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The NCPEA International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation is a nationally refereed journal published two times a year, in Spring and Fall by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration.

## **Note from NCPEA Publications Director, Brad Bizzell**

The International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation is NCPEA's contribution to the Open Education Resources (OER) movement. This contribution to OER will be permanent.

In August, 2005, NCPEA partnered with Rice University and the Connexions Project, to publish our IJELP as open and free to all who had access to the Internet. Currently, there are over 400 peer-reviewed research manuscripts in the NCPEA/Connexions database. The purpose of the NCPEA/Knowledge Base Connexions Project is to "add to the knowledge base of the educational administration profession" and "aid in the improvement of administrative theory and practice, as well as administrative preparation programs." Our partnership continues but a new door has opened for NCPEA Publications to join the OER movement in a more substantive and direct way. In March 2013, NCPEA Publications and the NCPEA Executive Board committed the IJELP to the OER movement.

### **What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?**

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching and learning materials that you may freely use, adapt and reuse, without charge. Open Educational Resources are different from other resources an educator may use in that OER have been given limited licensing rights. That means they have been authored or created by an individual or organization that chooses to provide access to all, at no charge. NCPEA Publications is committed to providing access to all, while assuring author/s of full attribution as others use the material.

The worldwide OER movement is rooted in the idea that equitable access to high-quality education is a global imperative. To NCPEA, this is a moral/ethical responsibility and issue of social justice. Open Educational Resources offer opportunities for systemic change in teaching and learning through accessible content, and importantly, through embedding participatory processes and effective technologies for engaging with learning. The OER Commons project aims to grow a sustainable culture of sharing among educators at all levels.

### **What is the OER Commons?**

The Institute for the Study of Knowledge in Education (ISKME) created OER Commons, publicly launched in February 2007, to provide support for, build, and make available to all, a knowledge base around the use and reuse of open educational resources (OER). As a network for teaching and learning materials, the web site offers engagement with resources in the form of social bookmarking, tagging, rating, and reviewing. OER Commons has forged alliances with over 120 major content partners to provide a single point of access through which educators and learners can search across collections to access thousands of items, find and provide descriptive information about each resource,

and retrieve the ones they need. By being "open," these resources are publicly available for all to use.

### **What NCPEA OER is Not!**

NCPEA open educational resources are not an open door at the NCPEA Publications submission and review stages. We have always insisted on and will continue to require very thorough peer reviews (double and often triple-blind). NCPEA Publications is fortunate to have a cadre of professional reviewers (university professors), numbering over 300. Topic Editors first consider a submitted manuscript, and if appropriate, selects/assigns two reviewers who also have the expertise/interest in the manuscript's specific topic. This process assures that reviewers will read an author's manuscript with expertise/experience in that area.

The "openness" of the IJELP OER comes at publication stage. Once the issues are published, they are formatted/published in an open access website, indexed by Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), catalogued as a "commendable journal" in the Cabell's Directory, and provided to the Open Educational Resource database. The IJELP is currently viewed and read by educators from over 72 countries (many 3rd World) and all 50 U.S. States (data provided by Google Analytics).

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*The manuscripts in Volume 10, Number 1 (Spring 2015) have been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration as significant contributions to the scholarship and practice of school administration and PK-12 education.*

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# Doctoral Pedagogy in Stage One: Forming a Scholarly Identity

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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*As a contribution to the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990), the author conducted a self-study of praxis (Kemmis & Smith, 2008) to identify and describe how certain pedagogies help students meet “stage one” challenges in doctoral education (Lovitts, 2001) at one university. Findings from a literature review identified the challenges typically experienced at “entry and adjustment,” including gaining formal knowledge about the structure of a discipline; experiencing growth in conceptual development and modes of scholarly inquiry; learning about and experiencing the role of graduate student and independent researcher; forming relationships with peers and faculty, and participating in department culture and professional networks; and learning about the role, responsibilities, and work of faculty as teachers, researchers, and stewards of a discipline, field, and profession. The author identified seven core strategies associated with stage one doctoral pedagogy and analyzed how and why they supported students in their journey to become scholars and independent researchers.*

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## Introduction

When doctoral students enrolled in an interdisciplinary leadership program attend a Saturday orientation meeting, they begin the first of three stages in doctoral education (Lovitts, 2001; Tinto as cited in Golde, 1998). The first stage involves entry and first year experience in the program. The orientation meeting educates students about their role and responsibilities as graduate students and introduces them to department faculty and culture. Students and faculty introduce themselves to the group, and when my turn comes, I try to get students to laugh. I tell them about a statistic I read somewhere – only 15% of the students enrolled in formal education truly enjoy school – and we're all seated in this room!

Following introductions, faculty and students eat lunch together and briefly review program structures, concentrations, and course offerings. After lunch faculty members depart with the exception of my colleague and me. We introduce the first five credits in the “core” leadership program and conduct a brief class meeting as the final orientation activity. We describe course themes, learning goals, required reading, and assign the first paper, emphasizing important scholarly habits, such as careful reading (and re-reading) of texts and the characteristics of an effective paper. All this occurs in preparation for an intensive four-day, on-campus residential experience, fondly called “boot camp.”

During orientation, students learn doctoral education starts now, and continues in a cycle during their first year: they read texts, write papers, engage in research activities, and reflect on their learning before they enter class to learn together. We also describe some additional goals not found in the syllabus. These include our plan to demystify doctoral education, help them overcome their fears about their ability to do this work, and discover and value the importance of relationships for support and learning in their program.

We end the session by describing the “imposter syndrome” (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005) experienced by many fearful college students:

Students who feel like imposters imagine that they are constantly on the verge of being found out to be too dumb and unprepared for college-level learning. They imagine that once this discovery is made, they will be asked to leave whatever program they're enrolled in, shrouded in a cloud of public shame, humiliation, and embarrassment. Each week that passes without this happening only serves to increase the sense that a dramatic unmasking lies around the corner. ‘Surely,’ these students tell themselves, ‘sooner or later someone, somewhere, is going to realize that letting me onto this campus was a big mistake. I don't belong here, and I'm not smart enough to succeed.’ (p. 143)

Smiles of relief spread across student faces as they read the above passage. We invite students to comment on their fears (most missed a few hours sleep the previous night), and then tell a few inspirational and humorous stories about student fears and subsequent success. We close the session by stating one obvious fact: the faculty accepted them into the program because they met the department's criteria as capable students likely to succeed in earning a doctorate. The rest is up to them.

## Defining Pedagogy and Praxis

In this self-study of praxis, I investigated how the adoption of certain pedagogies may help students to meet stage one challenges in doctoral education. Pedagogy concerns the way knowledge is produced and “the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the interaction of three agencies – the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they together produce” (Lusted, 1986, p. 3). Lusted’s eloquent description of the pursuit of knowledge and consciousness reveals the struggle and rewards of learning for students and teachers:

Knowledge is produced not just at the researcher’s desk nor at the lectern but in the *consciousness*, through the process of thought, discussion, writing, debate, exchange; in the social and internal, collective and isolated struggle for control of understanding; from engagement in the unfamiliar idea, the difficult formulation pressed at the limit of comprehension or energy; in the meeting of the deeply held and casually dismissed; in the dramatic moment of realisation (*sic*) that a scarcely regarded concern, an unarticulated desire, the barely assimilated, can come alive, make for a new sense of self, change commitments and activity. And these are also *transformations* which take place across all agencies in an educational process, regardless of their title as academic, critic, teacher or learner. (p. 4)

“Critical exchanges” and “arrangements” within the learning environment foster co-learning and knowledge construction (Danby & Lee, 2012). Pedagogy concerns the co-creation of knowledge within social communities through interactions between students, teachers, and disciplines with the potential of transformation. Simmons described specific pedagogical elements, “referring to [pedagogy as] the integration in practice of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and technique, a time and space for the practice of those strategies and techniques and evaluation purposes and methods” (as cited in Stenberg & Lee, 2002, p. 328). “Praxis” includes an examination of pedagogy and practice with a moral view, including its effects on participants and “the social and historical consequences of their action” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 4).

Praxis requires self-awareness of the purposes and goals of learning with the willingness to judge actions by its consequences (Kemmis & Smith, 2008). The complexities involved in student and teacher learning occur and become subjects of investigation through “praxis inquiry” (Burrige, Carpenter, Cherednichenko & Krueger, 2010), involving critical and moral reflection on all aspects of learning and teaching. I use the terms “pedagogy” and “praxis” to offer a social and cultural view of learning and teaching with the construction of knowledge within communities as an ongoing task and product of interactions between students and teachers.

I first describe findings from a review of literature concerning the stages in doctoral education, introduce my research question, and explain my methodology. I then offer as data a description of doctoral pedagogy, including the selection of resources, design of learning activities, arrangement of the learning environment, and campus activities associated with formation experiences in accomplishing the academic and social tasks (Lovitts, 2001, 2008) associated with stage one in doctoral education. My praxis inquiry revealed seven *core* strategies adopted to meet student characteristics, needs, and goals during induction and formal coursework. I describe and analyze how and why pedagogical intentions, moves, and arrangements within a learning community support doctoral students on their journey. I

conclude with brief comments regarding the importance of supporting and mentoring doctoral students within coursework through deliberate staging of learning events.

I offer this study and my analysis as a contribution to a community of practice (Wenger, 2006). My study concerns how learning experiences in coursework contribute to the development of a scholarly or researcher identity. I briefly introduce the three stages in doctoral education, and then describe stage one challenges in detail.

### **Stages in Doctoral Education**

Descriptions of stages in doctoral education show a progression from student admission and entry into a doctoral program to degree completion. “Stage 1 occurs from admission through the first year of coursework. In Stage 2, the student typically completes coursework, passes candidacy exams, and begins the dissertation proposal process. In Stage 3, the student focuses on completing the dissertation” (Tinto as cited in Baker & Pifer, 2011, p. 5). Descriptions of stages refer not only to program requirements but also the accomplishment of developmental tasks associated with pursuing a doctoral degree. For example, Lovitts (2011) used the term “entry and adjustment” to describe stage one, revealing more takes place than simply starting a course of study. Students adjust to the program and transition into doctoral education (Lovitts, 2001).

During stage two, students must shift from consuming to creating knowledge (Baker, Pifer, & Flemion, 2013) to gain competence and independence (Lovitts, 2001). An approved proposal ends stage two and begins the third, and final “research stage,” involving the period from beginning to completion of the dissertation (Lovitts, 2001). Because doctoral faculty must not only know what students need to learn during stage one but also the competencies needed for stage two and three, Horton’s (1998) “two-eyed” theory of teaching applies here. Faculty must keep “one eye on where people are, and one eye on where they can be” (p. xx). Stage one course instructors must help students meet stage one challenges and facilitate their transition from being “good course-takers” to independent researchers (Lovitts, 2005, p. 1) in preparation for stages two and three – a tall order.

### **State One Challenges in Doctoral Education**

During admission, induction, and initial coursework, doctoral students begin to form a scholarly identity and experience the mentored nature of doctoral education (Richardson, 2006). Golde’s (1998) description of four “general tasks of transition and initial socialization” in doctoral education offers a window on the challenges experienced, and questioning characteristic of first-year doctoral students (p. 56). Doctoral challenges identified in Golde’s study included (1) “intellectual mastery” to assess capableness with regard to scholarly work; (2) “learning about the realities of life as graduate student,” to estimate the costs and benefits associated with the struggle; (3) “learning about the profession” to identify and determine whether anticipated career paths remains attractive and available; and (4) “integrating oneself with the department” to see whether a good fit exists between the student and department (p. 56).

Four questions accompany the transition: “Can I do this? ... Do I want to be a graduate student? ... Do I want to do this work? ... [and] Do I belong here?” (Golde, 1998, p. 56). Doctoral students seek answers to these questions to determine whether they made the right choice. I organized review findings using Golde’s questions.

## Can I do This?

The goal of becoming an independent scholar in doctoral education is a “journey toward independence, rooted in the socialization process of graduate school” (Gardner, 200, p. 326). The journey begins in stage one through student engagement in formal coursework and informal learning experiences with the end goal of gaining competence in research, writing a dissertation, and earning a doctoral degree. These concerns mark academic benchmarks achieved in the path toward degree completion and “independence” as a final stage in doctoral education

Coryell, Wagner, Clark, and Stuessy (2013) analyzed “learner impressionist tales” composed by students in response to a class assignment (the course instructor did not serve as a member of the research team) regarding their early experiences in forming a researcher identity. Stories revealed students experienced considerable anxiety, felt threatened, and questioned their capableness in doing research and writing a paper. Students wondered how “real researchers construct knowledge” (p. 375) and “know their work is valid” (p. 378).

Approaching the formation of a scholarly identity through changes in conceptual understanding and adoption of roles, Kiley (2009) found students get stuck due to an inability to understand concepts or ways of conducting research. Doctoral students struggled to understand “the concept of an *argument* or *thesis*, supported by defensible evidence” (p. 298); “the concept of *theory* as underpinning research and being an outcome of research” (p. 299); and the “concept of a *framework* as a means of locating or bounding the research” (p. 299). Threshold theory explains students’ conceptual difficulties and their struggle to achieve understanding (Meyer & Land as cited in Kiley, 2009). Getting unstuck often requires successive attempts at learning and receiving help from peers and supervisors. Emphasizing the importance of cognitive mentoring and academic culture, Kiley (2009) found research supervisors emphasized discussion, concepts maps, and visual aids to help students free themselves from stuck places in their understanding.

Lovitts’ (2001) study of doctoral attrition (and success) revealed how students made progress during stage one: they acquired formal disciplinary knowledge, learned how to engage in scholarly inquiry, and adopted a balanced approach to achieving academic tasks and accomplished social integration within the department and university. Embarking on a journey to become stewards of a discipline and profession, students enroll in coursework during stage one to gain formal disciplinary knowledge as well as concepts and practices associated with scholarly inquiry (Richardson, 2006). Doctoral students join a discourse community, which “defines the field, conducts the research within it, determines criteria for validity, and helps to mentor and support developing stewards” (p. 255). In addition to formal and practical knowledge, Richardson described the intellectual dispositions needed to examine and challenge unexamined beliefs and understandings gained from experience, and determine “what it might take for others to change these beliefs” (p. 258). Lovitt’s (2008) identified individual resources, including intelligence, motivation, knowledge, personality, and thinking styles, as factors affecting degree completion and creative performance.

Stage one challenges pertain to gaining formal knowledge and also knowing how to move through the program to earn a degree. Beyond the idea of learning whether students can meet the intellectual demands and academic tasks required in doctoral education, students must also know enough about the expectations and requirements to assess their ability to succeed in the program, asking not only “Can I do this?” (Golde, 1998, p. 56) but also, “How do I do this?” The answers to the next two questions largely concern the socialization of graduate students.

## Do I Want to be a Graduate Student? Do I Want to do this Work?

Lovitt's (2001) comprehensive study of doctoral attrition revealed students enter doctoral programs mostly uninformed about program requirements or their potential fit with the department and program. During stage one and two, students must learn the formal requirements and gain an appreciation of the academic and social tasks involved in earning a doctorate and joining a profession. To become a successful scholar and professional, students must also acquire practical knowledge to understand how to enact the role and accomplish the work within the academy or the field (Richardson, 2006).

Developmental challenges involve recognizing a "shift in cognitive development to [meet the] demands of graduate school [and an] understanding professional roles" (Gardner, 2008, p. 344). The formation of a scholarly identity and entry into a new culture and role does not occur instantaneously; instead students experience a state of liminality while attempting to perform a role (Turner as cited in Kiley, 2009). Students in stage one "often focused on short-term goals. They scheduled their life based on assignment due dates and exam dates, the beginning and end of semesters, and the timing and completion of program milestones" (Baker & Pifer, 2011, p. 13). Adopting a researcher identity requires a long-term commitment to scholarship (Baker & Pifer, 2011).

Doctoral students engage in sense-making as they establish their identities as scholar-in-training and reconcile those identities with a preexisting sense of self" (Pifer & Baker, 2014, p. 14). Gaining expertise requires students to experience a period of formation, defined as a "process through which intellectual and social practices of a discipline are gradually internalized by novice practitioners" (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008, p. 61). Three principles characterize this journey: "(1) *progressive development* towards increasing independence and responsibility, (2) *integration* across contexts and arenas of scholarly work, and (3) *collaboration* with peers and faculty at each stage of the process" (pp. 61-62).

Delaying formation experiences, such as postponing engagement in research during the early (first) stage of doctoral education, works against developing the capacity for creative and independent work (Lovitts, 2005). Research productivity and strong relationships with mentors favorably predicted degree completion in all five disciplines examined in Nettles and Millett's (2006) survey of 9,000 doctoral students enrolled in the top 21 degree-granting institutions in the United States. Formation experiences help students develop an appreciation for the long-term goals regarding the dissertation proposal and completion process (Baker & Pifer, 2011).

Drawing from professional education, Golde (2008) described three types of apprenticeship needed to prepare doctoral students for a future faculty role. The first, the "*intellectual apprenticeship* emphasizes content knowledge and ways of thinking inherent in the profession and discipline" (p. 19). The intellectual apprenticeship involves thinking like a professional, learning to adopt modes of inquiry and analytical methods while enacting a professional role. The next two, the "*skill apprenticeship*," and the "*apprenticeship of identity and purpose*" emphasize performing the work (knowing how) and knowing the ethical standards, roles and norms of the profession (p. 19). Golde, Bueschel, Jones, and Walker (2009) argued for expansion of the traditional meaning of apprenticeship involving a senior mentor with a junior scholar "to free it from its connotations of indentured servitude" (p. 55). They recommend students learn from many mentors using an expanded idea of apprenticeship, helping student gain access to expert knowledge and benefitting from multiple relationships and also shared

faculty responsibility for student development.

Lovitts' (2001) study of the causes and consequences of doctoral attrition revealed factors causing students to leave, such as the lack of good information, the absence of community, disappointing learning experiences, and the quality of the adviser-advisee relationship. Using the metaphor of mental maps, Lovitts (2001) described the importance of accessing global maps (mental models) regarding the overall structure of the program as well as local maps with routes to accomplishing academic and social tasks.

Gardner (2009a) interviewed faculty and students to examine the causes for attrition. Faculty generally attributed attrition to deficiencies described as "student lacking" [missing motivation, initiative, ability, etc.], enrolled in the program for the wrong reasons, and personal problems. Students attributed attrition problem to program fit, departmental politics, and personal problems. The only area of agreement in between faculty and students concerned personal problems (Gardner, 2009a). Nettles and Millett's (2006) identified three types of personal problems causing students to interrupt or "stop out" of their program: work, money, and family concerns. To improve their experience, student participants in Gardner's (2009a) study recommended faculty increase efforts to educate them about the program and goals and help them achieve integration with the department and discipline. The last question concerns relationships, "fit," and networks.

### **Do I Belong Here?**

Relationships change over the course of doctoral education, beginning with peer, faculty, and staff relationships within the department to forming and developing a close relationship with an advisor, and later, establishing a relationship to the "larger discipline" (Gardner, 2008, p. 344). These relationships promote a sense of belonging and eventually membership in an academic community. Baker and Pifer (2011) found relationships provided "general support and advice," and contributed to identity development as "scholar[s] in training" and scholars engaged in "academic practice" (p. 8). Relationships in doctoral education provide support and facilitate self-discovery during the transition from student to scholar.

Using a sociocultural perspective, "learning is the result of social interactions with members of a given social group...[fostering] epistemological change (what one knows – knowledge) and ontological (identity) change" (Baker & Lattuca, 2010, p. 814). Socialization experiences include academic interactions with faculty, including "the quality of instruction, faculty availability to meet with students, faculty academic advising, feedback on projects and academic progress, faculty interest in student research and the quality of professional advising, and job placement by faculty" (Nettles & Millett, 2006, p. 94). Participation in different aspects of doctoral education help students to determine the degree to which they "fit" in and gain a sense of belonging and membership in a community (Baker & Pifer, 2013).

Baker and Pifer (2015) applied "fit" theory to doctoral education, identifying three different types of fit, person-environment (PE fit), person-culture (PC fit), and person-vocation (PV fit).

PE Fit encompasses doctoral students' perception of fit within the university and the academic department or program as well as person-person fit with faculty, staff, and other students – particularly those who comprise a student's immediate work group, lab

group, or research team; cohort, classmates, or peer group; and peer mentors such as more advanced students. (p. 300)

The lack of mentors or the experience of isolation leads to a poor PE fit (Baker & Pifer, 2015; Nettles & Millett, 2006). Gardner's (2008) study of socialization revealed five groups of doctoral students who "did not fit the mold" of traditional graduate education including women, students of color, older students, students with children, and part-time students" (p. 130). Students reported negative interactions, experienced dissatisfaction, and thought about leaving the program.

The PC fit refers primarily to the fit between doctoral students and the department, discipline and professional associations (Baker & Pifer, 2015). A strong fit between the student and the culture enhances a professional reputation and job placement; a poor fit occurs when goals and ideals are in dispute. Antony and Taylor's (2004) study on Black student socialization found "expectations of congruence and assimilation ... [and] the need to adjust to these expectations serves [d] as a profound trigger of stereotype threat," reducing the potential benefits of socialization experiences to advance the career aspirations of Black students (p. 93). Nearly half of all African American Ph.D. recipients earned their degree in education (Golde & Walker, 2006, p. 246), making studies of the inclusion and socialization of students of Color in doctoral education an important focus.

The PV fit concerns the career path associated with the degree program. If the program largely sponsors candidates seeking tenure-track appointments, non-traditional candidates with alternative career paths may experience a poor fit (Baker & Pifer, 2015). Part-time students enrolled in a doctoral program in education with experience in K-12 education may return to their professional careers and seek advancement instead of seeking a faculty position (Golde & Walker, 2006). Students with varying knowledge of and access to academic and social communities achieved different levels of integration within communities (Lovitts, 2001, 2005).

Lovitt's (2005) emphasized student experience over characteristics with regard to degree completion: "It is less the background characteristics students bring with them to the university than what happens to them after they enroll that affects decisions and completion" (p. 116). Success depends largely on access and opportunities to achieve integration through participation in communities leading to the development of more sophisticated "cognitive maps" (Lovitts, 2001). Full participation allows students an opportunity to determine whether a good fit exists between the student, department and their future role in higher education.

## **Summary of Review Findings**

Several key areas appeared as stage one challenges: (1) gaining formal knowledge about the structure of a discipline (Lovitts, 2001; Richardson, 2006), (2) experiencing growth in conceptual development and learning modes of scholarly inquiry (Gardner 2008; Golde, 1998; Kiley, 2009; Lovitts 2001, 2005, 2008; Metz, 2001; Richardson, 2006), (3) learning the graduate student role (Gardner, 2008; Golde, 1998; Kiley, 2009; Lovitts, 2001, 2004), (4) forming relationships with peers, faculty, and the department (Antony & Taylor, 2004; Baker & Lattuca, 2010; Baker & Pifer, 2011, 2015; Gardner, 2008; Golde, 1998; Lovitts, 2001, 2005; Nettles & Millett, 2006) and with a discipline, profession, field, and vocation (Baker & Pifer, 2015; Gardner, 2008; Golde, 2005; Lovitts, 2001; Nettles & Millett, 2006).

Because students seek answers to Golde's (1998) overarching question, "Is this the right choice?" (p. 56), students need rich introductory experiences to learn about the nature of doctoral education, including the personal, social and academic demands associated with the role of graduate student and independent scholar. I turn now to my research question and methodology.

### **Research Question, Purpose and Significance**

I adopted the following question to guide my inquiry: How does the adoption of certain pedagogies help students make the transition into doctoral education and support their future acquisition of stage two and three competencies? My purpose in conducting this inquiry of praxis is to make "pedagogy public" (Andresen, 2010, p. 143) by identifying why and how certain pedagogies serve the developmental needs and programmatic challenges encountered by doctoral students during the early stages of their education. Boyer (1990) argued pedagogy subjected to rigorous peer review and shared with colleagues "educates and entices future scholars" (p. 23). Studies of pedagogy may potentially contribute to knowledge regarding how course instructors help students meet developmental challenges encountered during their first year (Gardner, 2009b; Golde, 2005) and potentially reduce feelings of isolation and poor program fit described by students discontinuing doctoral programs (Lovitts, 2001; Nettles & Millett, 2006).

### **Methodology**

I adopted praxis inquiry, an action research method, to conduct my study regarding how certain pedagogies support student development and learning in the early stages of doctoral education. "Praxis" describes action informed by theory—capturing the important relationship between the action taken and the reasons for its selection and its effects based on viable theories and perspectives. "Being able to look back on an event with hindsight and with access to resources, including discussion with colleagues, references to research, and comparisons with other events," captures the essential nature of praxis inquiry (Burridge, Carpenter, Cherednichenko & Krueger, 2010, p. 24).

Praxis inquiry fits under the umbrella of formal or informal action research; the methods employed follow a familiar cycle of research, beginning with the identification of an area worthy of investigation, data collection, analysis, experimentation with methods to make improvements, changes in practice, and evaluation of the effect of these changes on student learning. To locate "core" strategies included under the umbrella of doctoral pedagogy during stage one, I followed the action research steps described.

Action research "empowers teachers in monitoring and analyzing personal practices with the intent of expanding ... [the] knowledge base and enhancing instructional prowess" (Schoen, 2007, p. 215). The knowledge gained may be shared in communities of practice (CoP; Wenger, 2006) with the intent of learning by making improvements in practice. I reviewed, described, and reflected on "pedagogy" (the larger meanings of this term described earlier) adopted and refined over more than a decade of critical reflection on practice. As I learned more about students, including their characteristics, needs, and experiences as primarily part-time students and the goals of doctoral education, I made changes to pedagogy with colleagues in response to student learning and feedback. I used the continued discovery of the purposes and goals of

doctoral education to sharpen my focus and practice.

Collaborative efforts with teaching partners and colleagues produced changes in my understanding and approach, affecting my idea regarding what it means to be a “good” teacher and professor. My investigation allowed me to name and describe core strategies for stage one doctoral education in my analysis – revealing how and why certain methods establish a “good” beginning for doctoral education. Using professional knowledge and established criteria for “good learning and teaching,” allowed me to scrutinize the identified strategies and explain their contribution to student learning based on principles associated with effective learning and teaching. I named the strategies and used theories from education, psychology, and sociology and findings from empirical studies to explain their success.

Boyer (1990) identified four types of scholarship in higher education: the scholarship of discovery (original research), the scholarship of integration (multidisciplinary work aimed at identifying “large intellectual patterns” in research; p. 19), the scholarship of application (applying theory to practice and learning from its application to advance knowledge and serve society), and the scholarship of teaching. A scholarly teacher uses the results of research in teaching (Boyer, 1990), however, a scholar of teaching engages in critical inquiries of practice to discover knowledge and pedagogy “previously ignored, or inadequately understood or presented” (Andresen, 2010, p. 149) with the potential to “draw attention to aspects of subject knowledge previously ignored, or inadequately understood and appreciated” (Eizenberg as cited in Andresen, 2010, p. 149).

Before continuing to the next section involving the program description, I wish to acknowledge here my substantial collaboration with Dr. Kate Boyle, a colleague and friend, and now chair of our department. Her contributions to the course content, arrangements, and my learning produced significant change in the course and me. We taught together for many years and continued to add and refine the methods described in this study. I also recognize the contributions of other teaching partners (Drs. Huber, Fish, Radd, Sathe, and Klein) as co-collaborators in course design.

To reflect the contributions of my teaching partners and the department practice of co-teaching *core* courses, I use “we” instead of “I” in my description of our efforts. In the spirit of praxis inquiry, I share the methods I consider representative of doctoral pedagogy and analyze how and why they show promise in addressing student challenges in doctoral education. I briefly explain the position of the first two courses (five credits) in the *core* program and describe the student arrangements and course goals at their entry point in their doctoral program.

### **Leadership “Core” Courses**

Students enrolled in an interdisciplinary doctoral leadership program at the University of St. Thomas participate in a “core” curriculum (18 credits) as one component of their doctoral coursework leading to a doctorate in education (Ed.D.). The *core* introduces multiple perspectives of leadership as well as the methods and habits of scholarship in the Academy. The first two courses, designated as EDLD 910 and 911: Leaders and Organizations: Multidisciplinary Perspectives, introduce the purposes and goals of doctoral education in a six-month period. The first two of a five-credit course sequence occurs during a four-day intensive summer course, followed by a three-credit course offered during the fall term as a continuation of *core* coursework.

Students participate in an open cohort model, attending *core* courses one weekend a month in fall and spring terms over a three-year period. Students also enroll in other coursework

to meet degree requirements and prepare for a candidate examination and proposal defense. Approximately 15-20 students begin their study yearly with backgrounds in K-12 education, higher education, business, health, government, non-profit, and social service fields. The *core* sets the stage for inducting students into the doctoral program and providing foundational experiences in leadership and scholarship. The “content” of the curriculum serves a larger purpose: introducing students to the contributions of different disciplines to education, learning different assumptions, practices, and modes of disciplinary/interdisciplinary inquiry, participating in an intellectual community, and gradually learning about and successfully performing the role of researcher/scholar.

Course goals emphasize leadership and scholarship, including: critical reflection on practice, naming and critiquing dominant traditions influencing leadership, expanding multiple perspectives using theories drawn from a variety of disciplines to analyze critical leadership issues in a global society, and increasing knowledge and skills with regard to critical thinking, analysis, and forming a scholarly argument. I describe features of doctoral pedagogy to address stage one challenges next.

### **Doctoral Pedagogy**

I identified seven “core” strategies useful in helping students to meet stage one challenges in doctoral education, and as preparation for future success in stage two and three. These included: (1) cohort development and participation in department culture, (2) critical reading and discussion to experience interdisciplinary frameworks and modes of inquiry, (3) writing papers and receiving strategy instruction and feedback, (4) participating in research teams and writing group-authored reviews of literature; becoming familiar with academic genres, (5) participating in active, collaborative, and novel learning experiences using constructivist approaches, (6) using journals to keep track of ideas and development, and engage in critical reflection, and (7) learning from role models, advisors, and mentors through interactions, example, and story. (see Figure 1. Doctoral pedagogy in stage one). Since doctoral students typically learn through coursework in stage one, the pedagogy described in this paper primarily concerns facilitation of student learning within courses.

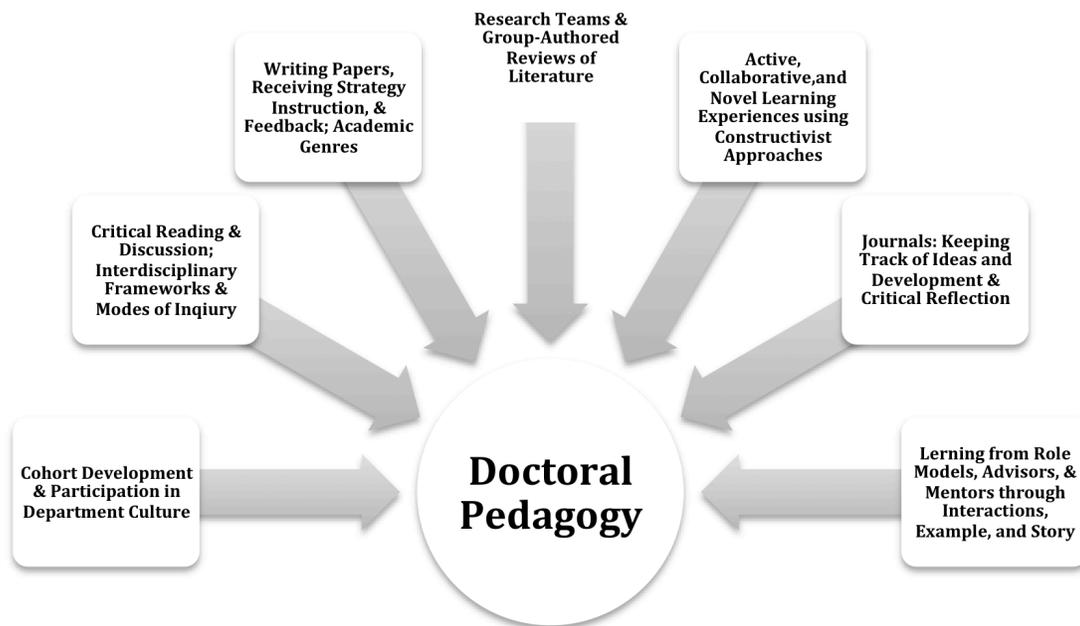


Figure 1. Doctoral pedagogy in stage one, seven core strategies

### **Cohort Development and Participation in Department Culture**

Cohort formation involves the selection and organization of doctoral students in a cohort with deliberate arrangements to facilitate group cohesiveness and trust for peer support and learning. While not described in detail here, the selection process involves an assessment of individual capabilities for doctoral work and the contributions students may make to cohort learning. Once accepted, students enroll in a two-credit summer intensive course with a required residential life experience at the beginning of their program. Students live in dorms for four days and complete assigned work during the evenings. They stay up late, form friendships, and establish the norms for participation and membership in the cohort. We know this indirectly through conversation and observation.

Most students find ways to contribute – making arrangements for the group, playing music, telling stories, mentoring others in using technology, or offering a ride to campus when the bus breaks down. Students begin the first day quietly and this changes dramatically by the next morning. Signs of group cohesion (Johnson & Johnson, 2013) include increased social interactions, inclusion of group members (noticing missing members and providing assistance), increased consideration for colleagues, humor and inside jokes, and a group Facebook™ page.

During the summer course and continuing through the core program, students also enjoy meals together every day during the summer and on Friday nights during fall and spring semesters. The meals facilitate social interactions between students and professors and often, colleagues from different programs. Program founders believed meals fostered community.

Despite a few attacks on the budget, the tradition of the dorm experience and meals continue to find favor among faculty and students.

We begin the core program with an opening ritual. A bucket of fresh flowers, a vase, and a pair of scissors sit on the center table. Students receive a simple instruction: introduce yourselves to the cohort, identify a leader in your life you wish to be with you this week as you begin your doctoral journey, describe his/her contribution to your life, select a flower to represent your leader, trim it, and add your flowers to the bouquet. Next, write the name of your leader on the blackboard, and then return to your place.

When the ritual ends, we discuss the various ways leaders facilitate our development and model ways of being in the world. The room fills with emotion as students describe important relationships and life experiences. We emphasize the importance of relationships as critical source of support in doctoral education, including those who guided us on the journey, those present in the room, and those in our future. We ask the students to take care of the bouquet over the next four days and the members of their cohort for the duration of the program.

Students plan and conduct the closing activity at the end of four days. Their rituals generally feature their hopes and goals for doctoral education and the way they intend to support each other. Many express relief and happiness with the completion of the first two-credits in doctoral education. A few confess they never expected to enjoy learning. A favorite closing ritual for the end of the five-credit sequence occurs on the last day of class in the fall semester. Shortly after students complete and share their end-of-the-course summary and reflection, we slip into our offices and put on our academic gowns and caps. Surprising students as we enter the classroom, we use the gowns to describe the history and distinguishing features of the Academy represented in academic wear. We then share the words of our university president after conferring the doctoral degree during the graduation ceremony, “Welcome to the community of scholars.” The ritual emphasizes degree completion and membership in the Academy – a future symbol of their achievement and confirmation as a scholar.

The rituals introduce students to department culture, and the gown serves as a symbol of the university and future role. The culture of the department and university affect the socialization experiences of students as they join an established culture with strong norms regarding what it means to become a member of a profession (Baker & Pifer, 2013).

An important aspect of doctoral education concerns forming relationships with peer, faculty and the department. Developmental networks serve as important sources of “*psychosocial support*... [, helping students gain a] sense of competence, identity, and work-role effectiveness” (Baker & Lattuca, 2010, p. 810). Active and engaged learning experiences requiring collaboration with peers in class contribute to group cohesion and foster sincere feelings of belonging inside and outside of class.

Participation in “in an academic community and acquiring knowledge provides “entrée into a community: without this base, the doctoral student cannot become a member of that community” (p. 812). McMillan (1996) described four characteristics of community, including spirit, trust, trade, and art. Spirit refers to the “spark of friendship [with] connections to others so that we have a setting and an audience to express unique aspects of our personality” (p. 315). Communities provide emotional safety to encourage truth, including descriptions of “internal experience” and feelings.

The first step require (*sic*) the member's courage to tell his or her intensely personal truth. The second and third steps involve the community. Can the community accept this truth safely? Can members of the community respond with courage equal to the self disclosing member's courage and develop a circle of truth tellers and empathy givers? (p. 316)

Spirit fosters trust (McMillan, 1996). An “authority structure” with shared expectations, group norms, equal distributions of power, and “principle above person” allows community members to contribute (p. 320). McMillan described “trade” as benefits derived from participation in groups, beginning with positive feelings but eventually allowing safe discussion of “criticisms, suggestions and differences of opinion” (p. 321). Finally, art refers to the stories, experiences, dramatic moments, and collective memory fostered by a common experience. McMillan’s description of a sense of community offers criteria for measuring whether membership and participation in communities allows truth-telling and challenges to dominant views bolstered by friendship, empathy, boundaries, and shared norms and values.

### **Critical Reading and Discussion: Interdisciplinary Frameworks and Modes of Inquiry**

Selected texts, such as Takaki’s (2008) *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, help students explore leadership in historical and contemporary contexts. Takaki provided an immigrant history with descriptions of cultural, political, social, and economic history often left out of traditional texts. The text invites readers to engage in a critical analysis of American history. Reading and interpreting texts with a critical stance creates openings for seeing things differently. Students develop “an intertextual network – historical, epistemological and methodological webs – among texts which ‘spoke’ to each other and which would serve later in writing and other forms of academic communication” (McAlpine, 2012, p. 354).

To study individual and collective leadership in social movements, students read *The Long Haul*, Horton’s (1998) biography of leadership. They see the power of education, the effects of radicalizing moments on individual and social change, strategies used in social activism, and the importance of social justice in leadership. Students read Morgan’s (2006) *Images of Organizations*, to learn how application of different metaphors provides new ways of analyzing leadership challenges to gain perspective and consider alternative actions.

Following a long-established liberal arts tradition at our university and program, students read Cliff’s *Abeng* (1994), a deceptively simple “coming of age” novel set in Jamaica during post-colonial times. We explore the universal themes in the human condition (identity, life stages, socialization, the search for meaning, and membership in communities). Students examine and analyze the various constructions of race, class, gender, and sexual preferences as well as the costs and legacy of slavery and oppression in the novel.

Greene’s (1988) text, *The Dialectic of Freedom*, introduces the various meanings of “freedom” in a democracy, and argues for an opening of spaces and inclusion of diverse perspectives within communities as a condition of authentic freedom. Students struggle to interpret Greene’s text and soon learn the work involved in reading and interpreting a difficult text. We ask students to nominate a passage for close reading. This requires them to select and read a passage, explain the meaning derived from the reading, and then explain why they selected this passage. Students often select passages about identity, education, and the effect of

culture on their lives. Greene's text helps students see different purposes and possibilities for education in their program and life.

I feature only a few selected texts to illustrate how critical reading and discussion create disturbances with sometimes unexpected results (Lesko, Simmons, Quarshie, & Newton, 2008). Texts undermine and challenge taken-for-grant assumptions, and offer opportunities to engage in analysis – helping students see how the selection of theory and subsequent analysis foster deep learning and expanded perspectives.

Not only must a good critical reader be conscious of how his or her own reading compares with other possible readings, but he or she must also recognize how his or her own position, in a particular situation and in a broader historical and cultural location, affects his or her response to the text. Readers, like texts, are culturally grounded. When we read texts, our responses and questions reflect our cultural assumptions. (Linkon, 2005, p. 251)

Reading and interpreting texts with a critical stance creates openings for seeing things differently and analyzing experience using grand and small theories from different disciplines. Reading also prepares students to detect the underlying structure of writing expected of scholars in the field and become familiar with different types of scholarly texts.

### **Writing Papers, Strategy Instruction, Feedback, and Academic Genres**

Prior to attending their first *core* course, students receive a writing assignment and submit their work a week before class begins. The assignment requires students to write a six-page paper about their family's experiences in the work and economic structure of the United States or in their native country. The exercise engages them in examining how their family and cultural experiences affected their assumptions about work and education. The paper serves as launching point for discussion of Takaki's (2008) *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. The assignment allows students to enter the classroom with a history and story, and offers diverse students an opportunity to share their family experiences and stories, achieving visibility in history and among peers.

Pifer and Baker's (2014) study of "Otherness" in doctoral programs concerned the experience of diverse students in doctoral education, including their estimates of success and fears associated with gaining acceptance and experiencing success in a doctoral program.

We found that students were acutely aware of the ways in which they may be different during a time in which they are engaged in risk-taking and identity transformation in the pursuit of the doctorate. Further, they pondered these differences carefully and accepted them as potential explanations for failure or inequitable access to resources in that pursuit. Findings reiterate what the diversity literature indicates: race, gender, and nationality matter in terms of understanding experiences in higher education and inequity across those experiences. (p. 26)

Valuing diversity and encouraging expressions of family and cultural stories provide a corner of safety for diverse students enrolled in doctoral education.

After sharing the content of their papers, students receive detailed feedback on their papers, including the conceptual and technical aspects of writing. We provide several pages of “line edits” to illustrate the changes needed in their text to meet standards for doctoral writing, and warn them this “editing service” does not occur elsewhere in their program. The tracked changes and comments on electronic versions of their papers give students an appreciation of the improvement needed in their writing and the value of editing. Their ideas and voice still appear in their papers but the overall quality of their writing improves dramatically for most, not all students.

We continue with a discussion of different forms of scholarly writing and identify the roles and purposes of writing in different academic genres. Viewing writing as a developmental project, we provide detailed feedback knowing this serves as the primary way students learn to write in doctoral programs (Aitchison, Catterall, Ross, & Burgin, 2012). Stories of revisions/rejections” of our submissions of conference proposals and articles reveal the risk of putting work out there and experiencing rejection. Our message: this happens to all of us – get over it!

Another writing assignment requires students to select a single theme described in two texts and produce a new understanding of the theme through critical reading and analysis. This exercise affords them an opportunity to describe how different authors contribute to an exploration of theory or concept, a valuable skill used in many forms of academic writing. We describe ways to construct an argument – one author might define the concept more clearly, while another might provide vivid examples to illustrate its application. Two authors might agree on several points but emphasize or arrange them differently. We warn students against a “book report” style of writing – author “A” said this, and author “B” said that, and instead advise students to consider and integrate the authors’ contributions to a central theme.

This type of scaffolding supports students in their initial attempts to write through strategy instruction and comparison (Harris, Santangelo, & Graham (2010). Introducing an assignment, providing specific feedback, and the debriefing process complete a developmental cycle of practice. Writing instruction addresses typical problems of novice or struggling writers, helping them avoid the obvious mistakes. Quite often students use “good looking” quotations to write their papers. They lack knowledge regarding how to regulate their efforts and compose text, and instead borrow the words from others without introducing and placing the quotation in an appropriate context based on the original text. We kindly explain this does not qualify as scholarship and discuss how to think and write differently.

Following this discussion about quotations, students return to their groups to revise their writing. I overheard one student say to another, “I can’t do this - I can’t write without quotations!” The second student replied, “I can’t do it either, but we’re going to learn how to do it, starting right now!” The two students read an article together, discussed the findings, and wrote a summary, sentence-by-painful sentence. They learned an important lesson: they can write like this but it takes time.

Students write a mini-case study of their leadership experience and apply metaphorical thinking to their analysis using Morgan’s (2006) *Images of Organizations*. Before they tackle the assignment, I share a guide to support student thinking in forming an argument called STAR (Noonan, 2013). The letters represent simple steps in forming an argument: summarize the data, select and describe a theory to analyze data, analyze (showing how theory explains and elevates their understanding of data), and reflect and recommend based on the insights gained from analysis. The results of their analysis represent “new” knowledge and offers insights valuable to their personal development or professional practice.

## Research Teams and Writing Group-Authored Reviews of Literature

The most challenging assignment during the summer and fall term involves writing a group-authored review of literature on an assigned research question. During the course of a single semester, students review literature, identify significant themes, learn how to introduce the review and describe studies, become “familiar” with APA style, and gain experience regarding the scholarship needed in preparing a research project.

Group-authored reviews require strategy, significant collaboration with peers and a good deal of instructor support. Students do not simply add their paragraph to the larger review, but instead incorporate the work of colleagues into a single body of work. Ensuring individual accountability, students submit text within the review using an assigned text color to show their contribution throughout the review. A poor review typically shows long blocks of color (taking turns writing sections or a dominant author) and lack of good description and integration of findings; good reviews, written in one voice with colorful text patterns in most paragraphs, show evidence of collaboration and integration. One student summarized the process for novice scholars: claim, cite, and explain! Later students write a review of literature as solo scholars - but first they begin their scholarly journey by working together.

Metz (2001) taught a seminar on diverse research traditions in interdisciplinary educational research to show students a “common anatomy for social science research,” irrespective of disciplinary perspectives and methodologies. “The key element, the starting point and most important issue in developing research, is the research question.... The research question should be tied to *a summary and analysis of prior knowledge of theoretical (or practical) significance*” (p. 13). The review assignment introduces the logic of research design and shows how contributions from different disciplines contribute to an understanding of the issue and question. The act of writing and submitting the product of one’s mind and effort to the scrutiny of peers plays a central role in academic work. Students learn the costs and benefits of scholarship, and perhaps consider whether they wish to be a graduate student - one of Golde’s (1998) four questions.

## Active, Collaborative, and Novel Learning Experiences

During the five-credit course sequence, students construct knowledge through a variety of engaging activities. For example, students select ten events in Takaki’s (2008) history during an assigned timeframe, and analyze how these events or actions affected the economic and social history of the period. We crowd around the group space to view a graphic illustration of their “events” and analysis. Removing the distance between presenters and audience. The close space invites dialogue. Instructors avoid talking and instead encourage students to add to the analysis and reflect on the group’s findings. The room settles down for deep listening and discussion.

One student notices a recurring theme in the analysis and makes connections between the group’s work and their individual or group understanding. Another student adds a different layer of analysis not seen by others. A third student invites the group to consider the author’s intent, bias, and missing data and interpretations left out of the text. We often return to the text, reading passages, offering new interpretations, and seeing new ways the text might be “read.” In this way teachers and students construct knowledge together.

Engaged learning requires an inquiry approach, students do something with the text before they try to figure out what it means. Learning comes from listening and reflecting on the findings, and then extending the ideas with skilled debriefing by instructors.

During debriefing, the teacher introduces, extends, or enriches disciplinary concepts or procedures, drawing on student experience to present and solidify concepts.... The teacher adopts a “conversational” style, probing students for their explanations and understandings of events and experience. The explanation adds a new layer of understanding to previous learning, exposing new concepts now under scrutiny. Debriefing refers *back* to experience to introduce and solidify general concepts and principles associated with the learning activity. The teacher expects students will encounter certain concepts as a result of the experience, naming and defining them. Teachers do not give up their position in the classroom as someone with knowledge and experience to share with students, but they regulate the use of more teacher-focused methods, such as lectures, until students use their knowledge and experience to engage in learning. (Noonan, 2013, p. 122)

After reading Noddings’ (2011) text, *Philosophy of Education*, students apply theory from the text to an analysis of “musty books.” Students “read” the text for examples of educational philosophy described or implied in the text, matching the example with descriptions of pedagogy. A second reading requires students to locate images (missing and present) within text to analyze the representations of gender, class, and race/ethnicity within the musty books. This leads to a rich discussion of ways to read texts with a critical eye. The next morning, students plan a “Dewey Day Spa,” to illustrate principles and practices based on Dewey’s educational philosophy (in Noddings, 2011).

Students enjoy planning and conducting a talk show modeled after the Face the Nation program (see <http://www.cbsnews.com/face-the-nation/>). They play roles as the host and guest panelists from conservative and liberal camps. We assign roles and issues, such as the Occupy Wall Street movement, the 2008 financial collapse and housing crisis, the collapse of the 35W bridge (a Minnesota event attracting national attention), Obamacare, and this year’s topic – legalization of marijuana (we served brownies). One group plans and facilitates the program, prepares the show’s host, and creates and presents two commercial breaks lasting 60 seconds. The remaining three groups support the “guest” panelist, a volunteer from their group. The planning takes 60 minutes and the program another 30 minutes.

Panelists and host must incorporate Morgan’s (2006) metaphors in their remarks and debates during the program, and lead a debriefing on their analysis once the program ends. The metaphors stem from different disciplinary traditions, allowing us to show how a event or problem benefits from interdisciplinary analysis. Students observe the performance and also participate with online comments using Today’s Meet™ (see <https://todaysmeet.com/>); they lampoon panelists and add their ideas to the debate. The online comments resemble “tweeting” without all the bother - talk about action!

Another favorite activity involves a “dramatic performance” stemming from Cliff’s (1984) novel, *Abeng*. We assign students to small groups and ask them to extend and enrich our understanding of *Abeng* through performance and discussion. The assignment requires students to read the text together, and use creativity and drama enhance understanding. Their

interpretations feature student artistic abilities as actors, musicians, and dramatic readers. Again, the debriefing adds to the analysis. The arts raise critical consciousness (Greene, 1988), and novelty contributes to enjoyment and pleasure to learning (Noonan, 2013).

The activities and cohort model lend themselves to collaborative learning, allowing us to use learner-centered psychological principals to engage and sustain learning (American Psychological Association, 1997). Lovitts (2005) study of forming a research identity identified the importance of creativity and experimentation in producing original research. Students learn early in their program about how to adopt creative approaches in their analysis, gaining confidence by experimenting with ideas through novel learning experiences and interdisciplinary modes of inquiry.

Active learning activities using constructivist approaches allow instructors to avoid coming at hard work directly (Noonan, 2013), and instead we use experiential learning and novelty to open up student minds and facilitate analysis. Students learn they can achieve depth in their analysis through collaborative learning in a safe and inclusive learning environment. Student participation in engaging learning activities serves as a form of “cognitive apprenticeship” (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991). Key ingredients favoring engagement and success involve the reliance on small group learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2013), the design of tasks with sufficient challenge – not too simple or difficult within the range of student abilities with support (Vygotsky, 1978), and the design of novel tasks with skilled debriefing (Noonan, 2013).

### **Journals: Keeping Track of Ideas and Development and Critical Reflection**

During orientation we identify three purposes of journaling, including (1) responding to instructor-provided prompts and in-class reflections on learning, (2) taking notes on reading and keeping track of terms, concepts, and theories informing their intellectual biography, and (3) recording “seeds” or ideas for their dissertation. Students use journals to record ideas and keep track of their progress. “Decades of work on how novice learners move toward advanced forms of understandings and action is that expert learners – those who continue to grow and develop throughout their careers – have a keen sense of how they learn” (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008, p. 85).

Grant (2007) analyzed her experience as a doctoral student and researcher, and described the importance of reflection in not only noticing changes in personal transformation but also adopting the habits of reflection as an established routine in research. “Reflecting on what angers, surprises, and/or intrigues me in both my rereading of literature as well my analyses of empirical observations from my time in the field, helps to identify the researcher I am becoming” (p. 270).

Journaling helps students keep track of their development during a significant identity change by noticing and recording insights and emerging ideas from research and reflection in their field.

Encouraging students to undertake reflective activity *regularly*... provides a starting point.... Introducing students to a range of reflective activities (for example, some form and/or combination of meditation, discussion, journaling or art) may provide a path through the wilderness – enabling students to explore which approach(s) best suits them. (Grant, 2007, p. 272)

Scholars establish practices to keep track of literature, theories, projects, writing, and ideas as an ongoing idea-generating and reflective process. The routine supports original approaches to research, accomplishment of intellectual tasks, and the habits needed to forming an intellectual biography of theories and texts. Another goal, critical reflection on practice, requires students to apply insights gained from analysis to their professional roles and duties. Students write regular reflections from instructor-provided prompts located strategically at certain turning points in learning, and see and learn the benefits of journaling in their academic and professional career.

### **Learning from Role Models, Advisors, and Mentors**

Course instructors serve as role models, informal advisors and mentors, and “stand-in” representatives of department, university, field, and profession. Different types of experiences within formal coursework and through informal interactions with students help students begin to see and experience the purpose, goals, and work of our profession. We facilitate group development, induct students into department culture, guide students in critical reading and interpretation, introduce different forms and expressions of scholarship, describe and model scholarly habits and virtues, and foster the development of curious and analytical minds.

A prime pedagogy for communicating about roles associated with the professoriate involves story. During class discussion and informal activities, professors transmit culture and invite participation through story (Noonan, 2007; see Andrews, Hull, & DeMeester, 2010 for storytelling as method). Quite often we tell stories about how graduates identified a research issue, developed a research design, and completed a dissertation. We share their findings to tell a research story and reveal the rewards of scholarship. Students experience three mini-forms of apprenticeship and mentorship in class: intellectual, skill-based, and identity and purpose (Golde, 2008). They begin to learn the difference between taking courses and the journey in becoming an independent researcher (Lovitts, 2005). Informal advising, discussion of the program structure and requirements, and joyful learning gets them started on their journey.

The seven core pedagogies reveal how students might begin to meet the challenges in stage one of doctoral education. A successful experience contributes to a successful transition to stages two and three, and the formation of a scholarly identity. I use Gee’s (2000) identity theory to illustrate how doctoral students come to understand how to become and be scholars.

### **Forming a Scholarly Identity – Becoming and Being a Scholar**

Gee (2000) defined identity as the experience of “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person,’ in a given context” (p. 99), and named four ways to view identity: nature-identity, institution-identity, discourse-identity, and affinity-identity (p.100). Students seeking confirmation of their scholarly identity must be viewed as individuals capable of performing and accomplishing work valued by others. The confirmation comes from a combination of identities.

The “nature-identity”(N-Identity) exists from forces outside of individual control and must be recognized by the self and others before they become a meaningful part of an identity (Gee, 2000). Gee describes his identity as a twin to illustrate this point. “Thus the N-Identities must always gain their force as identities through the work of institution, discourse and dialogue, or affinity groups” (p. 102). The confirmation of an academic and scholarly identity from student to scholar comes from several sources. “Institutional-identities,” such as a student,

professor, graduate, or scholar, must be “authorized by authorities within institutions” (Gee, 2000, p. 100). Professors assigning grades, departments conferring candidacy, and institutions granting degrees fall within the list of authorities. Gaining acceptance into a program as a student, earning a degree, or receiving an appointment to faculty fosters an institutional-identity.

A discourse-identity comes from the “*discourse* or *dialogue*” of “rational” people who recognize and confirm the qualities or characteristics possessed by individuals (Gee, 2000, p. 103). Gee described a friend with charismatic qualities to explain how recognition by others confers and confirms identity: “It is only because other people treat, talk about, and interact with my friend as a charismatic person that she is one” (p. 103).

Individuals gain an “affinity-identity” through involvement and membership in certain groups, “their allegiance is primarily to a set of common endeavors or practices and secondarily to other people in terms of a shared culture or traits” (Gee, 2000, p. 105). Membership in affinity groups provides opportunities for the development and expression of a scholarly identity in academic and professional settings. Gee argues different concepts of identity may be “woven together as a given person acts within a given context” (p. 101).

Consider the transition of a doctoral student at admission to the program. Students enter with well-established identities formed from the combination of identities, including professional roles and degrees earned. They represent someone who possesses certain features of identity assigned to them through discourse, such as being intelligent, capable, creative, or accomplished. Membership in groups defines them as “the kind of person” (Gee, 2000) who belongs and participates in certain groups, such as leaders of non-profits or educators in K-12 or higher education. Students already possess graduate degrees and an academic identity formed from years of experience in formal education.

Students enter doctoral education with the desire for a degree conferred from a legitimate authority and soon realize this must include becoming someone capable of conducting research and writing a dissertation. To join this community, they must learn how to construct and perform a scholarly or researcher identity. A legitimate authorizer granted students admission to the program, a first step in a long journey from student to scholar.

Individual qualities such as being smart, capable, and creative must be recognized in the new context by professors and colleagues, despite the perceived and actual fears and difficulties associated with being viewed this way at entry into the program. Finally, students must join and become authentic participants in several affinity groups, including a “cohort” of students pursuing a doctoral degree, a person affiliated with a department, discipline, and university, and later, someone who conducts research and achieves membership in a community of scholars.

The “imposter syndrome” (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005) applied to doctoral education may be viewed as a theory representative of the uncertainty and stress associated with attempts to form a new identity. The coursework at entry into doctoral education must provide safe opportunities for experimentation with new and future identities, such as student, scholar, graduate, and professor. When students use their talents during the early stages of doctoral education, confirming what they can do, they become known as someone who possesses the qualities of a capable student and aspiring scholar. The cohort offers membership in an affinity group and supports students transitioning to a new identity through participation and shared goals. The deliberate arrangement of learning and socialization experiences fosters the formation of a scholarly identity.

More challenges (and potential threats) to forming a scholarly identity occur at different stages in doctoral education not described here. The development of this identity occurs in stages and may be characterized as an “oscillating” identity (Jazvac-Martek, 2009). During doctoral education, students experience opportunities to practice a new identity. When students engage in scholarly activities and experience moments when they feel and perform like scholars, their identity reaches higher levels, and then returns or oscillates to a student or novice role with even more challenges (perhaps not as low).

This shifting or oscillating pattern (Jazvac-Martek, 2009) looks like waves, taking students to higher levels through authentic experiences and then dropping them back down again. Successful students and scholars stay longer on an upward track with practice and accomplishment, and hope to avoid the plunge to a novice state.

The notion of *oscillating* role identities foregrounds the incremental transition into academic role identities; there is no definitive moment when student role identities are left behind. Continuous oscillation is evidenced in constantly shifting perceptions of roles in relation to others, sometimes passively accepted, independently projected or actively enacted. (p. 259)

Practicing academic and scholarly roles in formal coursework provides opportunities for students to feel more like scholars and less like novices. The strategic selection and arrangement of meaningful learning experiences may be viewed as an important aspect of an identity development and socialization during stage one of doctoral education. “Learning, both in and out of the classroom, expands a student’s knowledge base (e.g. content knowledge, specialized vocabulary, methodological skills). This expanded knowledge base allows a student to participate at a higher level in the practices of the community” (Baker & Lattuca, 2010, p. 821).

### **Summary and Implications for Practice**

Golde’s (1998) four questions may be viewed through the lens of identity. Four questions accompany the transition: “Can I do this? ... Do I want to be a graduate student? ... Do I want to do this work? ... [and] Do I belong here?” (p. 56). Students ask Gee’s (2000) question: Am I “the kind of person” with the individual characteristics needed for doctoral study? Do the costs associated with becoming a graduate student, including my estimates of success and competing demands of other identities, justify the resources expended to continue in this program? Does performance of this role fit or threaten the other valued identities? These questions prove particularly important for diverse students in doctoral education (Pifer & Baker, 2014) because their knowledge and experience warns them about the potential of not being seen and included as a member of a new community.

My analysis of doctoral pedagogy revealed how certain pedagogies support the identity projects of doctoral students during stage one. This included experiences with group formation (includes residential life experiences, meals, and rituals), constructing knowledge with peers and faculty, learning through and from critical reading, writing, journaling, and discussion as forms of cognitive apprenticeship. Yilmaz (2011) described the methods associated with a “cognitive perspective on learning,” including cognitive apprenticeship, reciprocal teaching, anchored instruction, inquiry learning, discovery learning, and problem-based learning (pp. 209-210). Cognitive apprenticeship involves “modeling,” “coaching,” “articulation” (thinking about and discussing

strategies), “reflection,” and “exploration” (based on a problem, investigation, detection of different perspectives, and thinking independently; p. 209).

Professors adopt certain pedagogies and design learning experiences to foster critical thinking, providing practice and feedback typical of expert coaches, mostly through “critical exchanges” and “arrangements” within the learning environment (Danby & Lee, 2012). Reciprocal teaching, “based on information processing,” engages students and teachers in a dialogue about the text (Yilmaz, 2011). “Reciprocal teaching is composed of modeling, coaching, scaffolding, and fading” to achieve goals (p. 209). This strategy closely resembles “critical cultural reading” described earlier by Linkon (2005). The meaning of text grows through multiple readings and interpretations of the text.

“Anchored instruction” involves using “cases, stories, or situations” as the context for knowledge building and theorizing (Yilmaz, 2011, p. 209). We zigzag in and out of texts to discover the meaning and applications of theory through case studies involving leadership practice and stories of experience. Difficult concepts must be encountered indirectly (Noonan, 2013), beginning with the “anchor” and then applying theory to analyze the case.

Rituals, meals, and a residential life experiences support relationships with peers and professors, and foster socialization into the department, discipline, and profession. This helps students learn and value the norms forming and sustaining a community of scholars. Students gain visibility and receive affirmation for valued individual characteristics, such as intelligence, creativity, or capacity for academic work by gaining visibility within the cohort and authentically, sometimes joyfully, participating in learning. Cohort membership serves as the first of several affinity groups in higher education – first as a “doctoral student” and later as graduates and scholars in the Academy.

Because students enrolled in education doctoral programs as part-time students and often continue in their professional careers, they lack opportunities to participate in informal learning experiences and department research opportunities available to full-time doctoral students (Golde & Walker, 2006). Students rely on the learning experiences within formal coursework during the first few years to prepare them for conducting research and writing a dissertation.

Armed with knowledge regarding the developmental challenges experienced by students during the first year of their program, stage one doctoral faculty may provide students with the “gift” of a good beginning in their first year described by Golde (1998):

A good first-year graduate school experience might well be one in which a student is deliberately exposed to the practice of the life they are being prepared to enter...[,] opportunities to observe the lived life of professional practitioners...[,] and opportunities to interact with graduate students at various stages of the process to learn about graduate student life. Good beginnings, then, help students to make informed, early decisions in response to the socialization challenges they face. ‘Bad’ beginnings delay students’ ability to answer key questions or provide experiences that inaccurately reflect student and professional life. (pp. 63-64)

Making pedagogy public invites dialogue about the scholarship of teaching with the goal of serving students and our field. I encourage more of us to share practices at the pedagogy table, continuing the dialogue regarding the success of our students, the scholarship of teaching, and the future of doctoral education.

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# Creating a Cycle of Continuous Improvement Through Instructional Rounds

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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*Instructional Rounds is a continuous improvement strategy that focuses on the technical core of educational systems as well as educators collaborating side-by-side. Concentrating on collective learning, this process only makes sense within an overall strategy of improvement. This case study examined the Instructional Rounds process in a northern Michigan school district. Pressure points identified included a culture of distrust, an unclear definition of learner outcomes and effective teaching, and a status quo view of improvement. Supportive strategies for change were identified and continue to be implemented as part of the district's continuous improvement strategy.*

## **Introduction**

Schools must tackle a variety of instructional problems that are ever-present and emergent. The complex adaptive nature of instructional needs requires the use of the most valuable resources that schools have available to them: people. According to Schmoker (2010), “The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community” (p. 1).

There have been many reform initiatives and movements throughout the years that have either gone by the wayside or have been continually recycled without any real sustainable progress in schools (Kotter, 1996; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Although well-conducted educational research might appear to offer answers, due to many factors, educational research does not replicate well in different settings. Two of the factors that might contribute to this include the inability to properly train school personnel and the inability to create a capacity for learning in the face of a school’s current climate (Schmoker, 2010). Ultimately, these shortcomings tend to limit improvement results (Kotter, 1996; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

## **Background**

Fullan (2006) stated that effective teachers must be treated as active learners. Teachers should be empowered and taught to make decisions based upon relevant data and be treated as active researchers or scientists in trying to solve whatever problems might exist in their classroom or school (Schmoker, 2010). Oblinger (2003) provided deeper insight into this issue, indicating that an essential component to facilitating learning is to understand the learner. One researcher claimed that systemic problems become activated when a school tries to adopt an adult learning process absent an understanding of the learner (Roberts, 2012).

Teaching has historically been an isolated profession (Elmore & Burney, 1999; Schmoker, 2006). Traditionally, when the classroom doors close, what happens between the teacher and learner is a mystery. In addition, a culture of fear appears to follow high-stakes standardized testing as schools respond to what policy-makers say students should know and be able to do (Sagor, 2003). Teachers and principals everywhere are scrambling to raise test scores without really paying attention to methods for increasing learning within their school or district (Elmore, 2000). What Schmoker (2010), Elmore and Burney (1999), Newmann and Wehlage (1995), and others have suggested is breaking through that culture of fear by working together and looking closely at our students and the tasks we are asking them to do in the presence of rich content. If educators work together with a clear focus on the technical core of schools, which is teaching and learning, and with a developmental stance, some believe that reform is more apt to take a firm foothold (Elmore, 2008).

The technical work in education includes the interaction of student, teacher, and content. Changes cannot be made to one unless they are made to all three (Elmore, 2008). At the center of the technical work, also termed the instructional core, are the tasks teachers are asking the students to do, as well as the tasks students are actually doing (City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teitel, 2009). These might be the same—or not.

## Instructional Rounds Process

Instructional Rounds is a strategy of continuous improvement. Throughout the process, educators take a close look at the instructional core—at what is really happening between teacher and student in the presence of content—by analyzing the tasks teachers are asking the students to do, as well as what the students are actually doing (City et al., 2009). Instructional Rounds is also a culture-building process. It works best when it is part of a system-wide improvement strategy instead of a stand-alone strategy. Rounds only make sense within an overall strategy of improvement that contains specific learning goals. These goals must be directly related to the gaps identified through the setting of a clearly articulated vision and data analysis. Rounds is not an evaluation tool or a process to lead to evaluation. Rather, it is a focus on collective learning instead of individual learning (City et al., 2009).

According to City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teitel (2009), the process of Rounds includes the following steps:

1. The identification of a problem of practice
2. The observation of current practice within the instructional core
3. The observation data debrief, which includes describing, analyzing, and predicting
4. The identification of the next level of work

One of the first steps in the process is for a school's leadership team or school improvement team to determine on what problem they should focus on as a school, based upon tangible data. The data should identify a gap between where the school wishes to be and how it is currently functioning, based upon its vision statement. When the school team has identified a focus area (i.e., a problem of practice), they request a visit from a network of educators who have been trained in the process of Instructional Rounds. The visitors will offer observational data to support, refute, or provide more information about the identified problem of practice.

Working with trained facilitators, the network of educators visits approximately four random classrooms for at least 20 minutes each in teams of four to six individuals. Each team visits different classrooms and/or visits at different times of the class period. After a round of visits, the network convenes in their teams to look at the data they have collected through an affinity mapping protocol (NSRF, n.d.) (Appendix A), which is a structured way of bringing order to the observational data. First, visitors are asked to identify 6-8 pieces of observational evidence and share with their team. Then, the team begins to categorize the pieces of evidence and suggest patterns as well as infer what the observational data might be telling them. Once the teams go through the protocol of debriefing, analyzing, and predicting, they suggest next levels of work for the school in their same teams or as a whole network.

These suggestions are then given to the host school by the facilitator(s), with a debriefing that will help move the school forward addressing its identified problem of practice. The school team decides what suggested strategies, or next level of work on which they wish to work (City et al., 2009). If the school team finds they need more information, they can request another visit from the network of educators.

After some time of working with strategies, that either do or do not work, the school team develops some theories around their strategies or actions they have taken. These theories help to define and refine the work they do with students and the tasks teachers ask students to complete.

These theories also may be supported or refuted based upon a triangulation of analytical and observational data.

This cycle can continue indefinitely. Instructional Rounds is a strategy within a cycle of continuous improvement highlighted within the instructional core, which is where authentic teaching and learning improvements are made.

### **Research Questions**

The research presented in this article describes the work of a continuous improvement strategy that focused on the technical core of educational systems as well as educator collaboration. The following questions were explored:

- How does the process of Instructional Rounds distribute and build leadership capacity for all within the system?
- How can the process of Instructional Rounds assist in identifying areas needing improvement within the system?
- What strategies, skills, and processes support Instructional Rounds as an improvement strategy?

### **Methodology**

A case study approach was chosen for this study. The aim of this case study was to describe the school improvement process in one public school district. The study examined the state of improvement work based on critical enablers of school culture for successful use of the Rounds process. Rounds put pressure on the organization in ways the schools had not confronted before (Roberts, 2012). This case study looked closely at a journey of school improvement caused by those pressure points. It also uncovered strategies used to mitigate those pressure points so that the work of improvement was able to continue.

This study used multiple data points. Data included teacher and administrator interviews, direct observations, artifacts, archival records, and reflection statements collected by the researcher. Artifacts and other evidence collected included meeting agendas and minutes, documents detailing written problems of practice from multiple schools and their revisions, protocols created, used, and revised by the facilitators; and dates of school visits.

The researcher used three strategies suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) to analyze the data collected in this case study: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interviews and reflective statements were both transcribed and then combined for each response to the question in the protocol. The responses were marked for patterns and similar responses. The researcher identified emerging themes from the responses.

Other data collected were also reduced and analyzed from general to specific trends and emerging patterns. Observations were made of behaviors, situations, interactions, and environments. Topics were identified from the observation and put into categories and then from categories to patterns. Conclusions were inferred based on the patterns and categories identified. Emerging patterns were further reduced to identify specific activity, which could impact the researcher's interpretation taken from the data collected. Implications and recommendations for practice emerged from the data reduction strategies.

This study was designed to examine the implementation of Instructional Rounds in one district. Therefore, this study presents explanatory data on the subject of the implementation of Instructional Rounds, and making generalizations is limited to the scope of this study.

The researcher was the professional development director in the district at the time of this study. She first implemented Instructional Rounds at one high school with early success and expanded the process to all of the schools within the district, which included two large high schools, one alternative high school, two middle schools and 13 elementary schools. The purpose of sharing this journey was to describe a typical story of a reform initiative to provide some insight into the implementation of Rounds as well as offer strategies to improve the process of implementation.

In the following sections, the researcher did interweave the theory of Instructional Rounds with the findings of the study. This approach was taken in efforts to suggest ways the work of continuous improvement through the use of Instructional Rounds can be supported in other districts and schools.

### **Instructional Rounds: Building Structures for Leadership Capacity**

You don't have a strategy unless it is in the heads, hearts, and hands of every person in the organization (Constante, 2010). One way to enhance the distribution of leadership in a school is to provide some structures within the Instructional Rounds process. Structures that have been found to be helpful in this process include establishing leadership teams within each school to guide the continuous improvement process, identifying trained facilitators for each school, and establishing norms of behavior throughout the entire process.

For example, the target of this research was a district located in Northern Michigan (NMPS) that serves approximately 10,000 students. The purpose of employing Instructional Rounds in this situation was to target individual building-wide improvements while also identifying patterns across the district that would facilitate district-wide improvement. To successfully implement this continuous improvement strategy, some structures needed to be put in place that would flatten an existing hierarchical leadership structure and build leadership capacity in educators across the district, regardless of their position title.

#### **Establish Leadership Teams**

The first of these structural changes was for each building to establish a leadership team consisting of the principal and teachers across the building interested in leading the school in a uniform direction (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Marzano, 2010). Characteristics of a leadership team member included: (a) respect for and influence among colleagues, (b) knowledge and leadership capacity, (c) unique perspective, (d) specialized training, (e) relationships with key members of the staff, and (f) a sense of the school's history (vonFrank, 2011). Those chosen to be on the leadership team needed to understand their roles and responsibilities, which included determining a vision for the school, collecting current data, understanding the cycles of continuous improvement, and using their influence to move staff forward on well-crafted goals (based on the evidence) in collaboration with the principal. The number of teacher leaders on the team depended on the size of the building. Smaller elementary buildings might have only three or four teachers on their leadership teams, while secondary

buildings had anywhere from six to 10 leadership team members. Some schools called this a “school improvement” team; others, a “data” team.

The primary function of each leadership team was to work with their respective principals in establishing goals for the school by surfacing gaps and challenges through a data inquiry process. Each leadership team looked at data the school and district provided to identify a problem of practice for their school. They also helped to carry the collective message back to the other teachers in their buildings, articulating the building’s vision and providing professional learning directions and opportunities in relation to their theories of action. Many of these professional learning opportunities were provided via facilitated professional learning communities, which were scheduled in 90-minute segments six times a year.

### **Establish Facilitators**

A second structure put in place involved 10 teacher/administrator pairs who served as facilitators to the buildings. Each building had a pair of facilitators who worked with the staff throughout the Instructional Rounds process. They worked with the leadership teams to identify a problem of practice, facilitated the actual Instructional Rounds visit, and debriefed with either the leadership team or the whole staff on the results of the visit, including suggested next levels of work.

These 20 facilitators also served as a leadership team for the overall process of Instructional Rounds within the district. They met as a team regularly, evaluating the process and identifying successes and challenges. They also provided professional learning opportunities to the district as patterns began to emerge regarding areas of need. The facilitators worked with the original Instructional Rounds protocols they received from Harvard’s Professional Education seminars, but they also were empowered to revise and adapt the protocols to meet the needs of the individual buildings. Facilitators met after each building visit to debrief and discuss what worked and what did not. They utilized collaboration as a way to continuously improve the processes they were implementing.

### **Establish Participant Norms**

Finally, a norm was established that helped to distribute the leadership and build capacity in others. This norm was the notion of “side-by-side learners.” When staff were involved with the Instructional Rounds process, titles and labels were set aside. It was with deliberate intention that all professional facets of the organization were involved with the process—from union leaders to central office administrators, building leaders, board of education members, and teachers. Beliefs and assurances were drafted to help secure a mutual understanding of the importance of the work and the commitment of all involved (Appendix B). When participating in Rounds within the building, everyone needed to be present from start to finish, engaging in every aspect of the process. Groups were carefully crafted to ensure a collaborative and equal discussion in which all voices were heard.

### **Instructional Rounds: Identifying Needed Improvements**

Instructional Rounds can put pressure on an organization in ways it has not confronted before

(Roberts, 2012). If improvements are “stuck” in a school or district, then work-around efforts and culture change need to occur. This research looked closely at some of those pressure points the NMPS district encountered: (a) a culture of distrust, (b) an unclear definition of learner outcomes and effective teaching, and (c) a status quo view of intelligence and improvement.

## **Trust**

To effectively distribute the leadership that goes along with building leadership capacity, there must be a foundation of trust among the educators within the system. NMPS discovered a lack of trust rather quickly. The more the teachers in multiple buildings were asked to discuss and analyze aspects of the instructional core, the more issues and problems around management kept getting in the way. It was obvious teachers were not comfortable “opening their doors” to their colleagues to engage in discussions that highlighted what they were asking students to do or even what the students were accomplishing.

In addition, there were a couple of individual building teams that were so excited about the process they went off the agreed-upon protocols resulting in the teacher union leadership immediately putting a halt to the process. This led to multiple in-depth discussions about why the district was engaging in the Instructional Rounds process. All agreed, regardless of status within the district, that the purpose of Instructional Rounds was to improve teaching and learning across the whole building and the whole district. It was not evaluative; it did not target individual teacher performance. Thus, to move forward, systems were put in place to ensure the fidelity of the process. One system, previously mentioned, included the Beliefs and Assurances document (Appendix B). This document included norms of behavior all Instructional Rounds participants would agree to follow. This document was reviewed and signed before every Rounds visit.

Another system put in place included the review of protocols used within the overall process and facilitation. Facilitators had the authority to revise protocols, as they deemed necessary to meet the needs of the buildings for which they were responsible. However, each revised protocol was shared with all other facilitators, and the facilitators met after every Instructional Rounds visit to reflect upon what worked and what did not.

## **Learner Outcomes and Effective Teaching**

Another challenge to the work of improvement was a lack of definition and shared understanding about learner outcomes and effective teaching. As problems of practice were identified, it quickly became evident that many people within the district had a different definition of each learner outcome, as well as vastly differing thoughts about effective teaching. Many problems of practice were identified around student engagement, but there were many different thoughts on what student engagement should look like and what strategies should be utilized to increase engagement. As a result, the district’s school improvement teams took a school year to define each of the learner outcomes, including bringing in student work and student evidence to illustrate each outcome. These definitions were then rolled out to each building through the principals and a member of each building’s leadership team.

Defining effective teaching was an ongoing process and changed with district leadership. In the first year of Instructional Rounds, NMPS defined effective teaching through the lens of

Newmann’s framework of authentic instruction and assessment (Newmann & Associates, 1996). Subsequently, however, the district decided to align with regional schools in adopting Marzano’s Learning Map, based upon his research (Marzano, 2007). Ultimately, having a clear definition and shared understanding of effective teaching will help the Instructional Rounds network of educators understand what they are observing and better equip them for suggesting next levels of work.

### **Status Quo Mindset**

Another area that was stalling improvement was a “status quo” view of learning, as well as continuous improvement. On a visit to the district, Lee Teitel, one of the authors of “Instructional Rounds in Education” (City et al., 2009), met with the district’s school improvement leadership teams (and Instructional Rounds facilitators) and asked the question, “If your schools are in continuous improvement, then why is it taking a year or more to craft a problem of practice?” He also shared his theory of systems not achieving improvement until there is a mindfulness of the adult learning in the system. This led the district to further investigation of growth versus a fixed mindset within the adults (Dweck, 2006), and the facilitators began paying closer attention to what was said in the leadership teams. The facilitators also used a continuum of school improvement efforts with the leadership teams to assess their buildings and discover where they might be “stuck.” They assessed where the adults were in each of their buildings and helped to coach them toward more of a growth mindset, which helped to move the process—and continuous improvement—further along.

### **Supportive Strategies, Skills, and Processes**

As mentioned, there were many strategies, skills, and processes utilized to help support the work in the NMPS district. The use of structured universal protocols—such as “Hopes and Fears” (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2007) (Appendix C); “The 5 Whys for Inquiry” (National Staff Reform Faculty [NSRF], n.d.) (Appendix D); and “Affinity Mapping” (NSRF, n.d.) (Appendix A)—supported the implementation of the Instructional Rounds process. On the other hand, having the autonomy to revise the protocols to meet the immediate needs of the building being visited helped to authenticate and personalize the data for that building. The work could get messy, but with protocols to guide the process, visiting educator teams were able to make sense of the observational data that were collected.

The use of a data inquiry cycle within each building proved to be a process that greatly enhanced the strategy of Instructional Rounds and assisted in continuous improvement. The data inquiry cycle included identifying a problem of practice from an analysis of data, such as standardized assessments as well as local assessment and classroom data. A problem of practice was something the building believed they were able to improve upon. In each analysis, the need for collecting additional observational data around the instructional core became apparent. What was really happening when students and teachers were getting together in the presence of content? What tasks were being given and how were the tasks being completed? Once observational data was collected and next levels of work were suggested, staff members were able to identify which next levels of work or strategies they wished to employ. After focusing on the next level of work for some time during professional learning opportunities, the building

would reflect upon their original problem of practice, collect more current data, analyze, and continue the cycle of inquiry.

Understanding the data inquiry cycle helped teams to better understand the cycle of continuous improvement (Boudett, City, & Murnane, 2013). It put “walking legs” on compliance with school improvement and made it more real and authentic to all of those working with the students in the building. Leadership teams began to understand that the work was never finished. Some buildings began to embrace the notion that working on a problem of practice together should be ongoing and be included in professional learning community time as well as other professional learning opportunities. The observational data collected during an Instructional Rounds visit informed where time should be spent instructionally to improve the learning of the students.

The use of developmental scales and continua around school improvement and the processes used were very helpful in creating and supporting a growth mindset within and throughout the system. It was discovered that the assessment of where groups stood at any point in time fluctuated with the growth in learning. Rarely did any one group or building “arrive” at any criteria. Rather, there was improvement; when there was new learning, the assessment of a criterion might have taken a dip on the continua. The point of using the continua was to frame discussions and assist in targeting next levels of learning.

Ultimately, the most important part of the process was the attempt to level the hierarchical structure by acting as side-by-side learners and putting systems in place to support that change. These systems included the administrator and teacher pairings as a facilitator team, creating a set of norms for how the visits would be conducted, and the commitment of going through the entire visit and data analysis process together.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Instructional Rounds enhances learning for all involved with the process, in service of improving instruction for the students (City et al, 2009). When engaged in the process from start to finish, it is not just the target school that benefits from the analysis and synthesis of the data. Those among the network of educators who are engaging in dialogue about good teaching and learning also are able to take with them new insights and thoughts about what might work in their classrooms/buildings/districts. As previously stated, Instructional Rounds is not a stand-alone strategy for school improvement; it is a process of continuous improvement. If the process of Instructional Rounds does not appear to be working or forward movement is stalled, it is important to identify the reasons for this lack of progress. Instructional Rounds sheds light on parts of the system that work and parts that do not work. If a system appears to be “stuck,” leadership teams should examine the situation within the continuum of school improvement, pay attention to the adult learning, and take a developmental approach to move forward. Instructional Rounds, at its best, serves as an accelerant to building and/or district-wide improvement (Roberts, 2012). At its worst, it highlights areas of dysfunction within the system that demand attention prior to moving forward.

The practice of Instructional Rounds pulls multiple improvement initiatives together and tells us what is happening (or not happening) in the classroom. High-performing schools don’t look solely at assessment data. They look at data in the classroom, including observational data around the instructional core. If rigor is not seen in the tasks teachers are asking students to do,

then it is not there. It is best for a school or district to utilize Instructional Rounds to better understand the learning that is and is not taking place from a developmental stance. Improvement is growth, and growth is a process, not an event. Attention should be paid to all the learning experiences of each school as well as within the district and Instructional Rounds is a process that can facilitate this process.

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## Appendix A



### Affinity Mapping

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*This revision and description by Ross Peterson-Veatch, Instructional Consulting, Indiana University Kelley School of Business, 2006.*

#### **Description**

This activity works best when begun with an open-ended analytic question that asks for defining elements of something, or that has many answers and thereby provides many points of entry for deepening a conversation.

*Ex. What is the purpose of discussion? Or, perhaps: What do you need to be able to contribute to discussions?*

#### **Preparation**

Hang pieces of chart paper on a wall in the room so that small groups can gather around the paper. Hand out to every participant a “block” of post-it notes (perhaps 5-10 maximum).

#### **Step 1**

Ask the question and request that participants write one idea in response per post-it note. Instruct them to work silently on their own.

#### **Step 2**

Split into groups (of 4-8). In **silence**, put all post-it notes on the chart paper.

#### **Step 3**

Reminding participants to remain silent, have them organize ideas by “natural” categories. Directions might sound like this:

“Which ideas go together? As long as you do not talk, feel free to move any post-it note to any place. Move yours, and those of others, and feel free to do this. Do not be offended if someone moves yours to a place that you think it does not belong, just move it to where you think it does belong — but do this all in silence.”

#### **Step 4**

Once groups have settled on categories, have them place post-it notes on chart paper in neat columns. At this point, ask them to converse about the categories and come up with a name for each one.

#### **Step 5**

Have the groups pick a “spokesperson” to report their ideas to the larger group.

Gather that data, and have an open discussion using questions such as the following to help participants make connections between each groups’s responses and categories:

1. What themes emerged? Were there any surprises?
2. What dimensions are missing from our “maps”? Again, any surprises?
3. How did this expand your knowledge or your notion of what the question at the beginning asked you to consider?

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group® and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School Reform Faculty website at [www.nsrharmony.org](http://www.nsrharmony.org).

## Appendix B

### **Beliefs and Assurances**

#### **We believe Instructional Rounds...**

is a culture building practice, requiring of us sustained interaction around the details of the instructional core and instructional practice in ways that become part of the daily routine of schooling;

is about instructional problem-solving, getting a sense of the real challenges and complexities present when teachers and students get together in classrooms;

is an ongoing process, not an isolated event, whereby we continually coalesce our understanding of powerful teaching and learning in the presence of rich content;

is meant to be descriptive, predictive, and diagnostic, not evaluative;

is about professionalizing educators' work, not making it more bureaucratic or hierarchical;

is not about supervision and evaluation, nor an implementation check

#### **We are committed to...**

**An invitational spirit.** Visiting and serving schools only takes place when we've been invited by them to conduct rounds.

**Supporting schools.** Visiting and serving schools only happens when they've gone through their own in-house collaborative process of identifying their problem of practice and, possibly, a theory of action which drives their school improvement endeavors.

**Confidentiality and respect.** Confidentiality is a non-negotiable feature of this process whereby no classroom is ever referenced by teacher name or individual classrooms discussed outside of the rounds process.

**A learner's stance.** Individual network members participate in this process not as teachers, principals, central office leaders, or union leaders; but as equal educators taking on the role of learner.

**Collective actions.** Instructional Rounds is a collective, collaborative effort -- no one, single person can "do rounds." Individual actions cannot be called Instructional Rounds, nor should they ever be mistaken for "rounds."

**Collaborative support.** As network members and host schools interface with one another in this way to better support each other's learning, we offer support, patience, and sensitivity to one another. Missteps will happen, and when they do, it is up to the collective group to extend support for rectifying and keeping the process to the highest of integrity.

### **The assurances we extend and adhere to...**

A specific classroom or teacher observed in an Instructional Rounds visit will never be discussed or identified in any way outside of the rounds process.

All observation notes will be collected and destroyed by the facilitator of any given Instructional Rounds visit.

School administrators and teachers within the network will not participate as observers when hosting an Instructional Rounds visit at their particular site. If only part of a school has invited the network to visit (i.e. a neighborhood, an academy, etc.), then it is up to the leadership team (teachers + principal) of that section of the school whether or not to invite network members to participate as observers should they be assigned a different division of the host school.

All faculty members within a host school will know which network members will be part of their Instructional Rounds visit. Host school's leadership team (teachers + principal) will organize the network members into teams and assign them classrooms to visit.

A school will not be visited unless they have developed their problem of practice and, possibly, a theory of action in a collaborative way. We will only visit schools when a host school's leadership team (teachers + principal) have gone through a process with all faculty associated with the visit of identifying what it is they want out of the Instructional Rounds visit as part of their ongoing improvement strategies and efforts.

*I have read and understood the above requirements for Instructional Rounds Network membership. By signing below, I agree to abide by this code of conduct in all Instructional Rounds Network endeavors of which I am a part. Should I violate any of the above conditions, I am willing to work with the network to rectify any missteps to the satisfaction of the network membership or else be asked to no longer take part on any future Instructional Rounds visit.*

Name of Network Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Hopes and Fears

*Adapted from McDonald, J., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. (2007). The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Pp. 23-25.*

#### **Purposes:**

1. To help people learn some things about one another
2. To establish a norm of ownership by the group

#### **Details:**

The time can vary from 5 to 25 minutes depending on the size of the group and the range of concerns. If the group is larger, the facilitator should group people together to report out to the group as a whole. The only supplies needed would be writing materials, chart paper and markers.

#### **Steps:**

1. **Introduction:** The facilitator asks participants to write down briefly for themselves their greatest fear for this meeting: "If it's the worst experience you've had, what will have happened (or not happened)?" Then, they write their greatest hope: "If this is the best meeting you've ever attended, what will be its outcome?"
2. **Pair-share:** If time permits, the facilitator asks participants to share their hopes and fears with a partner.
3. **Listing:** Participants call out fears and hopes as the facilitator lists them on separate pieces of chart paper.
4. **Debriefing:** The facilitator prompts, "Did you notice anything surprising or otherwise interesting while doing this activity? What was the impact on you or others of expressing negative thoughts? Would you use this activity in your school? In your classroom? Why? Why not?"

## Appendix D



### The 5 Whys for Inquiry

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*Developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF.*

**Purpose**

To help the presenter get at the foundational root of his/her question and to uncover multiple perspectives on the question.

**Presentation** (3 minutes)

The presenter describes the context of his or her inquiry question

One might include...

- Why you chose this question
- Why it is so important to you
- How it relates to your work back home

**Clarifying Questions** (3 minutes)

The group asks clarifying questions. These are questions, which clarify the context of the presenter's remarks. They should be specific questions, which can be answered with brief statements. For example, "How long has your school been involved in place based learning?" Or, "How many community members are involved with planning this project?"

**Decision** (3 minutes)

The group discusses the best line of inquiry to get at the heart of the question and decides upon the initial "why question". The presenter is silent.

**The "Why Questioning":** (10 minutes)

The "why question" decided upon is asked and the presenter responds. Another "why question" is asked in response to the presenter's answer. This continues with a maximum of five "why questions" being asked.

**Discussion** (5 minutes)

The group then discusses what they have heard the presenter say. Their discussion is not a solving of a problem but an attempt to help the presenter understand the underlying causes for the issue he or she described. The presenter is silent.

**Response** (3 minutes)

The presenter responds to what has been said. The group is silent.

**Debrief** (3 minutes)

The group and the presenter debrief the experience.

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group® and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School Reform Faculty website at [www.nsrffharmony.org](http://www.nsrffharmony.org).

# Teacher Perceptions of the Value of Teacher Evaluations: New Jersey's ACHIEVE NJ

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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*The Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act was adopted by the New Jersey legislature in August 2012 with the intent to raise student achievement by improving the overall quality of instruction. As a result of this act, new teacher evaluation systems, known as ACHIEVE NJ, have been introduced in school districts across the state in an effort to more accurately assess teacher performance and to customize professional development opportunities for teachers based on observed areas of need. The overarching question that informs our research is what impact will ACHIEVE NJ have on the overall value of teacher evaluations and the quality of professional development opportunities offered to teachers. Data collected through survey research presents the pre-implementation practices (2012-2013 school year) as well as one year post-implementation practices (2013-2014) provides a snapshot of what is taking place in school districts throughout New Jersey. The findings reflect teachers' perceptions of the value of teacher evaluation practices, the quality of the professional development opportunities and the value the school administration places on teacher evaluations.*

## **Race to the Top**

The funding to support TEACH NJ and ACHIEVE NJ comes from the federal reform initiative Race to the Top (RTT). Background on RTT provides insight as to why so many states, including New Jersey, introduced legislation to reform their teacher evaluation systems and tenure decision processes. In July 2009, the Obama administration launched its \$4.35 billion Race to the Top (RTT) Fund, one of the largest competitive grant programs in the history of public education in the United States. As such, it significantly altered the level of federal involvement in public education through the sheer size of its financial investment and through the articulation of specific federal priorities that were to be met through RTT funding.

In an effort to secure RTT funds, at a time when state budgets were eviscerated by the economic crisis, many states enacted legislation that would reform the standards for teacher evaluations and tenure decisions. Many states rushed through hastily crafted legislation to secure federal dollars that were needed to close the revenue gap and forestall drastic cuts in personnel.

## **TEACH NJ**

The Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey Act (TEACH NJ) was signed into law on August 6, 2012.

In 2011, after two failed rounds of competition, New Jersey was awarded \$38 million to “reform” education. According to the NJ Department of Education, RTT funds will be used to pilot and develop a new educator evaluation system, which is the foundation of the TEACH NJ tenure reform act. The TEACHNJ Act calls for a four level evaluation system of teachers that links individual student data to teachers and creates a more difficult process for teachers to earn tenure.

Under the new law, teachers work for four years, with one of those years under the guidance of a mentor, before the tenure decision is made. During their first four years, new teachers must consistently earn good grades on annual performance evaluations in order to attain tenure. TEACH NJ also targets teachers who have already earned tenure. In a major change to educational policy, tenured teachers may lose their jobs after two consecutive years of ineffective evaluations. Prior to the legislation, school districts could dismiss tenured teachers for “inefficiency,” but the process for doing so took years and could often cost districts hundreds of thousands of dollars, leading many school districts to avoid the process all together. Now, teachers have 105 days after a school district files tenure revocation papers with the state to appeal the decision. Under the new law arbitration will take place outside of the courts and costs will be capped at \$7,500. In addition, the legal costs will be paid by the state. This reduction in administrative and financial burdens is thought to be an incentive for school districts to pursue the dismissal on ineffective teachers.

## **ACHIEVE NJ**

Beginning in September 2013, all New Jersey’s teachers will be evaluated on an annual basis. The evaluations will be based on multiple observations of classroom performance as well as student growth objectives (SGO). Rather than relying on absolute standardized test scores, a statistical formula will determine student growth from year to year (called value-added) and

compare that growth to that of their peers. Every teacher will receive a summative rating of “highly effective,” “effective,” “partially effective,” or “ineffective” which replaces the binary system that rated teachers as “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” The summative evaluation is based on 20 percent SGO and 80 percent teaching practice.

### **Teacher Evaluations**

In theory, a teacher evaluation system should measure a teacher’s strengths and weaknesses through an accurate and consistent process that provides timely and useful feedback. The evaluation and feedback should inform instruction and professional development opportunities to improve classroom instruction and educational outcomes (Marzano, 2012). According to Kelley and Maslow (2005), “Teacher evaluation systems ideally should foster improvement in both professional development opportunities and teaching practices” (p.1). However, in the real world theory often fails to inform practice. Marshall (2005) demonstrated that “the theory of action behind supervision and evaluation is flawed and the conventional process rarely changes what teachers do in the classrooms” (p.274).

Inadequate assessments are all too common, which means poor performance is not addressed, teaching excellence goes unrecognized, new teachers do not receive the feedback they need, and professional development is not aligned with areas of need. The evaluation process can play an important role in developing teachers’ instructional capacity, which in turn contributes to the academic achievement of students (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2002), however teacher evaluations, as currently conducted, fall short. Overall, teacher observations are brief and infrequent and they fail to differentiate among teachers.

Proponents of education reform rightfully argue that the current teacher evaluation systems are inadequate (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Marzano, 2012; Weisburg, et al 2009; Danielson, 2001). Often, these evaluations involve a short “walk through” visit by the principal or other administrator. The evaluators rely on a rubric that serves as a checklist of what they observe in the classroom. These rubrics tend to focus on trivial items that can be measured and have little to do with learning outcomes, school improvement efforts or professional development opportunities (Donaldson, 2008; Varlas, 2009).

Researchers found that teachers in Chicago had positive perceptions of the overall teacher evaluation process, especially when they valued the leadership of their principals and principal-teacher trust was rated as high (Jiang, Spote & Luppescu, 2015). In addition, they found the evaluation process contributed to teacher stress and decreased satisfaction in the teaching profession. They also learned that “teachers had negative perceptions about the inclusion of student growth metrics” (Jiang, et al 2015, p. 113).

Decades of research show there is a significant relationship between teacher effectiveness and student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2013; Danielson, 2001; Tucker and Stronge, 2005). According to Darling-Hammond (2000), the “effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status” (p. 39). And yet, existing teacher evaluation systems often illustrate no relationship between teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. On paper, almost every teacher is a good teacher, even at schools where student outcomes are dismal. In New York City, a school system with 89,000 teachers, only 1.8 percent of teachers were rated unsatisfactory (Brill, 2009) and in Chicago, where roughly 25

percent of high school students do not graduate on time, and 33 percent of fourth graders are not reading at grade level, 99.7 percent of teachers are evaluated as satisfactory to distinguished (Rich, 2012). Weisburg and his colleagues (2009) conducted research on the rigor of teacher evaluations of 12 school districts in four different states and found “less than one percent of surveyed teachers received a negative rating on their most recent evaluations (p.10).”

According to Morgaen Donaldson (2009) “Multiple factors, often working in tandem, produce this effect. External constraints decrease evaluators’ inclination to evaluate rigorously – vague district standards, poor evaluation instruments, overly restrictive collective bargaining agreements, and a lack of time all contribute to this problem” (p.2). Internal constraints including a school culture that discourages negative ratings and a district culture that offers little oversight and few incentives contribute to the inflated teacher ratings.

The American Federation for Teachers (AFT, 2010) and the National Education Association (NEA, 2010) have acknowledged the need to reform teacher evaluation systems as the existing systems are inadequate. Both associations highlight the importance of using multiple measures to assess teacher effectiveness, such as classroom observations and district wide assessments, as well as additional opportunities for feedback. They also emphasize the importance of targeted professional development.

Measuring teacher performance is complicated and there is no formula for what makes a good teacher, which means there is no formula for what should be included in the evaluation. Evaluation systems have multiple purposes. Danielson (2012) believes that teacher evaluations should focus on accountability and improvement while Marzano (2012) identifies the dual purpose of teacher evaluations as measurement and development. Both experts agree that one system of evaluation cannot effectively serve both purposes. “Although efforts to move quickly in designing and implementing more effective teacher evaluations systems are laudable, we need to acknowledge a crucial issue – that measuring teachers and developing teachers are different purposes with different implications. An evaluation system designed primarily for measurement will look quite different from a system designed primarily for development” (Marzano, 2012 p. 15).

### **Professional Development**

Research demonstrates that professional development opportunities, when properly designed and implemented, have the potential to enhance classroom practices and ultimately improve student learning outcomes (Fullan et al, 2006; Guskey, 2002). The key is providing professional development that is timely, relevant and effectively delivered. Professional development that is provided in an effective way can have a measurable impact on school improvement and student achievement (Schmoker, 2006; Mathers, Olivia & Lane, 2008). Historically, professional development programs were developed with little input from teachers. Research shows that when professional development programs are mandated, and there is a “pre-determined political agenda for instructional change and teachers’ perspectives are not valued during professional learning” little professional development takes place (Grierson & Woloshyn, 2013, p. 403). However, when teachers have the opportunity to inform the professional development training agenda, positive learning outcomes are realized and the transfer of knowledge is more effective (Alexander & Swafford, 2012; Edmond & Hayler, 2013; Alderman, 2004; Gregoire, 2003).

Moore (2002) conducted a study of 224 teachers and 23 administrators to assess their perception of the New Jersey Professional Development Initiative. The findings highlighted “considerable disjuncture between what teachers value and what they do in the area of professional development” (p. 156). According to Moore, professional development was a “compliance vehicle” (p. 158) with teachers attending random workshops to accumulate the mandatory 100 hours of professional development required by the initiative. The focus was compliance, not professional or personal growth. Similarly, a recent report by McKinsey & Company (2012) found that most school districts tend to offer the same set of training courses each year without reflecting on what worked and what did not.

Chappuis, Chappuis and Stiggins (2009) find “it’s essential to emphasize the long-term, ongoing nature of professional development as opposed to a short-term, commercially promised quick fixes” (p. 57). A one-time professional development seminar for hundreds of teachers is not as effective as ongoing and personalized professional development that is found in professional learning communities and realized through peer coaching (Rhodes & Beneicke 2002). Research demonstrates that professional development is most effective when it is offered on-site, is job embedded, sustained over time, centers on active learning, and focuses on student outcomes (Chappuis et al, 2009; Sparks, 2003).

While there is a substantial body of research on professional development that identifies the essential characteristics of professional development, there is growing evidence that only a small percentage of what is known to work is actually being implemented (Hawley & Valli, 2000; Spicer, 2008).

## **Methodology**

This research explores the current teacher evaluation and professional development practices in the state of New Jersey. The survey was designed to ascertain teacher perceptions of 1) the evaluation system in their school, 2) the level of communication between teachers and administrators, and 3) the availability, frequency and effectiveness of professional development opportunities. In addition, we wanted to ascertain if teachers are encouraged to participate in professional development activities as a result of their evaluations.

The original survey was pre-tested with a random sample (N=50) of New Jersey schoolteachers. Based on the feedback from the pre-test phase, the survey was revised and administered to a random sample (N=1235) of New Jersey schoolteachers during the spring of 2012 and yielded a 21% response rate (254 completed surveys).<sup>1</sup> Sixty-six percent of the survey respondents were female and 34 percent were male. In terms of tenure, 72 percent of the respondents were tenured teachers, while 28 percent were untenured.

The second survey was distributed to a random sample (N=1560) of schoolteachers in New Jersey during the spring of 2014 and yielded a 23% response rate (364 completed surveys). Seventy-five percent of the respondents were female and 25 percent were male. Most (89%) respondents worked in public school districts. There was less disparity with tenured versus non-tenured respondents in the 2014 survey, with 58 percent being tenured and 42% being non-tenured.

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<sup>1</sup> The researchers did not include data from partially completed surveys.

The original survey enabled us to gather baseline data for the 2012-13 school year; the year prior to the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system across all of the state’s districts. The 2014 survey provides data on teacher evaluations and professional development following the first full year of ACHIEVE NJ implementation. The survey will be replicated annually through the 2016-2017 school year.

## Findings

After analyzing the data we categorized the responses into four themes: formal evaluation process, impact of evaluation on teaching practice, perceived administrative value, and professional development needs.

### Formal Evaluation Process

We asked our respondents to indicate how often they received a formal evaluation by their school principal or assistant principal, other teachers or members of the school management team, or from an external individual such as a supervisor from central office (See Figure 1). During the pre-implementation year, 21 percent of respondents indicated having never been evaluated by their principal or assistant principal during the school year; while 10 percent of the respondents during the post-implementation year indicated they never received an evaluation from their principal or assistant principal. In the pre-implementation year 15 percent indicated having been evaluated three or more times, while in the post implementation year over 30 percent of the respondents had been observed three or more times. In 2012, 23 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the evaluation was a fair assessment of the quality of their work, while 14 percent strongly agreed the evaluation was helpful. In 2014, 22 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the evaluation they received was a fair assessment of the quality of their work, and 12 percent strongly agreed that the evaluation was helpful.

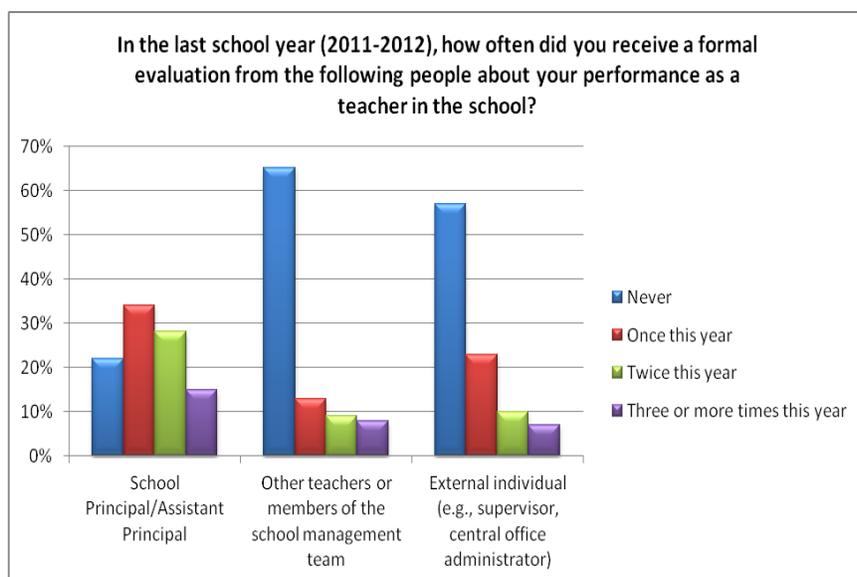


Figure 1A. Formal Evaluation Process Pre-implementation of ACHIEVENJ

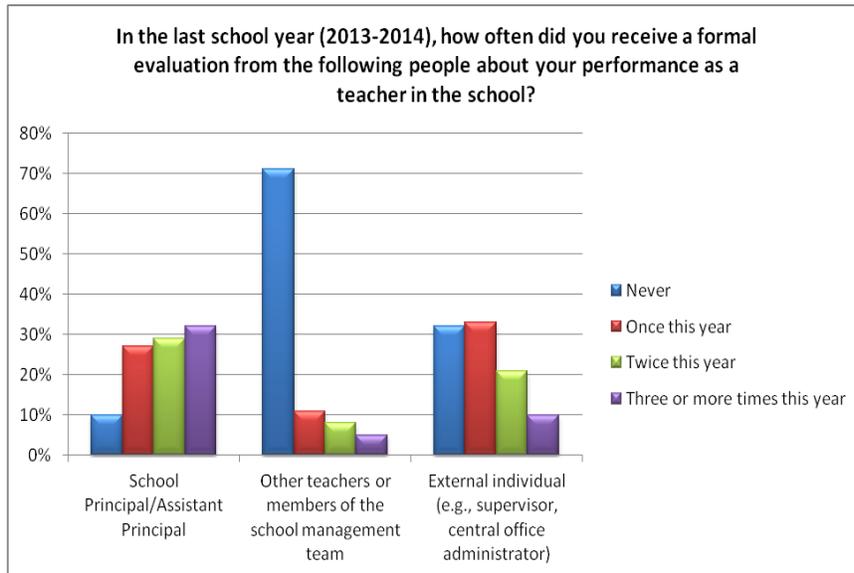


Figure 1B. Formal Evaluation Process One-Year Post-implementation of ACHIEVENJ

### Impact of Evaluation on Teaching Practice

We asked the respondents to what extent the formal evaluation they received led to changes in teaching children with special needs, raising student test scores, handling student discipline, knowledge of subject pedagogy, and classroom management. Across all five categories, in 2012 and 2014, over half of the respondents felt the evaluation had no impact and resulted in no change (See Figure 2)

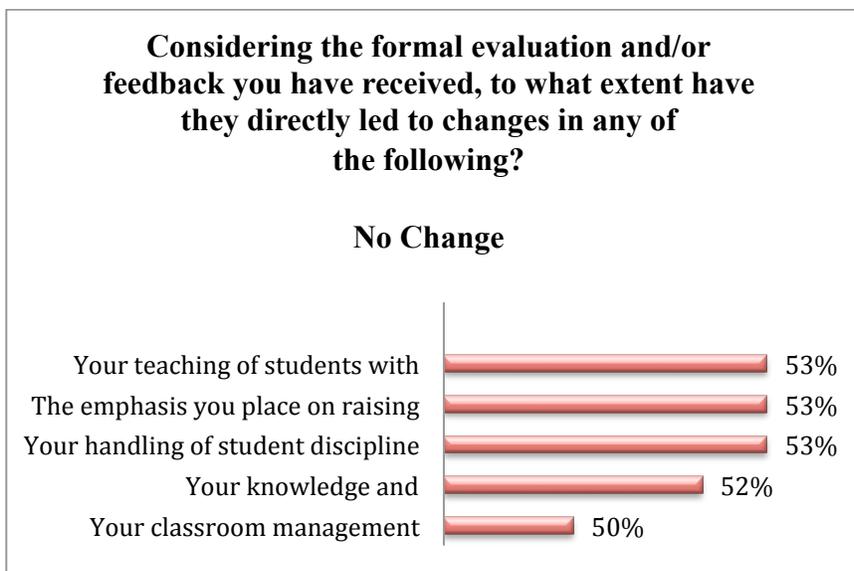
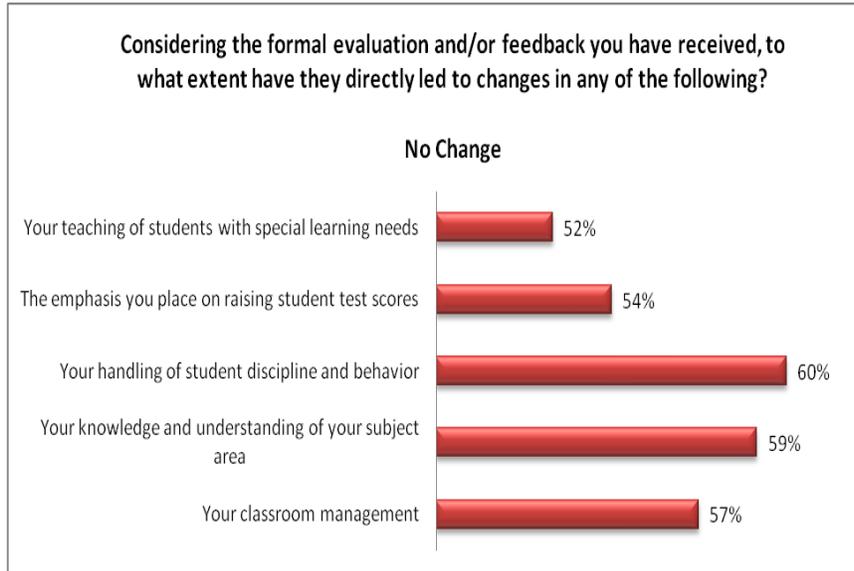


Figure 2A. Perceived Effects of Formal Evaluation Pre-implementation of ACHIEVENJ



*Figure 2B.* Perceived Effects of Formal Evaluation One-Year Post-implementation of ACHIEVENJ

### **Perceived Administration Value**

In an effort to develop a better understanding of the administrative value of the teacher evaluations we asked respondents to indicate how and if the outcomes of evaluations impact personnel decisions (See Figure 3). In 2012, 31 percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that a teacher would be dismissed because of sustained poor performance, while in 2014 it increased to 43 percent. In 2012, slightly more than 39 percent agreed /strongly agreed that administrators work with teachers to develop individual professional development plans and this increased to 42 percent in 2014. In 2012, 41 percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the administration offers no incentives for improved teaching practices and in 2014, 42 percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed with this statement. In 2012, 44 percent agreed/strongly agreed that the formal evaluation had little effect on the way they teach and in 2014, 42 percent felt the same way.

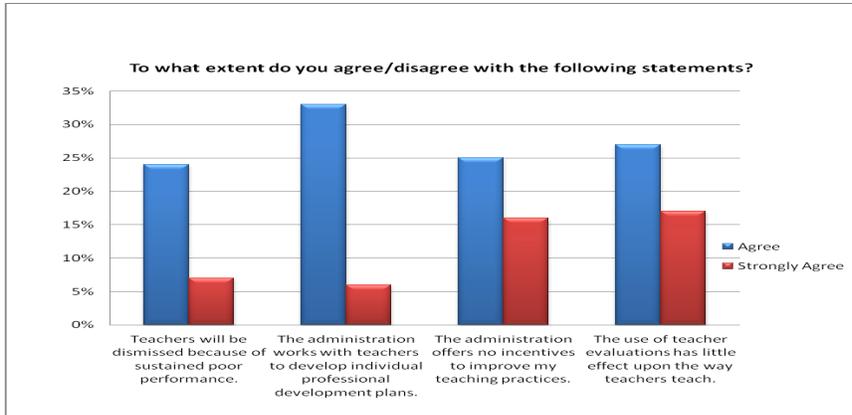


Figure 3A. Perceived Administrative Value Pre-implementation of ACHIEVENJ

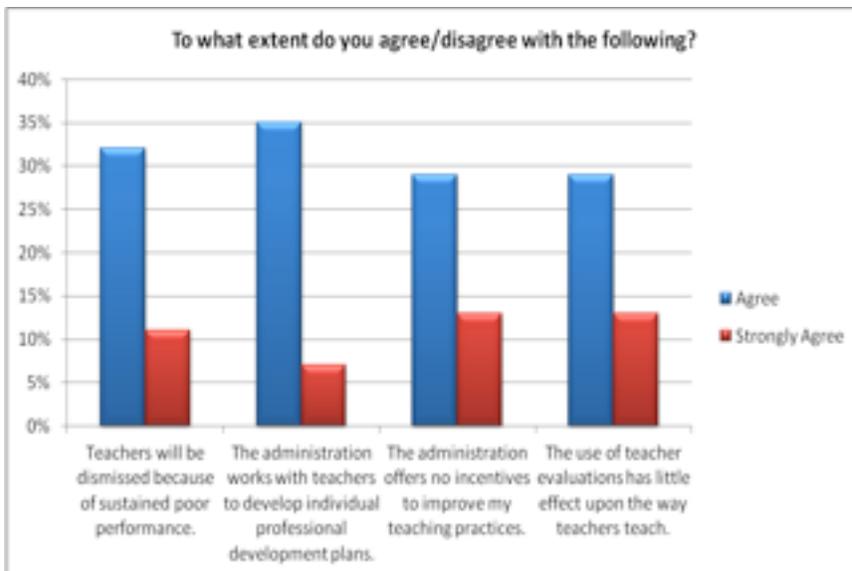


Figure 3B. Perceived Administrative Value One-Year Post-implementation of ACHIEVENJ

### Professional Development Needs

The survey asked a series of questions related to professional development. Overall, a majority of respondents (59%) in 2012 indicated that they wanted more professional development but felt there were barriers that prevented them from doing so (See Figure 4). In 2014, 56 percent indicated they wanted more professional development opportunities. Forty percent of respondents indicated they could not participate in professional development because it conflicted with their work schedules. Additionally, 39 percent did not attend professional development because they could not afford it, and 36 percent indicated their district would not reimburse them. Twenty seven percent felt their administration did not support their participation, and only five percent agreed that their administration worked with teachers to develop appropriate professional development that matched their needs.

Additionally, we asked teachers if they participated in professional development activities such as having their colleagues conducting peer observations and the perceived value of this type of professional development on their teaching pedagogy.

When asked, in 2012, if teachers participate in mentoring/peer observations, over 50 percent of the teachers indicated that they did and 66 percent found it had a moderate to large impact on their professional development as a teacher. In 2014, the percentages changed to 53 percent of teachers participating in mentoring/peer observation, with 61percent of those teachers indicating that it had a moderate to large impact on their professional development as a teacher.

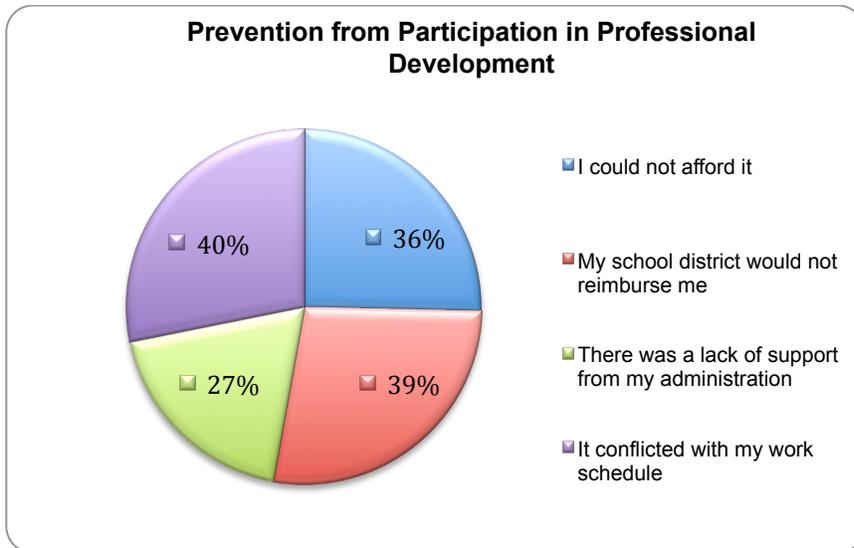


Figure 4A. Barriers to Professional Development Pre-implementation of ACHIEVENJ

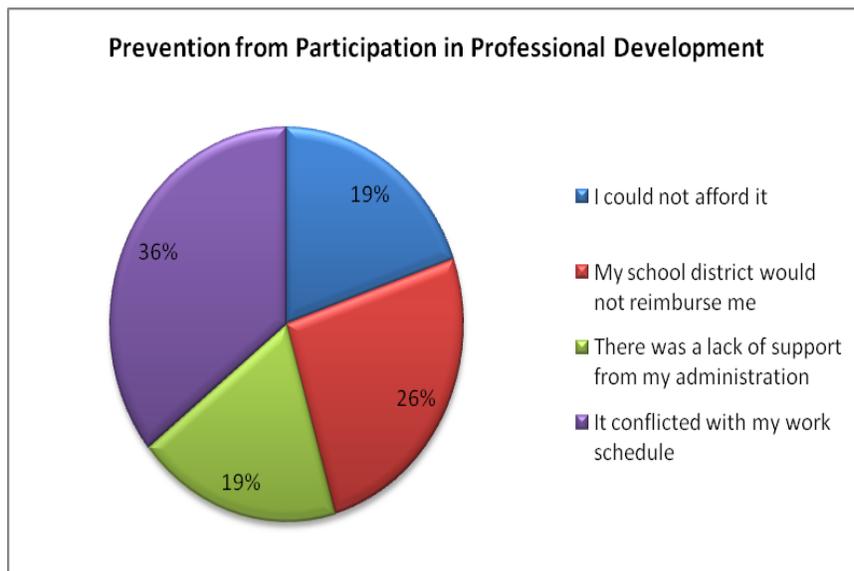


Figure 4B. Barriers to Professional Development One-Year Post-implementation of ACHIEVENJ

## Discussion

In 2012 we found that formal evaluations were conducted infrequently with a varying degree of accuracy and impact. Nearly half of the teachers indicated the formal evaluations did not lead to improvements in their classroom as measured by five different indicators. In addition, a majority of the teachers thought the formal evaluations they received were not an accurate assessment of their teaching abilities. Some of the teachers were not observed at all and many indicated they were only observed once, and often not by a school administrator.

In 2014, there was evidence that the frequency of observations had increased. During the pre-implementation year, 15 percent of the respondents indicated they had been observed three or more times. In 2014, 30 percent of the respondents indicated they had been observed three or more times. While the number and frequency of observations increased, the perception of fairness decreased a percentage point from 23 to 22 percent as did the perception of helpfulness, which decreased from 14 to 12 percent. Another way to assess the frequency of observation is to look at the percentage of respondents who indicate they have never been observed. In 2012, 21 percent of the respondents had never been observed. In 2014 it decreased to 10 percent of the respondents never receiving a formal observation.

While teachers indicated that they were observed more often, they also noted the value of the observation was diminished. Open-ended comments reflected numerous concerns about the formulaic nature of classroom observations. Several teachers noted that their principals were more focused on entering observations in real time than on teacher-centered observations. They appeared more focused on entering information on tablets, then in actually observing. Teachers noted the technology and demands of observing numerous required elements made the observation scripted.

In 2012, teachers questioned the administrative value of formal teacher evaluations with many questioning the rewards and sanctions associated with the outcome of the evaluations. Thirty-one percent agreed/strongly agreed that the poor performers were not sanctioned. In 2014, it increased to 43 percent. While the perception that teachers will be sanctioned for poor performance increased by 12 percentage points, the percent that indicated that effective teaching would be rewarded increased one percentage point from 41 to 42 percent.

In 2012, 59% wanted more professional development. In 2014, 56% wanted more. A key component of ACHIEVE NJ was to align professional development opportunities with observed areas of needs, yet only 5% of post implementation respondents indicated that administrators designed professional development based on observed need. A majority of the teachers raised concerns about the lack of resources for professional development. Other teachers or administrators provide much of the professional development offered internally. While teaching colleagues can be a valuable source of professional development for inexperienced teachers, survey results indicated that this was best realized through informal mentoring, not formal professional development. In 2012 and 2014, over 60% of the respondents indicated that informal mentoring had a moderate to large impact on their teaching practice.

What does this tell us about the state of teacher evaluations in New Jersey? Teacher observations are conducted more frequently, but the value of the observations has not improved. The frequent observations are more rigid, following a script. Professional development opportunities have changed little. With that observation we recall what Marzano (2012) said about professional development—measuring teachers and developing teachers are quite

different. An evaluation system designed to measure teachers is quite different than an evaluation system designed to assess professional development needs. We also need to remember that effective professional development opportunities are contingent upon sufficient financial resources and there is a genuine concern that the funding available to develop high quality teachers is insufficient.

The regulations associated with ACHIEVE NJ have turned what was once an organic, albeit infrequent, process into a scripted one. Teachers in New Jersey are demoralized and one of the contributing factors is the emphasis on rating teachers. School boards and school administrators should not lose sight of the original intent of TEACH NJ and that is to improve the educational outcomes for all students. Teacher evaluation systems are not perfect and effective teachers are not the product of formulas. Research shows us that much of what effective teachers do cannot be measured by categorical ratings. However, that is not to say we should not attempt to define what effective teachers do and make every effort to replicate it. We need to move beyond checklists and rubrics that fail to acknowledge teaching excellence and we need to identify and offer professional development strategies that are most effective to improving teaching pedagogy and ultimately improving student achievement.

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# Career Experiences of Latino/a Secondary Principals in Suburban School Districts

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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*In this phenomenological study, Latino/a secondary principals from suburban school districts were interviewed regarding their career advancement experiences. Participants described various motivators (drivers) and barriers experienced throughout their principal careers in suburban schools. Data were analyzed and interpreted using Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological reduction approach and framed by Lewin's (1954) force-field analysis theory. Internal drivers included: passion for educational leadership and drive and determination. External drivers comprised family support and mentoring. Internal barriers were career doubt and questioning of own leadership capacities. External barriers comprised gender bias and district level resistance to Latino/a diversity in hiring. Implications for the recruitment and retention of Latino/a principals in suburban school districts, as well as principal leadership preparation programs are discussed.*

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## **Introduction**

U.S. education scholars contend that diverse school leaders who mirror the races and ethnicities of the diverse student populations they serve provide positive role models for all students, and increase the motivation and engagement of students of color (Carillo, 2004; Hill & Torres, 2010; Jones, 2002). Furthermore, researchers suggest that student engagement and academic performance might be influenced by the presence or absence of adult role models, both teachers and principals, who students identify with ethnically or racially (Padilla, 2003; Tresslar, 2012). Moreover, a growing number of secondary students who are Latino/a are enrolled in suburban school districts throughout the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). Yet, the percentage of Latino/a secondary principals do not reflect the number of Latino/a secondary students, particularly in suburban school districts (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). In one study, the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA) noted large statistical gaps when comparing the number of Latino/a school leaders to the numbers of Latino/a students served in the state of California (Magdaleno, 2006). In Texas, large gaps also exist between the numbers of Latino/a principals and non-Latino/a principals working in Texas schools, especially in suburban secondary schools with increasing Latino/a student populations (Tresslar, 2010). Overall, few studies have been conducted that focus on Latino/a secondary school principals or the experiences of Latino/a principals who work in suburban, rather than urban, school districts. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Latino/a secondary school principals who worked in suburban school districts, as well as to identify these principals' perceptions of the supports and barriers they experienced in advancing their careers.

## **Overview of Relevant Literature**

Some scholars and policy-makers have proposed strategies for recruiting, retaining, developing, and guiding potential Latino/a school leaders and have stressed that having Latino/a school leaders in place is essential to addressing the needs of a growing Latino/a student population throughout the United States, particularly in suburban and rural schools where less Latino/a principals are employed than in more urban districts (Contreras, 2004; Magdaleno, 2009; Young, Young, Oto, 2011). Moreover, some scholars have suggested that the extent of school engagement and academic performance of minority students, in general, might be influenced by the presence or absence of adult role models, both teachers and principals, with whom students identify either ethnically or racially (Padilla, 2003; Tresslar, 2010).

In examining Latino/a school leadership, other researchers have discovered that non-White school leadership candidates tend to be held to a higher degree of scrutiny due to the fact that most recruitment agencies, school board members, and superintendents are White males, which can lead to maintenance of the status quo in not supporting racially, ethnically, and gender diverse school leadership (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Tallerico, 2000). In one study, Garcia & Guerra (2004) uncovered processes of deficit thinking by which a Latino/a leaders were judged to be less qualified solely on their ethnic status.

In exploring pathways to the superintendency for Latino/a school leaders, Tallerico (2000) observed two pathways to obtaining these positions. First, in the traditional route, applicants apply for jobs and a selection committee, usually appointed by the school board, sorts

through candidates and makes selections based on articulated needs. Secondly, school boards recruit successful candidates from other districts and positions or used recruitment agencies to find appropriate candidates. Tallerico (2000) suggested that gatekeepers were often a barrier in the hiring of school leaders of color because these gatekeeping district employees had valuable information regarding the hiring process that often gave preferred White candidates substantial advantages over Latino/a candidates. In particular Bjork (2000) discovered that Latino superintendents often were perceived as incompetent in managing district budgets and finances.

In the state of Texas, demographic trends suggest that Latino/a population numbers will continue to rise and, therefore, will lead to an increase in the number of Latino/a students enrolled in Texas school districts (Hodgkinson, 2000; LeCroy & Krysik, 2008). Additionally, many Texas school districts have documented academic performance gaps between Latino/a students and students from other ethnic groups, particularly as gaps relate to poor high school graduation rates (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). However, Romero (2005) suggested that adequately responding to demographic changes within school districts to ensure mirrored diversity in leadership has been difficult for many districts to accomplish.

Overall, despite demographic trends reflecting increasing Latino/a student enrollment, few studies have been conducted on the career choices of Latino/a educational leaders and what contributes to the retention and success of these school leaders (DeAngelis & Kawakyu O'Connor, 2012; Magdaleno, 2009). Nieto (2006), in highlighting a leadership crisis in the Latino/a educational community, described how evaluating the career paths of Latino/a educational leaders might provide insight into the motivation and reasoning behind job choices. Based on study findings, Magdaleno (2006) advocated the need for mentoring programs to support the advancement of Latino/a school administrators. Scholars concur that further investigations are essential to understanding the career choices and perceptions that Latino/a secondary school administrators have regarding their potential for advancement (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011; Young et al., 2011).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Lewin's force field analysis was used to provide an overarching framework for exploring drivers and barriers to Latino/a principals' career decisions and mobility (Lewin, 1951). Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy theory served as a framework for exploring Latino/a principal participants' internal drivers in making their career choices. External drivers were explored through the lens of Latino critical race theory (Aleman, 2009a, 2009b; Solózano & Yosso, 2002), which often is referred to as LatCrit (Huber, 2010).

Lewin's (1951) force field analysis theory was relevant to describing the drivers and barriers that Latino/a secondary principals might experience throughout the course of their careers. Lewin suggested that if an entity increases the driving forces and decreases the resistance to change, progress was possible. Lewin (1951) warned that if an individual increases the driving forces without decreasing barriers, more tension and conflict was possible.

Internal drivers for Latino/a secondary principals' career choices might best be understood through a lens of self-efficacy theory. Bandura (1993) suggested that self-efficacy was derived from successful experiences and achievement. Moreover, Bandura linked an individual's self-efficacy beliefs with internal drivers that determined motivation, and consequently, predicted effort and perseverance when beset by obstacles. Bandura's social

cognitive theory also can be applied when investigating career paths because the process of goal setting and the attribute of self-confidence have been determined to be pivotal for job promotion (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Bandura and Locke (2003) stated that goal setting, self-efficacy, and human functioning are all intricately interwoven into the human psyche and might predict the ability to achieve occupational success. The application of motivation and self-efficacy, as they pertain to Latino/a secondary school principals, potentially provides insights into their career experiences.

Aleman and Aleman (2010) described how Latino/as must seek opportunities to advance first by placating White superiors and aligning their interests in ways that serve the superior's interests more than their own and more often than White subordinates typically would be required to do. Aleman and Aleman (2010) also asserted that when cultural factors were considered, it was difficult to measure the differences between Latino/a cultural norms and the transfer of these cultural norms to a mainstream workplace environment. Moreover, in their investigation, problems with assimilation to work culture predicted the lack of movement for Latino/a secondary school administrators (Aleman & Aleman, 2010).

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) was used to provide a more specific framework for the Latino/a sociological experience (Aleman, 2009a, 2009b; Huber, 2009, 2010; Villalpando, 2003). Latino Critical Theory scholars (e.g., Aleman, 2009a; Aleman & Aleman, 2010) have indicated that although critical race theory has been useful when analyzing the whole spectrum of societal and racial implications, Latino/as have encountered specific barriers and therefore needed to address racism by applying a unique set of tenets that directly apply to the Latino/a/Latino experience. Critical race theorists have been quick to emphasize that LatCrit complements the work of critical race theory but does have specifically unique tenets (Aleman, 2009a). LatCrit scholars have utilized the process of counter-storytelling methodologies, such as narratives and phenomenology, to provide Latino/a educators with opportunities to share their views of racial and societal implications (Sorlozano & Yosso, 2002).

### **Research Questions**

This qualitative study consisted of a central research question and two subquestions. The central research question was: What are the experiences of select Latino/a secondary school principals regarding their career advancement in suburban school districts? Subquestions comprised the following: (a) What are the perceived internal drivers and barriers to career advancement for select Latino/a secondary school principals in suburban districts?; and (b) What are the perceived external drivers and barriers to career advancement for select Latino/a secondary school principals in suburban districts?

### **Method**

A phenomenological research approach was applied to address the research questions in this study designed to explore the career experiences of five select secondary school principals who were Latino/a and worked in suburban districts. A phenomenological approach was deemed the most appropriate by the researcher to capture the lived experiences of the principal participants. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research allows for exploration of shared experiences among a group of participants.

## Participant Selection and Procedures

Criteria sampling and network sampling were used to identify potential participants. To participate in the study, participants had to: (a) identify as Hispanic or Latino/a; (b) have been a secondary principal working in a suburban district for at least six years. Due to the limited number of Latino principals working in suburban (not urban) districts, network sampling was necessary to identify these principals through community contacts. Five suburban secondary school principals who met participation criteria, consented to being interviewed and recorded. Each Latino/a principal were interviewed at length and interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours. All interviews were transcribed for analysis. To protect participant and school district identities, pseudonyms, rather than real names, were used for all districts mentioned in the interviews, as well as the principals interviewed. Pseudo Spanish surnames were used for all principals in place of their real names. Participants were asked to review transcripts for accuracy.

## Data Analysis

Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological reduction approach was used to analyze the interview data from the transcripts. Following the phenomenological reduction procedures, first, significant statements were identified for each participant and put on an Excel spreadsheet. Then, *horizontalization* was conducted to identify and cluster related significant statements across the participants. These were initially coded using *in vivo* coding. As common themes emerged, descriptive codes were used to identify and categories or similar themes across the participants as they related the principals' shared career experiences as Latino/a secondary principals working in suburban districts. Structured descriptions were then created for each participant. Spanish pseudonyms were created for each of the principals' surnames and real surnames were not used.

## Results

Through the phenomenological reduction analysis process, eight themes were revealed. Interpretation of this data revealed both drivers and barriers to the success of the Latino/a secondary principals interviewed in this study. These themes are represented in Figure 1 as they related to internal and external drivers that the principals perceived in describing their career experiences, as well as Lewin's conceptual framework. The eight themes then were categorized accordingly as follows. Internal drivers included: (a) a passion for educational leadership and (b) drive and determination. Internal barriers were comprised of (c) career doubt and (d) questioning of leadership capacity. External drivers were (e) family support and (f) mentors. External barriers consisted of (g) experiences with gender discrimination and (h) district resistance to change. Additionally, the theme of family influence and support had two additional emergent subthemes including (a) family members who were educators, and (b) supportive parents who were still married. Figure 1 illustrates the internal drivers and barriers described by the participants and Figure 2 illustrates the external drivers and barriers evident in principal interviews. Below each figure, each theme is explained in greater detail with supporting quotes provided to elucidate the principal participants' experiences in their own words.

### Internal Drivers

- Passion for Educational Leadership
- Drive and Determination

### Internal Barriers

- Career Doubt
- Leadership Capacity Questioned

*Figure 1.* Themes related to internal drivers and barriers.

#### **Internal Drivers: Passion for Educational Leadership and Drive and Determination**

All five participants described themselves as having a competitive nature or a strong desire to progress in their career, regardless of the obstacles. The participants articulated a passion for educational leadership and many shared instances in which they desire to expand their span of influence within school settings to impact positively larger groups of students and teachers. Phrases such as “I wanted to have a bigger impact” and “I can impact all kids” were used to express this sentiment. Most participants believed that they really wanted to influence systemic changes in education. Moreover, each respondent discussed an intrinsic drive for continual growth on an administrator career path. A passion for educational leadership was a pivotal factor for the principal participants when they described their decisions to take on administrative roles within the educational system hierarchy and move from positions as teachers to administrators. Principal Escobar expressed this sentiment:

As a teacher, you teach the kids that come into your room and leave. As a principal, you touch them all, and you can affect them in a positive way, and of course as a superintendent, it’s a greater extent. So that’s why for me it’s secondary education.

In regard to a passion for educational leadership and making a greater impact, Principal Diaz added:

I really thought that I would make a bigger impact with kids, but what I found is that I’m making an impact with teachers. So at the time when I decided that, I thought oh I’ll get to work with more kids. The reality is that I get to coach teachers.

Similarly, Principal Botero reported:

As a teacher, the principal had the opportunity to impact a lot more kids and the culture, I didn't think about it when I was a teacher. How you interact with other people, the kids, how you make decision about programs, a plan for staff development. All that is different than just having 22 kids in the classroom.

Another major internal driver was drive and determination. This was defined as the will to continue on a given path regardless of the obstacles. In this study, determination related to the inner resilience that participants described that allowed them to reach their current positions as secondary school principals. Principal Botero spoke about her determination as it related to challenges:

I like a challenge, I work really hard, I always try to do my very best job for whomever it is that I'm serving, because I'm serving my kids, the parents, knowing that I can help people. I've always been an overachiever.

In regard to the emergent theme of determination, Principal Diaz added that her internal competitive nature enhanced her ability to succeed:

I think it's just my competitive nature. When I do something, I just want to excel, like what's the final goal. So what kept me internally motivated was that it was a challenge, and I come from a big family and we all came out to be type A people, and so that just steeped into your internal drive and it's who you are.

Principal Chavez stated similar ideas about determination, "So I'm not quite sure if there's a next step for me, but as long as I'm determined and productive, it's all that matters." Overall, in their interview responses, the principals revisited periods in their careers when these two internal drivers served as substantial motivators for them in obtaining promotions and succeeding in secondary principal positions.

### **Internal Barriers: Career Doubt and Leadership Capacity Questioned**

In regard to internal barriers, themes of self-doubt about their career capacity in the form of an *imposter syndrome* in which one believes that he or she does not really know what he or she is doing or are faking his or her abilities to carry out a role or function. Having their leadership capabilities challenged or questioned by others emerged frequently in participants' descriptions. The theme of career doubt manifested in several ways. For some participants, self-doubt about their capabilities and career choices as an educational leader was common. Sentiments such as, "I doubted my ability" or "Is this for me?" were relayed as common in times of stress or during role changes throughout their careers. Other participants doubted that they would pursue a career in education at all. Two of the participants cited instances where a subordinate questioned a decision, and that questioning led to an internal questioning of their own leadership acumen. Another candidate discussed how her boss continually questioned her decisions at the campus level, which led to self-doubt and her own insecurities about her leadership abilities. All of the respondents expressed that, over time, they developed "thick skin" and the ability to persevere through times when their leadership was questioned.

In seeking more in-depth information, each participant was asked to share the reason behind expressed career doubts. Principal Arias discussed her doubts in moving from the position of counselor to the role of assistant principal. She questioned her ability to handle some of the duties associated with discipline as it pertains to an assistant principal position.

Principal Arias stated:

It took a lot to jump from a counselor to an AP. It took a lot of interviews. It was the first time it took me so many interviews to get a job, usually any job I would interview I would get the job right away, but to go from counselor to AP, I think that was hard because I was seen as very green, or not able to make hard decisions and take in and discipline a student. So when I took the jump, I doubted myself.

According to the participants, career doubt manifested in a variety of ways. Although these doubts might have symbolized the respondents' internal struggles, they further described how they were able to persevere and continue on with their educational leadership careers.

The suburban principal participants also frequently described how their leadership was challenged by others and how this, in turn, led to them questioning their own leadership capacities. The principals described how they often reflected on their own leadership abilities in response to a perceived lack of trust from supervisors and colleagues who questioned their decisions as school leaders. Most of the participants discussed at least one instance when either a subordinate or supervisor questioned their decision making which, in turn, led to their own internal doubt or insecurity about their leadership abilities. For example, Principal Diaz stated:

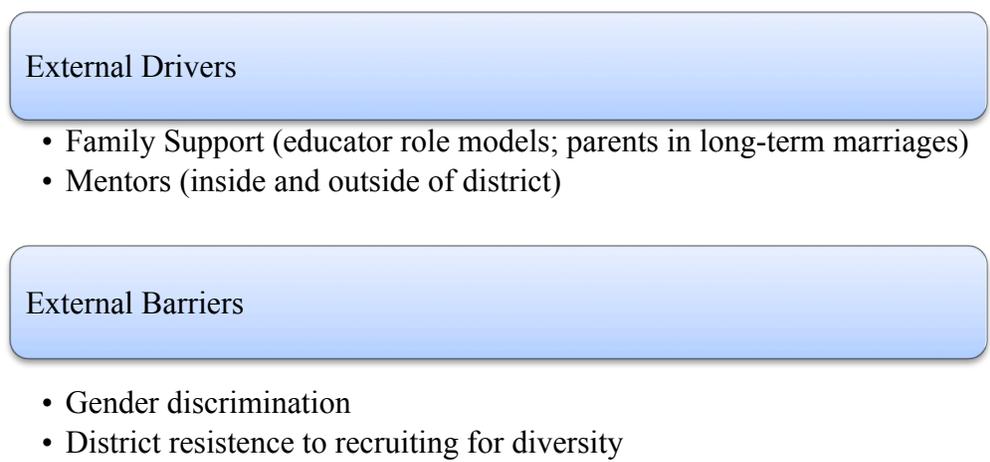
When we received that big enrollment, we were doing fairly well with the scores, and then we had a major drop. She made it seem like it was my fault that it was a lack of leadership that we went backwards. There was no room to think that we were almost a whole new campus starting over. She kept comparing us to other campuses that did not look like us...so I was constantly having to explain myself and why I chose this certain program.

Additionally, Principal Botero discussed an instance when her leadership was questioned:

Having someone come attack your integrity, having people go to the board meeting and speak out because they don't agree with everything you do on your campus. Those are certainly barriers that do make you question your own leadership. There are some really difficult people to work with and it makes you question yourself.

Principal Chavez also indicated some internal struggles related to questioning her own leadership ability based on other people's responses to her being in a leadership position. She conveyed how, during the course of her career, she had worked in a district where she believed that students of color were treated unfairly. She described: "I dealt with a lot of prejudice there. Whenever the police officer came to haul off a student, whether Black or Latino/a, the officer made sure to take the kids while there were kids in the hallway so other kids would see." Her decisions, as the principal of that school, were so frequently questioned by district personnel,

parents, and other community members that the situation led her to resign from her position in response to criticism and pressure.



*Figure 1.* Themes related to external drivers and barriers.

### **External Drivers**

Themes of family support, with a stable parental unit, and mentorship emerged in interpreting the participants externally related career drivers or motivators. All participants described how they had relationships with a mentor or mentors who helped them grow as educational leaders. Mentors were best defined as significant persons in the respondents' educational career that provided support, advice, and knowledge at no personal gain of their own. According to Magdaleno (2006), having quality mentorships is a necessity for aspiring Latino/a educational leaders. Only one participant mentioned having a Latino/a mentor. Another elaborated on how a female African American mentor had been pivotal in her leadership development. The remaining school leaders identified their mentors as older White males. Overall, the principal participants emphasized how mentors were an integral part of their growth as educational leaders. However, participants stressed that they would have greatly benefited from a Latino/a mentor who might have understood their culture-related struggles.

Within the theme of family support, common subthemes emerged related to the fact that nearly all of the participants mentioned having family members who were educators and parents who had been married for several years. Four out of the five participants stated that they had either immediate family members who were educators or were related to an educator in some form. Furthermore, these four participants shared that these educator role models were deciding factors in their pursuit for careers in education. Phrases such as "My dad was a principal" or "Everyone in my family was an educator" added credence to the importance of educator role models among the participants. Principal Botero indicated that her brother-in-law was a positive influence: "I had a brother-in-law that was an AP at [name] High School, who always told me I should get my master's. I was like nah, I really liked what I was doing, but I just went ahead and

did it.” All participants reported that they had stable homes and that their parents were still married at the time of the interviews.

### **External Barriers**

Based on participant interviews, gender discrimination and district and school leaders’ resistance to change were cited as substantial barriers to the principals’ careers. Four out of the five participants in the study were women and, therefore, described some different career experiences than the one man participating. All four of the women indicated that they believed gender might have been a factor in how and when they acquired principal positions. They implied that being a woman hindered their ascension through the educational system, sometimes more than being Latino/a. They described trying to “break into” a male-dominated field in educational leadership. The female principals also expressed that they felt a greater need to demonstrate their abilities, especially in the realms of decision-making and discipline. The male participant did not report any obstacles related to gender. Principal Chavez described her experience and the implications of being a female in a male-dominated field:

My very first job as an administrator, there was a perception years ago in the 1990s that Latino/a females were always going to be submissive to males. I always had to work harder because I was a woman and a minority. I have to know two languages and I better know them good. I have to have my discipline down, I better be able to break up a fight and not have people say “oh she’s a woman, she’s going to get hurt.” Now days, women are all over the place but back then it was always questioned if we could do the hard core stuff or just the education part.

Additionally, Principal Arias shared her experiences as a woman in the field of educational leadership:

I think being a female has been difficult, and I don’t really see the fact that I’m a Latino/a as a barrier. It’s just being a female, becoming a leader or being in leadership, mentoring males, and possibly people that are older than you are, but over all I have found that just with reaching a level a respect with the people around you that it is easily overcome.

All participants described a type of resistance to change based that emanated from district policies and supervisors, particularly when proposing new procedures or strategies for recruiting more Latino/a teachers and school leaders or seeking ways to better support Latino/a students. Resistance to change has been defined as a systemic organizational process that reinforces the status quo and rejects change (Bolman & Deal, 2008). School district resistance to change was most salient in participants’ descriptions of their efforts to focus recruiting efforts to increase the number of Latino/a principals working in suburban districts. One participant described an incident where he proposed to the superintendent a hiring strategy for increasing the number of Latino/a administrators for his predominately Latino/a student campus. His superintendent then commented on how “most Latino/as were just not qualified.” Other participants expressed that their suburban districts did not have strategies focused on recruiting or training more Latino/a principals. Overall, however, participants agreed that focused recruiting was a needed strategy

for their schools, but that recruiting more Latino/a principals and teachers was not a district priority. The principals described how they experienced “push back” whenever suggestions of this nature were made. Principal Escobar described how his district was not willing to modify its recruiting efforts to identify and attract qualified Latino/a candidates:

One of the things I will tell you, it made my blood boil, I went to the superintendent that I wanted to hire more Latino/a teachers and administrators, we wanted to hire someone from [district] and I think she went to [district]. He told me that [Texas suburban town] wasn't a Latino/a friendly community. He told me that if I wanted to hire someone they had to be high quality and I thought, well “Why would I hire someone who wasn't?,” but that's usually the first thing in mind when you say Latino/a. I'm talking about interviewing people, not just going and hiring the first Latino/a I found.

For Principal Diaz, perceptions of resistance to change reflected a lack of support for the recruitment and promotion of Latino/a administrators occurred in both predominately White and African American school districts:

While central administration would not see this because they have too narrow of a focus, being Latino/a on this campus and having an AP that is fluent in Spanish has helped combat so many conflicts here. They will never know all the things that are taken care of here simply because I can walk in and have a conversation with parents in their own language. There aren't enough Latino/as in leadership roles. We wonder why Latino/as are so far behind, and African Americans are so behind. I'm only going to speak for Latino/as, because I'm not African American. Sometimes people just want someone to relate to. I don't believe that in this district, they have taken advantage of their Latino/a leaders.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

Results from this study have several implications for school district recruitment, retention, and support of Latino/a school leaders. Additionally, recommendations for school leader preparation programs, as well as aspiring Latino/a principals are outlined. Ideally, studies of this nature can lead to more effective recruiting of Latino/a principals, as well as focused preparation and mentoring of school leaders to attend to systemic strategies for better supporting growing Latino/a student populations in suburban school districts.

#### **Implications for School Districts**

According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2014), Texas has the second largest Latino/a population in the nation, after California. Moreover, U.S. Census projections indicate a continued growth in the number of Latino/a families in public schools across the nation. Consequently, the need for Latino/a educational leaders in U.S. schools has been identified by scholars as one of the most pressing issues in current education reform (Aleman, 2009a). In particular, based on the results of this study, suburban school districts might increase the number of high quality Latino/a

secondary principals through focused recruitment efforts, mentoring programs, and networking support.

**Recruitment.** The findings of this study indicate a need to implement focused recruitment strategies to attract competent Latino/a educational leaders. The principals in this study stated that none of the suburban school districts they worked in had a strategic recruitment plan and that, in general, suggestions regarding diversification of administrators was met with resistance. Therefore, districts might benefit from acknowledging a need to provide their communities with culturally representative leadership and developing focused recruitment strategies. One recruitment strategy districts might employ involves specifically seeking out educators from universities that are considered Hispanic serving institutions. Job fairs also can be strategically held where potential Latino/a administrators might attend. Promotional aspects of educator recruitment and marketing could be targeted to attracting Latino/a applicants by ensuring photos are reflective of Latino people. In addition to identifying potential administrator candidates, district should examine their notions of organizational “fit,” as research has indicated that perceptions of “fit” often disadvantage administrators from minority groups (see I.P. Young et al., 2011). Pipeline approaches would also be a viable option for recruiting more Latino/a principals from teachers who might be aspiring to leadership positions in the district. However, this must be a conscious, strategic process as some studies have shown that the “tapping” approach taking to recruit administrators from the inside often favors some racial/ethnic groups while disadvantaging others.

**Mentoring programs.** Findings from this study suggest that quality mentors are essential to an educational leader’s development and career success. For people of color, formal mentoring programs have been shown to be particularly essential (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Magdaleno, 2009; Nieto, 2006). Participants in this study believed that they would have benefited from having a Latino/a mentor who could relate to them culturally; however, most thought that mentorship in itself was important. In fact, all participants indicated that the White mentors they encountered were pivotal to their career success. Only one principal indicated that an African American female helped her navigate some of the barriers of educational leadership. On the one hand, this finding refutes the idea that Latino/a principals need Latino/a mentors. However, based on participants’ pioneering stories, very few other Latino/a principals who could have served as potential mentors even worked in the school districts where participants initiated their principal careers. Overall, the participants cited instances where key district leaders encouraged them to move forward and identified in them positive leadership traits. Consequently, participants were encouraged to pursue leadership opportunities and were able to reach their educational goals. Also, these mentors were sources of inspiration during difficult times and helped the principal participants persevere and learn to navigate political terrain.

**Networking support.** Participants did not mention specific circumstances in which mentors introduced them to key district personnel to further their careers. Out of the five participants in our study, four indicated a desire to advance their careers into the upper levels of administration. Participants wanted to become superintendents, assistant superintendents, and other high ranking leaders within the district hierarchy. Surprisingly, when asked who could provide opportunities and support for them to meet and interact with high level decision makers in the district, all of the participants indicated that no opportunities were available for that type of interaction. Furthermore, when participants themselves learned about the importance of self-promotion and relationship-building with district decision makers, all the principals stated that

they had learned this on their own. Considering the lack of Latino/a administrators in suburban districts, this absence of guidance in relationship building, networking, and access could be a key barrier to school leader development and promotion. When school districts assign mentors to Latino/a administrators, opportunities for social networking events could be a part of mentoring responsibilities. Opportunities to establish relationships and have direct links to decision making personnel within a district are pivotal to the success of aspiring Latino/a administrators who are unlikely to have the same opportunities to socialize in the same churches or social settings as White administrators who might live and work in the same community.

### **Implications for Leadership Preparation Programs**

Participants admitted to several obstacles in their careers and described how they initially believed that they did not have the necessary skills to cope with various situations as principals. Specifically, participants indicated a desire for more skills in navigating district and campus politics and coping with subordinates who consistently challenged their leadership abilities. Most of their coping skills were acquired from consulting with and observing other administrators whom they trusted. Although these informal relationships were helpful, the need for educator preparation and district training focused on communication skills and handling difficult interpersonal situations was evident in this study. Instead, principals described how current district trainings primarily centered on programming, human resources, building maintenance, and other matters. These procedure-focused training programs do little to help school leaders develop awareness and skills in handling difficult people and situations. Specifically, Principal Chavez indicated that her lack of understanding of the political nature of her job led to her failure as a school administrator. Ultimately, she resigned from the job under pressure from the local community and without the support of the superintendent. Moreover, Principal Botero suggested that her transition from an urban school to an affluent suburban school was somewhat problematic due to her lack of understanding of the political structures within the district. This lack of knowledge and awareness of the underlying politics in a school district was noted as very disruptive for the participants.

Moreover, university leadership programs rarely explicitly address social justice issues in ways that raise the consciousness of all school leaders regarding the importance of diversity in school leadership. This sentiment has been shared by educational leadership scholars (see Lopez, Magdaleno, & Reis, 2006) and reaffirmed by the principal participants in this study. According to Lopez et al. (2006), this lack of social justice preparation in leadership development programs can hinder leadership growth in a diverse world because the field of educational administration traditionally has been based on a White male privileged perspective that does not address issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, and social status. Consequently, the Latino/a principal participants in this study often were surprised or ill-equipped in dealing with issues related to ethnicity and gender. Moreover, their district level supervisors might have benefitted from leadership education and training that could lead to greater awareness of the importance of cultural sensitivity and responsiveness in public school settings.

## **Implications for Latino/a Principals**

Based on the results of this study, the need for formal mentorship programs such as CALSA was evident (Magdaleno, 2009). Some scholars suggest that Latino/a school leaders must create their own mentorship programs and seek to network outside of the conventional avenues of school districts and governmental agencies (Young et al., 2011). By creating opportunities in the Latino/a educational community, Latino/as can circumvent some of the barriers that LatCrit scholars such as Aleman (2009a) and Tate (1997) describe. Presently, few organizations, such as CALSA, exist to provide aspiring Latino/a educational leaders with networking opportunities for career growth. Moreover, the participants in this study suggested that Latino/a principals should seek out and become involved in professional organizations that might not specifically cater to the needs of minorities but offer chances to network and dialogue with other school leaders. Latino/a principals should be active in organizations such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals as a means to get their voices heard and network with other administrators. Moreover, Latino/a principals and administrators must take a proactive role in starting organizations and providing networking opportunities in each state with large Latino/a populations. In this way, Latino/a principals also can find a space to reach out to aspiring Latino/a leaders and mentor them in their educational careers.

## **Conclusions**

The increased enrollment of Latino/a students continues in suburban districts throughout the United States (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Moreover, the need for more Latino/a/Latino administrators to serve as role models and advocate for the educational needs Latino/a students is a goal often associated with quality educational reform (Aleman, 2009a; Mendez-Morse, 2000). In this study, Latino/a principals with careers in suburban school districts were able to contribute to the knowledge base in educational leadership by expressing their career experiences and sharing the internal and external drivers and barriers to their success. Participants greatly stressed the need for not only Latino/a educational leaders, but for all school leaders to value the importance of ethnically representative leadership in schools and be willing to mentor the next generation of school principals and administrators.

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# Examining the Value Master's and PhD Students Place on Various Instructional Methods in Educational Leadership Preparation

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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*The purpose of this study was to determine the value that graduate students place on different types of instructional methods used by professors in educational leadership preparation programs, and to determine if master's and doctoral students place different values on different instructional methods. The participants included 87 graduate students, including 43 master's students and 44 PhD students in an educational leadership program at a university located in the Southwest. The students completed a qualitative survey that asked them to discuss instructional methods that they valued, including specific types of (a) class discussions, (b) in-class learning activities other than discussions, (c) course readings (d) out-of-class assignments and projects other than readings, and (e) instruction provided by a "composite" outstanding professor of educational leadership. Although both master's and doctoral students valued many of the same instructional methods, there were clear differences between the two groups regarding several methods. This study begins to address the gaps in our knowledge base on graduate students' perceptions of different instructional methods used in leadership preparation.*

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## **Introduction**

Scholars of educational leadership preparation have for some time been calling for reforms in the content of preparation programs, urging a shift from a curriculum based on management theory and social science research to content in areas like instructional leadership (Brazer & Bauer, 2013), analytic skills (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009), school-community collaboration, school improvement, vision building (Ballenger, Alford, McCune, & McCune, 2009), technology skills (Dale, Moody, Slattery, & Wieland, 2007), and democratic education (Gerstl-Pepin & Aiken, 2009). The greatest appeal for content reform in recent years has been the call to focus leadership preparation on social justice (Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Furman, 2012). Change in program content, regardless of which of the calls for curriculum reform are adopted, is unlikely to lead to improved student learning if it is not accompanied by quality instruction. If students do not consider the instruction they receive to be of reasonably high quality, there is little likelihood they will develop the intended leadership capacities.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to determine what instructional methods used by professors in educational leadership preparation programs graduate students value, and if master's and doctoral students value different instructional methods. The research questions were:

1. What types of class discussions do educational leadership students value, and do master's and doctoral students value different types of class discussions?
2. What types of in-class activities other than discussions do educational leadership students value, and do master's and doctoral students value different types of in-class activities?
3. What types of readings do educational leadership students value, and do master's and doctoral students value different types of readings?
4. What types of out-of-class assignments other than readings do educational leadership students value, and do master's and doctoral students value different types of out-of-class assignments?
5. How do educational leadership students describe the outstanding instructor of educational leadership, and do master's and doctoral students describe the outstanding instructor differently?

### **Review of Literature**

Instructional methods used by professors of educational leadership include in-class and out-of-class activities. In-class methods recommended in the literature include shared inquiry, case study, role-play (Siegrist, 2000), problem-based learning (Brazer & Bauer, 2013), exercises using web-based technology (Mayer, Musser, & Remidez, 2001), simulations (Dotger, 2011), constructivist teaching and learning, (Doolittle, Stanwood, & Simmerman, 2006), and collaborative learning (Young, O'Doherty, Gooden, & Goodnow, 2011)). Out-of-class methods suggested in the literature include various online activities, school-based experiences such as school improvement and action research projects (Ballenger, Alford, McCune, & McCune, 2009; Bartee, 2012; Goldring & Schuermann, 2009), community engagement (Bartee, 2012), cross-

cultural discussions, cultural histories of diverse communities, equity audits (Furman, 2012), portfolio development (Meadows & Dyal, 2000), and reflective writing on all of these experiences. Below we briefly review a number of instructional methods described in the literature on educational leadership preparation.

### **Case Method**

Diamantes and Ovington (2003) review benefits of using cases as a teaching tool, including the fostering of student involvement, application of learning to real or realistic situations, critical reflection and analysis, problem solving skills, self-directed learning, and the development of a learning community. An example of case method process described by Diamantes and Ovington begins with a mini-lesson on the topic, followed by the introduction of the case to small groups of students who read the case, brainstorm solutions, and present their findings. Students can be asked to write their own cases as a learning activity. In student case-writing described by Sherman (2008), students visualized a scenario they might experience as a principal and which they would successfully resolve. In the cases they wrote, the students assumed the role of negotiator or facilitator and developed actions they would take to address the problem they had envisioned. The students integrated references to relevant literature with the situation they described.

### **Problem-Based Learning**

Bridges (1992) presents the classic model of problem-based learning (PBL) for educational leadership, which involves small groups of aspiring administrators using developing knowledge to address problems they are likely to experience as educational leaders. Two models of PBL described by Bridges are student-centered learning and problem-stimulated learning. Student-centered learning includes a description of the problem, a specified product, and a time limit for producing the product. Problem-stimulated learning includes all of the components of the student-centered model but also provides the students with learning objectives, resources, guiding questions, and assessment exercises. Brazer and Bauer (2013) argue that PBL allows students to practice leadership skills in a safe environment, with the professor close-at-hand to provide feedback and support, and to work with their peers to apply theories they are learning to situations and problems that mirror reality.

### **Simulations**

Dotger (2011) describes simulated interactions between school leaders and students, parents, and faculty based on interviews with school administrators about actual interactions, including both positive and negative exchanges. According to Dotger, simulations offer those assuming the role of school leader the opportunity to participate with peers in reality-like experiences that are both professionally and emotionally challenging, after which immediate analysis can take place and feedback can be provided. The model discussed by Dotger involves a cycle of simulation, reflection, and creation of an improvement plan. The simulations include unscripted protocols for the participant in the role of school leader and standardized protocols for participants in the role of student, teacher, or parent. An individual debriefing immediately following the simulation

allows the participant in the school leadership role to reflect on the problem presented in the simulation, her or his performance, areas for improvement, and next steps that would be necessary to fully address the problem. Following the simulation, each participant views and reflects on a video of the simulation and chooses a one-minute segment of the video to share at a large group briefing a week after the simulation. All members of the large group session show the group their video segments, then engage in discussion with their colleagues about the video. Dotger suggests that such simulations can bridge the gap between theory and practice.

## **Praxis**

Praxis historically has been focused on reflective action for social justice. Although the extent to which social justice is addressed in an educational leadership program is initially a curricular issue, once social justice content is introduced it becomes an instructional matter as well, because a variety of instructional methods are directly related to the development of social justice leaders. Furman (2012) has proposed five dimensions of “social justice leadership as praxis” (p. 204) and recommends activities, some focused on reflection and others on action, for developing social justice leaders. A few examples of Furman’s suggested activities for each dimension are listed below:

- *Personal dimension:* cultural autobiographies, self-reflection on one’s developmental stages, forms of guided self-reflection such as journaling, and leadership growth plans based on self-assessment
- *Interpersonal dimension:* life histories, cross-cultural interviews, diversity panels, role-plays
- *Communal dimension:* community exploration, school environment analysis, democratic forums, team building, equity audits, community action plans
- *Systemic dimension:* visits to social justice schools, educational plunges, diversity panels, simulations, audit-based activist plans, role plays of equity interviews
- *Ecological dimension:* Readings and reflective discussions on relationships between schools and broader social issues, studies of local communities, the design of professional development that connects schools and communities, and action research by K-12 students (pp. 205-212)

Furman points out that much of the current literature on educational leadership for social justice is focused on critical consciousness, which while necessary, needs to be accompanied by skill development based on activities like the ones she describes.

## **Practice-Based Research**

The literature on educational leadership development presents several different models of practice-based research that can be incorporated into preparation programs. These models can be placed on a continuum from low to high intervention. At the low-intervention end of the continuum, in one example described by Sappington, Baker, Gardner, and Pacha (2010), aspiring principals compared school improvement plans to the actual planning process and improvement activities in schools. In another example reviewed by Sappington, et al., aspiring principals

interviewed a central office administrator, principal, and two teachers on a school's professional development program over the previous two years and then wrote a paper comparing the professional development program with literature on effective professional development.

Further along the intervention continuum is the type of student research described by Ärlestig (2012) in which participants spend a year studying about a school problem identified by the school's principal. The participant becomes familiar with literature on the problem and the school, designs a study, gathers and analyzes data on the problem, and prepares a report including recommendations for addressing the problem. After the report is shared, the principal may or may not decide to act on the researcher's recommendations.

Still further along the continuum lies the model proposed by Kowalski, Place, Edmister, and Zigler (2009) in which aspiring principals identify a school problem, apply a relevant theory to the problem, and modify the theory to make it more applicable to the local context. This applied research gives aspiring principals considerable decision-making power in terms of designing and conducting the research, but at the same time limits them to testing and refining existing theory.

At the high-intervention end of the continuum is the type of full-scale action research described by Jacobs, Yammamura, Guerra, and Nelson (2013), in which aspiring principals and teachers at a school conduct a needs assessment, write a review of literature on a priority need, develop an action plan, and then implement the action research, gathering and analyzing evaluation data at the end of the project.

### **Arts-Based Methods**

Two methods described by Katz-Buonincontro and Phillips (2011)—reflection on arts-based activities and improvisational role-playing—represent an arts-based approach to the preparation of educational leaders. In a study of the first method, educational leadership doctoral students visited visual and performing arts venues, read creative literature, and engaged in their own art projects. Students reported that they were more reflective, willing to take risks, and creative as a result of completing the course. The second study was on a course for doctoral students centered on improvisational theatrical role-plays involving the students and actors. The actors helped the students journey through five phases: choosing the problem, projecting the problem, amplifying the problem, identifying potential solutions, objectifying the problem, and selecting a solution. The students reported that the course helped them to become more reflective, adopt new perspectives, contemplate problems, and consider creative solutions.

### **Portfolio Development**

Student portfolios can be used not only for student assessment but also as a vehicle for student learning. Portfolios can foster self-assessment (Hackmann & Alsbury, 2005), promote self-reflection, link theory and practice (Knoepfel & Logan, 2011), assist individualized learning (Meadows & Dyal, 2000), structure long-term professional development, and encourage collaborative learning (Gottesman & Villa, 2001). The contents of portfolios are described in numerous ways. At the most general level, portfolios consist of artifacts, attestations, and reflections (Hackman & Alsbury, 2005). Portfolios constructed by students in educational leadership programs are often organized around designated concepts. For example, the concepts

in portfolios described by Gutterman and Villa (2001) include administration and management, democratic education, equity, change leadership, and reflective inquiry on practice.

### **Technology-Enhanced Teaching and Learning**

Technology can be used to deliver instruction to students at a distance, enhance face-to-face instruction, and even simulate field experiences in K-12 schools and classrooms. LaFrance and Beck (2014) define web-facilitated courses as those with 1 to 29 percent of content delivered online, blended or hybrid courses as providing 30 to 79 percent of content online, and online courses as those with 80 percent or more of content delivered online. Sherman and Beaty (2007) argue that online education can provide not only a longer geographic reach but also improved teaching and learning in leadership preparation. According to LeFrance and Beck (2014), only 9 percent of educational leadership preparation programs provide virtual field experiences, and 95 percent of the programs that provide virtual experiences blend those experiences with face-to-face field activities.

### **Research Methods**

The participants included 87 graduate students, including 43 master's students and 44 PhD students in an educational leadership program at a university located in the Southwest. The surveys were completed during class meetings, with students not wishing to complete the surveys free to leave class early. The qualitative survey asked the respondents to discuss valued instructional methods, including specific types of (a) class discussions, (b) in-class learning activities other than discussions, (c) course readings (d) out-of-class assignments and projects other than readings, and (e) instruction provided by a "composite" outstanding professor of educational leadership. Although we asked the students for their perceptions of valued instructional methods, they sometimes voiced negative perceptions of particular methods, and we also report negative themes that emerged from the data.

Data analysis began with several reviews of survey responses to become intimately familiar with the data. We completed open, line-by-line coding of the students' responses, and then proceeded with axial coding to develop categories. With the aid of a series of matrices on which we displayed data relative to each survey topic, and ongoing analytic memos, we identified themes that cut across both groups as well as themes unique to one group or the other.

## **Results**

We present our results under headings corresponding to the topics we asked the graduate students to discuss. The quotes we share are representative of themes present within the perceptions of one or both groups.

### **Class Discussions**

Master's and doctoral students expressed very positive perceptions of both small- and whole-group discussions. Both groups appreciated discussions that encouraged students to share their

personal experiences. Students were especially appreciative of discussions that helped individuals to transform their thinking. One master's student described a discussion of this type:

We were discussing the issue of another student being a "border crosser" because she married someone from Mexico. During one of the classes, she had been offended when this term was used. As we had this discussion, her perception of the term changed, as did her view of the people, culture, and customs on the other side of the border. Once she did that, she was able to embrace her circumstances in a whole new, positive way. It was nice to be witness to that transformation.

Master's and doctoral students valued discussions in which every student had a voice. One benefit of allowing everyone to express himself or herself cited by the students is that it allows different points of view to be considered and often integrated. In the words of a master's student:

I have really enjoyed class discussions where peers are able to contribute and various contributions are given so that many points of view are exposed. This is great when it is concluded by the professor facilitating a dialogue that brings the ideas and key points from the class together.

Both master's and doctoral students believed they benefited greatly from discussion of research on the topic being addressed, including discussion of case studies. Both groups of students valued discussions on how the topic at hand could be applied to practice. For example, a master's student stated, "A good class discussion included conversation about peer-reviewed studies, leading into how it related or didn't relate to individuals in the class, and the potential application of all of the information exchanged." A doctoral student recalled the following:

Team building was a particularly good class discussion because we were able to help some cohort members, through discussion, in suggesting [how] they could adopt the readings to their real-life work setting. This was very intriguing and interesting to watch; how these ideas and theories could be effectively applied to different situations.

There were only two types of discussions in which master's and doctoral students' perceptions differed in any notable way: discussions of theory and discussions focused on social justice. Although both groups made generally positive comments about the discussion of theory, the doctoral students provided more specific examples of valued theoretical discussions. Similarly, although both groups expressed general appreciation of discussions on equity and social justice, the doctoral students more frequently described specific discussions that they valued. One doctoral student, for instance, commented, "We discussed Critical Race Theory. We were able to construct and deconstruct methodologies and openly discuss multiple ways of knowing while questioning how education and power structures promote racism in the U.S." Themes for the class discussion responses are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

*Summary of Themes: Types of Valued Class Discussions*

<b>Both Groups</b>	<b>Master's Students Only</b>	<b>PhD Students Only</b>
Small and whole-group	Discussion of social justice mentioned	Discussion of social justice described in detail
Share personal experiences	Discussion of theory mentioned	Discussion of theory described in detail
Transformative		
Every Student has voice		
Discussion of research on topic		

**In-Class Activities Other than Discussions**

Master's and doctoral students were enamored of small-group problem solving activities, including those conducted in a single class meeting as well as longer-term, problem-based learning. Regarding the former, a doctoral student said, "problem solving activities in small groups helped give voice to all participants and brought the lesson to practical use." Both master's and doctoral students said they valued brainstorming possible solutions as one phase of the problem-solving activity. Regarding problem-based learning, a master's student reported, "I found group research of a structural problem in an organization was fascinating and allowed us to develop a rapport within our cohort. [The professor] gave enough freedom in the project to allow true problem-based learning."

Both groups believed they had learned a great deal from simulations in which they participated. An example of a valued simulation at the master's level involved students prioritizing and responding to messages received from stakeholders. A description of a simulation at the doctoral level reviewed how students were asked to "handicap" themselves for the duration of a class in order to become more sensitive to the realities that persons with disabilities deal with every day.

A final class activity that both groups valued highly was the use of case method. A master's student commented,

I remember one time that in a small group my peers and I got a case study and then had to discuss the scenario for the problem presented. I feel like this was a very practical way of doing that activity. We were "hiring" a candidate from a group of applicants. It helped us have important conversations about personnel issues, which was the particular topic that day.

Although role-playing was not a major theme for either group, a subgroup of doctoral students did discuss role-plays in which students played real-life people or educators in real-world situations. A doctoral student recalled,

Role-playing a real decision-making process was another approach that I learned in my school improvement courses. One professor informed us to role-play various positions that helped us to feel and hear the way decisions related to school improvement were made.

Master’s and doctoral students seldom discussed viewing videos, panel discussions, visiting presenters, artistic activities, and student debate in positive terms. Notably, neither group discussed the lecture as a preferred instructional method. One disagreement between master’s and doctoral students concerned various inventories, such as adult learning style and adult lifestyle inventories. Master’s students placed more value than doctoral students on completing and analyzing the results of such inventories. Table 2 summarizes themes for class activities other than discussions.

Table 2

*Summary of Themes: Types of Valued Class Activities Other than Discussions*

<b>Both Groups</b>	<b>Master’s Students Only</b>	<b>PhD Students Only</b>
Single-class small-group problem solving	Adult learning style and lifestyle inventories	Subgroup theme: Role-playing real-life people and situations
Long-range problem-based learning		
Simulations		
Case Method		

## **Readings**

Both master’s and doctoral students voiced a preference for reading case studies. Neither group placed a great deal of value on reading textbooks. A master’s student lamented, “For me, it is hard to read chapter after chapter just to find a few practical pieces of information.” Although there was little preference voiced for non-scholarly works by either group, a subgroup of master’s students reported that they had benefited greatly from reading fiction in the course “Understanding Self.” One master’s student wrote, “Novels allow you to unlock your imagination and connect to personal experiences, which in turn ties back to that reflective analysis, which is so powerful.” Another master’s student remarked, “Novels are my bread and butter; something that is related to the subject but takes the readers on a path”. A third master’s student stated, “I gain the most perspective from fiction literature. For my style of learning, I

believe it best facilitates genuine thinking and analysis.” A theme running through the perceptions of doctoral students that was not present in the master’s students’ responses was a valuing of journal articles, from both scholarly and practitioner journals. Students from both groups preferred readings that included implications for practice. Themes for types of preferred readings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

*Summary of Themes: Types of Valued Readings*

<b>Both Groups</b>	<b>Master’s Students Only</b>	<b>PhD Students Only</b>
Case Studies	Subgroup theme: Fiction related to class topic	Articles from scholarly journals
Readings with implications for practice		Articles from practitioner journals

**Other Out-of-Class Assignments Other than Readings**

Assignments involving reflective writing were highly valued by both master’s and doctoral students. A master’s student stated,

Writing reflections is probably one of the most enriching assignments I’ve had the pleasure of doing. Reflecting on the self and different assignments sheds light on your overall understanding. It is hard to imagine what grad school would be like without reflecting on your journey.

A doctoral student wrote,

Writing a reaction paper to the lesson that we were taught on a particular day was really great. The reaction paper was spread not only to the reactions to the teaching-learning process, but it allowed me to share ideas about how I viewed the points raised by the professor and the other articles that we had been asked to read.

A more complex form of reflective writing assigned to both master’s and doctoral students was the autoethnography. A master’s student wrote, “It pushes the boundary of being comfortable. I believe it allowed me to see more in myself, which will make me a better leader.” A doctoral student described the benefits of autoethnography:

The process, production, and presentation were transformational. I gained such insight into my own history, values, struggles, and relationships...and this activity took place at the beginning of my doctoral experience. By the end of my coursework, I had discovered why the autoethnography was so important to my work as a researcher and scholar—how my past informs my thinking and interpretations of data...even the theoretical

frameworks I choose to operate from are informed by the ethnographic insight I gained through that activity.

Both groups found value in field-based activities, either as part of a practicum or as assignments built into regular courses. Such activities included observations, gathering and analyzing data, full-scale action research, equity audits, and carrying out a variety of leadership activities. Shadowing educational leaders was an example provided under the observation category. A master's student discussed shadowing a principal:

I was asked to shadow a principal at my school for a day. This experience really opened my eyes as to what the job of being an administrator is like. I never realized how many meetings take place, or how much of the time is loosely unstructured yet still with requirements of what must get done. We probably walked three or four miles over the course of the day and the principal I was following easily interacted with 100 different people in addition to the students.

A doctoral student who had completed a qualitative research course described a valued field-based activity centered on gathering and analyzing data: "Participating in a focus group, and then transcribing and analyzing the data from the focus group was a great experience and left me really wanting to become a qualitative researcher." Another doctoral student described action research that "had us going out there and getting our hands dirty, and trying to create a report for the entire class." A master's student reported that carrying out an equity audit "made me look in more detail at the community where my students live."

Leadership activities that master's and doctoral students engaged in included professional development, instructional supervision, community engagement, and so forth. A master's student wrote that being involved in school leadership activities allowed the student "to view our campus from a different perspective and take on a different role...this assignment gave me the opportunity to execute some of my ideas." Another assignment valued by both groups was conducting interviews, with teachers, educational leaders, scholars, and even family members. A master's student noted,

Conducting interviews is always informative. Interviews truly extend the learning. Even when you are unaware of the outcome, you know what you are looking for if it (the interview) is given as an assignment. Reflecting on the knowledge and wisdom of others can be very beneficial.

Preparing demonstrations to be shown to the class and lessons to be taught to the class were other out-of-class activities that both master's and doctoral students perceived as valuable learning experiences. A master's student wrote, "Having to prepare presentations for class with activities [for the students to complete], makes you focus on the material since you have to teach and facilitate it." A doctoral student discussed "Teaching colleagues about a topic, above and beyond the readings with real-world examples and activities."

There were a number of traditional out-of-class assignments that were seldom discussed as valuable by either group. Despite the power often attributed to journaling, it was seldom

mentioned by master's or doctoral students. When journaling was discussed in a positive light, it was by students who had kept journals on their own across their years of graduate study, not as part of assigned coursework. One student noted,

Keeping a journal during my time in the PhD program helped me process and connect what was happening in the public institution where I worked and assisted me in making sense of the research articles I was reading. I could actually begin to have a better understanding of praxis, where theory and practice come together.

In general, neither master's nor doctoral students valued the creation of videos or recordings, unless they were the medium for a larger activity that the students found worthwhile. For instance, some professors required students to present the aforementioned and highly valued autoethnographies as videos, and students reported those videos became cherished artifacts. Few students from either group reported valuing long-term group projects conducted outside of class, but there were a few notable exceptions. The first quote below about long-term group projects came from master's students, the second from a doctoral student:

We had to develop a professional development plan for a real campus based on actual data. I liked this activity because it mirrored an actual task that we will have to do as educational leaders.

We were assigned a theoretical framework and told to do something in the community representing that framework. Our group was given feminism and organized a girls' job fair at a local school that represented male dominated career choices but featured women who had chosen that career. It was great using the material and putting it into relative practice.

There were very few students in either group who reported that they valued using creative or artistic expression in class assignments, creating posters or displays to share with the class, developing portfolios, writing policy briefs, or writing reviews of case law. Regarding the latter, a master's student wrote,

Analyzing [legal briefs] in a class lecture seems to be all that is necessary. Having to write a 20-page paper is pointless. We're just restating what we learned from the case briefs and the paper is a long, busy-work assignment.

There were several themes running through doctoral students' perceptions of valuable assignments that were not present across master's student's perceptions. Doctoral students more often discussed carrying out case studies, writing research papers, and other long-term individualized projects as valuable learning experiences. Table 4 summarizes themes for out-of-class assignments other than readings.

## Composite Description of Outstanding Instructor

There were no major differences between the master's and doctoral students' perceptions of an outstanding instructor of educational leadership. We drew three general characteristics of outstanding instructors from the composite descriptions written by the graduate students. Outstanding instructors, according to the students, model educational leadership, create an organic learning environment, and take a constructivist approach to teaching.

Table 4

*Summary of Themes: Out-of-Class Assignments Other than Readings*

Both Groups	Master's Students Only	PhD Students Only
Reflective writing		Case studies
Autoethnography		Research papers in general
Field Activities		Long-term individualized projects
Preparing demonstrations for class		
Preparing lessons to be taught to graduate class		

**Modeling educational leadership.** The master's and doctoral students perceived the outstanding instructor as modeling the personal characteristics and actions of successful educational leaders. The outstanding instructor, according to the students, is approachable, personable, displays a good sense of humor, has an engaging personality, is well organized, and cares for students. The master's and doctoral students perceived the outstanding instructor as knowledgeable about the current literature on educational leadership and familiar with best practice. Master's and doctoral students perceived the outstanding instructor as being open and respectful to students, treating them as equals. According to the students, the outstanding instructor both challenges students to reach their potential and provides them with detailed, constructive feedback. As one doctoral student put it, "The instructor didn't give me an A just for breathing; she handed my work back, told me what was lacking, and had me do it again."

**Creating an organic learning environment.** The term "organic learning environment" came from one of the graduate students and it reflects a concept expressed by both master's and doctoral students. The organic environment the students described includes elements of care, openness, psychological safety, trust, flexibility, empowerment, critical reflection, and creativity. It is perhaps best described in a series of quotes from master's and doctoral students:

- The environment is inviting, the learning is meaningful, thus true reflection is inevitable.

- Open dialogue with students, judge-free zone, informative, sincere, open to new ideas....
- The stage is set at the beginning that limits will be stretched and the environment needs to be a safe one to do so. The fact that learning is actually taking place lends to the structure of the class. The avenue that we use to get there changes from class to class, as we do. The process evolves.
- The class is structured to allow for plenty of critical discussion and the students have a level of trust with one another and with the professor so those crucial conversations can take place in a safe environment.

The students reported that when the instructor created an organic learning environment it opened up space for growth and led to collaborative learning among students.

**Taking a constructivist approach to teaching.** For both groups, the outstanding instructor engaged in constructivist teaching. A doctoral student describing an outstanding professor related, “We could problem-pose and ask compelling questions of each other: student to student, student to teacher, and teacher to student.” One aspect of the constructivist approach highlighted by both master’s and doctoral students was the encouragement of self-reflection and self-discovery. A master’s student wrote that the outstanding instructor “encourages students to get out of their comfort zone. This often results in meaningful self-reflection and re-discovery.” A doctoral student stated, “The composite instructor plays devil’s advocate with the students—pushing them to justify their ‘status quo’ thinking.” Another doctoral student said, “Professors that ask questions that may not have an answer and leave us perplexed and losing sleep for a few days are the best.” Both groups discussed the changing of old perspectives and construction of new knowledge as a result of self-reflection. A doctoral student discussed the effects of teachers who promote reflection: “By the end of their classes you are shocked to realize that there has been a shift in your perspective on certain issues that you thought were already resolved in your mind.” The students also saw the self-reflection promoted by the outstanding instructor as a way for students to personalize learning and construct their own meaning.

Students in both groups described their outstanding instructor as fostering social as well as individual construction of knowledge. A doctoral student noted that the outstanding instructor encouraged social construction of knowledge when they “engaged in dialogue, rather than lecture.” A master’s student wrote, “This professor encourages students to regularly engage in deep, meaningful conversations. Through this process, I learned so much from others, about others, and about myself.” Themes for a composite description of an outstanding instructor are summarized in Table 5.

## **Discussion**

This exploratory study involved master’s and doctoral students from a single university, thus the points we make in this discussion are tentative. Based on our experience as professors of educational leadership who teach in master’s and PhD programs that have almost completely discreet student populations, we were surprised that we did not find more difference in the types of instructional methods master’s and doctoral students value. We believe, however, that this study provides a great deal of tentative information on instructional methods that graduate students at both levels do and do not value. Our headings below parallel the research questions and headings in the results section.

## Class Discussions

The master's and doctoral students clearly preferred open discussion to direct instruction, especially when that discussion gave all students a voice, allowed them to relate the topic to their personal beliefs and experiences, and generated ideas for applying the topic to practice. An additional idea found in the survey responses that bears further consideration is that of taking time toward the end of a discussion to integrate differing views into a coherent whole.

Table 5

*Summary of Themes: Composite Description of an Outstanding Instructor*

<b>Both Groups</b>	<b>Master's Students Only</b>	<b>PhD Students Only</b>
Modeling educational leadership		
Creating an organic learning environment		
Taking a constructivist approach to teaching		

## Class Activities

One overarching conclusion regarding the class activities valued by master's and doctoral students is that active learning was vastly preferred to passive learning. The students' perceptions of problem-based learning mirror the benefits of the model described by Brazer and Bauer (2013)—it allows students to collaboratively test their theories of action in a safe environment. Simulations, also highly valued by the students, took them even closer to a real-world environment while providing the same protection. The use of case method, as described by the master's and doctoral students, followed the same process and yielded the same benefits discussed by Dotger (2011). The students' preference for telling their personal and professional stories, especially their phases of development, indicates that leadership preparation programs need to seriously consider learning focused on adult and career development.

The low value that most master's and doctoral students placed on role playing may relate to the perception that it is an artificial activity, unrelated to the real world of educational leadership. The students who did value role-plays seemed to participate in enactments of situations that either had or could actually occur in districts and schools, so structuring role plays to better reflect reality may make them more valued instructional methods. Also, it seems that making role-playing one component of a wider learning activity, such as a simulation, increases its value as an instructional tool. Other instructional methods that were valued by few students—viewing videos, panel discussions, visiting presenters—when done in traditional format, turn students into passive learners. However, each one of these instructional methods can be converted into interactive activities, which we believe makes them more worthwhile to educational leadership students.

The fact that arts-based activities like those described by Katz-Buonincontro and Phillips (2011) were not valued by either group of students could well be due to the infrequent use of such activities, at least at the level of sophistication described by Katz-Buonincontro and Phillips. Why master's students valued completing and analyzing adult learning style and adult lifestyle inventories more than doctoral students is not clear. One possible reason is that the latter group may have already completed their fair share of such inventories by the time they become doctoral students.

## **Readings**

Our study's results indicate that case studies that integrate theory and practice are a powerful tool for educating both master's and doctoral students in educational leadership. Professors of educational leadership need to ask themselves why both types of students seem to value texts so little—is it the type of student, the quality of the texts, or how we use texts in our teaching? The high value placed on fiction, and especially on novels, by a subgroup of master's students points to the potential of fiction as an avenue for learning about leadership. Finally, given the wide variety of quality journals with both theoretical and research articles focused on educational leadership, the finding that master's students assigned little value to reading journal articles should raise questions about how we introduce and use such articles with master's students.

## **Other Out-of-Class Assignments**

Master's and doctoral students perceived reflective writing as a key ingredient in their learning. It seems that the best combination of components in reflective writing assignments included reflections on the topic at hand in relationship to past and current experiences and the student's anticipated future leadership role. Autoethnography seems to have been an especially powerful learning tool because it promoted self-understanding within the context of the student's personal history and social environment.

Our findings regarding the power of field experiences for both groups are consistent with widespread recommendations within the field to increase the number and quality of such experiences. Both the master's and doctoral program placed a high value on field experiences embedded in regular coursework. It is such embedded field experiences, which allow for weekly face-to-face interaction with the course professor and with fellow students engaged in the same or similar field activities, that may be the best avenue to the praxis championed by scholars like Furman (2012). The practice-based research that both master's and doctoral students carried out ran the full gamut of models described in the literature. These projects allowed many master's students their first opportunity to engage in practice-based research, gave doctoral students already in leadership roles the opportunity to carry out research within their span of responsibility, and provided both groups the chance to improve their educational settings while learning how to conduct various types of research.

Given both groups' highly positive perceptions of reflective writing, we were surprised there was not more value expressed for assigned journaling. The fact that the students who discussed the value of journaling were writing about private journaling rather than assigned journaling has implications for leadership preparation. The best approach may be to invite

students to journal informally and then provide space and time for students who wish to share selected portions of journals with the class or a small group to do so, either in person or online.

Neither master's nor doctoral students viewed long-term out-of-class group projects in a positive light. This may be due to logistical or communication problems students have experienced with such projects in the past, problems with appropriate distribution of responsibility among group members, and so on. In the examples of out-of-class group projects perceived positively by students, a major part of the project was school or community based. Implications for instructors of educational leadership include being selective in their use of such projects; connecting the project to practice; carefully structuring the projects in terms of process, responsibilities, and expected outcomes; and considering providing class time for some of the group work.

The lack of positive statements about portfolio development, despite the popularity of portfolios in many leadership preparation programs, indicate a need to design portfolios that:

- connect portfolio development to individual courses as well as long-term projects that cut across several courses
- are vehicles for integrating theory, practice, and reflection
- include student collaboration as part of the portfolio development process
- will be of value to the student in his or her future career

Writing case studies, preparing research papers, and completing long-term individual projects are complex undertakings, and the finding that doctoral students expressed more value for these assignments than master's students may be because the doctoral students were more academically advanced than students at the master's level.

### **Outstanding Instructor**

We found it interesting that both groups, in descriptions of personal and professional characteristics of their outstanding instructor, focused not on successful scholarship or dynamic teaching style but on the modeling of educational leadership. The characteristics cited by the students—caring, respectful, challenging, and supportive—seem to apply equally well to practitioners as well as professors of educational leadership. Perhaps the most interesting result of the study was the master's and doctoral students' description of an organic learning environment, consisting of several interacting elements that lead to individual and collective learning. The constructivist approach identified by both groups included both individual (self-reflection, self-discovery) and social (dialogue, group problem solving) dimensions.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

As with the discussion above, the recommendations we make based on this exploratory study are tentative. In the case of instructional methods used in educational leadership preparation programs, the "practitioners" are university faculty, thus we address these recommendations to faculty members. First, we recommend that faculty in educational leadership preparation programs consider our findings that some instructional methods were valued by both master's

and doctoral students, some were valued by neither group, and some were valued by one group and not the other. We do not suggest that instructors use our tentative findings to adopt some instructional methods and eliminate others, but rather that they begin to test the findings with their students, and make their own determinations concerning which of our findings ring true within their own context.

Many instructors, especially new faculty members, may not be familiar with some of the more innovative instructional methods for the preparation of educational leaders recommended in the literature, such as complex simulations, some types of technology assisted learning, and so forth. Professional development may be necessary, but such development need not take the form of traditional training. Rather, faculty members who want to learn more about a particular method may wish to visit the classrooms of those who use the method to observe it being implemented, and instructors who have developed expertise in particular methods can consult others who wish to try out those methods.

Assigning some of the types of assignments valued by the students in this study (if those assignments are not already in place) seems like a good way to test the study's findings in this area. Reflective writing on course topics and their relationship to practice, autoethnographies, preparing for class demonstrations and peer teaching, and interviewing stakeholders in K-12 education are all promising out-of-class assignments for both master's and doctoral students. We also recommend that educational leadership faculties and individual instructors explore new ideas for embedding field experiences into traditional courses. The best instruction integrates research, theory, and practice, and at the individual course level that integration cannot be complete without application at the school, district, or community level. Practica and internships are powerful culminating experiences, but we cannot wait until the end of the student's program of study for application to begin. New ways of embedding school-based action research throughout students' coursework, for example, are described by Wetzel and Ewbank (2013) as well as Zambo & Isa (2012). Shadowing school leaders, performing equity audits, and carrying out leadership activities (especially instructional leadership) are just a few more examples of school-based activities that can be embedded into regular coursework.

A final recommendation for faculty is to regularly gather feedback from students beyond traditional course evaluations. Such feedback can be gathered at both the program and course level. Formative feedback should be gathered by the program and the individual faculty member on all aspects of how to improve instruction, but feedback relative to the characteristics of the "outstanding instructor" reported by the students in this study—modeling educational leadership, creating an organic learning environment, and taking a constructivist approach to teaching—seems to us to be especially vital. Are these elements evident in the individual faculty member's teaching? Are they present across the program as a whole? Based on student feedback, the individual instructor can reflect on how to strengthen the three characteristics in her or his own teaching, and the program faculty can engage in collaborative work for program renewal.

There are, of course, multiple types of data beyond student feedback that can inform faculty whether instructional methods are successful. Observations of students during classroom and field activities, analysis of student performance, and surveys or interviews of other stakeholders can all become part of the mix of methods for assessing instructional methods (Korach, 2011). In the final analysis, student preferences, the individual faculty member's teaching style, program goals, local school district needs, and "situational and organizational

contexts” (Mast, Scribner, & Sanzo, 2011, p. 39) all need to be considered in decisions about what instructional methods to use in the preparation of educational leaders.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

We recommend that additional qualitative surveys similar to this one be done with other groups of master’s and doctoral students at other universities to determine if those studies yield the same or similar results. Although we believe this study is an important early step in determining which instructional methods master’s and doctoral students value, the question of the extent to which student values are contextual is still an open one. For example, different instructional methods may be valued differently depending on the types of students recruited and accepted, the program’s curriculum, or the structures and systems for program delivery. Other qualitative studies could include individual or focus group interviews on instructional methods valued by graduate students. Additionally, results of quantitative surveys on valued instructional methods could be integrated with qualitative findings to expand the emerging knowledge base on this topic.

### **Closing Thoughts**

It is difficult to imagine any aspect of an educational leadership preparation program that is more critical to the growth and development of the students enrolled in that program than the instruction they are provided. Yet, while we have a fair amount of literature describing and promoting a few instructional methods, we have little research comparing a wide range of other instructional methods and student perceptions of those methods. Nor do we have adequate research comparing master’s and doctoral students’ perceptions of different methods. Hopefully this study will begin to address these gaps in our knowledge base, and will lead to additional research in this area.

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# Missed Opportunities: Preparing Aspiring School Leaders for Bold Social Justice School Leadership Needed for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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*How and when are current and aspiring school leaders provided with opportunities to engage in sense making and reflection as it relates to race, oppression, and equal access to a quality education for all students while simultaneously making sense of the implications of their roles as school leaders in negotiating the sociopolitical and sociocultural challenges present in their schools? Given the diversity of the student population in the state of Texas and the importance that has been assigned to social justice leadership for diverse student populations, this research sought to explore the readiness of recent graduates of Principal Preparation Program in Texas to engage in bold social justice leadership required of 21<sup>st</sup> Century school leaders.*

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## Introduction

For the first time in US history, public school enrollment has reached a majority-minority milestone. The number of Hispanic, African American and Asian students currently exceeds the number of non-Hispanic White students enrolled in PK-12 schools throughout the US (Maxwell, 2014). Over five million public school students are English Language Learners (Uro & Barrio, 2013); 13 percent of the student population are classified as having one or more of fourteen disabling conditions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013) and 51 percent of public school students qualify for free or reduced lunch (Southern Education Foundation, 2015).

The dramatic shifting of the demographic makeup of public schools have far reaching implications for educators and school leaders in ensuring that all students have access to a quality education than ever before. As public school students are becoming increasingly more diverse and poor, the 21<sup>st</sup> century realities of the changing demographics of public schools in the US will demand school leaders who embrace and are committed to the tenets of school leadership for social justice to ensure that all students are provided with equal access to a high quality education.

Although public school students in the US have become more diverse and poor, the principalship has remained fairly homogeneous and middle class. Presently, 80 percent of Principals in the US are White, 10 percent are African American, 7 percent are Hispanic, and 3 percent are of another race/ethnicity (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013). More likely than not, a large percentage of Principals today have very little connection to the histories and cultures of the students that they interact with every day. It is this paradox of cultural incongruence that many researchers would argue has resulted in a disconnect in the leadership needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools that is a contributing factor exacerbating the achievement gaps, disproportionate student discipline and high school drop out rates in the US (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ford & Moore III, 2013; Hanselman, Bruch, Gamoran, & Borman, 2014; Hernandez & Kose, 2012).

In 2014, the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights reported that black students are suspended from school at a rate of three times that of white students; black girls are suspended six times the rate of white girls and black preschoolers comprise 16% of the preschool population however they represent 48% of the preschoolers suspended one or more times from school (US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). In a briefing session with reporters to discuss the disproportionate rate of black children being suspended in public schools across the nation, US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan stated “Education is the civil rights of our generation, the undeniable truth is that the everyday education experience for too many students of color violates the principle of equity at the heart of the American promise (Lewin, 2012).” These violations exist and persist because educators in many of the nation’s schools struggle to effectively and successfully support students who are members of cultures that are different than their own (Anderson, 2011; Byrd-Blake & Olivieri, 2009; Hollins, 2013; Quezada, Lindsey, & Lindsey, 2013; VanRoekel, 2008).

The suspension rates of children of color as reported by the US Department of Education should prompt educators and educational leaders to question why this phenomenon exists and further these data should ignite a commitment from school leaders to interrogate the policies and procedures that result in such inequities. An emerging research base on the intersectionality of black students and their experiences in public schools have presented compelling empirical evidence that black students are subject to disproportionate applications of exclusionary

discipline for behaviors that are associated with subjective, sometimes biased, decision-making by teachers and school leaders (Morris, 2012). For example, when black girls' behaviors are subjectively characterized by educators and school leaders as "unladylike" or "ghetto" their actions are viewed as a deviation from the socially accepted views of femininity in the US that are based on White Middle class values thus black girls are subject to more harsh disciplinary consequences than their white peers (Morris, 2012).

The cultural incongruity that results in unequal discipline experienced by many black students results from school leaders and school disciplinarians' lack of understanding of the cultural norms and mores of students who do not look or act like them. In fact, it is the school leaders own' background, history and group affiliations that facilitates their construction of meaning that frames the decisions that they have to make in school (Evans, 2007). School leadership is complex and quite often school leaders must negotiate and make sense of numerous sociopolitical and sociocultural issues within schools of which they have not been taught or trained to deal with.

Sixty years post the landmark 1954 Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* at Topeka, public schools are still struggling with the dismantling of institutionalized racist and oppressive public school structures that have historically, currently and systematically denied marginalized students with equal access to a high quality education (Mark A Gooden & Dantley, 2012). As the needs of school children have changed so too has the role of the Principal. The Principalship has evolved from that of disciplinarian and supervisor of teachers to instructional transformational leaders charged with closing achieving gaps for *all groups of students*, ensuring continuous growth in student achievement for *all students*, decreasing drop out rates for *all students* and increasing work place and college readiness for *all students*. (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Lynch, 2012). Concomitant to the changing role of the Principal is the expanding disconnect in the leadership needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and the current school leadership that is being provided (Klotz, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

School leaders for social justice recognize that there are situations, especially in institutions such as public schools where the application of the same rules to unequal groups or marginalized groups such as can be found in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools can generate unequal results as evidenced by the omnipresent achievement gap, disproportionate suspension rates, high school drop out rates and lack of work or college readiness (Place, Ballenger, Wasonga, Piveral, & Edmonds, 2010, p. 541).

Smith (2005) warned that the lack of respect or the acceptance of the cultural diversity of student populations may result in a disconnect of the leadership provided by Principals and the leadership needed by culturally diverse student populations to be successful. Bustamente et al. (2009), presents compelling evidence that far too often school leaders struggle with the identification of inclusive school practices that promote equitable access to education for all students within their schools.

Furthermore, convincing evidence from extant empirical research studies suggest that many school leaders have not been appropriately educated by either their Principal Preparation Programs or from professional development opportunities provided by their school districts to effectively address the challenges that are present in schools due to the increasingly more culturally and linguistically diverse school populations (Ballenger & Kemp-Graham, 2014; Evans, 2007; Mark A Gooden & O'Doherty, 2014; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). Schools throughout the nation are plentiful with well-intentioned school leaders that have

unsuccessfully attempted to close the achievement gap by having high expectations, being data driven, implementing policies and programs that were designed to support equity and equal access to a quality education for all students such as IDEA, NCLB, Race to The Top, Title I School Improvement Initiatives (SIG) and Common Core Standards. However, widespread replicable success has not been realized because many leaders do not grasp the immutable fact that legislation, programs, policies and data driven decision making alone will have *minimal* impact in schools that are populated with large numbers of poor failing students who have been historically and currently marginalized.

School leaders have yet to realize that to make systemic change for marginalized students, they must first understand their own biases, acknowledge their own deficit thinking, engage in ongoing critical reflection of their beliefs of oppression and social justice, thus becoming aware of the cultural influences in school settings and their own biases that perpetuate the inequitable practices within schools (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Kemp-Graham, 2014; Miller & Martin, 2015). Embracing the tenets of social justice school leadership would allow for this type of reflection and introspection of oppression, racism and classism that negatively impact marginalized students both current and future. How and when are school leaders provided with opportunities to engage in sense making and reflection as it relates to race, oppression and equal access to a quality education for all students while simultaneously making sense of the implications of their roles as school leaders in negotiating the sociopolitical and sociocultural challenges present in their schools?

To prepare aspiring school leaders with the awareness, skills and confidence to address diversity and equity challenges currently that are plaguing public schools in the United States, scholars in the field of education leadership have recommended that leadership for social justice be included as a central component of Principal Preparation Programs (Mark A. Gooden, 2012; Mark A Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010; Kimmons, 2011; Miller & Martin, 2015; Pazey & Cole, 2013; Reed, 2012; Santamaría, 2014; Scanlan, 2013; Shoho, Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006).

Unfortunately, there is no one broadly accepted template that has been recommended in the research base on what a Principal Preparation Program focusing on Social Justice School Leadership must resemble. However a framework of the skills and knowledge required for the ***Bold Leadership*** needed by School Principals to effectively transform 21<sup>st</sup> century schools into institutions of learning that promote equity and access to a high quality education and the expectation of academic success for all students has been eloquently articulated in the most recent revision of the ISLCC standards. More directly the recommendations found in Standard 10 of the 2014 draft of the ISLCC Standards explicitly states that an educational leader promotes the success and well-being of *every* student by ensuring the development of an equitable and culturally responsive school (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014).

The framers of the draft version of the 2014 ISLCC standards recommend achieving the goals established in Standard 10 can be accomplished by school leaders leading from a social justice perspective, thus attacking issues of student marginalization; deficit-based schooling; and limiting assumptions about gender, race, class, and special status (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014).

Education researchers and critical race and social justice theorists have posited for over a decade that school leaders cannot be effective if they are not knowledgeable about their own biases of persons who look different from them as well as not knowledgeable about and

understand the impact of oppression and marginalization of peoples in the United States. Given the expanding diverse school population and the homogeneity of school leaders charged with providing all students with equal access to a high quality education, social justice school leaders are needed to serve as activists in schools with the primary goal of creating and sustaining schools that will support equal access to a quality education free from deficit thinking, lowered expectations and marginalization for all students (Turhan, 2010).

The need for ‘*school ready*’ **BOLD** school leaders who are committed to school leadership for social justice is irrefutable and supported by decades of research. Twenty-first century students needs school Principals who are willing to take **Bold** stands and engage in activism, leading for social justice igniting a heightened sense of awareness of issues related to oppression, exclusion and marginalization. The Council of Chief State School Officers proffered an inspiring description of an effective school leader that should be the vision held by all principal preparation programs for its aspiring school leaders:

“[School-ready principals are] ready on day one to blend their energy, knowledge, and professional skills to collaborate and motivate others to transform school learning environments in ways that ensure **ALL** students will graduate college and career ready.” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012)

Principal Preparation Programs have a moral and ethical responsibility to prepare school leaders for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools ensuring that their graduates understand *that all lives matter*. The intentional inclusion of coursework and opportunities for students to interrogate race through self reflection, engage in meaning conversations about race and oppression of marginalized groups in the US can be a starting point in the quest to eradicate the inequities that exist in public education. Aspiring school leaders need to be provided with the knowledge, skills and confidence to engage in social justice school leadership that should be initiated in their preparation for the Principalship (Mark A Gooden & Dantley, 2012).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that guided this research was Social Justice School Leadership. The concept of social justice school leadership has emerged within the last two decades (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009) in response to the shifting demographics of society, increased achievement gaps of underserved populations and accountability pressures and high stakes testing. Social justice for school leadership has been defined in numerous ways in the research, however themes are easily evident and identifiable.

Theoharis (2007) defines social justice leadership to mean that the *principals make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other historically and currently marginalizes conditions in the US central to their advocacy, leadership practice and vision* (P. 223). Turhan (2010) argues that defining social justice is difficult because it is not a specific structure that can be defined, reduced, observed or replicated and one definition could not possible relate to every situation forever. With that being said, Turhan did posit that social justice leadership is a process or manner in which you live in an ethical society. Further, Turhan proffered a broad interpretative definition, *social justice leadership is a social influence to ensure social justice in society or a certain organization that requires deliberate intervention*

*and use of force* (p. 1359). Marshall and Olivia (2010) *define social justice leadership as leadership that emphasizes “equity, ethical values, justice, care and respect in educating of all students regardless of race and class, with a high quality education; and therefore closing the achievement gap between White, middle class students and minority students.”* Rivera-McCutchen (2014) argued that *Social justice leadership is a mindset that requires action to right what is wrong; social justice leaders actively work to improve teaching and learning so that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and excel* (p. 149).

Despite the varying definitions of social justice education leadership, scholars committed to this research are in agreement that social justice leadership is demonstrated through ongoing actions, skills, habits of mind and competencies that are continually being created, questioned and refined and social justice school leaders embrace social justice leadership to ensure the academic success of school children, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, age, language, religion or socioeconomic status (Brown, 2004; Capper & Young, 2014; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2007)..

For the purposes of this research, I used the definition postulated by Theoharis, 2007: principals make use of issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other historically and currently marginalized conditions in the US central to their advocacy, leadership, practice and vision to ensure the academic success of all students.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore recent graduates of a university sponsored principal preparation program in Texas understanding of racism and oppression of marginalized groups in the US. Given the diversity of the student population in the state of Texas and the importance that has been assigned to school justice leadership for diverse student populations, this research sought out to explore the readiness of recent Principal Preparations graduates to engage in Social Justice Leadership

In the state of Texas there are over 5 million students enrolled in its public schools, coming in only second to California in terms public school student enrollment in the (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). The majority of students attending Texas schools are non-white and poor. The demographic makeup of the Texas public school student population is as follows: 51.8% Hispanic, 29.4% white, 12.7% African American, 3.7% Asian. Approximately 60.2% of the student population is economically disadvantaged, 17.5% are Limited English Proficient and 8.5% of the student population are Special Education. African American students in Texas have the highest school drop out rate of 9.9%, followed by American Indians at 8.5%, Hispanic at 8.2% and White at 3.5%. Similarly, African American students have the lowest graduation rate of 84.1%, followed by Hispanic 85.1%, American Indian 85.8%, Asian 93.8% and White 93% (The Texas Education Agency, 2015)

In 2013, over 25,000 aspiring Principals completed a state approved principal preparation program in Texas. Persons seeking to obtain a Principal Certification in the state of Texas have a wide variety of program options. There are 152 state approved Principal Preparation Programs in the state of Texas; 79 university based, 34 Private, 20 TEA Education Service Regions, 5 School District based and 13 community college base. (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Invited participants for this study, attend one of the top five producers of certifiable Principals in the state of Texas.

Participants in this study completed a 100% online 7 course, 21 credit hour State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) approved university based Principal Preparation Program located in the state of Texas. The Principal Preparation Program referenced for this study, offered one course on diversity. The purpose of the course as indicated on the course syllabi was to prepare students to administer programs for special pupil populations. Student Learning Outcomes as indicated on the course syllabi were as follows:

1. Respond appropriately to the diverse needs of individuals within the school and the community;
2. Implement special programs to ensure that all students' individual needs are met through quality, flexible instructional programs and services;
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the components and legal requirements of the various special programs available in public schools
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the assessment, referral and legal guidelines that direct the delivery of special programs; and
5. Provide effective leadership for staff and parents in the administration of special programs.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study.

1. To what extent are recent graduates of a university based Principal Preparation Program in Texas prepared to engage in social justice education leadership vis a vis their understanding of
  - a. Critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language of historically and current marginalized peoples and minorities in the United States.
  - b. Patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with marginalized groups in the United States.
2. To what extent does age, gender **or** ethnicity of recent graduates of a university based Principal Preparation Program in Texas vary in their ability to engage in social justice education leadership vis a vis their understanding of
  - a. Critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language of historically and current marginalized peoples and minorities in the United States.
  - b. Patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with marginalized groups in the United States.
3. To what extent does the intersectionality of race, gender **and** age of recent graduates of a university based Principal Preparation Program in Texas impact their understanding of
  - a. Patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with marginalized groups in the United States.
  - b. Critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language.

## Research Design

The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative survey research was to gather information via the use of the Diversity & Oppression survey to describe the extent to which a diverse population of recent graduates of a Principal Preparation Program in Texas were prepared to engage in social justice school leadership as evidenced by their understanding and beliefs of oppression and racism in the United States. The use of survey research is a useful methodological research approach which allows a researcher to collect information to describe a group via the use of a survey (Gravetter & Forzano, 2015). Furthermore, a major advantage in the use an online web based survey as a method to collect respondents' perceptions or own beliefs of sensitive issues such as race and oppression is that the participants submit their responses via the internet and no face to face contact with the researcher is required (Rea & Parker, 2012).

## Research Methods

The Diversity & Oppression Scale (DOS) survey developed by researchers at UT Austin and Rutgers University was used to explore aspiring and novice school principals understanding of critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, and language and understandings of the patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with individual groups

The DOS is a 25-item self-report survey that includes four subscales:

- Cultural diversity, self-confidence, and awareness (11 items)
- Diversity and oppression (8 items)
- Educator/client congruence (3 items)
- Educator responsibilities in cultural diversity (3 items)

Two subscales from the DOS were used to answer the research questions for this study. The first subscale, the *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness Scale*, measured respondent levels of agreement with statements demonstrating their understanding of critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, and language. Survey items for this subscale are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness Scale Survey Subscale*

---

1. I am able to develop instructional program support services that reflect an understanding of diversity between and within cultures.
2. I have knowledge to critique and apply culturally competent and social justice approaches to influence assessment, planning, access of resources, intervention and research.
3. I am aware about ways in which institutional oppression and the misuse of power constrain human and legal rights of individuals and groups within American Society

4. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of people with disabilities needs, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
  5. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of African American and African history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
  6. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Middle Eastern history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
  7. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of women's history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
  8. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
  9. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Native American history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
  10. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Jewish history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
  11. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Asian and Asian American history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
- 

The second subscale, *Diversity and Oppression Scale*, measured respondents' understanding of the patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with individual groups. Survey items for this subscale are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Diversity and Oppression Subscale*

---

1. Because we live in the US everyone should speak or at least try to learn English.
  2. In the US some people are often verbally attacked because of their minority status.
  3. Illegal immigrants should be deported to their home countries.
  4. Membership in a minority group significantly increases risk factors for exposure to discrimination, economic deprivation and oppression.
  5. In the US some people are often physically attacked because of their minority status.
  6. Being lesbian, bisexual or gay is a choice.
  7. The American Dream is real for anyone willing to work hard to achieve it.
  8. All people have equal opportunities in the US.
- 

## **Participants**

Purposeful sampling was used for this research. This investigation specifically targeted participants from a large regional university located in Northeast Texas who completed the university's Principal Certification Program during 2011, 2012 and 2013. Three hundred and forty graduates were invited to participate in this research of which 106 surveys were returned. The demographic data of the respondents are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

*Demographics of Respondents*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Male	28%
Female	72%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	59.2
Black	31.2
Hispanic	6.5
American	2.2
Indian	
Hawaiian	1.1
<b>Age</b>	
≤34	32.1%
35-49	51.6%
≥50	17.2%

**Data Collection**

After securing IRB approval, invitations were emailed to all graduates from the Principal Preparation Program offered by a Northeast Texas Regional University for the years of 2011-2013. Guidelines recommended by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014) were used to administer this online web based survey used for this research. Dillman et al. (2014) recommends the use of multiple contacts be used when sending out the survey to maximize the survey return rate. Email invitations were sent to the last known work and home email addresses of the graduates provided by the respondents to this regional university. Dillman et al. (2014) recommends strategic scheduling of the emailing of the survey to ensure that possible respondent are available at their computers to receive the email to participate in the online survey. Given that the great majority of graduates who participated who were invited to participate in this study worked in various capacities in public schools, requests to participate in this research were emailed before the traditional school day and early in the evening after the school day ended. The authors also recommend that all contacts are personalized and that follow up email messages are brief and to the point (Dillman et al., 2014). Each email invitation to participate in this research was personalized with the students first name, included in the body of the email was information about the purpose of the study, time commitment and link to the online survey hosted by Qualtrics.

Three hundred and forty graduates were invited to participate in this study. The survey remained active online for twenty days. During this time, four reminder emails were sent out to respondents urging them to complete the survey. Thirty-two emails were bounced back due to incorrect email addresses; 106 surveys were submitted which resulted in a return rate of 34%. To encourage participants to respond to the survey, the opportunity to win a Mini IPAD was offered as an incentive.

## Data Analysis

All survey responses were exported from the Qualtrics website and imported into SPSS v.22 for statistical analysis. Responses for the DOS were given in a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). In order to provide for consistency within all of the items for scale measurement, scoring of five survey items that were negatively worded in the two subscales used for this research were recoded in SPSS. New values of the recoded survey items are found in Table 4 and the recoded survey items are listed in Table 5.

Table 4

*New Values of Negatively Recoded Survey Items*

Likert Response	Old Value	New Value
Strongly Agree	5	1
Agree	4	2
Neutral	3	3
Disagree	2	4
Strongly Disagree	1	5

Table 5

*DOS Survey Items That Were Recoded*

1. Because we live in the US everyone should speak or at least try to learn English.
2. Illegal immigrants should be deported to their home countries.
3. All people have equal opportunities in the US.
4. Being lesbian, bisexual or gay is a choice.
5. The American Dream is real for anyone willing to work hard to achieve it.

Responses to survey data were analyzed in two phases. The first phase consisted of performing and analyzing descriptive statistics for all participants responses on the two subscales of the SOS survey. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were calculated to identify themes and to provide a descriptive summary of the participants' overall responses to the survey questions indicating their understanding and beliefs about racism and oppression in the United States.

The second phase consisted of performing and analyzing inferential statistics to determine if survey responses differed based on respondent age, ethnicity or gender. Independent t-tests, one way ANOVA and Factorial ANOVAs were performed. Prior to performing inferential statistical analysis assumptions of variances were assessed and addressed when necessary with the use of alternative statistical tests. When the possibility of uneven sample sizes, as is the case with this study, violations of the homogeneity of variance assumption may be of concern. When performing the one-way ANOVA, homogeneity of variance was tested using the Levene's statistic resulting in a violation of variances being reported for the ethnicity factor therefore the homogeneity of this factor could not be assumed. Therefore, the Welch's F test for equality of mean was used as an alternative when performing an ANOVA for this factor. The Welch's F test is reported instead of the standard F Test. Respondents agreement and disagreement with survey items are presented in combined form in descriptive data charts.

“Agreement” represents respondents’ selection of Agree and Strongly Agree on survey items and “Disagreement” represents respondents selection of Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

## Findings

### Research Question #1

1. To what extent are recent graduates of a university based Principal Preparation Program in Texas prepared to engage in social justice education leadership vis a vis their understanding of
  - a. Critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language of historically and current marginalized peoples and minorities in the United States.
  - b. Patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with marginalized groups in the United States.

Descriptive and Inferential statistical analysis of responses to the *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness* and *Diversity and Oppression* subscales were used to answer Research Question #1. The mean scale score on the first scale reviewed, *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness*, was  $M= 4.0$  with a  $SD = .47$ . Descriptive statistics of this subscale can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

#### *Descriptive Statistics of the Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness Subscales*

Survey Items	Agree	Neutra l	Disagre e	Mea n	SD
I am able to develop instructional program support services that reflect an understanding of diversity between and within cultures.	43.00 %	11.8%	45.10%	2.95	1.34
I have knowledge to critique and apply culturally competent and social justice approaches to influence assessment, planning, access of resources, intervention and research.	74.20 %	15.1%	10.80%	3.79	.915
I am aware about ways in which institutional oppression and the misuse of power constrain human and legal rights of individuals and groups within American Society	54.90 %	19.4%	25.90%	3.32	1.09
I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of people with disabilities needs, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.	93.50 %	2.2%	4.30%	4.11	.77

I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of African American and African history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.	89.20 %	5.4%	5.40%	4.17	.76
I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Middle Eastern history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.	74.20 %	7.5%	18.30%	3.88	1.15
I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of women's history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.	40.80 %	12.9%	46.20%	2.9	1.31
I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.	48.40 %	12.9%	38.80%	3.15	1.18
I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Native American history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.	76.40 %	8.6%	15.10%	3.92	1.03
I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Jewish history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.	93.40 %	17.2%	24.80%	3.37	1.07
I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Asian and Asian American history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.	76.40 %	6.5%	17.20%	3.94	1.08

Overall, the responses from this subscale suggest that respondents had minimal understanding of critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, and language as evidenced by their low agreement on survey subscale items. There were only two survey items on this scale where the respondents rated themselves high as evidenced by a mean score of 4 or higher. Respondents had strong agreement that they understood the needs, traditions, values, family systems and artistic expressions for persons who are *disabled* and those who *African Americans*. At the other end of the spectrum, respondents rated themselves low as evidenced by mean scale scores of less than  $M=3.5$  in understanding the needs, traditions, values, family systems and artistic expressions of persons who are Women, Jewish, gay/lesbian/bisexual or transgender. Additionally respondents rated themselves very low in terms of being able to

develop instructional program supports and services that reflect an understanding of diversity between and within cultures. An interesting finding on this subscale was that although women represent 72% of the respondents for this survey only 40% of the respondents indicated that they felt confident about their knowledge and understanding of women’s history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions. Perhaps this could be attributed to lack of understanding of women from different ethnic groups than their own.

To answer the second part of Research Question #1, descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the *Diversity and Oppression* subscale were performed to determine respondents’ understanding of patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with marginalized groups in the United States. Descriptive statistics for this subscale are found in Table 7. The mean scale score on the second scale reviewed for this research the *Diversity and Oppression*, subscale, was  $M=3.11$ ,  $SD=.36$ .

Table 7  
*Descriptive Statistics of the Diversity and Oppression Subscale*

Survey Items	Agree	N	Disagree	Mean	SD
Because we live in the US everyone should speak or at least try to learn English.*	76.4%	16.1%	7.5%	2.0	.88
In the US some people are often verbally attacked because of their minority status.	56.0%	12.9%	20.5%	3.54	.983
Illegal immigrants should be deported to their home countries.*	24.7%	16.1%	59.1%	3.38	1.13
Membership in a minority group significantly increases risk factors for exposure to discrimination, economic deprivation and oppression.	50.5%	26.9%	22.6%	3.31	.999
In the US some people are often physically attacked because of their minority status.	81.7%	11.8%	6.2%	4.02	.920
Being lesbian, bisexual or gay is a choice.*	57.0%	26.9%	15.0%	2.51	1.07
The American Dream is real for anyone willing to work hard to achieve it.*	64.6%	12.9%	21.5%	2.38	1.05
All people have equal opportunities in the US.*	9.7%	25.8%	63.5%	3.75	.967

Note: Items that were recoded/scoring was reversed are denoted by an \*.

Survey responses from the second subscale, *Diversity and Oppression* reviewed for this research indicate respondents’ lack of understanding of patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustices and the benefits and liabilities associated with individual cultural groups. Respondents

did not overwhelmingly agree to statements that would demonstrate their understanding of their own personal biases about non-English speakers, racism, classism, LGBT community, oppression and institutional racism. For example, almost 65% of respondents believed that the American Dream is real for anyone willing to work hard to achieve it but 51.5% of respondents agreed that membership in a minority group significantly increases risk factors for exposure to discrimination. In understanding the history of discrimination experienced by marginalized people and minority groups in the US, one would understand that working hard alone will not minimize marginalized peoples and minorities from being discriminated against which would negatively impact their achievement of the American Dream.

Another interesting finding from this research was that there were three survey items where approximately one quarter of the respondents were neutral, thus they did not agree or disagree with the survey item: *all people have equal opportunities in the US* (25.8%); *being lesbian, bisexual or gay is a choice* (26.9%) and *membership in a minority group significantly increases risk factors for discrimination* (26.9%). Failure to agree or disagree with these statements may indicate a lack of knowledge of diversity and oppression for certain marginalized groups, especially for the gay and lesbian community. The data reviewed for research question #1 indicate that the respondents do not have the knowledge or the skills necessary to engage in **bold** social justice leadership for diverse school populations.

### *Research Question #2*

1. To what extent does age, gender **or** ethnicity of recent graduates of a university based Principal Preparation Program in Texas vary in their ability to engage in social justice education leadership vis a vis their understanding of
  - a. Critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language of historically and current marginalized peoples and minorities in the United States.
  - b. Patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with marginalized groups in the *United States*.

To answer Research Question #2 independent-samples t-tests and ANOVAs were performed to determine if the level of respondents' understanding of patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustices and the benefits and liabilities associated with individual cultural groups and critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language of historically and current marginalized peoples and minorities in the United States differed based on *gender, age or ethnicity*. Descriptive statistics of mean scores according to gender, age and ethnicity for both subscales are listed in Table 8. Findings are reported by subscale.

Table 8

*Descriptive statistics for the Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness and Diversity and Oppression Subscales by Age, Ethnicity And Gender.*

		Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness			Diversity and Oppression		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Age							
	≤34	3.94	.418	29	3.14	.356	28
	35-49	3.96	.495	48	3.09	.400	46
	≥50	4.25	.428	16	3.15	.313	16
Ethnicity							
	White	4.03	.455	56	3.15	.341	55
	Black	3.98	.462	29	3.06	.309	27
	Hispanic	3.83	.643	6	2.97	.609	6
	American Indian	4.18	.771	2	3.3	1.06	2
Gender							
	Male	4.13	.490	26	3.04	.404	26
	Female	3.95	.455	67	3.14	.353	64

### Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness Subscale

#### Gender

An independent t-test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between male and female respondents on the *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness* subscale. Findings indicated that there was not a significant difference in respondents' responses on this subscale due to gender, Male ( $M=4.13$ ,  $SD=.490$ ) and Female ( $M=3.95$ ,  $SD=.455$ );  $t(91)=1.714$ ,  $p=0.090$ . Responses on this subscale did not significantly differ based on gender. Descriptive statistics of the t-test are reported in Table 9.

Table 9

*Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Survey Responses on the Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness Subscale*

	Sex						95% CI for Mean Difference	T	df
	Male			Female					
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N			
Diversity and Oppression Scale	4.13	.490	26	3.95	.455	67	0.029, 0.397	1.714	91

## Ethnicity

To assess the influence of the independent variable of ethnicity on survey responses on the *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness scale*, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted. Descriptive statistics for the survey respondents according to ethnicity on this subscale are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics for Survey Respondents on the Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness Subscale by Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	M	SD	n	95% CI for Mean		
				Difference	Min	Max
White	4.03	.455	56	3.90,4.15	2.83	4.91
Black	3.98	.462	29	3.80,4.16	3.18	4.82
Hispanic	3.83	.643	6	3.15,4.50	2.82	4.73
American Indian	4.81	.771	2	-2.74,11.11	3.64	4.73
Total	4.0	.470	93	3.91,4.10		

Findings from the ANOVA suggest that there was not a significant effect of respondents' **ethnicity** on scale scores *the Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness* subscale at the  $p < .05$  level for four groups,  $F(3,89) = .428$ ,  $p = .733$ . The results indicate that respondents' awareness and understanding of critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language of historically and current marginalized peoples and minorities in the United States differed did not differ based on respondents ethnicity.

## Age

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of age on respondents score on the *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness subscale*. Descriptive statistics for survey respondents based on age for this subscale are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

*Descriptive Statistics for Survey Respondents on the Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness Subscale by Age*

Age	M	SD	n	95% CI for Mean		
				Difference	Min	Max
≤ 34	3.94	.418	29	3.78,4.10	3.36	4.82
35-49	3.96	.495	48	3.18,4.10	2.82	4.82
≥ 50	4.25	.428	16	4.02,4.47	3.27	4.91
Total	4.00	.470	93	3.91,4.10	2.82	4.91

Findings from the ANOVA indicate that there was not a significant effect of respondents' **age** on scale scores this subscale at the  $p < .05$  level for three groups,  $F(2,90) = 2.69$ ,  $p = 0.073$ . Respondents' awareness and understanding of critical theories related to culture, disability,

ethnicity, gender and language of historically and current marginalized peoples and minorities in the United States differed did not differ based on respondents age.

Although no statistical significance in scale scores were determined an interesting theme emerged. Respondents aged 50 and older (M=4.25, SD=.428) had higher mean scores on the *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness* than respondents aged 35-49 (M=3.96, SD=.495) and respondents 34 and under (M=3.94, SD=.418). These results indicate that respondents 50 and older were more informed about and aware of issues of critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, and language and patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with individual groups.

### Diversity and Oppression SubScale

#### Gender

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare survey respondents scores on the *Diversity and Oppression Scale Survey Subscale* to determine if responses differed based on respondents' **gender**. Results of the t-test are reported in Table 12.

Table 12  
*Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Survey Responses on the Diversity and Oppressions SubScale*

	Sex						95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
	Male			Female					
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N			
Diversity and Oppression Scale	3.04	.404	26	3.14	3.53	64	0.276, 0.064	1.234	88

Findings from the t-test indicate that there was not a significant difference in respondents' responses on the *Diversity and Oppression* due to gender, Male (M=3.04, SD=.404) and Female (M=3.14, SD=.353);  $t(88)=1.234, p=0.221$ .

#### Age

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of **age** on respondents' score on the *Diversity and Oppression* subscale. Descriptive statistics for survey responses on this subscale according to age are reported in Table 13.

Table 13

*Descriptive Statistics for Survey Respondents on the Diversity and Oppression SubScale by Age*

Age	M	SD	n	95% CI for Mean		
				Difference	Min	Max
≤34	3.14	.356	28	3.00,3.28	2.50	4.13
35-49	3.09	.400	46	2.97,3.21	2.00	3.75
≥50	3.15	.313	16	2.98,3.31	2.50	3.75
Total	3.11	.369	90	3.04,3.19	2.00	4.13

Findings from the ANOVA indicate that there was not a significant effect of respondents' **age** on scale scores the Diversity and Oppression subscale at the  $p < .05$  level for three groups,  $F(2,87) = .233$ ,  $p = .793$

**Ethnicity**

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of **ethnicity** on respondents score on the *Diversity and Oppression* subscale. Descriptive statistics for survey respondents subscale scores by ethnicity are reported in Table 14.

Table 14

*Descriptive Statistics for Survey Respondents on the Diversity and Oppression SubScale by Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	M	SD	n	95% CI for Mean		
				Difference	Min	Max
White	4.03	.455	56	3.90,4.15	2.83	4.91
Black	3.98	.462	29	3.80,4.16	3.18	4.82
Hispanic	3.83	.643	6	3.15,4.50	2.82	4.73
American Indian	4.81	.771	2	-2.74,11.11	3.64	4.73
Total	4.0	.470	93	3.91,4.10	2.82	4.91

Findings from the ANOVA indicate that there was not a significant effect of respondents' **ethnicity** on scale scores the Diversity and Oppression subscale at the  $p < .05$  level for four groups,  $F(3,86) = .969$ ,  $p = .717$

The data from the independent-samples t-tests and ANOVAs that were performed to determine if the level of respondents' understanding of patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustices and the benefits and liabilities associated with individual cultural groups and critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language of historically and current marginalized peoples and minorities in the United States differed based on gender, age or ethnicity indicate that neither independent factor had an effect on survey respondents scale scores.

Research Question #3

To what extent does the intersectionality of race, gender **and** age of recent graduates of a university based Principal Preparation Program in Texas impact their understanding of

- a. Critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language.
- b. Patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with marginalized groups in the United States.

To answer Research Question #3, a 2 (sex of respondent) X 3 ( age of respondent) X 4 (ethnicity of respondent) factor analysis of variances was conducted to evaluate the main effects and interaction effects of independent variables, gender, age and ethnicity on respondent scores on the *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness* and the *Diversity and Oppression* subscales. The three independent variables are gender (male, female), age ( $\leq 34$ , 35-49,  $\geq 50$ ) and ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian). The dependent variable are the scores on the *Cultural Awareness, Self Confidence and Awareness* and *Diversity and Oppression* subscale. A high score on the *Cultural Awareness, Self Confidence and Awareness* subscale indicate respondents had levels of understanding of critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and language of historically marginalized peoples and minorities in the US. A low score on the *Diversity and Oppression* subscale indicate respondents had high levels of understanding of patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with marginalized groups in the United States.

The results of the factorial ANOVA for the *Culture Awareness, Self Confidence and Awareness* subscale indicated non-significant main effects of **ethnicity** on respondents' scores  $F(3,75)=.963$ ,  $p=.415$ ; non-significant main effects of **age** on respondents scores,  $F(2,75)=1.934$ ,  $p=.152$  and non-significant main effects of **gender** on respondents scores,  $F(1,75)=.139$ ,  $p=.711$ . Findings suggest that the age, gender and ethnicity of responding did not result in different respondents on the *Cultural Awareness, Self Confidence and Awareness* subscale. Results of the Factorial ANOVA for the scale are reported in Table15.

Table 15

*Factorial ANOVA Results for Respondents Scale Scores on Cultural Awareness, Self Confidence and Awareness Subscale by Independent Variable*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P	Partial $\eta^2$
Ethnicity	.641	3	.214	.963	.415	.037
Age	.858	2	.429	1.934	.152	.049
Gender	.031	1	.031	.139	.711	.002
Ethnicity*Age	.492	4	.123	.555	.696	.029
Ethnicity*Gender	.183	2	.092	.413	.663	.011
Age*Gender	.281	2	.141	.634	.533	.017

Ethnicity*Age*Gender	.000	2	5.976	.000	1.0	.000
Error	16.639	75	.222		0	
Total	20.350	92				

The results of the ANOVA for the *Diversity and Oppression* subscale indicated non-significant main effects of ethnicity  $F(3,72)=1.172$ ,  $p=.326$ ; non-significant main effects of age,  $F(2,72)=2.83$ ,  $p=.065$  and non-significant main effects of gender on,  $F(1,72)=1.049$ ,  $p=.309$ . Findings indicate that the *age, gender and ethnicity* of respondents did not result in different subscale scores. Results of the Factorial ANOVA for scale scores on the Diversity and Oppression are reported in Table 16.

Table 16

*Factorial ANOVA Results for Respondents Scale Scores on the Diversity and Oppression*

*SubScale by Independent Variable*

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	P	Partial $\eta^2$
Ethnicity	.389	3	.130	1.172	.326	.047
Age	.626	2	.313	2.835	.065	.073
Gender	.166	1	.116	1.049	.309	.014
Ethnicity*Age	1.604	4	.401	3.628	.009	.168
Ethnicity*Gender	1.125	2	.563	5.090	.009	.124
Age*Gender	.076	2	.038	.344	.710	.009
Ethnicity*Age*Gender	.463	2	.232	2.096	.130	.055
Error	7.956	72	.111			
Total	887.420	90				

As can be seen in Figure 1, there was significant interaction between *gender and ethnicity* on survey responses on the *Diversity and Oppression* subscale,  $F(2,72)=5.090$ ,  $p=.009$ , indicating any differences in scale score were dependent upon the gender and race of the respondents.

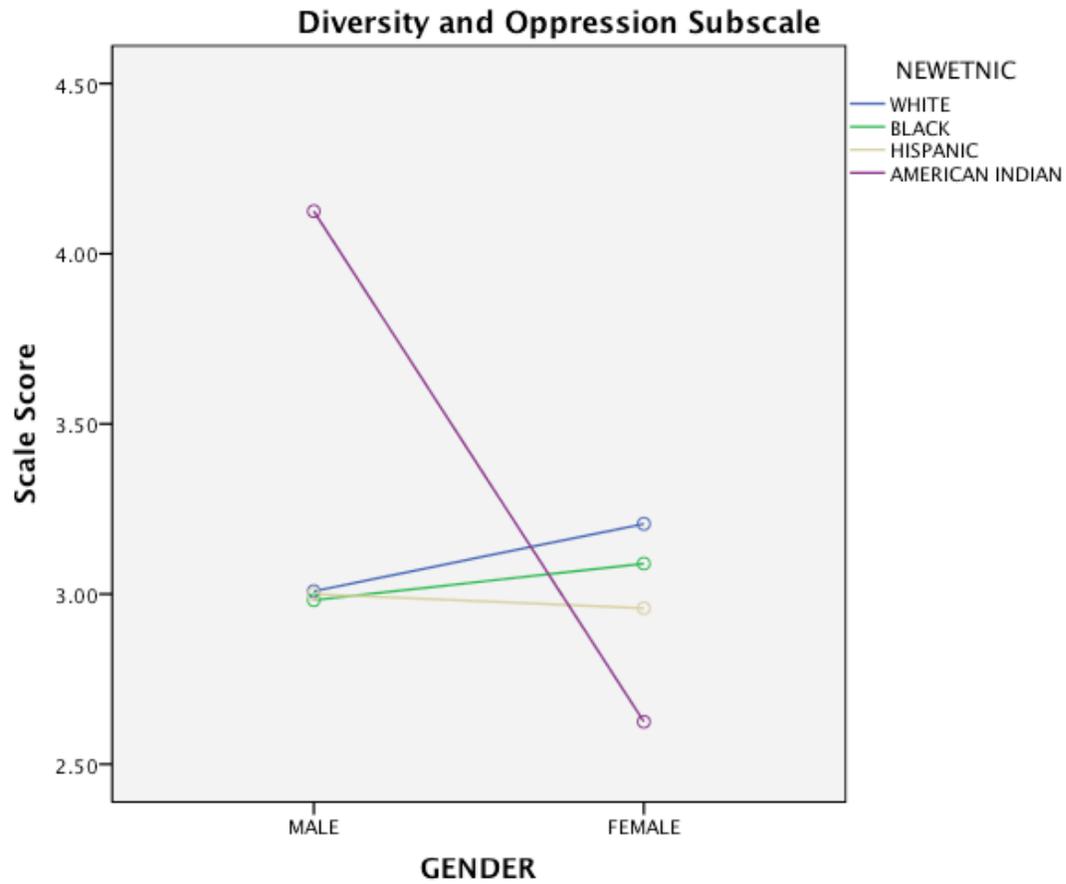


Figure 1. Plot of Means for the Interaction of Gender and Ethnicity on the Diversity and Oppression Subscale

Descriptive statistics for interaction for age and ethnicity are reported in Table 17.

Table 17  
*Descriptive Statistics for Responses on the Diversity  
 and Oppression Subscale; Age X Gender*

		Diversity and Oppression		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
White				
	<i>Male</i>	3.00	.328	15
	<i>Female</i>	3.20	.334	40
	<i>Total</i>	3.15	.341	55
Black				
	<i>Male</i>	2.98	.423	7
	<i>Female</i>	3.08	.266	20
	<i>Total</i>	3.09	.400	46
Hispanic				
	<i>Male</i>	3.00	.423	3
	<i>Female</i>	2.95	.886	3
	<i>Total</i>	2.97	.609	6
<i>American Indian</i>				
	<i>Male</i>	4.12		1
	<i>Female</i>	2.62		1
	<i>Total</i>	3.37	1.06	2
<i>TOTAL</i>				
	<i>Male</i>	3.04	.404	26
	<i>Female</i>	3.14	.353	64
	<i>Total</i>	3.11	.369	90

As can be seen in Figure 2, there was also a significant interaction was between ethnicity and age of respondents on the Diversity and Oppression subscale,  $F(4,72)=3.62$ ,  $p=.009$  indicating any differences in scale score were dependent upon the ethnicity of the respondents and the differences among the age groups: 34 and under ( $M=3.14$ ,  $SD=.356$ ); 35-49 ( $M=3.09$ ,  $SD=.400$ ) and 50 and over ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=.313$ ) of the respondents. Descriptive interactions for age and ethnicity are reported in Table 18.

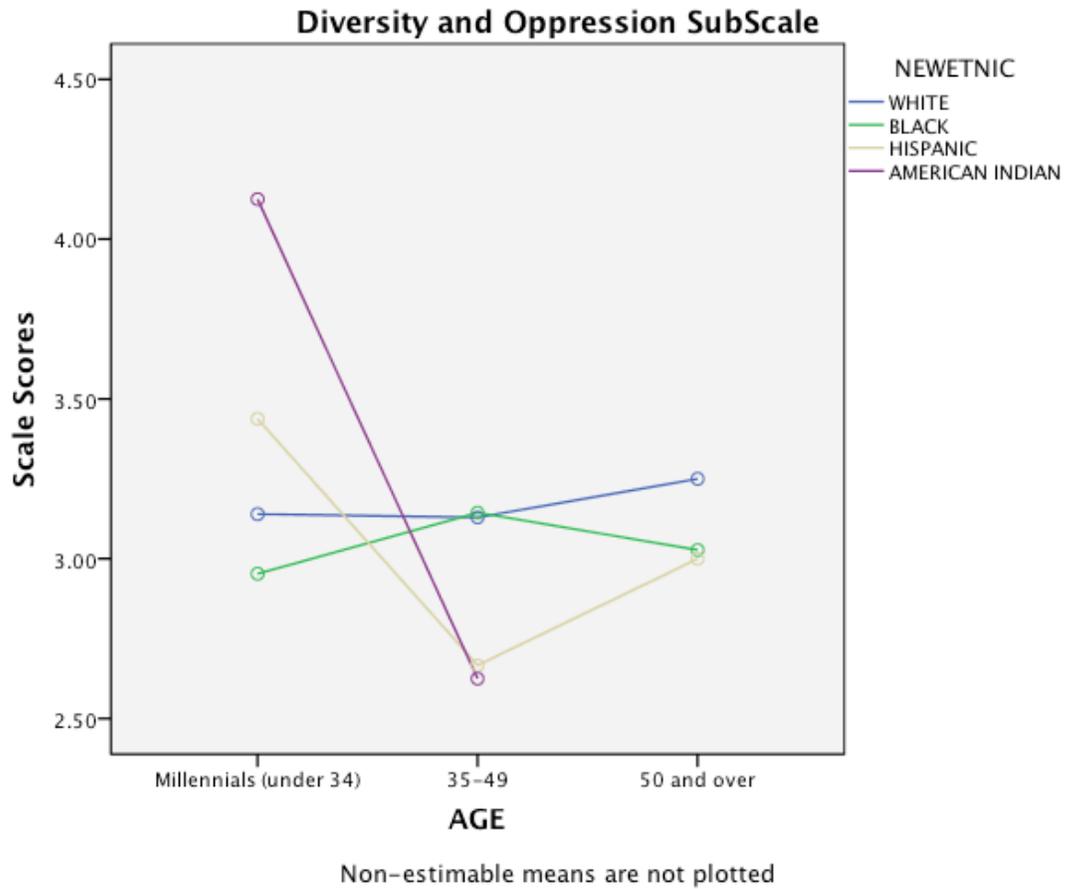


Figure 2. Plot of Means for the Interaction of Age and Ethnicity on the Diversity and Oppression Subscale

Table 18

*Descriptive Statistics of Interaction of Age and Race on Diversity and Oppression Subscale*

		<i>Diversity and Oppression</i>		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Age				
	<34			
	<i>White</i>	3.13	.249	17
	<i>Black</i>	2.95	.340	8
	<i>Hispanic</i>	3.43	.441	2
	<i>American Indian</i>	4.12	*	1
	Total	3.14	.356	28
	35-49			
	<i>White</i>	3.12	.387	29
	<i>Black</i>	3.14	.318	13
	<i>Hispanic</i>	2.66	.688	3
	<i>American Indian</i>	2.62	*	1
	Total	3.09	.400	46
	50 and Over			
	<i>White</i>	3.25	.353	9
	<i>Black</i>	3.02	.233	6
	<i>Hispanic</i>	3.0	*	1
	Total	3.15	.313	16
<i>TOTAL</i>				
	<i>White</i>	3.15	.341	55
	<i>Black</i>	3.06	.309	27
	<i>Hispanic</i>	2.97	.609	6
	<i>American Indian</i>	3.37	1.06	2
	Total	3.11	.369	90

**Discussion**

Findings from the data obtained from the two subscales reviewed for this research suggest that respondents did not have a firm understanding of diversity and oppression of various groups, particularly groups that have been traditionally marginalized in the United States.

There are clear conflicts with survey responses provided in the *Cultural Diversity, Self Confidence and Awareness* subscale compared to the responses in the *Diversity and Oppression* subscale. For example, respondents subscale scores indicate that they do not have a firm understanding of institutional oppression and the misuse of power that constrain human and legal rights of individuals and groups in society but they strongly agreed that the American Dream is real for anyone willing to work hard to achieve it, totally disregarding institutional and societal racism and oppression. Additionally, respondents had strong opinions about several historically marginalized groups in the US. They believed that being lesbian, bisexual or gay is a choice and that everyone who lives in the US should speak or try to learn English. Further respondents did not overwhelmingly believe that membership in a minority group significantly increases risk factors for exposure to discrimination, economic deprivation and oppression and that in the US

some people are not often physically attacked because of their minority status however respondents rated themselves very highly on their knowledge of African American history. African Americans have been subjected to discrimination, oppression and economic deprivation in the US for over 200 years and these atrocities still exist. Additionally, African Americans continue to experience extreme levels of violence in the United States.

The data from this research are very telling. Racism is socially constructed. All ethnicities and age group of respondents participating in this research differed slightly in their understanding of racism and oppression in the United State. Although beyond the scope of this research, it is conceivable to believe that the differences can be attributed to respondents own life experiences and interactions.

Given the low levels of understanding of race and oppression evidenced by the data analysis in this research, the need for Principal Preparation Programs to include Leadership for Social Justice as an essential component for the preparation of aspiring school leader and is clear and urgent. In order for school leaders to begin to interrogate policies and school structures that support inequities that exists in public schools, they first must recognize what those inequities look like. Aspiring school leaders must be presented with the opportunities to engage in ongoing dialog and reflection of these issues throughout their training and not in one course as was the experience of graduates that participated in this study.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

Clearly, the data from this research is in alignment with similar research findings that informs us that students graduating from the Principal Preparation Programs are not exiting with the requisite skills required to lead diverse schools. This lack of preparation impacts the nation as a whole and not just poor and minority communities. School leader preparation programs must do a better job in preparing aspiring school leaders with the skills needed to successfully address challenges that may be present in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools.

The demand and expectations for school leaders have shifted greatly but principal preparation programs continue to prepare school leaders for traditional roles in traditional school settings thus creating a void of skilled Principals who can lead 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. The changing demographics of American schools will demand that principal leadership preparation programs revise their curriculum to reflect the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of students attending public schools, more specifically, aspiring school leaders will need a deeper understanding of social justice, democracy and equity (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe, 2005; Hernandez & Fraynd, 2014; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Miller & Martin, 2015; Theoharis, 2010; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008).

Curriculum and program goals of Principal Preparations programs are often dictated by state or national standards and the most recent revision of ISLLC standards currently in draft form have been revised to provide a social justice framework to support the development of Principal standards that are current and relevant to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century schools, school leaders and children. Standard 10 of the revised ISLLC standards specifically addresses the issues of equity and cultural responsiveness. This standard states that an educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of an equitable and culturally responsive school. *The principal can reach this goal by*

- Ensuring equity+ access to social capital and institutional support
- Fostering schools as affirming and inclusive places
- Advocating for children, families, and caregivers
- Attacking issues of student marginalization; deficit-based schooling; and limiting assumptions about gender, race, class, and special status
- Promoting the ability of students to participate in multiple cultural environments
- Promoting understanding, appreciation, and use of diverse cultural, ecological, social, political, and intellectual resources (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014, p. 20).

In order to prepare aspiring school leaders to be school ready Principals leading 21<sup>st</sup> century schools advocating for the success of all students, Principal Preparation Programs will need to do a better job in revising current curriculum with a foci of students gaining understanding and achieving mastery of critical theories related to culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, and language and understanding of the patterns of discrimination and inequities, injustice and the benefits and liabilities associated with individual groups.

To effectively prepare 21<sup>st</sup> century schools leaders to lead 21<sup>st</sup> century schools, Principal Preparation Programs must include in their curriculum on going opportunities for students to connect the important aspect of school leadership revolving around issues of diversity self awareness and reflection, facilitating discussions on privilege, inequities, racism and the important of raising expectation for all students and advocating for and understanding the backgrounds of traditionally marginalized students (Hernandez & Kose, 2012; Miller & Martin, 2015). This should not be offered in one or two courses but dispersed throughout the entire program including the internship (Ballenger & Kemp-Graham, 2014). Students need numerous opportunities to engage in candid discussions of oppression and discrimination in a safe environment which can support critical reflection and their own understanding of critical theories of oppression and marginalization (Miller & Martin, 2015). An excellent instructional strategy to assist students with understanding and the application of social justice school leadership would be the use of the case studies to stimulate awareness of inequities in schools and how to address these issues effectively and successfully (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014).

Principal preparation programs can serve as a springboard, immersing students into unfamiliar cultures, engaging in difficult conversations, propelling and inspiring students into social justice activism that support equality of education and the expectation of success for all students. We can longer wait for change to occur, it is time for action.

### **Limitations of this Research**

The results of this study may only be generalizable to the populations that mirror the survey respondents in this quantitative research. Additionally, the use of a closed survey did not provide in depth specific information as to possible reasons respondents appeared to have limited understanding of racism and oppression in the US beyond the scope of the research questions posed. This research was not experimental and therefore claims of causation and effects of the independent variables identified in this research on the dependent variable included in this study cannot be offered, despite the identification of statistically significant interactions of independent variables on the dependent variables included in this study.

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