directly informed how they navigated predominantly White spaces and supported students (Delgado Bernal, 2016; Yosso & Burciaga, 2016; Covarrubias et al., 2018). Respondents in Tavares's study spoke about connecting with students, families, and colleagues using the Spanish language, as shared in the interviews, "where I could just, you know, feel like I'm in a community that feels like family" thereby connecting through their linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005). Findings indicated that Black students of the Black Leadership Advisory Council had initially chosen a White educator to be their facilitator and later, they discovered that they couldn't be their true selves. Asian students who faced overt racist attacks found themselves reaching out to Asian educators and leaders for mentorship on advocacy and affinity group care. As our

survey findings indicated and supported by Gray's findings, educational leaders leverage their racial identity to better connect with students and colleagues.

Participants in Gray's study spoke about the creation of affinity groups as forms of social capital. The work of growing alliances and building BIPOC networks created communities amongst educational leaders in the District that were unrealized before the pandemic. These affinity groups and alliances helped to mitigate the effects of cultural isolation that affected communities of color. Asian leaders in Po's study spoke of growing leaders who can also lead others and grow alliances to gain credibility for acknowledgment. Most of the Latinx leaders in Tavares's study, who are small in number across the District, spoke of their knowledge of the equity work of other Latinx leaders in the District.

Critical negotiations with colleagues to counter racial inequity involve the use of navigational capital. BIPOC leaders must navigate the social systems that do not favor their race, ethnicity, or culture. In Tavares's and Po's studies, participants shared how they critically negotiated with educators to not pathologize students; one way they did this was to drive educators to communicate with and learn from families to humanize students and to connect with the students beyond the school setting as an asset to help students succeed.

In Gray's, Po's, and Tavares's studies, the skill of maintaining hope and persistence is paramount to moving past moments of harm and conflict to "agency and action" (Marshall and Marsh, 2021). Some participants spoke of needing to find ways to continue to work with racist colleagues and to negotiate for anti-racist student outcomes with those same colleagues.

Implications for Research

Often, leaders of color are leading anti-racist work in majority White spaces where they may experience microaggressions and witness the racialized violence enacted against the Black community and anti-Asian hate in the media (Yancey-Bragg, 2021, Stop AAPI Hate, 2021; Donaghue, 2021). The acknowledgment of these BIPOC leaders' assets is supported by a growing body of literature on how educational leaders of color use their cultural knowledge and experiences in the field (Méndez-Morse & Mártinez, 2021). Yosso (2005) details the "array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" which directly supports the findings across the individual studies (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Therefore, our findings suggest that future research should investigate the importance of alliances and the importance of building networks that have racial congruence with other BIPOC colleagues.

The literature on leaders of color robustly affirms that these leaders matter in the advancement of racial equity in schools (McMahon, 2007; Khalifa, 2011; Reed, 2012). However, the foci of these studies often cite the difficulties they faced through isolation and the ways in which they gave in to despair by not staying in their positions (Agosto et al., 2013; Viano & Hunter, 2017). This study calls on future researchers to further investigate the strengths and critical assets of leaders of color who have persisted in their roles, especially given all the ways they matter for racial equity in schools and the academic outcomes of students of color in particular (Kholi et al., 2015; Kholi et al., 2019). We ask researchers to take a deeper look at the assets of leaders of color, uncovered across the studies of Gray, Po, and Tavares, thereby adding to the growing

literature on building race-consciousness among educational leaders (Diem & Welton, 2021). Our study implies that more research is needed on the strengths of BIPOC leaders, including that of cultural intuition, the use of navigational capital, critically negotiating with colleagues, the use of social capital and growing alliances and networks, and to persist in anti-racist work.

Leaders of color must lead through racism, work through the perceived or expected forgiveness of racist events while maintaining the belief in the educability of these colleagues who transmit transgressions for anti-racist work in schools (Mukkamala & Syuemoto, 2018; Valencia, 2010). This very skill is also what culturally relevant pedagogy focuses on in maintaining the belief in the educability of our students, especially those who have been pathologized by racism to explain performance differentials. This study suggests that further research could elucidate how the lived experiences of leaders of color are connected to professional development for both leaders of color and all educators in the work for racial equity (Hernandez et al., 2014; Milligan & Howley, 2015; Toure & Dorsey, 2018).

Implications for Practice and Policy

Given that BIPOC leaders share experiences of racism and that many BIPOC leaders develop a greater capacity to lead as a result of their racist experience, this tension implies for the District a need to look first at the assets of leaders of color and learn from them, and, secondly, to move the burden to be borne across the District for anti-racist work.

The skills and knowledge that leaders of color acquire because of the challenges that they face are important to formally develop across the District. As one White

educator had named, there are certain skills that White educators may likely need to cede to leaders of color, as students of color in a racist climate may prefer mentorship and guidance of leaders of color, especially when facing racist experiences. However, the skills of allyship, belief in the educability of all colleagues, and the persistence to work through and resist racist incidents are skills that all members of the District can aspire to.

Because the majority of the people working in this District are White, the onus of responsibility for anti-racism must fall on White educators, not on the minority BIPOC. One implication is that districts such as the one studied may choose to seek a unified professional development approach for this work, most importantly on White racial identity development. Districts such as the one studied, which enjoys both motivated educators and leaders as well as community support for equity work, are in a position to nationally lead this work.

Conclusion

The District has made a strong public commitment and aspires to advance anti-racist work. As evidenced by its public statements about racial equity, the District's anti-racist intent has been animated by the work of the educators and leaders. The findings addressed how educational leaders enacted anti-racist practices and their perceptions of the limitation or support for anti-racist leadership during the COVID 19 pandemic and during this moment of racial reckoning.

Currently, our studies found commitments by District leadership and across educational leaders that directly supported anti-racist practices. Efforts within individual schools and led by members of those school communities were evident, as detailed across our findings including a collective acknowledgment of racism heightened by the current

national attention. Once again, across the five individual studies, an overall understanding of the efforts laid out by the District to address anti-racist work was demonstrated by the common language or nomenclature used by the members of the organization, gained through common professional development.

Given what we've found, antiracist change can happen when the work is shared between BIPOC and White leaders, when coalitions are built, and when there is resolve to direct strategic decision-making with an anti-racist lens. Our findings suggest that when a district acknowledges the existence of racism, it is positioned to make a commitment to anti-racist work. Research participants shared that the District's public commitment emboldened small group efforts that courageously enabled discourse. Our findings showed that when resources are given to innovative efforts, affinity groups can be supported, and new curriculum writing can be mobilized. Identification of resistance against anti-racist efforts allows that resistance to be countered. Small groups within the district have begun to address racism and propose anti-racist practices to help mitigate the impact of structural racism.

As identified by Welton et al. (2018), educators committed to anti-racism must work to shift attitudes and beliefs as they relate to race and racism. As shared by study participants across our studies, some of the ways the District has worked to demonstrate its commitment to becoming conscious of racism has been through engaging in professional development related to racial identity in some schools, the creation of affinity groups to support BIPOC educators and responding to racist incidents in its school communities. Study findings suggest that the next step for similar districts

committed to this work could be to make a system-level commitment to this work by ensuring that White racial identity development takes place across all schools.

We assert that a predominantly White public school district can pursue anti-racist change and we highlight that White adults have a responsibility for this work. Our study's participants identified resistance to anti-racist efforts that were subsequently met with capitulation by school leaders. Out of Welton et al.'s framework for anti-racism, attitudes and beliefs rose as the predominant source of resistance that our study participants met. These attitudes and beliefs are embedded in the culture. Efforts to change that culture include increasing the numbers of individuals and small groups working for anti-racism, developing professional development to teach new culture, and finally, through the focused work of affinity groups and coordinated leadership groups for anti-racist change such as the human rights council, innovations of new small-community cultures have the capacity to interact with others. However, there were times when leaders prioritized getting the work done over mandating that all take part in the work.

We recognize that these leaders, in pursuing anti-racist change, made capitulations that then upheld the status quo. At times they made these capitulations for self-preservation, or to contain resistance to allow the work of others to move forward. We as researchers and practitioners are also enculturated by endemic racism, and we recognize that some of the actions of leaders to pursue anti-racism may uphold racism; we can be anti-racist while having racist ideology. For most efforts to move forward, leaders reported having to face white interest convergence. And thus, a question that this study inspires is to ask what tools leaders can employ other than the racist ones we have

been taught to lead with. We acknowledge the importance of a multitiered approach by supporting both the small group efforts and a system-wide approach to anti-racist leadership practice. The district's context matters, one approach is insufficient to address the complexity of racism; no one effort provides a solution to endemic racism. We persist in anti-racist work.

This is a well-resourced District that has chosen to invest in human resources, professional development time, and instructional materials for anti-racist work. New roles and committees have been instituted, there are BIPOC leaders at the building level and in the District, and individual initiatives asking for support for instructional materials for race literacy have been supported. Additionally, the District demonstrates its commitment by choosing to welcome this research team to investigate anti-racism in its schools during a historically difficult time - during the COVID-19 pandemic. While interview participants shared the low representation of Latinx leaders in the District, DESE data shows this District holds 10% of the state's Asian building leaders. Many of the participants of color also named that the District's support for their anti-racist work is felt when they come up against resistance from the community.

Data suggests that the tensions can be addressed by considering the cultural competency of all administrators who are in supervisory and evaluative roles. Districts like this might clarify what standard it is using to evaluate their staff for cultural competency. Similarly, it could be helpful if the anti-racist leadership personnel had evaluative power over the department heads, so there could be a mechanism to support the continued development of department heads in cultural competency, thereby allowing department heads to hold educators accountable for anti-racist work.

As this study finds that race matters and that different leadership, as informed by racialized experiences, has different assets, future research should investigate for a deeper understanding of partnerships between Whites and BIPOC leaders. Additionally, Districts like these can investigate the particular assets that leaders of color bring to the work. The development of anti-racist practices and the learning and teaching of this intellectual work must permeate all levels of the District and become the responsibility of all members of the organization.

For Districts like the one used in this study, those that are predominantly White, have relative affluence, and positive will towards anti-racist work, this study offers some implications for District practice. The data collected suggest that districts may want to find ways to measure the impact of policy and protocol mandates on the intended outcomes to interrogate how the District's intentions are being lived out. Another area for districts to consider is how they may use both the role and power of policy setting and the energy of grassroots initiatives to drive systemic change. Finally, based on the narratives of leaders of color who lead for anti-racism in this District, similar districts ought to consider different leadership support and preparation for leaders of color, especially in predominantly White spaces: that they need different support compared to White leaders. These leaders of color offer different capacities that the District can learn from.

Researcher Reflections

In conclusion, there was a great deal of individual learning that took place throughout this process. Collectively, we learned that there is an incredible amount of emotional learning that accompanies academic learning and scholarship about race and racism. As a result of this study, we have a greater belief in our collective capacity to

learn and grow towards anti-racism. Because racism is endemic, anti-racist work requires vigilance to dismantle it. As researcher-practitioners leading culturally responsive practice and confronting racism, it is imperative to invest in our learning and unlearning while supporting colleagues at all levels of the organizations we lead to do the same. As individuals, we must be accountable while holding others accountable. We recognize that our learning communities are at different places along the continuum of anti-racist work. We were impressed by the anti-racist efforts in the District. For example, individual efforts, small group efforts, school building efforts, and district efforts were evident. We held the stories of the leaders in this district, some of whom shared deeply painful experiences of racism, as a critical acknowledgment of the systemic nature of this problem. Many of our research participants shared that despite all this very hard work, there is more to be done in pursuit of anti-racism. And yet, we come out of this research learning that all of the hard work counts, and we must persist; there is power in community and proximity. Action is necessary to be a living embodiment of anti-racism.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocols

Investigator: Dacey

Opening reminders

- This interview is voluntary; you may ask to end the interview at any time.
- All interview questions are optional.
- This interview was recorded. You may request for us to turn off the recording device at any time.
- We are here to listen and to learn; not to judge.
- We will take measures to ensure that all interview responses remain confidential. In addition, we will use pseudonyms in our dissertation to protect the identities of the respondents and the district.

Introduction: Tell us about your role. What are your primary responsibilities in this role? How long have you been in this role? In the district/school? What attracted you to this position? What motivates you to do this work?

System-Level Commitment

1.) This research focuses on educational leaders enacting anti-racist leadership practices. How does your school community engage in discussions about race or racial equity? What sorts of spaces exist for these discussions?

2.) How would you characterize these discussions?

3.) In your role as a school leader, what actions do you take to communicate concepts of racial equity to your staff, faculty, students, families, and community?

4.) One anti-racist practice we are studying is the development of one's positive racial identity; how people understand themselves and others. What types of ongoing, embedded professional development do you provide to support faculty in developing their racial identity?

5.) What are your impressions of the effectiveness of this racial identity work?

6.) Is there any professional development designed specifically to help White faculty to develop their White racial identity (Whiteness, White privilege, White supremacy, anti-racism)? If yes, please elaborate.

7.) What are your impressions of the effectiveness of this White racial identity work?

Attitudes and Beliefs

8.) How, if at all, has this racial identity work been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

9.) Can you tell me a story about when this White racial identity development worked?

10.) Can you tell me a story about when this White racial identity development did not work?

11.) I'm curious about your own personal racial identity. In what ways, if any, have school leaders helped support you in developing your racial identity?

12.) How, if at all, have you been impacted personally and professionally by the COVID-19 pandemic?

13.) Do you have opportunities to reflect on how you might speak about race on behalf of those
who might not be present in the conversation both inside and outside of school?

14.) Given your efforts towards achieving racial equity, what risks do you perceive to be involved in your work with your White and non-White colleagues?

15.) What systems of support would you need to build in order to counter resistance and pushback from White faculty or colleagues?

16.) What types of support from the district would help you accomplish this?

17.) Do you feel that the district supports your racial equity work? Please elaborate.

Closing Thoughts: Thank you very much for your time and insights.

Investigator: Gray

1. This research focuses on Black educational leaders and what sustains them to stay in the field of education. What attracted you to your current role? What motivates you to do this work?

2. How does your school community engage in discussions about race or racial equity? What sorts of spaces exist for these discussions? Is anti-racist practices a priority for your institution? If so, provide examples.

3. Describe your background and identity. What is the context in which you grew up? How, if at all, does your positionality influence your practice?

4. Do you experience any resistance and pushback from white faculty or colleagues as a result of your identity or racial equity work?

5. Please describe how you have been impacted personally and professionally, if at all, by the current pandemic.

6. What systems of support (both formal and informal) exist for you in your current school/role? Outside of your school/role?

7. Why did you decide to become an educator? What was your pathway to leadership? Can you tell me about the barriers or challenges that you faced in your career? How have these influenced your leadership?

8. What advice do you have for other Black educators who would like to advance to leadership?

Investigator: Po

Opening Statement

- *This interview is strictly voluntary. At any time, you may ask to conclude the interview.*
- *All interview questions are optional. Please feel free to not answer a question.*
- *All interview responses will be confidential. Although we plan to share our findings with our district, we will take measures to maintain your confidentiality and use pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.*
- *We are here to listen and learn from you and your experiences. Our position is to examine, not judge, to learn from your expertise.*
- *We plan to record this interview. At any time, you may request for us to turn off the transcription device.*
- *Here is a consent form.*

Part I. Biographical Information

1. What about your life experiences inspired your interest in school leadership? Or How did you choose to become a school leader?

Part II. Leadership Perceptions

2. What makes you a successful leader? What are your levers as a school leader? Perceptions of yourself as an authentic leader at your institution?

3. What do you see as the current needs of your school community: students, families, faculty & staff?

Part III. Reflections on Asian American women in school leadership

4. How do issues of race and gender come up for you as a school leader?
5. What are some challenges and successes that you have faced as a school leader?
6. Describe the equity issues that matter most to you as a school leader.
7. How do you prioritize your decision making? Does crisis, like COVID 19, impact your priority setting?

Part IV. Instructional Leadership

8. In what ways do you lead for teaching and learning?
9. What are your highest priorities for student performance? For your educators? How are you working on them?
10. What are the negotiations that you must navigate with your faculty and staff?

Part V. Closing

11. What advice do you have for other Asian American women who would like to advance to leadership?

Is there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to share with me?
Do you have any questions for me?

Investigator: Smith

Opening reminder:

- This interview is voluntary; you may ask to end the interview at any time.
- All interview questions are optional.
- This interview was recorded. You may request for us to turn off the recording device at any time.
- We are here to listen and to learn; not to judge.
- We will take measures to ensure that all interview responses remain confidential. In addition, we will use pseudonyms in our dissertation to protect the identities of the respondents and the district.

As part of my dissertation, I am interested in how school leaders perceive the emergence of anti-racism in predominantly White spaces, specifically within the context of the last two years. We have the global pandemic we are still navigating and the recent racial reckoning that has entered our learning spaces. I want to hear about what you see happening regarding anti-racism in a mostly White school.

Introduction: Tell us about your role. What are your primary responsibilities in this role? How long have you been in this role? In the district/school?

1. Talk to me a little bit about your experience at your school over the past two years, especially regarding the racial reckoning and global pandemic. How did you and/or your school respond, it at all?

Attitudes and Beliefs

2. Have you implemented or have your teachers experienced professional development around anti-racism, critical consciousness, or culturally responsive pedagogy?
    a. Can you describe this professional development?
        i. How was it received?
        ii. Was there any resistance? How do you respond to faculty who do not engage in this type of professional development?
3. Have you experienced any resistance or pushback from parents regarding anti-racist work?
    a. Describe an example of resistance…
4. Do you know what your faculty, staff, students, and parents think about anti-racism and how it is implemented in your school?
5. What are some of the obstacles you might face in getting teachers and parents on board with anti-racist work?

Policies and Practices

6. How would you describe your teachers' ability to teach with anti-racist approach?
7. How is anti-racist pedagogy or course content received by the students?
8. Tell me about a time where anti-racist work was successful or effective.
9. With a mostly White community, how do you help teachers and students recognize the importance of anti-racism?
10. How is the curriculum reviewed in your school? Where there any changes to the curriculum over the past few years, in light of what has been going on in the world?

System-Level Commitment

11. Can you talk a little bit about the structure of your school, especially in terms of leadership and decision-making?
    a. How are personnel decisions made?
        i. Is there a diversity, equity, and inclusion director?
            1. If not, are there personnel who do this type of work?
            2. In what ways are they involved in personnel decisions or the induction/onboarding/formation process for new employees?
12. How would you describe the culture of your staff?

a. What is the quality of interpersonal relationships between and among teachers and staff?
b. Are there opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practices?

13. How would you describe the culture of your student body?
    a. Are students tracked into academic hierarchies?
    b. What is the degree of competition and social comparison between students?
    c. Do students have the ability to change levels or tracks?
        i. How often do parents intervene regarding academic issues with their child?
        ii. How often do parents intervene regarding disciplinary issues with their child?
        iii. How do you respond to families' requests to move their son/daughter to a different track?
    d. How are students of color supported, both academically and socially emotionally?
    e. How often do you examine the experiences of students of color?
14. What are some obstacles you might face when trying to implement school-wide changes towards becoming a more anti-racist community?

Thank you for sharing your time with me today.

Investigator: Tavares

Opening reminders:

- This interview is voluntary; you may ask to end the interview at any time.
- I will ask for your consent in writing.
- All interview questions are optional.
- This interview will be recorded. You can request I turn off the recording at any time.
- I'm here to listen and to learn; not to judge.
- I will take measures to ensure that all interview responses remain confidential. In addition, I will use pseudonyms in the dissertation to protect the identities of the respondents and the district.
- Can I reach out if I have an additional question?
- At this point, I will start recording

Please sign the consent form I am adding to the chat. You have a copy for your review. Please feel free to ask any questions at any time. Your electronic signature indicates you consent to the interview.

As part of my dissertation I am interested in how educators navigate race in their work specifically in leadership (in classrooms, schools, or district level) within the context of the impact of the last two years. We have the global pandemic we are still navigating and the recent racial reckoning that has entered our learning spaces. I want to hear about your experience by better understanding your work and the district's work.

My question: *How do Latina/x/o educational leaders make sense of their leadership practice during this moment of racial reckoning and the COVID-19 pandemic?*

Self-identity/Latinidad & Leadership

1. Could you describe your background and how you identify? What languages do you navigate in personally and or professionally?

2. Would you consider your identity (language) as an asset for you as an educator? Are there challenges? Can you describe them?

3. Have you been able to enact initiatives that matter to you? If so, give examples.

4. Are you satisfied with the district's support of your leadership as an educator? If yes, how do they support you and if not, what could they do better?

5. Who do you consider to be a Latina/x/o addressing equity issues head on in the district? How do they show this?

The Global Pandemic

6. How, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted you personally or professionally? Can you describe the impact on your school or district?

7. What have you learned about the impact of COVID-19 on your students and their communities?

Race/Racism

8. From February through May of 2020 we witnessed the deaths of several Black people (George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery to name a few of the most public). How, if at all, were these events discussed within your school/district?

9. How does NPS's anti-racist work align with your leadership goals as an educator?

10. What are some of the potential benefits for increasing the number of Latino administrators or administrators of color in the district?

¡Muchísimas gracias! I appreciate your time and for supporting my leadership.

Themes:
Self-identity/Latinidad & Leadership
Race/Ethnicity/language
How does community respond
How does the individual respond

Follow-up Questions

11. What do people outside of your school/district get wrong about your students/community? What do they get right?
12. How does your district/school talk about race, if at all?
13. What do you recommend as the next steps?
14. What are some of the potential benefits for increasing the number of Latinx administrators or other BIPOC administrators in the district?

Email invitation to interview sent to all participants:
Dear_____,

Hope you are having a good start to the school year. I am one of the doctoral students Dr. _____ may have mentioned who is interested in interviewing you. Please know I'm happy to accommodate your availability and will offer some dates for you to consider below.

I want to share a little bit about the study, the title is: *Anti-Racist Educational Leadership in Times of Crisis* which I am co-authoring with four classmates. We are interviewing a diverse collection of leaders from your district. Additionally, I'm specifically interested in the following question for my section of the dissertation:

How Latina/o/x educational leaders make sense of their leadership practice during this moment of racial reckoning and the COVID-19 pandemic?

I'm very excited to meet you and learn about your work. Please feel free to email, text, or call with any questions at any time.

Options for approximately 60-90 min interview:

Dates & Times listed

If none of these dates or times work for you please share a few options that work for you between _____ and I'm happy to accommodate as needed.

en solidaridad,
Ana

Cell: xxx xxx-xxxx

Sample of follow up email post interview:
To each participant, with specific detail of the work they lead -
Le quiero dar las gracias por su tiempo y generosidad. Verdaderamente fue un increíble honor aprender sobre su trabajo y su dedicación a sus estudiantes. Son tan dichosos de tenerla a usted como campeona de su bienestar.

Espero volver a pláticar con usted y le tome en serio la invitación al _____. ¡Cuente conmigo!

con mucho cariño,
Ana

Appendix B: List of Reviewed Documents

Anti-racism graphic for staff

BIPOC Staff Affinity Groups

Courageous Conversations Class Presentation

Courageous Conversations Lesson Plan

Department of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion website

District Equity Policy

District Statement of Commitment to Racial Equity

District Superintendent's Goals

District Systemic Goals

Guidelines to implement the Equity Policy

Massachusetts Department of Education (MA DOE) Enrollment Data

Professional Development Plan – specific to one of the two high schools in the District

Report on Diverse Literature

Sample Anti-racist emails from department chair to department members

Staff Response graphic for staff

Appendix C: District Wide Survey

Boston College Consent Form

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

Informed Consent to be in study titled: *Anti-Racist Leadership in Times of Crisis*

Co-Researchers: *Stephen Dacey, Laniesha Gray, Cicy Po, Thomas Smith, Ana Tavares, Study Sponsor: Dr. Andrew Miller*

Educator Consent Form

By signing this consent form, you agree to participate in this research study on District School District Trends on Anti-racist Leadership in Times of Crisis and Massachusetts Asian Leaders descriptive survey. You were selected to be in the study because you are a teacher/principal/administrator/district personnel in the District Public Schools. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. The purpose of the study is to understand how educational leaders respond to this moment of crisis, racial reckoning, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The total number of people in this study is expected to be 80 survey participants, 30 interview participants, 30 meeting observation participants. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to answer questions about your practice by completing a survey. This survey will be sent through the District Public Schools/Boston College Qualtrics platform/email and will be sent to all participants.

We expect the survey to take 10-15 minutes. Although you will not directly benefit from participating in this study, others may benefit because we hope to use our findings to better understand specific leadership behaviors for building and maintaining trusting relationships in schools, practices for supporting healthy school and district climates, and the strategies needed to redress systemic inequities. We don't believe there are physical, psychological or informational risks from participating in this research. Risks or discomforts from this research include discussing issues pertaining to racism. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You don't have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project. Researchers will minimize potential risks by allowing participants to skip questions or end at any time. To minimize informational risks we will ensure those survey responses are anonymous. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. The Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. State or federal laws or court orders may also require that information from your research study records be released. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information

that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless we are legally required to do so. There is no cost to you to be in this research study. There is no compensation for your participation in this study. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from the research data collected as part of the project. No later than June 30, 2022. We will not share our research data with other investigators. Any data maintained as part of this research project will not contain information that could directly identify you. It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, we will delete any prior data collected, connected to your participation. If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with any school district. The researcher may dismiss you from the study at any time for the following reasons: (1) it is in your best interests (e.g. side effects or distress have resulted), (2) you have failed to comply with the study rules.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions About the Research
If you have questions about this research, you may contact:
Stephen Dacey (daceyst@bc.edu) or at [redacted]
Laniesha Gray (grayll@bc.edu) or at [redacted]
Cicy Po (poc@bc.edu) or at [redacted]
Thomas Smith (smithwr@bc.edu) or at [redacted]
Ana Tavares (tavarean@bc.edu) or at [redacted]
Faculty Advisor Dr. Andrew Miller (andrew.miller.6@bc.edu) or at [redacted]

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following: Boston College Office for Research Protections Phone: (617) 552-4778 Email: irb@bc.edu By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.
___ Yes, I consent to participate in this survey.
___ No, I do not consent to participate in this survey.

Enter your name and today's date here.
_____

General School Information and Your Responsibilities

Q2.1. What is the best description of your current position at your school or district?
- Full time classroom teacher

- Department Chair
- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Program Director
- Counselor/Student Support
- District leader
- Other (Please specify: _____)

Q2.2. Reflecting on the last 18 months, pick the most appropriate frequency of occurrence for your work time spent on the following activities.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
In classrooms or on instruction					
In meetings					
Student discipline					
Paper work					
Supervising extra curricular activities					

School Performance- Your Perception

Q3.1. To the best of your knowledge, how often does the following issue occur at your current school building or across the district if you are a district leader?

	Frequency of Occurrence				
	Never	**Rarely**	**Occasionally**	**Often**	**Very Often**
Racial tensions					

Q3.2. To what extent is each of the following a concern in your current school building or across the district?

	Not a concern	Minor Concern	Moderate Concern	Serious Concern
Family Engagement				
Student access to learning opportunities				
Student achievement towards graduation				
Racial disparity in student academic achievement				

Q3.3. For each of the following student groups, select the response that best indicates your perception of that group's success in passing Massachusetts performance standards last year.

	District & State Performance Standards Passed		
	All or most passed	**Some passed**	**None or few passed**
African American students	○	○	○
Latina/o students	○	○	○
AAPI students	○	○	○
White students	○	○	○
Low-Income students	○	○	○
Special Education students	○	○	○
English Language Learners (ESL students)			

Professional Development

Q4.1. Which of the following types of professional development, related to anti-racist leadership and or classrooms, or culturally responsive pedagogy, have you participated in during the past 12 months? Mark all that apply.

- ○ University courses
- ○ Workshops, conferences, or training.
- ○ Visits to other schools
- ○ Individual or collaborative research
- ○ Within district professional development

Other

Perceptions

Q5.1. Rate the extent to which race/ethnicity and gender impact your work for equity.

	Not at all	Rarely	Somewhat	Often	Large Extent
To what extent has your racial/ethnic background helped you connect with students of color in your work?					
To what extent have your racial/ethnic background created opportunities for you in your work?					
To what extent has your gender created barriers or problems for you in your work?					
To what extent has your gender created barriers or problems for you in your work?					
To what extent has your gender created opportunities for you in your work?					

Q5.2. Rate the extent to which you engage in the following activities for racial equity.

	Not at all	Rarely	Somewhat	Often	Large Extent
Engaged in my own learning outside of work					
Changing attitudes and beliefs that are obstacles to equity work					
Working for system level change toward equity					
Maintaining or improving high					

expectations instructions					
Promoting or engaging community & family connections					
Negotiations with colleagues					
Professional development for anti-racism					

Q5.3. Rate the level in which this moment of our nation's racial reckoning affected your work for equity.

- Obstructed my work for equity greatly
- Somewhat obstructed my work for equity
- No impact on my work
- Somewhat created opportunity for equity work
- Greatly created opportunity for equity work

Q5.4. Rate the level in which the COVID-19 pandemic affected your work for equity.

- Obstructed my work for equity greatly
- Somewhat obstructed my work for equity
- No impact on my work
- Somewhat created opportunity for equity work
- Greatly created opportunity for equity work

Your Background

Q6.1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Gender non-conforming
- Cis gender- gender matches that assigned at birth
- Trans gender- gender differs from that assigned at birth
- Non Binary-gender identity that is neither female nor male
- Prefer not to say

Q6.2. How do you identify by race/ethnicity?

- American Indian/Native American
- Black or African American
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Latina, Latinx, non-White

- Latina, Latinx, White
- Latina, Latinx, Black
- Latina, Latinx, Multi-race
- Latina, Latinx, Indigenous
- Biracial
- Multracial
- White
- Prefer not to say

Q6.3. Do you have any comments or questions related to this research?

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Appendix D: National Latino Leaders/Principals Survey Informed Consent Document

Title of Study: The Racial Identity Development of Latino School Principals and its Relation to Their Leadership Practice: Lessons Learned From the Last 15 years

Dear Principal:
I am requesting that you participate in a follow up study that was conducted back in 2004. If you recall, you participated in a study on "The Racial Identity Development of Latino School Principals and its Relation to Their Leadership Practice". Valuable information was provided with the original study. I am interested in learning how your leadership has changed over time and the role that your Latino racial identity has either continued or not continued to play in your leadership practices.

Why should you participate in this survey?
Policymakers and educational leaders could rely on data from this study to inform their decisions concerning K-12 schools. Latina/o school leaders, for far too long, have been one of the least researched groups in educational leadership. Rarely are principals studied over time and your participation could provide insights into leadership changes and development for the field of Educational Leadership. Your participation could make a great contribution to the literature on educational leadership.

Participant Rights
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate and not complete the required survey or interview. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. If you decide not to participate in the study, it will not result in any penalty or loss to you. Survey information was confidential and only the principal investigator will have access to the survey results. The interview will take approximately 1.5 hours and was tape recorded and housed in a secure location and be password protected. Please note that no individual data that links one's name, address, or place of employment was included in this study. Finally, You may skip any question on the survey or during the interview that makes you uncomfortable.

Who is conducting this survey?
Dr. Frank Hernandez, professor at Southern Methodist University is conducting this study.

Questions or Concerns

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact **Dr. Frank Hernandez at** [redacted] If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the Human Subjects Research Office, SMU IRB Chair, Austin Baldwin, Ph.D. @ [redacted] and/or researchcompliance@smu.edu.

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Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you via the information provided, and that you have been given the time to read the explanation.

SIGNATURE_____

Thank you for your willingness to complete this survey. We do hope that you decide to take the survey. Please answer the following questions based on your experience as a school principal. All information you provide was kept completely confidential.

After you complete the survey please mail it in the postage paid envelope included in the package.

Instructions

- It is important that this secure and confidential survey be completed by the school PRINCIPAL, not by anyone else.

- If you are unsure about how to answer a question, please give the best answer you can rather than leave it blank.

General School Information

1. Which of the following grades are included at your current school building? (Check all that apply.)

□ Kindergarten
□ 1st grade
□ 2nd grade
□ 3rd grade
□ 4th grade
□ 5th grade
□ 6th grade
□ 7th grade
□ 8th grade
□ 9th grade
□ 10th grade
□ 11th grade
□ 12th grade
□ Ungraded

2. Which of the following best describes your school building? (Select only one.)

○ **Regular elementary or secondary**

- **Elementary or secondary with a special program emphasis** (such as a science/math school, performing arts school, talented/gifted school, foreign language immersion school, etc.)
- **Special education** school (primarily serving students with disabilities)
- **Vocational/Technical** school (primarily serving students being trained for occupations)
- **Charter** school (the school is operated by a private organization or school district)
- **Alternative** school (providing alternative or non-traditional education, but not specifically special education, vocational, or other categories listed above)

3. Do you consider your school building to be located in a rural, urban, or suburban area?

- Rural
- Urban
- Suburban

4. Does your school provide before-school or after-school day care programs?

- Yes
- No

5. How many students are currently enrolled in your school building? _____

6. Please record the percentage of students at your school building with the following characteristics:

	Percentage
Students of color	
Students on free or reduced-price lunches	
Special education students	
English language learners (ESL)	

7. Please record the number of teachers employed by your school as of the first of January in each of the following categories.

Number	**Teacher Categories**
	TOTAL Teachers
	Full-time teachers
	Part-time teachers

	Latina/o teachers (including Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican, ect.)
	White teachers
	African American/Black teachers
	Asian or Pacific Islander teachers
	Other ethnicity

School Performance

8. For each of the student groups in the table below, please select the one response that best indicates that group's success in passing performance standards last year.

	District & State Performance Standards Passed			
	Passed All	**Passed Most**	**Passed Some**	**Passed No Standards**
White students				
African American students				
Latina/o students				
Low-Income students				
Special Education students				
English Language Learners (ESL students)				

9. To the best of your knowledge, how often do the following types of issues occur at your current school building? (If you are new to this school, then consider your last school.)

	Frequency of Occurrence				
	Never	**Rarely**	**Occasionally**	**Often**	**Very Often**
Bullying					
Physical conflicts among students					
Student disrespect for teachers					
Vandalism					
Robbery or theft					

Possession of weapons					
Racial tensions					
Gang activities					

10. To what extent is each of the following a concern in your current school building?

	Not a concern	**Minor concern**	**Moderate concern**	**Serious concern**
Student tardiness				
Student absenteeism				
Student Drop-outs				
Lack of Parental involvement				
Students unprepared to learn (lacking basic necessities)				
Student use of alcohol or illegal drugs				
Student pregnancy				

<u>Your Responsibilities</u>

11. During a typical full week, how many total hours do you spend on **all school-related activities** for your current school? (Include hours spent working during the school day, before school, after school, and on weekends.)

_____ Total hours per week of school-related work

12. How many total hours do you spend **interacting with students** during a typical full week at
this school? (Include both formal and informal interactions.)

_____Total hours per week of student interaction

13. Reflecting on your entire last year as principal, approximately what percentage of your work time did you spend on the following activities?

% of Work Time	Activities
	In classrooms
	In meetings
	Student discipline
	Paper work
	Supervising extra curricular activities
	Other – please describe:
100%	**TOTAL**

Professional Development

14. Which of the following types of professional development have you participated in during the past 12 months? Mark all that apply.

	Participated? Yes	No
a. University course(s)	○	○
b. Workshops, conferences, or training.	○	○
c. Visits to other schools	○	○
d. Individual or collaborative research	○	○
e. Other – please describe:	○	○

15. Before you became a principal, did you participate in a district development program for aspiring school principals?

○ Yes
○ No

Leadership Style and Practice.

16. Which leadership style most closely resembles you practice? Mark all that fit.

○ **Autocratic:** Makes decisions without consulting with others. Clearly identify the goals that will lead the organization to success.

○ **Democratic:** Shared decision-making and facilitates consensus in the group. Asks questions to involve others.

○ **Delegative:** Allows others to make decisions, set priorities, and delegate certain tasks

17. How much did **mentors or role models influence you to choose educational administration work?**

○ Not at all
○ A little
○ Some
○ Quite a bit
○ A great deal

18. How would you rate the influence of **mentors or role models on the development of your leadership skills?**

○ No impact
○ A little
○ Some
○ Quite a bit
○ A great deal

Your Experience and Training

19. What is your current position at your school?

○ Principal
○ Assistant Principal
○ Other (Please specify: _____)

20. Including this school year (count part of a year as 1 year), how many years have you served in each of the following positions? (If none, please enter "0".)

_____ Total number of years as a principal

____ years at this school

_____ Total number of years as an assistant principal

____ years at this school

21. We are interested in your experience in the field of education prior to becoming a principal or assistant principal. Please check the positions listed below that you have held in the past, and record the number of years you held that position.

	Position Held? Yes	No	# of years of experience
Teacher	○	○	
Curriculum specialist/coordinator	○	○	
Guidance counselor	○	○	
Library/Media specialist	○	○	
Educational/Teaching Assistant	○	○	
Athletic coach/director	○	○	
Other educational work experience: (Please specify:_____)	○	○	

22. We are also interested in your work experience **outside** of the field of education. How many years have you worked full-time at other jobs, outside the field of education?

_____ Years

23. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Educational specialist or professional diploma (at least 1 year beyond Master's level)
- ○ Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D.)

24. Which of the following best describes where you received your principal's license/certification?

- ○ Public university
- ○ Private university
- ○ Liberal Arts College
- ○ On-line university
- ○ Other (Please specify: _____)

25. How well prepared do you think you were when you became a principal?

- Very well prepared
- Well prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- A little prepared
- Not prepared at all

26. Did you begin your post secondary education at a community college?

- Yes
- No

27. Are you a member of a **national** professional association of principals? (For example, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, American Association of School Administrators, etc.)

- Yes
- No

28. Are you a member of a **state** professional association of principals?

- Yes
- No

Short essay questions

29. What are your biggest challenges in your current work as a principal?

30. What are your biggest successes in your current role as a principal?

31. To what extent has your **racial/ethnic background** created barriers or problems for you in your work as a school administrator?

Not at all large extent

1 2 3 4 5

32. To what extent has your **gender** created barriers or problems for you in your work as a school administrator?

Not at all Large extent

1 2 3 4 5

33. To what extent has your **racial/ethnic background** helped you to connect with students of color in your work as a school administrator?

Not at all Large extent

1 2 3 4 5

Your Background

34. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

35. This study uses the term "Latina/o." How do you identify your own racial/ethnic background?

- Latina/o
- Mexican
- Hispanic
- Cuban
- Puerto Rican
- Other – please specify: _____

36. What year were you born? _____

37. Where were you born?

- United States
- Puerto Rico
- Mexico
- Cuba

- Other – please specify: _____

38. If you were born in the United States, what state were you born in? _____

39. How would you describe your own schooling experiences in general?

- Very positive
- Mostly positive
- Both positive and negative
- Mostly negative
- Very negative

40. What are your future professional aspirations?

41. Do you have any comments or questions relating to this research?

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Please mail the completed in the postage paid envelope included in the package.

Appendix E: Focus Group Protocols

Investigator: Dacey

Opening reminders

- This interview is voluntary; you may ask to end the interview at any time.
- All interview questions are optional. Feel free to not answer a question.
- This interview was recorded. You may request for us to turn off the recording device at any time.
- We are here to listen and to learn; not to judge.
- We will take measures to ensure that all interview responses remain confidential. In addition, we will use pseudonyms in our dissertation to protect the identities of the respondents and the district.

Introduction: Tell us a little about you. How long have you been a teacher in this school/district?

1.) This research focuses on educational leaders enacting anti-racist leadership practices. Please describe for me how race impacts your conversations with colleagues and/or school leaders.

2.) Depending on the responses to #1, what could be done to change (the atmosphere, the quality, etc) of these discussions?

3.) One anti-racist practice we are studying is the development of one's positive racial identity; how people understand themselves and others. Please tell me how the school supports you in developing your racial identity (e.g. school-sponsored professional development), including your impressions of the effectiveness of this racial identity work?

4.) Please explain to me any opportunities that you have to reflect (whether in thought, writing, or dialogue) on your White racial identity (Whiteness, White privilege, White supremacy, anti-racism)? Please include your impressions of the effectiveness of this reflection.

5.) Please tell me a story about when you engaged in a conversation about race or racial equity with a colleague or school leader. Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable, equipped or unequipped?

6.) How, if at all, has this racial identity work been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

7.) Please tell me a story about a time when you acted against racial inequity in your school. How did it go? Did you feel supported by school leadership?

8.) What do you believe the school should change in its approach to promoting racial equity?

9.) What actions do you believe that school leadership should enact to support White teachers in the development of their White racial identity?

10.) Any final thoughts? Anything you were hoping I would ask about that I did not?

Closing Thoughts: Thank you very much for your time and insights.

Investigator: Smith

Getting to Know You

- Introduce myself, a little bit about me, and the study we are conducting.
- Start by asking participants to introduce themselves and to share how long they've been working at this school or district and in what capacity.
- Some kind of "break-the-ice" question to help people become more comfortable.

Questions

- If asked about the faculty and staff and their openness to professional development, what comes to mind?
- If asked about parental involvement at your school, what comes to mind?
- If asked about leveling at your school, what comes to mind?
- If asked about the climate of your school, what comes to mind?

- What was the school's response to the recent racial strife across the country, if there was one? Were these issues addressed at all in the classrooms?
- What was it like teaching during the pandemic the past two years?
- Do you have anything you'd like to add, that you feel could help me with my research?

Thank you for sharing your time with me today.