

**NCPEA**  
**International Journal of Educational  
Leadership Preparation**

**Spring 2017**  
**Volume 12, Number 1**  
**ISSN 1532-0723**

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## **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.

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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-blind). NCPEA Publications is fortunate to have a cadre of professional reviewers (university professors), numbering over 300. 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 12, Number 1 (Spring 2017) 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.*

# Contents

<b>A Case Study of Dual Language Program Administrators: The Teachers We Need</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Joan R. Lachance</i>	
<b>Resistance to Change among Veteran Teachers: Providing Voice for More Effective Engagement</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Richard R. Snyder</i>	
<b>Social Justice and School Leadership Preparation: Can We Shift Beliefs, Values, and Commitments?</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>James G. Allen, Robert E. Harper and James W. Koschoreck</i>	
<b>What Factors Impact Why Novice Middle School Teachers in a Large Midwestern Urban School District Leave After Their Initial Year of Teaching</b>	<b>53</b>
<i>Joyce L. Albright, L. Arthur Safer, Paul A. Sims, Angela Tagaris, Denise Glasgow, Kim M. Sekulich and Mary C. Zaharis</i>	
<b>Increasing Principal Preparation Candidates' Awareness of Biases in Educational Environments</b>	<b>69</b>
<i>Karen D. Jones and Marjorie C. Ringler</i>	
<b>University Strategic Planning: A Process for Change in a Principal Preparation Program</b>	<b>83</b>
<i>Federico R. Guerra, Roberto Zamora, Rosalinda Hernandez, and Velma Menchaca</i>	
<b>Automatically Discounted: Using Black Feminist Theory to Critically Analyze the Experiences of Black Female Faculty</b>	<b>98</b>
<i>Shametrice Davis and Kelly Brown</i>	

# A Case Study of Dual Language Program Administrators: The Teachers We Need

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.



**Joan R. Lachance**

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*In support of growing numbers of dual language programs nation-wide, dual language school administrators seek to find teachers who are specifically prepared to work with dual language learners for additive biliteracy. For this research the author utilized a case study design to explore practicing dual language administrators' perspectives regarding programmatic necessities related to dual language teachers and how these needs might shape responses from U.S. teacher education programs. The study participants voiced fundamental considerations regarding dual language teachers' essential competencies along with the complexities of additive biliteracy and academic language development in both Spanish and English. Additionally, the study's findings and discussions provide participants' detailed recommendations for new ways to consider preparing dual language teachers for the specialized pedagogies necessary to support dual language learners' biliteracy and academic language development.*

Current and historical research authenticates the academic, cognitive, socio-cultural, and economic benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, & Rogers, 2007; Thomas & Collier 2012). For school administrators and others working in various roles within dual language education, there is a strong sense of consensus that it is the most effective program structure for academic achievement, supported by evidence-based findings from long-term analysis of student outcomes (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Garcia, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 2012). Research continues to solidify the facts with school administrators that biliterate students have significantly increased academic achievement in K-12 schools nation-wide (Escamilla, Hopewell, Butvilofsky, Sparrow, Soltero-Gonzalez, Ruiz-Figueroa, & Escamilla, 2013; Thomas & Collier, 2012, 2014). Keeping biliteracy and academic achievement in mind, school administrators are still highly challenged with finding teachers to support ever-growing diverse student populations (Loeb, Soland, & Fox, 2014; Migration Policy Institute, 2015).

On another note, long-standing research continues to suggest that English learners in dual language programs master academic English skills better than traditional English as a second language (ESL) programs even though only half or less of the instruction is delivered in English (August & Shanahan, 2010; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2012). As a result of these consistent research-based discoveries, there has been a marked increase in K-12 dual language programs in US schools (Center for Applied Linguistics [CAL], 2012; McKay, 2011). That said, biliteracy and second language acquisition as they are integrated in dual language pedagogy are quite unique processes, indicating the need for distinctive teacher preparation (DeFour, 2012; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005; Hamayan, Genessee, & Cloud, 2013; Hopkins, 2013; Lindholm-Leary, 2012). Given the national shortage of dual language teachers trained in U.S. teacher preparation programs, states, including North Carolina are faced with barriers to expand or even maintain current dual language programs (Associated Press, 2008; DeFour, 2012). In response, the purpose of this case study (Creswell, 2015; Yin, 2014) was to closely examine dual language school administrators' perspectives regarding programmatic necessities related to dual language teachers and, how these needs might shape responses from U.S. teacher education programs.

## **Literature Review**

Dual Language educational programs are shaped by the ideological notion that multilingualism is beneficial for all learners. Being bilingual and biliterate improves thinking and learning (Lindholm-Leary, 2012). The fundamental point in the dual language academic configuration is the presence of language-majority and language-minority students for sustained, additive bilingual instruction. The ultimate goal at the core of dual language programs is for both groups of students to learn content concepts through language learning principles resulting in demonstrated academic proficiency in both languages (Bickle, Hakuta, & Billings, 2004; Collier & Thomas, 2007; Lindholm-Leary, 2012). Meaning, dual language programs and their teachers must embrace and facilitate the myriad cognitive, linguistic, and cultural advantages of combining language-minority and language-majority students with each other in K-12 classrooms (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2016; Grojean & Li, 2013). School administrators and teachers working with bilingual students agree that dual language education is outstanding for all students' academic achievement and increased metacognition (García, 2009; Grojean, 2010;

Thomas & Collier, 2012, 2014). Evidence-based findings along with field-based professionals' informal classroom verifications support long-term analysis of increased student outcomes (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 2012). Dual language school administrators and teachers are granted repeated incidents of proof regarding language learning and thinking skills dual language students demonstrate on a daily basis in their classrooms and, in the communities they serve (Lachance, 2015).

Knowing dual language programs support academic growth with all students, there remains a national concern regarding the availability of qualified teachers who are prepared for the unique requirements of dual language teaching (CAL, 2012; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2014). Numerous states, including North Carolina attempt to expand dual language programs and simply cannot find sufficient dual language teachers from their local areas, regions, and often nation-wide. Dual language teacher shortages often result in states continuously being forced to look to other countries to fill positions as best they can (Associated Press, 2008; DeFour, 2010; McKay, 2011; Modern Language Association of America, 2007; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009). While there are cultural and linguistic benefits to having native-speaking language teachers in U.S. schools, there are also measured challenges associated with this dependence on international faculty (Hutchison, 2005; Kissau, S., Yon, M., & Algozzine, 2011).

Visiting teachers from other countries are often mismatched in preparation for the logistics of U.S. schooling. Often times they struggle with adopting student-centered pedagogy and even become stagnate without a deep cultural understanding of their role in motivating students in the learning process (Haley & Farro, 2011; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009). Excessive time may be ineffectively spent by the teachers "transitioning" from culture shock to best-practices (Thomas & Collier, 2014). In some cases, international teachers do not adapt to their post in the U.S., resulting in declined program enrollment or program elimination (Haley & Farro, 2011). School, district, and state-level dual language program administrators, albeit invested in supporting program expansion are challenged with using additional human resources and limited time to provide professional development for visiting dual language teachers. These same stakeholders are also frequently dismayed when visiting bilingual teachers they have supported return to their countries earlier than planned due to maladjustment (Thomas & Collier, 2014). To these points, dual language school administrators continue to reach with desperation to find bilingual teachers who can deliver state level content standards in a language other than English with academic and pedagogical alignment. North Carolina is no exception. Consider this notion set forth by Drs. Thomas and Collier (2014, p. 51) as they discussed recruitment patterns of bilingual teachers:

Many of the bilingual teachers in North Carolina have been recruited from other countries during the first decade of implementation in two-way dual language and immersion programs, with the goal of the NC school districts to eventually "grow their own" bilingual teachers.

Literature also suggests potential reasons for the shortage of dual language teachers, based upon the identified specialized teacher preparation necessary to support dual language learners (García 2009; Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2011; Wong-Fillmore, 2014). Additionally, there are limited teacher preparation programs nation-wide that authentically address dual language teaching and learning with the National Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education at the core of the preparation. National dual language teacher preparation standards

are non-existent (Howard, et. al., 2007). Prior bodies of literature substantiate that teachers working in dual language classrooms are faced with students' countless layers of diversity and complexity, all of which shape pedagogical patterns and, students' approaches to learning (Hamayan, Genesee, & Cloud, 2013; Ovando & Collier, 1998; Valdés, 1997). Classrooms where content standards are delivered in two languages with groups of students who are both minority and majority language speakers gives cause to reexamine teachers' preparation, affording new competencies for successful teaching and learning in two languages. Likewise, school administrators working with teachers in K-12 classrooms across the nation are facing increasing expectations to improve students' academic outcomes as a direct result of informed teaching and critical, linguistically supportive instruction. Therefore, responding to the nuances of dual language teaching within teacher preparation is increasingly vital, to provide the specialized training they require while also addressing the national dual language teacher shortage (Knight, Lloyd, Arbaugh, Gamson, McDonald, Nolan, and Whitney, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Herrera, Cabral, & Murry, 2013).

### **Theoretical Frame**

This case study with dual language administrators (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014) was framed by the theoretical constructs that support specialized dual language teaching and learning with additive biliteracy development. Highly qualified dual language teachers must operationalize additive bilingual education paradigms, guiding academic language development in two languages (Collier, 1992; García, 2009; Guerrero, 1997; Wong-Fillmore, 2014). Two interconnected concepts within the framework that supported this investigation of dual language administrators' perspectives regarding their needs with dual language teachers and, how these needs might shape responses from U.S. teacher education programs were: a) the complexities of additive biliteracy with dual language learners and, b) the importance of quality, specialized teacher preparation while working with language learners.

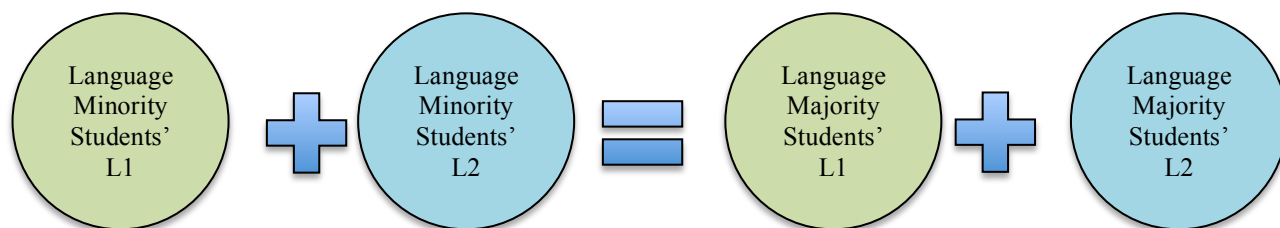
### **Additive Biliteracy**

Historically, patterns for many bilingual education programs in the U.S. were transitional, misleading to oblige students' development of knowledge and language according to monolingual dominant-language norms (August & Hakuta, 1997; Ovando & Collier, 1998; Wong-Fillmore, 2014). In stark contrast, this study was framed to reflect recent scholarship supporting the conception that dual language learners must be in value-added programs that result in enriching benefits for language-minority students (Escamilla, et al., 2014). Acquisition, preservation, and development of students' bilingualism and biliteracy in both majority and home languages support diglossic bilingual education (see Figure 1). In practitioners' terms, this study examined the need for school administrators to consider biliteracy with the guided affirmation that both first languages (L1) and second languages (L2) are honored, carefully addressed, and authentically connected to teachers' and students' classroom experiences (García, 2009). Correspondingly, Guerrero's (1997) historical research on the importance of contextualized, cognitively demanding learning experiences for Spanish academic language proficiency solidified this study's construct. It stands to reason that additive biliteracy in the context of dual language schooling obliges teachers to understand subject matter while



simultaneously attending to the significance of academic language functions, pragmatic conventions, and sociocultural layers of academic discourse development in both languages.

Parallel to García and Guerrero's research, Thomas and Collier's Prism Model for Bilingual Learners (2007) also supports the notion of additive biliteracy with dual language learners. The Prism Model's four apparatuses of sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive processes indicate that sustained responsiveness in these developmental areas is necessary for all learners to be successful. In dual language education, all aspects of the prism, in both languages are addressed, doubling the Prism Model's components from four to eight (Collier & Thomas, 2007; Thomas & Collier, 2012). The Prism Model's linguistic constructs tenet suggests that both language-minority and language-majority students dual language learners need specialized attention to comprehend language and content in both languages.



*Figure 1. Additive Biliteracy, adapted from García (2007).*

### **Quality, Specialized Language Teacher Training**

Considerable attention has been given to the importance of highly qualified teachers in U.S. schools. Likewise, research has noted that language learners also encounter negative experiences as a result of what is termed a teacher-quality gap (Samson & Collins, 2012). Teachers in K-12 classrooms across the nation are faced with increasing numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Professional expectations are that teachers facilitate increased student outcomes as a direct result of informed teaching and critical, linguistically supportive instruction (Knight, Lloyd, Arbaugh, Gamson, McDonald, Nolan, and Whitney, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Herrera, Cabral, & Murry, 2013; Sato, 2014). Yet, challenges still exist for teachers to feel prepared to work with language learners (Lachance, 2015). Respectively, school administrators look to U.S. teacher preparation programs to graduate highly qualified candidates who are ready to teach diverse populations of learners using research-based best practices (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Such transformations in learner populations and specialized educational programs, including dual language, call for teacher preparation programs to be current with their teacher training in order for candidates to be well prepared for learners' pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural needs (Goldenburg, 2013).

Even more pronounced, the need to enhance teacher candidate support is particularly relevant with dual language teaching and learning (Umansky & Reardon, 2015). School administrators need teacher candidates working with dual language learners to demonstrate skills that facilitate students' use and application of two languages in the classroom context. This specialization requires a wide variety of scaffolding techniques and lesson approaches related to academic language development and communicative domains of both languages. Furthermore,

the pedagogical uniqueness with dual language is to strategically prepare teachers to approach bilingual students' learning as "one learner" rather than viewing the bilingual students as two monolingual entities in one brain (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2016; Grosjean & Li, 2013).

Given the notion that dual language education supports all students' learning, along with the national shortage of trained dual language teachers, this study was framed with theoretical constructs regarding the complexities of additive biliteracy and the importance of quality, specialized teacher preparation for dual language. The framework supported the research goals to gain new understandings of school principals' perspectives regarding programmatic necessities related to dual language teachers and, how these needs might shape responses from U.S. teacher education programs.

## **Research Methods**

Seeking to gain clarity on school principals' insights regarding programmatic necessities related to dual language teachers and, how these needs might reshape U.S. teacher preparation, the researcher conducted a qualitative, interpretive case study (Creswell, 2015; Erickson, 1986; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014) with two dual language school principals in one North Carolina district. With structural tenets from the Center for Applied Linguistics Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education research (Howard, et. al., 2007) the study's purpose was two-dimensional. Accordingly, the following research questions related to dual language program needs and teacher preparation guided the work with this case study:

- 1) What are the necessary considerations for school principals in dual language schools when selecting teachers to support their programmatic needs?
- 2) What are school administrators' recommendations for teacher preparation programs for teachers' distinct needs while working with dual language learners?

## **Context**

The study was situated in the southeastern state of North Carolina where the state education agency (SEA) is strategically aiming to expand the existing 120 dual language programs (The State Board of Education, North Carolina [NCSBE], 2013). Specifically, the interpretive case study examined dual language school administrators' perspectives regarding dual language programmatic needs within their district as they sought to expand their limited elementary programs. The study's construct was selected based on Creswell's recent direction (2015) and Merriam's historical guidance for (1998) an interpretive case study model. The design was implemented in order for the researcher to "gather as much information about the problem as possible" (p.38). The intent of the data collection and analysis were to develop a categorical continuum that conceptualizes a different approach to the task, in this case, specialized dual language teacher preparation. This district was challenged for ways to increase programs in both number and, vertical span given that North Carolina has a bilingual endorsement for high school graduates (Public Schools of North Carolina [NCDPI], 2015a; 2015b). The study's two administrator participants (Yin, 2014) worked in dual language programs with English and Spanish speaking students. While other partner languages were available in North Carolina's dual language programs, this study focused on language-minority students and language-majority students in Spanish/English program settings. More specifically, the participants'

program models also supported varying structures for time percentages in partner languages (ie. 90/10, 80/20, 70/30, and 50/50).

**North Carolina specifics.** Of the states approximate 1.5 million K-12 students in public schools, nearly 100,000 are classified as English Learners according to federal guidelines for basic Language Assistance Program services (NCDPI, 2016). With these learners in mind, as well as native speakers of English, North Carolina includes dual language and immersion programs in formalized SEA K-12 standard courses of study for curriculum and instruction (NCDPI, 2015a). In January of 2013, The North Carolina State Board of Education (NCSBE) released the document *Preparing Students for the World: Final Report of the State Board of Education's Task Force on Global Education*. This call for action was to ensure that all North Carolina public school graduates are globally prepared for the 21st century (NCSBE, 2013). Specifically included in the report is the strategic expansion of dual language programs state-wide, already at 120 in for 2016-17 (NCDPI, 2016).

## **Participants**

For the purpose of this research, purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998) resulted in a participant group consisting of two dual language school administrators (see Table 1). Via personal recruitment, the researcher was able to include the participant administrators from North Carolina. Participants were selected as their program sites represented dual language models with language-minority and language-majority students with the languages of instruction as Spanish and English. The programmatic structures also represented a mixture of times spent in English and Spanish within their program models, the common pattern in North Carolina. Sampling targeted participants to represent school administrators that were in a district attempting to increase dual language programs in size and scope. More specifically, the study participants worked in elementary dual language schools, giving focus within the interpretive case so that specific, highly detailed descriptions might emerge (Coffey, 2014; Merriam, 1998). The participating principals had a minimum of 20 years experience in elementary education. In both cases the participants' first language was English, with their details revealed in the demographic portion of the data set (Seidman, 2013). Parallel this, both participants self-identified that they volunteered to be school administrators in dual language settings, with little to no prior training for the specifics of dual language education. Both participants also disclosed that they had to over-rely on national and international professional development conferences for support regarding things like program structure options, curricular and assessment tools, ideas for hiring teachers, and how to work with communities and parents. Much like the shortage in dual language teacher preparation programs, there are even fewer options for school principals wanting to lead dual language schools (Thomas & Collier, 2014).

Table 1  
*Dual Language Administrator Participants*

Pseudonym	Years in Elementary Education	Native Language	Specifically Trained for DL School Administration
Cassandra	<25	English	No
Kelly	<20	English	No

*Note.* Both participants made reference to extensive administrator training in some form via professional development conferences at the national and international level. Both attended a minimum of one dual language conference outside of North Carolina annually.

### Data Sources

With purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 1998), the study’s approach allowed for the exploration of the research questions in actual dual language school settings, reflecting the communities where the school research sites were situated. The schools represented purposeful sample and sample of convenience based on the researcher’s fostered relationships (Stringer, 2014) with the district and school administrators. For case study data triangulation (Coffey, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), multiple sources of on-site evidence were examined in the context where the data were collected over a 6-month period. The data sources from both participants were face-to-face interviews, artifacts and documents analysis, as well as participant observations in their school settings.

**Interviews.** Semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews were conducted on-site with both participants. Each on-site interview ranged from 60 to 90 minutes in duration. Interview recordings for each participant were transcribed, resulting in data transcriptions of 20-26 pages per participant. The semi-structured interview protocol (Seidman, 2013) was based on the tenets of the CAL Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education to explore current dual language administrators’ perspectives on their programmatic needs regarding dual language teachers and recommendations for dual language teacher preparation. The interviews were transcribed resulting in over 50 pages of transcripts for data analysis via coding (Saldaña, 2016).

**Artifacts and documentation.** Data sources included artifacts and documentation regarding school setting details with dual language learners for triangulation. School improvement plan documents detailing Title 1, English learner, Free and Reduced Lunch percentages, and overall school setting narratives (see Table 2) were utilized. Additionally, school administrators shared dual language curricular materials, classroom language supports used with teachers and their students as well as identifying curricular needs based on in house adaptation of dual language materials. Some artifacts were teacher-generated while others were supporting documents from site-based textbook adoptions. Artifacts and documents also included text examples, assessment examples, classroom rubrics, and language supports across the content areas, in both languages.

Table 2  
*Dual Language Administrator Participants' Schools*

Pseudonym	Total Number of Students K-5	Dual Language Program	Title I
Apple Hills	578	K (exploratory)	Yes
Rolling Ridge	525	K-3	Yes

*Note.* Both sites have over 80% of their students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch.

**Participant Observations.** Data sources also included 60-90 minute on-site observations with both participants. The purpose of the face-to-face observations was to view the school administrators in the context of their own environment, to capture deeper understandings of the participants as they were in the actual community and schools where they work. In both cases the observations took place during the school day while students were in school. Both participants self-selected the time of the observations based on their individual schedules and time constraints and for the purpose of this study to focus on administrators' perspectives, the researcher did not interact with the students. Anecdotal records, including photographs without students from hallways, teachers' classrooms, and administrators' offices were kept to capture myriad details. Some of these included curricular materials, ancillary language supports, and other visible resources for literacy in both languages. The on-site observations provided a familiar environment for the administrator participants, allowing for research observations while the participants accessed their own lexical schema based on where they work, the dual language teachers with whom they work, and the dual language learners their programs served (Merriam, 1998).

### Data Analysis

In the interpretive case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014), the data were analyzed for case descriptions to construct explanations (Bazeley, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Yin 2014). With multiple, triangulated data sources representing dual language education from both participants and their sites, highly detailed descriptions emerged, forming thematic categories (Creswell, 2015; Wolcott, 2001). The results, intending to address the needs dual language school administrators face included details associated with teacher shortages and classroom needs. Data analysis via open-ended coding (Saldaña, 2016), implored categorical culling, grouping, and re-coding processes to analyze refined, emergent data patterns. The integration of thematic and categorical structures from coding each participant's data led to data categories and sub-categories within the holistic data set to respond to the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

### Findings

The study's findings resulted in the formation of two data categories as connectors to a predominant thematic axis of: Preparing Teachers for Dual Language Classrooms (Saldaña, 2016; Corbin & Strauss, 1998). The data categories were: 1) dual language teachers' essential

competencies and, 2) recommendations for specialized dual language teacher preparation. Both categories had corresponding code markers, supporting the streamlining of codes-to-assertions in the data set (Coffey, 2014; Densin & Lincoln, 2008; Saldaña, 2014). A noteworthy point with the two categories and their code markers was the markers' frequencies within the data sources. While there was some noticed variation, more importantly, the frequencies were mostly even in their distribution. This would stand to reveal the construct that the participants found each of the marked codes as important. (See Figures 2 and 3).

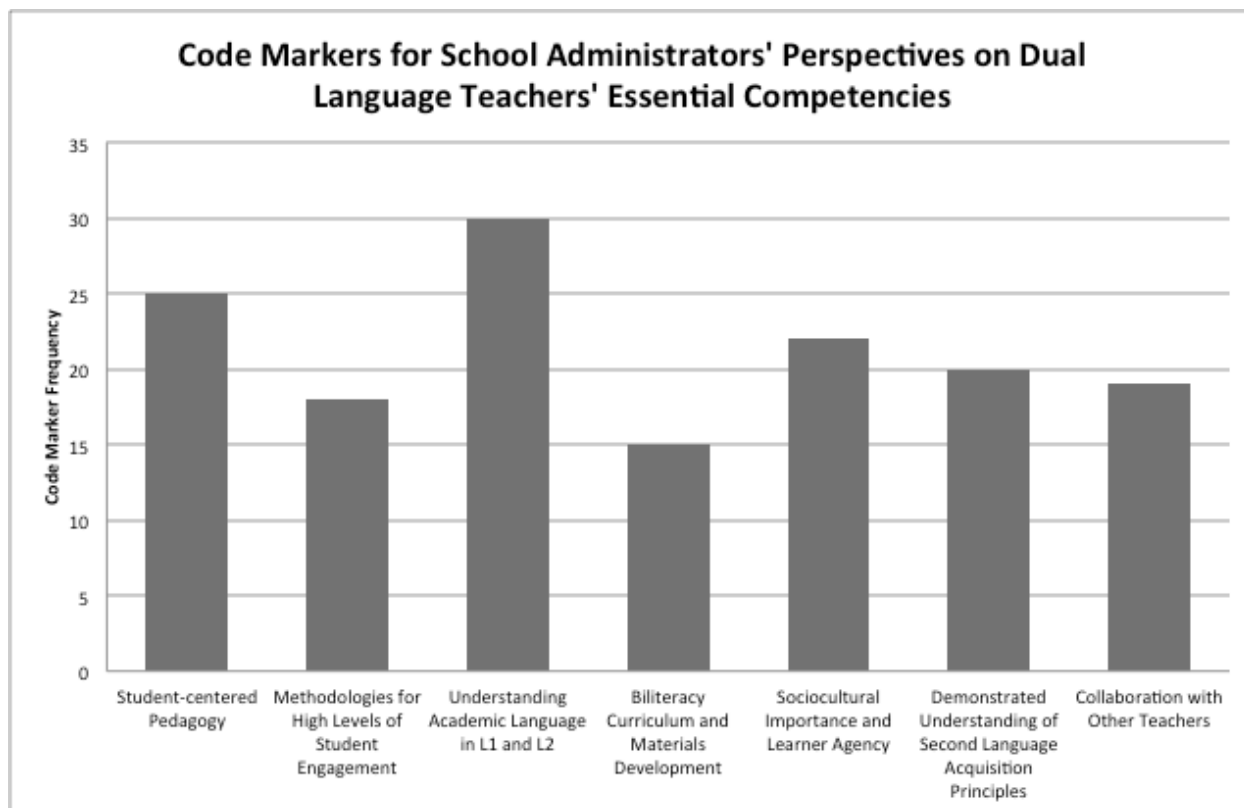


Figure 2. School Administrators' Perspectives on Dual Language Teachers

Both school administrators identified and described several areas they felt were of vital importance when discussing the dual language teachers' essential competencies. The seven categorical code markers, as shown in Figure 2, indicate the range of capacities they desired from the dual language teachers while teaching the dual language learners in their schools. These competencies included (a) student-centered pedagogy, (b) methodologies for high levels of student engagement, (c) understanding academic language in both L1 and L2, (d) biliteracy curriculum and materials development skills, (e) sociocultural importance and learner agency, (f) demonstrated understandings of second language acquisition principles, and (g) collaboration with other teachers. These details indicated both principals' given emphasis to the importance of dual language teachers understanding the complexities of academic language, in both languages.

Both participating school principals made emphasized references to the processes of learning academic language in two languages. Of all the data analysis code markers, this one

received the most in frequency. From the conceptual perspectives on second language acquisition and sociocultural nuances, academic language development in both languages is noted for being highly complex and significantly challenging (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011; Gottlieb, & Ernst-Slavits, 2014; Guerrero, 1997; WIDA, 2007, 2012). Similarly, based on the linguistic tenet from the Prism Model (Collier & Thomas, 2007) academic language development is fundamental for students' success in school, with additional distinctions in dual language education. Particulars regarding explicit instruction for language learners have historically provided the essentials related to grammar, semantics, communicative language forms and the role of translation in the process (Calderón, 2007; Krashen, 1985, Reyes & Klein, 2010; WIDA, 2012). However, there are still some key pieces to the dual language biliteracy puzzle that directly involve teachers' competencies to design and deliver lessons that attend to academic language development in both students' L1 and L2. Directly related to this, Cassandra, expressed her ideas regarding academic language and the related competencies she expects from dual language teachers. She specified:

100% of the time the [dual language] teachers must be well versed in understanding second language acquisition and academic language with all the students. We want the dual language teachers to be able to know what their students should sound like and understand the language they are and should be producing while acquiring two languages. We want them to really be experienced to understand how the language and the content function together, and how literacy is created in both languages. This is quite difficult so they [the teachers] really need to understand it [academic language] well.

On a similar note, Kelly expressed:

Teachers [in dual language] need clear vision regarding academic language skills and how to deliver strong lessons in English and Spanish. They need to know a lot about vocabulary and how to support emerging bilingual students with literacy development. They [the teachers] must facilitate academic language development with all students, getting them [the dual language learners] to use both languages in academic ways. They need very strong understandings of academic language.

The study's findings included aspects regarding the need to prepare teachers dual language methodologies, framed by additive biliteracy and attending to the complex linguistic constructs of Spanish and English (García, 2009; Guerrero, 1997; Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011; Escamillia, et. al., 2013). Participants made recommendation about teacher preparation, to be ready to teach in two languages (Flores, Sheets, & Clark, 2011; Reyes & Kleyn, 2010). Likewise, there continued to be mention of the need to prepare dual language teachers before they arrive to dual language classrooms (García, 2009; Morales & Aldana, 2010). Participants' responses regarding essential dual language teachers' competencies were complemented with clear recommendations for teacher preparation programs. Coded interview transcripts revealed details, as connections to the essential dual language teacher competencies, requesting specific coursework be designed for dual language teacher preparation with specific course contents (see Figure 3). Both school administrators expressed the desire to have teachers

arrive to their schools, already trained in very specific ways, to be ready to teach dual language.

Both school administrators also indicated they spend time and resources to support teachers' learning of dual language basics as they go, filling in the gaps with professional development as possible. The five categorical code markers for recommendations regarding of dual language teacher preparation within these data were: (a) biliteracy development and second language acquisition, (b) working with parents, (c) dual language methodologies (in L1 and L2), (d) extensive clinicals and specialized internships, and (e) authentic assessment in L1 and L2. Within these code markers, the one with the highest frequency was dual language methodologies in both languages. This also aligns with the highest code marker frequency in the prior category, that of teachers' understanding academic language development in both L1 and L2. Not only do dual language teachers need to understand academic language development in two languages, they need to be prepared with specific methodologies, practicing in clinical settings that facilitate its learning with their students (Clarke, Triggs, & Neilsen, 2014).

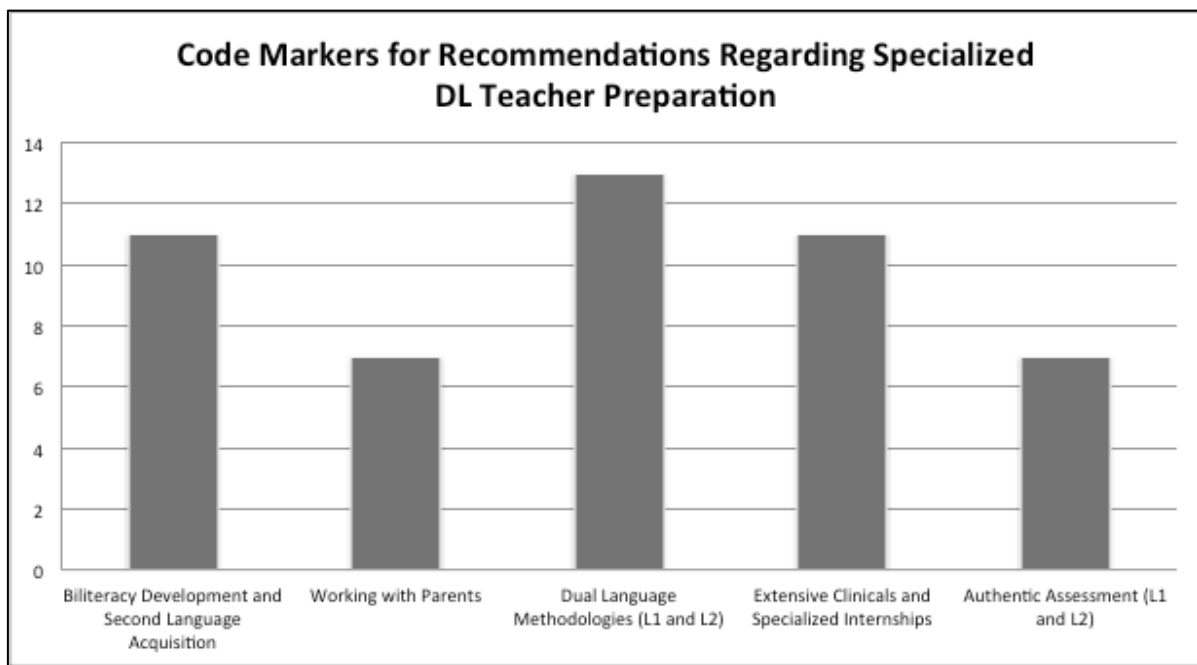


Figure 3. School Administrators Recommendations for Dual Language Teacher Preparation

Kelly stated her thoughts regarding this point on teacher preparation:

Teachers need to learn about dual language methods. It's similar to regular methods in terms of teaching for student engagement but, it's also very different in dual language. Teachers need methodologies that facilitate students' learning in both languages in ways that get the students doing the work, learning from their language peers, and supporting each other very differently to learn language and content. Methods need to be pervasive and consistent to show how this language learning is different. They also need methods that teach kids that languages are a



gift and that they will have advantages by being bilingual. These are special methods.

On a parallel note, Cassandra stated:

Dual language teaching methods need to ensure that kids are coming away from the program being able to articulate and express themselves in two languages. Teaching methods need to facilitate problem-solving skills in both languages. We know these [dual language] students think differently and we need teaching methods to be sure they think in both languages and then articulate what they know in both languages. Teaching methods need to make this happen in unique ways, to digest curricula and then create pathways for the students to access information in two languages.

In summary, each of the dual language school administrator participants expressed ideas and thoughts that supported essential dual language teachers competencies, viewed as programmatic necessities. In addition to this, they both expressed clear recommendations for dual language teacher preparation, addressing the teacher shortage, and reducing the time spent supporting their teachers upon arrival without the specialized skills they need. The findings were also noteworthy as the participants' perspectives connected to the framing additive bilingual research, as well as the concepts of linguistic constructs and complex academic language development. Likewise, the findings were especially relevant to dual language as they made conclusive recommendations and assertions about how to shape teacher preparation in dual language education. The interpretive case study results (Merriman, 1998) offered particulars for specific course contents, conceptualizing a different approach for the task of preparing dual language teachers.

### **Discussion and Implications for Practice**

As school administrators continue to seek out well-prepared dual language teachers to sustain and expand dual language programs, it becomes increasingly important to find ways to address the national shortage of dual language teachers. Simply stated, teacher preparation programs must continue to further develop program options for dual language teachers. The evidence gained from this study was meaningful to support reconsidered, changed approaches to teacher preparation coursework, bearing in mind essential competencies that dual language teachers should demonstrate. The dual language administrator participants gave details and explanations to support their views on the magnitude of complexity with academic language development, through the administrator lens of perspective. To point, the participants expressed both the complexities and the importance of teachers' understanding them to successfully facilitate academic language development in their dual language classrooms. This accentuates current and relevant research regarding dual language teaching and learning (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Hamayan, Genesee, & Cloud, 2013; Molle, Sato, Boals, and Hedgspeth, 2015; Thomas & Collier, 2013). The study's findings also suggested enhanced connections between dual language teachers' essential competencies and, how to support them via changed dual language teacher preparation (Merriman, 1998). Ultimately, there was a general consensus from both school

administrators that biliteracy and academic language development with dual language learners are in fact complex in nature, requiring specialized teaching (Zadina, 2014).

The study suggests that practicing dual language school administrators identified and affirmed perspectives regarding programmatic necessities related to dual language teachers and, how these needs might shape responses from U.S. teacher education programs. Participants described clear understandings of how these complexities impacted their considerations while seeking teachers, and how the shortage of dual language teachers presented challenges within their dual language programs. The study results also moved to make solid and well-defined recommendations for teacher preparation programs, hence the axial theme of: Preparing Teachers for Dual Language Classrooms. Based on the qualitative data collection and coded analysis, the study revealed the continued need specialized preparation for dual language teachers, even with some very well established bilingual education programs in place (Thomas & Collier, 2014). Therefore, university level programs should increase and re-shape ways to respond to the current demands of the field. Research and collaboration may potentially result in the creation of more innovative, researched-based dual language teacher preparation programs, expanding limited options for dual language teacher education. Such changes might give comprehensive attention to dual language pedagogy and methodologies, with notable aspects of metalinguistics and additive biliteracy across the coursework. Additionally, the probable need for increased clinical, fieldwork in well-established dual language classrooms exists, including substantial teacher mentor relationships (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014; Flores, Sheets, & Clark, 2011). This all-inclusive thinking suggests practiced constancy to include theory and application of standards-based dual language principles and perspectives (Howard, et. al, 2007).

Next steps in transforming teacher preparation for dual language are justified by the case study outcomes, inclusive of school administrators' relevant perceptions. In order for these next steps to fully come to fruition, it is also vital to expand interdisciplinary collaborations that include multiple stakeholders, in addition to school administrators, in the teacher preparation process. The implications for practice from this study are three-fold. First, from the current dual language administrator perspective, the concepts and associated nuances for teachers to understand additive biliteracy and academic language development remain crucial points of pedagogical consideration. Teaching and learning in two languages with language-minority students and language-majority students require unique approaches. Second, in order for dual language programs to continue and expand, school administrators need support in finding highly qualified dual language teacher candidates who come to their schools as prepared dual language teachers, specialists in their unique field. Finally, it would be greatly beneficial for teacher preparation programs to give attention to these details to facilitate dual language education program maintenance and expansion.

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# Resistance to Change among Veteran Teachers: Providing Voice for More Effective Engagement

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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*Effective implementation of change remains a crucial concern for educational leaders in the 21st Century. One of the factors affecting effective implementation of reform is resistance to change. Veteran teachers in particular present unique challenges, and stereotypically the greatest resistance, for effective implementation of change. This study provided voice to veteran teachers to help educational leaders gain insight for more effective engagement with resistance. Veteran teachers frequently act in ways that protect their “psychic rewards” (Lortie, 1975). Veteran teachers also strive to protect social nostalgia and political nostalgia (Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006). Understanding the complexity of resistance among veteran teachers validates their mission and memory (Goodson et al., 2006) while strengthening the implementation of initiatives at the local level (Fullan, 2016; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).*

**Keywords:** resistance, change, psychic rewards, veteran, nostalgia, engagement

Resistance to change among *any* teacher slows the implementation of educational reform. In spite of hopeful prescriptions from researchers, policymakers, and educational leaders, effective implementation of educational reform remains inconsistent (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Payne & Kaba, 2007; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This research focused on front-line individuals who seem to provide a particularly unique challenge to the implementation of change: veteran teachers. Gaining insight from their specific reasons for resistance provides opportunities for meaningful conversations and deeper engagement from these seasoned educators.

At the outset, it is important to note that the goal of this work is learning from veteran teachers for insight and understanding rather than manipulation. Change agents – those initiating change – frequently assume an objective, position of superiority when initiating change (Ford et al., 2008). Rather than adding to the illusion of objectivity on the part of change agents, the goal here is to set the stage for meaningful conversations and engagement (Ford & Ford, 2009a; Ford & Ford, 2009b). Educational leaders need to realize the extent to which *their approach toward* resistance can play an inhibitory role in effectively engaging change recipients.

Through semi-structured interviews, this phenomenological, qualitative research provided voice for veteran teachers (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Implications of this research suggest that effective engagement with resistant teachers might strengthen ownership of initiatives among those working directly with students (Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves, 2005). Understanding the complexity of resistance among veteran teachers validates their mission and memory (Goodson et al., 2006) while strengthening the implementation of initiatives at the local level (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to clarify reasons for resistance to change among later career teachers in order that educational leaders might respond in more meaningful and effective ways. Since veteran teachers may resist change for a variety of systemic or individual reasons, understanding those reasons for resistance may provide educational leaders with more effective strategies for implementing change.

Educational leaders can greatly benefit from growing in their understanding of two aspects of resistance to change. First, educational leaders can benefit from learning teachers' reasons for resistance. The overwhelming schedule of educational leaders (Fitzwater, 1996; Hall & Hord, 2011) makes it difficult to inquire, understand, and integrate reasons why veteran teachers may resist prescribed reforms. In addition, the ability of early career teachers and administrators to comprehend the reality of later career teachers is challenging (Hargreaves, 2005). Providing insights to later career teachers frames of thinking and frustration can lead to more effective interaction. Also, contemporary business theorists highlight the interaction between change agents and change recipients (Ford, 2009b; Ford et al, 2008). Educational leaders do well to consider the role those interactions play in the response from teachers. While business paradigms certainly do not apply to education in all contexts, the work done by organizational theorists as well as resistance to change theorists provide helpful paradigms from which educational leaders might approach resistance in their context.



## Definition of Terms

*Veteran:* While Huberman (1988) identified veteran teachers as those with six or more years of experience, he also recognized that distinguishing characteristics arose among teachers who neared retirement. Hargreaves (2005) expanded upon the distinct characteristics that develop among “later career” teachers who have more than 20 years of experience. Use of the term “veteran” in this work refers to those later career teachers with 20 or more years of experience who are also more than 50 years old.

*Resistance:* This researcher’s interest and reading in the area of resistance began with the traditional view of “willful opposition which must be overcome” (Dent & Powley, 2002, p. 60). Also in mind was Rogers’ (1983) use of the term “laggards” referring to those individuals slowest to adopt innovations. However, resistance can take on numerous meanings based upon one’s theoretical framework. An important goal of this work is for veteran teachers and administrators to clarify their own thinking about how each defines resistance.

## A Review of the Literature

### Resistance to Change

Contemporary business theorists acknowledge that the traditional approach to resistance presents several concerns. Resistance is typically defined as a “willful opposition which must be overcome” (Dent & Powley, 2002, p. 60). Yet this definition assumes a position of objectivity on the part of the change agent. Change agents wrongly see resistance as an objective reality in the mind of the change recipient – a reality that is “in them” or “over there” (Ford et al., 2008). This “change-agent centric” view of resistance misses the fact that resistance is an interpretation assigned to behaviors of the change recipient.

Ford and Ford (2010) conducted an intriguing project at Ohio State University that illustrated the subjective nature of resistance. The project focused on managers as they explained a new initiative to students. During discussion following their respective presentations, some participants viewed inquiries as resistance while other participants viewed the same questions as thoughtful and productive. Change agents assuming an objective assessment of the situation missed the opportunity to step back, learn from, and work through perceived resistance with greater meaning and effectiveness (Ford & Ford, 2010).

The reasons, thinking and emotions that accompany resistance are complex. Behaviors leaders perceive to be resistance may not, in fact, be resistance (Ford & Ford, 2009b). Workers may see their actions as a legitimate effort to maintain the goals of the organization. Long-time employees have a tremendous amount of personal commitment and psychological ownership in the organization. Individuals perceived to be resistant may see their actions as supporting the organization’s goals rather than resistance (Ford & Ford, 2009b).

Due to the subjective nature and the complexity of resistance, Ford and Ford (2009a) prescribed a “conversational” approach when encountering perceived resistance. In the conversational view, change agents are encouraged to ask the question, “Why do we call this resistance?” Change recipients then become active and interested participants with whom one can learn and work (Ford et al., 2008). Built upon the constructivist model, this view of

resistance sees resistance as an opportunity for learning, understanding and improving the change process. Ford and Ford (2009a) approach resistance as a sense-making process through which change agents and change recipients can learn, grow and improve. These conversations remove the objective, moral high ground of the change agent while rightly seeing resistance as a product of the agent-recipient relationship (Ford et al., 2008).

### **Later Career Teachers**

While it might seem obvious, it is important to emphasize that all later career teachers do not resist change. Huberman (1988) initially proposed, then Hargreaves (2005) elaborated, various responses to change by later career teachers: continuing renewal, positive focusers, disenchanted, and negative focusers. Continuing renewal teachers identify ways to stay current and relevant, adopting new strategies throughout their career. Positive focusers will accept change, but predominantly within the confines of their own classroom. In their wisdom and later in life, positive focusers conserve their energy while focusing upon the students who cross their threshold every day. Disenchanted later career teachers are those who invested themselves in several school reform efforts, only to be let down. Skepticism exists toward new initiatives due to the tabling of previous efforts as well as the repetition of change initiatives (Abrahamson, 2004; Hargreaves, 2005; Huberman, 1988). Though passive in their resistance to change, disenchanted veteran teachers feel marginalized by enthusiastic young administrators with little memory or respect for the experiences of these teachers. Disenchanted veterans can easily be confused with, but should be kept distinct from, negative focusers (Hargreaves, 2005).

Negative focusers are those veterans who work aggressively to undermine change, thwart any improvements that may threaten them, and use their political power to keep their life easy. They are the most outspoken, and the stereotypical resistant veteran teacher – “the bane of administrators’ lives” (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 974). The prominence of these vocal cynics inclines administrators to see many later career teachers as equally resistant. However, Hargreaves (2005) and Huberman (1988) highlight the importance of avoiding universal stereotypes for all later career teachers.

### **Psychic Rewards and Nostalgia**

Lortie (1975) identified various types of “rewards” associated with the selection of careers. Extrinsic rewards focus on income, level of prestige, and potential power that comes with a position. Ancillary rewards include the work schedule and conditions associated with a particular job. Psychic rewards are the internal feelings of fulfillment for which one enters the profession. Lortie (1975) found that teachers predominantly chose education based upon psychic rewards. Though research since Lortie identified distinct motivational aspects for “Xers” and Millennials compared to Boomers, all three generations still articulate the importance of the personally rewarding service associated with making an impact in students’ lives (Stone-Johnson, 2011; Troman, 2008).

While psychic rewards vary from teacher to teacher, each educator is certain to protect those elements of the profession she or he values. If administrators add responsibilities, teachers will accomplish their own priorities first, and then address any additional expectations (Lortie,

1975). It follows then, that teachers are inclined to resist changes and initiatives that threaten what they deem to be their primary reason they entered the profession.

Goodson et al. (2006) emphasized a final characteristic central to the later career teacher experience: teacher nostalgia. Nostalgia is “the major form of memory among a demographically dominant cohort of experienced older teachers” (Goodson et al., 2006, p. 42). Two types of teacher nostalgia reflect different aspects of resistance from teachers and present differing challenges for educational leaders. “Social nostalgia” is the sense of family – a school’s community of staff and students – that teachers knew and experienced earlier in their career. Social nostalgia accompanies changes that take time away from, or change relationships with, colleagues and students. “Political nostalgia,” on the other hand, arises from a loss of autonomy stemming from mandated, top-down initiatives. These initiatives particularly result in the loss of independence, creativity and status that veteran teachers once knew. Taking time to understand these concerns of later career teachers can validate their experience and set the stage for positive engagement (Goodson, et al., 2006).

## **Methodology**

The nine veteran teachers in this qualitative study were all over 50 years old, taught for at least 20 years, and averaged 31 years of experience. They taught in a range of small rural and large urban districts, and worked with students from kindergarten to high school. They represented Schools in Need of Assistance (SINA) as well as schools recognized for academic achievement. One participant taught in the same district for over 35 years, while others spent portions of their teaching careers in others states and even overseas. Six of the nine attained their masters’ degrees as a reflection of their desire to continue growing intellectually and professionally. All participants clearly remained vested in their labor of love: making a lifelong impact on students.

Semi-structured, responsive interviews provided insight into the phenomenological experience of each teacher (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009). Responsive interviews provided the opportunity to build rapport with the participants and capture their own words and thoughts about societal change, attitudes toward change, and specific experiences with resistance in their settings (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Interviews were digitally recorded, and then personally transcribed in order to maintain confidentiality and provide hard-copy records for coding and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Initial coding focused upon the a priori codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) of resistance theory and veteran teacher career issues. Axial coding also identified topics and themes outside the conceptual framework.

## **Findings**

### **Reasons for Resistance: Social Nostalgia**

Goodson et al. (2006) argued that later career teachers resist changes that negatively impact relationships (social nostalgia) or decrease their autonomy (political nostalgia). The interviews reflected the participants’ frustration with decreasing instructional and relational time due to added curricular expectations, the increased use of technology, and the increased emphasis on testing and data collection. Mr. Booker (all teacher names are pseudonyms) expressed

frustration with the schedule changes affecting instructional time, which threatened his relational, intellectual discourse with his students.

I felt rushed this year. It wasn't as much fun for me... to compare to the kind of things we used to be able to do with longer class periods, we miss a lot of what I think is special and important; those intangible things that kind of allow kids to see that intellectual discourse can be fun, and important.

In fact, Mr. Booker – a social studies teacher with over 30 years of experience – acknowledged giving “lip service” to numerous initiatives, then returning to his own classroom intent on accomplishing intellectual discourse through interactive lecture.

Several participants noted their frustration with growing curricular expectations affecting their instructional time with students. Mr. Schmidt noted, “Uh, I, I just felt rushed all the time. I didn't like the Common Core.” Mrs. Klinger similarly stated, “Well, because not all students are the same. You know? ...it [the Common Core] doesn't take into account our knowledge and our expertise of how to reach our students. And um, it's kind of a cookie cutter education, and I worry about that.” Ms. Johnson also expressed, “Well I think with the Common Core, what has happened is there's more and more. When you think that I have a 6-page report card, if I want to get all the Common Core, that there's just so much more.”

Veteran teachers also recognized the changing nature of relationships with students due to the increased presence of technology. High school teacher Mr. Stauffer noted,

...of course the technology has just been incredible as far as how that's changed. Um, I, I think uh, as far as the technology, the good and bad I guess. It uh, I'm thinking how to word this, um, I just think we've gotten in a huge hurry. I feel so much more rushed than I did before...there's so many things we can gather off technology and the Internet and so on, and I think our kids growing up in that element as well, it's just everything is now, now, now. I just, I want it now, I want it now.

Ms. Johnson expressed her frustrations with decreased instructional time due to the increased expectations for assessment.

I think because some of it you're just putting it on paper so that somebody else can look at it and see that that student needs help. Where you, after you've taught awhile yourself, you know which kids need help. And you can just go and help them. So are we wasting some of our time looking at data when we should be looking at what the students need?

An early elementary teacher with over 30 years of experience, Mrs. Rittmeyer similarly stated, “Because we're, there's so much of this that we have to do, and then we have to customize according to our FAST [The Formative Assessment System for Teachers] assessments what more we need to do, it has become less engaging and less fun. We feel like we don't have time for that.”

While Goodson et al. (2006) suggested that teachers work to preserve those past memories and experiences, this author found that the participants focused much more on preserving current student relationships. Teachers did not work toward preserving past

conditions, but rather the student relationships they once knew and enjoyed. Middle level literacy teacher Mrs. Smith illustrated this difference when asked if she was nostalgic for the good old days,

Well I don't know that things were better, they were certainly different. And I may have alluded to the fact my first classroom ... they all lived at home with their biological parents. It was different. For some of those kids it wasn't better than what they have now. But the change has caused them to come to us differently abled. They are more skeptical. Um, it takes them much longer to trust the adults that are present in the building, and some never do trust the adults that are present in the building. And all of that is the foundation for good learning.

Mrs. Smith's focal point was not returning to the past, but her intent to "come here every day trying to do what's best for kids...I know that kids need this and that's the reason that I do."

Mr. Booker similarly highlighted the centrality of daily interaction with students amidst educational changes. "The part that hasn't changed is that teaching is a one-to-one proposition. One, you know, a teacher connecting with a student. Uh, and that's the part I've always loved about it." Moreover, when working with students, Mr. Booker's goal was to help his students experience, "Those intangible things that kind of allow kids to see that intellectual discourse can be fun, and important."

In spite of changes in curricular expectations, Mrs. Klinger committed several days at the beginning of the year to develop relationships with her students. When asked about her reasons for doing so, she replied,

But then I always think, you know I think my first job is to help these children be good people. And "good people" to me means that they're wanting to continue to learn, that I don't turn off that curiosity. And um, I think having a caring and enriched environment helps to achieve that.

Most participants expressed frustrations with the changing nature of their relationships with students due to various initiatives. Increased expectations frequently threatened their primary psychic reward of meaningful relationships with their students through which effective instruction might take place.

### **Reasons for Resistance: Political Nostalgia**

The participants similarly provided numerous examples of decreasing autonomy indicative of political nostalgia (Goodson et al., 2006). Loss of local autonomy due to the state's Core Curriculum, the increased presence of Area Education Agency (AEA) consultants in Schools in Need of Assistance, and the loss of creativity associated with repetitive change all threatened the relative freedom each teacher experienced earlier in their careers.

Elementary teacher Mrs. Klinger noted the decrease in local control throughout her career when she said, "...when I started you know, it was standards and benchmarks – very much local

control. And we've seen that local control dissipate throughout my 27 years here. And the Common Core just kind of hones that in. That it's more top-down and not local control."

Mrs. Rittmeyer expressed a similar loss of autonomy with the increasing presence of AEA consultants.

So now the AEA is teaching us how to teach because we don't know how to teach kids how to read, and learn letters and sounds, things like that... never have darkened the doors of our classroom, but they can meet with us once a week and tell us what to do. That's very frustrating.

Mrs. Rittmeyer noted how the presence of AEA consultants now curtailed her creativity and professional independence. She said, "...we all have to teach the same way. We all have to teach the exact same thing, and it has to be so scripted, so to-the-test."

Repetitive change (Abrahamson, 2004) was a frequent source of frustration that threatened veteran teacher experience and creativity. Mr. Stauffer said, "But yeah, I, yeah I would say I've become more frustrated, especially when I started hearing things I've heard before and spun as new." He continued, "Um, I mean with something successful there's nothing wrong with tweaking it and using it again. Um, I don't like the way we, we put brand new wrappers on things and it's the, and I sit through a pile of meetings and hear the same things I heard 15 years ago." These repetitive, often top-down, changes frequently marginalize teacher experience, creativity and ownership (Bailey, 2000; Fullan, 2016). Mrs. Smith captured these sentiments when she said,

You know I've been in education long enough to see the different curriculum cycles come and go. OK, let's write this curriculum and we call it standards and benchmarks, and then we call it something else like critical objectives. It's never new...And this time [the] Core is just kind of being jammed down everybody's throat instead of the other way around.

Themes identified throughout the coding process pointed toward a loss of autonomy and increased marginalization stemming from top-down initiatives and the presence of AEA personnel. Numerous veteran teachers reflected the concept of political nostalgia (Goodson et al., 2006), which included the loss of creativity through repetitive change syndrome (Abrahamson, 2004) and the marginalization of teachers due to top-down initiatives (Fullan, 2016; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

### **Later Career Teachers**

While insights from the interviews supported Huberman's (1988) and Hargreaves' (2005) varying responses to change by later career teachers, data also suggested that participants responded differently depending on the initiative. Two participants consistently reflected continuing renewal toward their work and change. Mrs. Smith expressed these continuing renewal sentiments when she said, "I like the change. I always grow when I change, when I have these new opportunities. And, and it's just more exciting. I like coming to school every day and figuring out the next thing." Mrs. Klinger illustrated similar sentiments when she stated,

“...if administration would be consistent at my school, and they were able to watch me, you know, from a young 20-some to now a 54-year-old, and that growth and that passion, you know, hasn’t wavered.”

Other participants reflected the positive focuser’s reluctance toward systemic change, yet an ongoing desire to make an impact on the students in their classrooms. Mr. Stauffer, a social studies teacher and coach, expressed this tendency when he said,

Give me the objective and if I have some flexibility how I get there. Are you more concerned about how I do it? Or that we get it? You know, do the test scores go up? Is that what you’re, you know, you’re wondering about? Um, give me the objective, let me close my door...

Other participants reflected characteristics of disenchanting later career teachers. A kindergarten teacher with over 30 years of experience, Ms. Johnson noted her willingness to change for the welfare of her students, though being more mindful of the effects of an initiative.

I think we’re [veteran teachers] more critical of change. When you’re first beginning, I mean I was always taught what your boss said you did. But now I think I’m looking at what’s best for kids. I don’t mind change if it’s going to improve what we do for the students. But I think we get critical because we know, we’ve done this before. We’ve tried this before. It doesn’t work. In about five years we’re going to swing back and go the other way. So I think we’ve become more critical about is it really a good change or not. Rather than just saying, “Oh, I don’t want to change,” if you can show me that it’s going to make a difference for my students, then I will go at it whole hog.

A special education instructor with over 20 years of experience, Mr. Clauson expressed similar skepticism toward initiatives when he said,

As an early-career teacher I was always trying to find, I was always trying to be that person finding the next change, and building that better mousetrap. Now I’m more set in my ways. Maybe I’ve got more experience of things that I know work or won’t work.

While Hargreaves’ (2005) and Huberman’s (1988) classifications supported the reality that later career teachers respond to change differently, the interviews illustrated that teachers may not fit consistently into one category. Continuing renewal and positive focusing later career teachers may become reluctant to embrace change if they deem the initiative to work against the best interest of students. The continuing renewal Mrs. Smith reflected this reluctance when she said,

I am that one who says, “But wait a minute – that’s not good for kids.” So am I resistant to change? No. Are there times that I have resisted it? Absolutely. And when I see that a kid, or a group of students is going to lose because of the change, then I fight for that.

Mr. Booker expressed his reluctance toward building initiatives in spite of his willingness to make changes in his classroom to increase the effectiveness of instruction. He stated, “Most of my resistance is passive resistance. I do the minimum to meet whatever guideline it is and then I go in my room and I teach. You hear that from a lot of veteran teachers.”

Conversations with the nine later career teachers reflected various responses to change. While some participants related their passion to make a positive impact in the lives of their students, they simultaneously expressed a willingness to resist changes that negatively affected their students. These later career teachers also reflected the tendency to look at initiatives more skeptically based upon their experience and the perceived success of more effective interaction with their students. Yet none of the nine teachers interviewed portrayed the cynicism of the negative focuser, intent to undermine or publicly criticize school initiatives.

### **Psychic Rewards**

After getting to know each participant, one could easily discern the psychic rewards motivating her or his long-term commitment to the profession. As noted above, Mr. Booker expressed his fulfillment with student interaction that fostered intellectual growth. Mrs. Klinger dedicated her efforts to developing “good people” at the expense of curricular expectations. Mr. Stauffer similarly worked hard to teach life skills to students for success beyond high school.

I, I think when I get called for references for jobs and I get a lot of those, um, they never ask about their grade point. Um, and you’ve probably had the same experience but it’s always, “Are they courteous? Are they on time?” Um, you know, “Can they solve problems?” Um, you know, a lot of those are just being a good person.

Mr. Schmidt recalled one school setting with a minimalist Science curriculum that provided great freedom and encouraged creativity. He explained, “I just loved that when I walked in there and saw that 4-page document... It gave me what I needed to do. But it also gave me leverage to get into areas that were not necessarily a definite part of that curriculum.” With that professional freedom, Mr. Schmidt noted, “And I felt I sent kids on that went on and were successful at the college level.”

Building an inclusive environment, developing skills their students would need long after their time in the classroom, and the simple joy of learning motivated these participants through their decades of service. When additional curricular and professional expectations threatened their primary objectives, as Lortie (1975) suggested, these veteran teachers expressed their commitment to their psychic rewards. When facing resistant teachers then, it might be helpful for educational leaders to consider, “What foundational psychic reward is being threatened for this teacher perceived to be resistant?” The following section will elaborate on how these psychic rewards corresponded to specific reasons for resistance.

### **Engaging Resistance through Clarifying Conversations**

Resistance to change theorists emphasize the importance of clarifying the perception of resistance through conversations with those deemed to be resistant (Ford & Ford, 2010; Ford, et al., 2008; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Goodson et al., 2006). Teacher participants consistently



expressed their desire to have open conversations about reform initiatives. Mrs. Rittmeyer said, “So, let’s be real. And you know, look at the kids for who they really are.” Middle level teacher Ms. Nelson echoed this desire to look at concerns more deeply when she said, “You know, I, I think sometimes there’s a tendency to look at things too simply. And I, I would much rather get into things deeply. Let’s look at the mess.”

Mr. Booker said that he wished building meetings would include, “...willingness on the part of the administration to really engage in issues rather than avoid them.” He contrasted this desire with the reality, “But the fact that nobody wanted to talk about the issues that teachers raised in good faith in the survey is troublesome. It hurts morale. Again, it doesn’t lead to the kind of teamwork that everybody says is important.”

Mrs. Klinger expressed her desire to sit down and talk about the specific implications of reform for her district in order to tailor those changes to the students in her district.

You know, “What’s wrong? How are we going to fix it?” You know, “Where do we go from here?” I think that, we seldom talk about that, just on a local level... it’s more about, alright this is what the state is telling us today and so we need to learn about this. This is what, and it’s not just, well look at our student base. We don’t sit down and reflect on our student base very often and say, “What are we doing right? What can we improve on?” And, “Where should we go from there?”

Clarifying conversations that identify the meaning of any initiative at the local level may be time-consuming and messy, but they strengthen the ownership and implementation of change through shared leadership (Fullan, 2016; Leithwood & Seashore Lewis, 2012). These conversations validate the mission and memory of veteran teachers (Goodson et al., 2006) while legitimizing their psychic rewards (Lortie, 1975). In the words of Ms. Nelson, “It’s messier, it’s harder, it’s more time-consuming. But I think you get a stronger product if, if we work together.”

The participants supported the belief that taking the time to think critically about new initiatives reflected the school’s long-term goals rather than resistance to those goals. Engaging these seemingly resistant individuals in clarifying conversations may strengthen the initiative, while recognizing the legitimate mission and memory of the change recipients (Ford & Ford, 2010; Goodson, et al., 2006).

### **Conclusions and Implications for Practice**

The literature, as well as the interview data from this research, supported the reality that later career teachers respond to change differently. Within the context of this study, some later career teachers reflected enthusiasm for new opportunities and more effective strategies for working with their students. Other participants acknowledged a more critical attitude toward initiatives. Those interviewed admitted they would maintain strategies they deemed “best for kids.” Hargreaves (2005) and Huberman (1988), as well as the interview data, emphasized the importance of recognizing the different responses later career teachers might have toward change.

This research also indicated that later career teachers may resist change for a variety of reasons. Since individual reasons for frustration and resistance vary, educational leaders benefit

from being cognizant of changes that negatively affect relationships (social nostalgia) and changes that decrease teacher autonomy (political nostalgia; Goodson et al., 2006). At the heart of these frustrations lies a core psychic reward which relates to the primary reason the teacher entered the profession (Lortie, 1975). Clarifying conversations provide insight to educational leaders about the individual reasons later career teachers respond to initiatives (Ford & Ford, 2009a).

Last, later career teachers desire meaningful conversations with educational leaders about the implementation of initiatives. Several participants acknowledged they may be more critical of change, but they were also willing to dialogue about meaningful implementation of initiatives in their local context. A greater willingness on the part of educational leaders to provide a context for these conversations validates the experience of these teachers, clarifies their concerns about potential initiatives, and sets the stage for more effective engagement from all teachers (Goodson et al., 2006; Hargreaves, 2005).

Implications for educational leader practice center on greater awareness of psychic rewards, social and political nostalgia, later-career teacher experience, and engaging teachers in clarifying conversations. A key place to begin clarifying conversations is to identify the foundational psychic rewards that might be threatened by the proposed initiative. The educational leader would then benefit from addressing the autonomy (political nostalgia) or relationships (social nostalgia) perceived to be in jeopardy in the mind of the change recipient.

Providing arenas for professional conversations prior to change implementation validates teacher concerns while potentially strengthening any initiative. Being mindful of how educational leaders play a role in the change agent – recipient relationship, has a greater potential to engage all teachers in meaningful ways for more effective implementation of change.

### **Limitations and Future Research Recommendations**

Several limitations existed with this research. The first limitation stemmed from the relatively small sample size. Time and money limited the “do-ability” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) of numerous interviews across a variety of contexts and grade levels. Yet hopefully this work provided a model for educational leaders to seek information from veteran teachers in their own context.

Second, this researcher’s identity as a veteran teacher provided potential bias in this research. While my 20 years of experience as a teacher provided helpful rapport with which to conduct interviews with fellow veterans, this researcher’s values, emotions, and perspectives may have played a role in the analysis of interview results. Being a veteran teacher held benefits, as well as limitations for this research project.

The interaction of teachers and educational leaders needs ongoing research regarding the interaction of those individuals. The increasing presence of teacher leaders, instructional coaches, and other new roles for teachers and administrators only heightens the challenge of effective interaction for school improvement. Interviews, surveys, and ongoing research with educational leaders, as well as ongoing interviews with teachers on the frontlines of change implementation, is greatly needed. Continuous improvement can only occur as teachers and educational leaders strive toward that goal together.

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# Social Justice and School Leadership Preparation: Can We Shift Beliefs, Values, and Commitments?

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 explore the relationship between a social justice curriculum and the dispositions of graduate students enrolled in an online pre-service school principal preparation program. Data Collection: Students were asked to write reflective essays before the course began and again after the course was over discussing their understanding of social justice and the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders to make social justice a priority. Students' essays were coded to identify themes and patterns and to see if their beliefs, values, and commitments to leadership for social justice changed over time. Findings: Findings indicated that a social justice curriculum can clearly influence the development of positive dispositions.*

*Keywords: School principal preparation; leadership; dispositions; social justice; leadership standards*

**NCPEA International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, Vol. 12, No. 1– Spring, 2017  
ISSN: 2155-9635 © 2017 National Council of Professors of Educational Administration**

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between a social justice curriculum and the dispositions of graduate students enrolled in an online pre-service school principal preparation program. Among the many aims of our program, we hope that our students will believe in, value, and become committed to:

- the inclusion of all members of the school community;
- a willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices;
- the benefits that diversity brings to the school community;
- a safe and supportive learning environment;
- the proposition that diversity enriches the school;
- and the development of a caring school community.

Such values, beliefs, and commitments are often referred to as dispositions. Although not comprehensive in scope, these examples are the kinds of traits we expect of teachers and principals as they carry out their important work in our classrooms and schools on a daily basis. Principals who believe in, value, and are committed to the inclusion of all members of the school community and develop safe, supportive, and caring schools are likely to positively impact the culture of those schools and the students and teachers they serve. According to Diez and Murrell (2010), dispositions are:

habits of professional action or moral commitments that spur such actions. In effect, dispositions refer to a teaching stance, a way of orienting oneself to the work and responsibilities of teachers. Those responsibilities are ultimately about moral practice, in which the teacher mobilizes her knowledge and skills in behalf of the learners entrusted to her care. (p. 9)

School principal preparation programs are designed to help pre-service principal candidates develop their content knowledge, skills, *and* such dispositions. Traditionally, programs require that candidates take course work in areas such as school law, finance, and curriculum to develop content knowledge expertise. They help candidates develop skills relative to supervising teachers, developing school improvement plans, and analyzing large data sets through fieldwork and internship experiences. However, they are also charged with paying attention to and assessing the dispositions of these future principals -- the beliefs, values, and commitments that are sometimes difficult to discover, examine, and impact in a positive way. Are dispositions fixed behaviors and traits or can they be developed through education, reflection, and action? How best can dispositions be assessed? Some argue that there are challenges to this process and that "dispositions can only be assessed indirectly, as they 'leak out' in action or as they are described in reflection" (Diez, 2006, p. 68). Such challenges can lead preparation programs to become superficial in their approach to assessment through the exclusive use of candidate dispositional self-assessment instruments at a prescribed point in their programs. Such a superficial attempt at assessing dispositions will likely uncover much to examine and change. Others assess dispositions of candidates "across the program, over time, using multiple methods, both structured instruments and ongoing observation of the candidate in action" (Diez, 2006, p. 70). This kind of work would likely uncover beliefs, values, and commitments of candidates in a much deeper and thoughtful manner.

Our commitment to assessing dispositions led us to our current study in an online graduate course for future school principals. We understood this was to be a challenging and complex task, but "failure to prepare administrators to engage in difficult work that requires a shift in values, attitudes, and behaviors within the school community severely limits their ability

to address fundamental social justice issues” (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005, p. 204) once they become principals.

For most educators, it would be easy to agree with a belief that “all students can learn” or that they could be committed to “a safe and supportive learning environment” once they become principals. However, principal candidates really need to be engaged in a process of examining their core beliefs, values, and commitments to the surface level assumption that “all students can learn” if they discover, for example, an overassignment of students of color (or students living in poverty, students who are English language learners, etc.) to special education programs in their schools. They must also come to terms with their commitment to implementing a “vision of high and challenging standards” if there are issues in providing equitable access to learning for *all* groups of students who are not college bound. Additionally, they will need to confront their personal values and beliefs in maintaining a “safe and supportive learning environment” for *all* students when deciding whether or not they would allow gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender students to form Gay/Straight Alliances in their schools. It is imperative, therefore, that principal candidates examine such beliefs, values, and commitments before they consider becoming principals and it is our role in principal preparation programs to ensure that they develop the knowledge, skills, *and* dispositions necessary to be leaders for social justice.

### **Purpose**

Within the field of educational leadership, many scholars have contributed to an ever growing knowledge-base regarding the knowledge and skills needed to prepare leaders for social justice (e.g., Brown, 2004, 2006; Furman, 2012; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis, 2007, 2008). However, the literature is less clear on the necessary dispositions required of those same leaders. While some researchers have focused on the study of teacher dispositions in recent years (Diez & Murrell, 2010; Harrison, Smithey, McAfee, & Weiner, 2006; Phelps, 2006; Wasicsko, 2002; Wasicsko, Callahan, & Wirtz, 2004), and others have narrowed in on better understanding dispositions of principals (Lindahl, 2008; McKerrow, Crawford, & Cornell, 2006; Melton, Mallory, & Green, 2010; Rea, Carter, Wilkerson, Valesky, & Lang, 2011; Schulte & Kowal, 2005), the research is still somewhat limited on the dispositions required of leaders for social justice (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008; Wasonga, 2009, 2010). In the field of educational leadership, some contend that “too often leadership programs shy away from dealing with issues such as attitudes and beliefs because of their potential social, political, and/or religious connotations, due to the nebulous nature of their definition and measurement” (Allen, Wasicsko, & Chirichello, 2014, p. 136). This can be particularly problematic for those interested in better understanding dispositions within the context of leadership for social justice.

Because we were concerned about assessing candidate dispositions regarding issues of social justice, the purpose of our basic qualitative study was to explore the relationship between a social justice curriculum and the dispositions of graduate students in an advanced level Foundations of Educational Leadership online course. The course was part of the curriculum in an educational leadership principal preparation graduate program that focused on leadership for social justice. The following research question guided our study: What are the effects of a social justice curriculum on pre-service principals’ beliefs, values, and commitments (dispositions) to issues of leadership for social justice?

## **Perspective**

Because the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a social justice curriculum on the development of attitudes and dispositions of students in our leadership preparation program, our perspective comes from Marshall and Oliva's (2010) work on leadership for social justice. This framework is both theoretical and practical in terms of understanding how to support our students if they decide to embrace social justice leadership and build capacity to become "astute activists, ready with strategies and the sense of responsibility to intervene to make schools equitable" (Marshall & Oliva, 2010, p. 1). It was our hope that this framework would serve as the scaffolding to our research as we supported the ongoing development of our students as they engaged in understanding what it means to be leaders for social justice. We believed this work would be helpful for these future principals in order to "better understand inequity and the lack of social justice for certain students in our schools at the intellectual level, but also to more fully understand it the way such students do—at the experiential level" (Marshall & Oliva, 2010, p. 1).

## **Review of Literature**

Research on defining and assessing dispositions has been well documented in the literature related to the preparation of pre-service teachers in the United States for many years (Diez & Murrell, 2010; Harrison et al., 2006; Phelps, 2006; Wasicsko, 2002; Wasicsko et al., 2004; Wasicsko, Wirtz, & Resor, 2009). This review focused on how principal preparation programs have attempted to define and assess dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates. Specifically, the literature was probed to document relevant research studies in three specific areas related to: defining which dispositions principal preparation programs use when assessing pre-service principal candidates in their programs; assessing the dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates in general; and assessing the dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates related to issues of social justice.

### **Defining Dispositions**

In order for principal preparation programs to be able to assess dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates, there needs to be a common understanding of which dispositions are being assessed by institutions offering principal preparation programs. Lindahl (2008) conducted a qualitative study to determine the degree to which principal preparation programs introduced and assessed dispositions. Interviews were conducted with faculty members from institutions of higher education from across the United States. He found that "almost all respondents indicated that they considered dispositions to be a key element of principal preparation...[and] in almost all cases, the respondents referred specifically to the [Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium] ISLLC standards" (Lindahl, 2008, p. 20).

Melton, Mallory, and Green (2010) conducted a quantitative study to determine how educational leadership programs identified and assessed dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates. They first validated the challenge of defining the term "disposition." They found that "how institutions defined 'dispositions,' responses varied; but a majority indicated that they drew upon NCATE (44.4%, N=16) or Interstate School Leaders Licensing Consortium (ISLLC) (27.8%, N = 10)" (Melton et al., 2010, p. 55).



These findings are consistent with the challenges Rea et al. (2011) discovered in their study when determining how to define dispositions for pre-service school principal candidates and how they could be assessed. They echoed that indeed multiple definitions of dispositions have been problematic for those working to assess dispositions (Rea et al., 2011). As a result of this challenge, they adopted the ISLLC standards as the method to determine dispositions because “the standards are organized into six Performance Expectations (PEs), each of which contains a list of dispositions” (Rea et al., 2011, p. 4). The research studies highlighted in this section explored the inherent challenges of defining which dispositions principal preparation programs use for the assessment of pre-service school principal candidates and provided evidence that most use the ISLLC standards.

### **Assessing Dispositions**

Another area of interest in the literature is the broad notion of how principal preparation programs assess the dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates. The literature suggests pre-service school principal candidates are assessed using survey instruments, through modeling, embedded coursework, capstone projects, and reflection.

As a part of one study, Schulte and Kowal (2005) sought to determine the validity of the Administrator Dispositions Index (ADI) instrument used to measure the dispositions of “effective school leaders” (Schulte & Kowal, 2005, p. 75). As such, the ADI was aligned with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration Standards and the researchers concluded the ADI was a reliable and valid instrument for assessing the dispositions of effective school leaders. Schulte and Kowal (2005) concluded by emphasizing “because dispositions involve human behavior, teaching and assessing dispositions bring about new challenges. In the area of dispositions, awareness and self-reflection are essential to the learning process and to determining one’s own growth” (p. 86).

In a similar quantitative study, Rea et al. (2011) developed an instrument to assess their pre-service school principal candidates’ dispositions. Using the ISLLC standards, they developed the Educational Leader Candidate Belief Scale (ELCBS) and determined it to be a valid and reliable instrument for assessing candidate dispositions including that, “the instrument, then, provides an operational definition of the NCATE requirements as well as the ISLLC standards” (Rea et al., 2011, p. 12). Their summary recommendations “recognize that one instrument is insufficient to measure well, so we will continue developing this and other assessments” (Rea et al., 2011, p. 12).

In order to determine the degree to which principal preparation programs introduced and assessed dispositions, Lindahl (2008) interviewed principal preparation program faculty members from across the United States. He discovered that a significant number of respondents used modeling to teach the dispositions; however, internships and field-work were experiences where dispositions were readily assessed. Culminating coursework projects were additional areas dispositions were assessed. In summary, “most, if not all, respondents concurred that their programs have identified key dispositions related to school administration and make at least some attempt to teach and evaluate student acquisition of these dispositions...[most of which] occurred until the internship or capstone portfolio” (Lindahl, 2008, p. 24).

In a related quantitative study focused on in-service principals, McKerrow, Crawford, and Cornell (2006) set out to “determine the importance of the six ISLLC standards generally

and the 42 dispositions specifically. In addition, the study examined the extent to which the ISLLC standards and dispositions were emphasized in preparation programs” (McKerrow et al., 2006, p. 33). Data were collected through a randomly selected sample of K-12 administrators in Illinois. Participants completed a two-part Likert scale survey. Findings indicated that:

administrators felt that the ISLLC standards were very important or important to their current practice. Similarly these administrators agreed that the disposition categories of social justice, democracy, school improvement, and courage-risk taking were also important to their profession and their practice. (McKerrow et al., 2006, p. 37)

Additionally, “the standards and dispositions were important to administrative practice and that all of them were emphasized in their preparation programs” (McKerrow et al., 2006, p. 40). The literature explored for assessing the dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates suggests that principal preparation programs assess the dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates using survey instruments, through modeling, embedded coursework, capstone projects, and reflection.

### **Assessing Dispositions Related to Social Justice**

Recent studies exploring the assessment of dispositions specifically related to issues of social justice were also probed in the literature. These studies provide research-based recommendations for assessing dispositions of pre-service school principal candidates related to issues of social justice.

Surface, Smith, Kaiser, and Hayes (2012) investigated how educational leadership candidates’ perceptions evidenced alignment with their skills and identified dispositions needed to lead diverse schools. Participants in this quantitative study were students who successfully completed a Masters in Educational Administration program with endorsement or the endorsement only. Participants completed the ISLLC Standards survey and the Administrator Dispositions Index (ADI). Study findings indicated posttest means were significantly higher than pretest means on both the ISLLC Standards survey and the ADI. The researchers identified ISLLC Standards 2 and 5 of particular interest as they “focus on positive school culture and acting fairly ethically” (Surface et al., 2012, p. 121). Further analysis on these two standards was conducted. Additionally, the researchers were interested in “the growth in diversity dispositions” (Surface et al., 2012, p. 124). In conclusion, “educational administration candidates espoused more positive diversity dispositions after completing the program” (Surface et al., 2012, p. 124).

In a qualitative study, Wasonga (2009), researched “leadership practices that integrate social justice and democratic community for student learning” (p. 200). Participants in this study were practicing principals and superintendents who participated in focus groups centered on issues of “social justice, democratic community, and school improvement” (Wasonga, 2009, p. 204). The findings focused on four themes:

Shared decision-making was the most frequently used practice for integrating democratic community and social justice (31%), as followed by advocacy (29%), dispositions and relationships (25%), and social control (15%). The first three practices are indicative of the concept of empowering others. (Wasonga, 2009, p. 218)

In conclusion, “the challenge for educational administration training programs is to prepare leaders who can develop processes and values that lead to practices that integrate democratic

community and social justice for the greater good of children and their communities” (Wasonga, 2009, p. 221).

Koschoreck and Allen (2012) conducted a quantitative study to determine how pre-service principal preparation candidates would report their dispositions related to social justice during their time in a masters level course on social justice. Specifically, participants in the study completed a Likert-scale survey based on the ISLLC dispositions once at the beginning of the course and once at the end. Results of the study evidenced “that at the end of the course the composite score ( $M = 93.19$ ,  $SD = 5.14$ ) was significantly higher than the composite score at the beginning of the course ( $M = 91.67$ ,  $SD = 5.21$ ),  $t(110) = 3.63$ ,  $p < .01$ ” (Koschoreck & Allen, 2012, p. 56). In conclusion, this study indicates that a social justice curriculum can positively affect dispositions related to social justice.

### **Method**

Throughout the duration of a five-week online course, students engaged in several required readings such as Marshall and Oliva’s (2010) book titled *Leadership for Social Justice: Making Revolutions in Education*. Additionally, students engaged in weekly online discussions, completed two surveys, and wrote essays at the beginning and at the end of the course. The instructions for the first essay were:

One scholar has said that “making social justice concerns a priority in schools requires leaders not only to understand and name unjust practices that deprive individuals of their rights and dignity, but also necessitates that they take action to change the structures that perpetuate the injustices” (Cambron-McCabe, 2010, p. 48). Discuss your understanding of social justice as it relates to the rights and dignity of individuals, and elaborate on the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders to make social justice concerns a priority.

At the end of the course, students were asked to write an essay on the following:

Early in the course, you wrote an essay about your understanding of social justice and the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders to make social justice concerns a priority. How has your thinking developed through this course? What are the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders as they relate to racial issues? To class issues? To issues of sexuality? Be sure to express your ideas concerning all these questions thoroughly and thoughtfully.

In the second writing prompt, we included race, class, and sexuality because the course was designed to help students develop more complex thinking about these issues as related to the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders. Additionally, we wanted to uncover instances from students’ essays where we noticed a significant shift in their beliefs, values, and commitments to issues of social justice. In order to examine these data, we compared students’ essays at the start of the course to those written at the end of the course.

### **Participants, Process, and Ethics**

Of the 188 students enrolled in the course, 117 granted consent to participate in the study, 9 opted not to participate, and 62 failed to respond to our request. Of the 117 students who agreed to participate in the study, 5 did not complete one or both of the essays, thereby leaving a total of 112 students who provided complete data for both essays.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis involved four stages. During the first stage, all transcripts (Essay 1 and Essay 2) from participants were downloaded from Blackboard, our course management system. All transcripts were then paired so that each student's essays were together (Student 1-Essay 1, Student 1-Essay 2, etc.). Next, all three authors independently read and re-read all of the transcripts. During this process, we began open coding (Merriam, 2009) by writing down notes, comments, and observations in the margins. After working our way through all of the transcripts, all three authors met and discussed our observations. We then reviewed all 28 of the dispositional elements of the preparation standards of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) as described in the *Performance Expectations and Indicators for Education Leaders: An ISLLC-Based Guide to Implementing Leader Standards and a Companion Guide to the Educational Leadership Policy Standards-ISLLC 2008* (Sanders & Kearney, 2008)<sup>1</sup>. For the purpose of coding, we then reduced the original list to include only those dispositions that we believed related to issues of social justice. This process resulted in identifying 10 dispositions that were used as the preassigned coding scheme (Creswell, 2009) for our analysis (See Appendix).

During the next phase of data analysis, we used conventional methods of qualitative inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) in order to identify any of the key themes from the preassigned coding scheme and to see if there was a shift in their beliefs, values, and commitments (dispositions) to issues of leadership for social justice as a result of the course. All three researchers re-read the manuscripts and coded each paragraph using the preassigned coding scheme. We then met to compare our codes in order to establish intercoder agreement (Creswell, 2013) and reliability. We discussed our different interpretations of the data and resolved disagreements.

In order to generate meaning and identify a possible shift in their beliefs, values, and commitments (dispositions), we then compared the codes from each student's written essays about their understanding of social justice issues from the beginning of the course (Essay 1) to those from the end of the course (Essay 2). It was clear to us that because students had yet to engage in course content, most students discussed issues of social justice in Essay 1 in very basic terms. Our analysis of the essay from the end of the course (Essay 2) showed that students had addressed not only how their beliefs about social justice leadership had evolved, but they also wrote about the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders related to issues of race, class, and sexuality. In the Essay 2, students had developed very clear definitions of leadership for

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<sup>1</sup> In 2015, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) approved the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). Formerly known as the ISLLC standards, PSEL will be adopted/adapted by many states or leadership preparation programs "as they identify and develop the specific knowledge, skills, dispositions, and other characteristics required of educational leaders to achieve real student success in school" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 5).

social justice and most were able to articulate a positive shift in their values, beliefs, and commitments to these issues as future principals.

## Findings

As a result of analyzing the essays, we were able to uncover students' beliefs, values, and commitments to leadership for social justice and how they had changed as a result of the course. We found that indeed there was a positive shift in the development of our students' dispositions in five specific areas: (1) the common good over personal interests, (2) diversity as an asset, (3) a safe and supportive learning environment, (4) every student learning, and (5) build on diverse social and cultural assets<sup>2</sup>.

### The Common Good Over Personal Interests

The disposition "The Common Good Over Personal Interests" is exemplified in the ISLLC Performance Expectation 5: Ethics and Integrity (Sanders & Kearney, 2008). The narrative that underscores this performance expectation suggests that education leaders are "responsible for distributing the unique benefits of education more equitably, expanding future opportunities of less-advantaged students and families, and increasing social justice across a highly diverse population" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 25). Further, it indicates that education leaders "are responsible for positive and negative consequences of their interpretations and implementation of policies as they affect students, educators, communities, and their own positions" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 25). Additionally, education leaders should work to avoid "potential harm to students, educators, or communities that result from ineffective or insufficient approaches" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 25).

In Essay 1, students wrote in a very cursory manner about issues of being "fair" and "equal" when considering issues of social justice. These words were the most frequently coded in Essay 1, as one student noted: "With education, teachers should teach fairness and equality. No one wants to be chastised because of their differences" (Student 40-Essay 1). Most definitions were very rudimentary and reflected the kind of thinking that one might expect at the outset of a course on social justice, a new topic to many of our students. The definitions were also very personal and the examples they gave related either to students in their classrooms or American society in general. A shift occurred, however, between Essay 1 and Essay 2 as many students noted at the end of the course a need to *teach* their students about issues of social justice and many were able to articulate how these beliefs might be carried out over time, particularly as future school leaders. For example, one student noted the following in Essay 1: "On a broad scale, social justice implies equality. In this democracy we call America, all citizens have the right to equal access to things such as due process, government services, and personal liberty of religion, press, and self-expression" (Student 20-Essay 1). This same student noted the following in Essay 2:

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<sup>2</sup> As noted in the introduction, our perspective for this study comes from Marshall and Oliva's (2010) work on leadership for social justice. At the end of each of these next five sections, we connect our understanding of these findings to edited chapters from Marshall and Oliva's (2010) book titled *Leadership for Social Justice: Making Revolutions in Education*.

Educators themselves may not have the power to change the currently existing biases and prejudices in American society. However, they do have a unique position of power in influencing the thoughts and actions of their students. I've learned that it's not enough make an effort to treat all students equally; rather I am charged with developing instruction that helps THEM make this effort in their own lives, thus creating a societal ripple effect of increased awareness and tolerance. (Student 20-Essay 2)

It is clear to us that as we continue to prepare future principals, we must constantly strive for this kind of deep reflection that leads to a belief in this kind of work. Our teaching must continue to include "consistent self-reflection in relationship to issues of privilege and oppression, access and outcomes, resistance and hope. It is essential that we remember that teaching for social justice is not only about *what we teach* but also about *how we teach* and *who we are* as individual school leaders" (Hafner, 2010, p. 212).

### **Diversity as an Asset**

The disposition "Diversity as an Asset" is exemplified in the ISLLC Performance Expectation 2: Teaching and Learning (Sanders & Kearney, 2008). The narrative that underscores this performance expectation suggests that education leaders are responsible for "a professional culture in which learning opportunities are targeted to the vision and goals and differentiated appropriately to meet the needs of every student" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, 16). Additionally, education leaders need "knowledge, skills, and beliefs that provide equitable differentiation of instruction and curriculum materials to be effective with a range of student characteristics, needs, and achievement" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 16).

This disposition was the second most coded theme from the essays. The most notable shift was from teachers who are complacent about racial issues in Essay 1 to a belief that teachers need to face prejudices and promote a more positive school culture by promoting a sense of community. One student noted that the school principal must pay attention to the culture of the school to ensure that it is supportive for diverse students. He emphasized that "after many years of very few racial issues, a school can become complacent and not devote as much effort towards the unity of its climate which can have a devastating effect" (Student 136-Essay 1). The student described a situation where one student who is Caucasian caused serious unrest at school when he refused to refrain from making derogatory and racially insensitive slurs towards African American students and others. Teachers and administrators were slow to react and "thought the White student was goofing around" (Student 136-Essay 1). In closing Essay 1, this student noted that "the climate of the school must recognize the differences and embrace them...as complacency can lead to slow reactions and inflaming actions" (Student 136-Essay 1). In Essay 2, this same student noted that school leaders must not only pay attention to the climate of the school but they also must help others face their prejudices. Additionally, he espoused a belief that school leaders need to learn how to be effective with a range of diversity in schools:

As diversity increases within a school, the teachers and administrators need to educate themselves on the culture and needs of the students. Students will not respond the same way to teaching methods or reprimands if they are different from the majority group. To help alleviate this problem, teachers and administrators need to face their prejudice. Most of the time this will be a long process and will require intense self evaluation and reflection because some of the prejudices may not be overt or some educators may be in

denial about the overlying opinions they have regarding race. Since most educators, including administrators, have not been exposed to the deeper issues of racism and how to effectively handle it among students and faculty, it is up to the administration to figure out how to teach students and staff to be sensitive to racial issues and needs. (Student 136-Essay 2)

The belief that schools should be teaching about issues of social justice and ensuring that *all* students are experiencing high levels of success was a very prevalent theme in students' responses to Essay 2. In this area, we saw the most prominent shift from a more passive belief about diversity to one that is more proactive concerning understanding and appreciating all of the students within the school. Our hope for these future principals is that they "move from passive discourse and involvement to conscious, deliberate, and proactive practice in educational leadership that will produce socially just outcomes for all children" (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 31).

### **A Safe and Supportive Learning Environment**

The disposition "A Safe and Supportive Learning Environment" is exemplified in the ISLLC Performance Expectation 3: Managing Organizational Systems and Safety (Sanders & Kearney, 2008). The narrative that underscores this performance expectation suggests that education leaders "identify and allocate resources equitably to address the unique academic, physical, and mental health needs of all students" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 19). Further, they "address any conditions that might impede student and staff learning, and they implement laws and policies that protect safety of students and staff (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 19).

Within this disposition, we noticed a shift in our students' attitudes about what it means to develop relationships with students in order to create a school culture that is safe and supportive for all. In Essay 1, students described this socially just practice as "teaching the whole child" (Student 141-Essay 1) and where leaders for social justice "imagine a world and a classroom where every child comes to school fed and creates such a school culture in which the success of these children can become a reality" (Student 114-Essay 1). In Essay 2, these ideas were best captured in their reflections about what they thought the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders are as they relate to issues of sexuality. Student 141 (Essay 2) noted that this particular issue would be the most difficult social injustice that she would face. In discussing the bullying and harassment of gay students that she has witnessed, she noted that "the bottom line for me is that as a building administrator, I must provide a safe environment for all students" (Student 141-Essay 2). In addition to stating this belief, she discussed some concrete actions that teachers can take to address this issue including: 1) acquiring knowledge about anti-LGBT bias; 2) intervening when direct harassment occurs; 3) adopting gender neutral language; and 4) creating Safe Space/Zone Programs" (Student 141-Essay 2).

Discussing issues of sexuality was difficult for some because it caused them to confront their personal and religious biases. It is clear that students' beliefs about what constitutes a "safe and supportive learning environment" had grown to encompass *all* students and that many had acquired a set of strategies to consider as future school principals. It is our hope that their reflection and growth in this area has helped them better understand what it means to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students in their schools. We also hope that they will become committed to a vision of social justice in which "it is incumbent upon all school leaders

to eliminate the homophobia and heterosexism within our educational systems” (Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010, p. 171)

### **Every Student Learning**

The disposition “Every Student Learning” is exemplified in the ISLLC Performance Expectation 1: Vision, Mission, and Goals (Sanders & Kearney, 2008). While the disposition is not defined specifically, the narrative suggests that education leaders are responsible for creating goals that are “high and achievable for every student when provided with appropriate, effective learning opportunities” (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 13). Further, they suggest “it is undeniably their responsibility to advocate for and act to increase equity and social justice” (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 13).

In reflecting on this topic in Essay 1, students wrote about the belief that “all students can learn”—a statement that has been so integral to the mission and vision statements of schools across the United States. In this instance, students paired this belief with their definitions of social justice. For example, one student noted the importance of building relationships between students and staff so that “all children [have] the opportunity to learn in school communities that are socially just” (Student 16-Essay 1). Another noted that educational leaders are faced with pressure “to demonstrate that every child for whom they have responsibility is achieving success” (Student 83-Essay 1).

The biggest shift that occurred was from an awareness of social justice issues related to all students learning (Essay 1) to developing a critical consciousness to what it should mean for them as future school leaders. One student noted that he believed “very few educators would probably be willing to admit outright that they treat certain students with lower expectations or in a derogatory manner” and that for most educators, “these practices are non-existent” (Student 20-Essay 1). He explained that working for social justice means “stopping the train of thought that leads to comments like ‘What do you expect, look at that child’s home life?’ or ‘Our kids’ parents don’t speak any English, how can they possibly give their children adequate help with schoolwork’ and on, and on!” (Student 20-Essay1).

In Essay 2, this same student noted:

Educators do not have the luxury of merely *considering* issues of social justice. Because of the nature of their position in society, they are called to be active change agents in creating a republic where social justice for all is a practiced reality. Our first priority is to examine and change our own thinking regarding minorities of class, gender, race, religion, and sexuality. After a realistic examination of these attitudes, we must work to create programs of professional development that address the barriers created by such attitudes. We must strive to develop curricula and policy that are inclusive of ALL students’ cultures, sexuality, religion, and racial identity. Further, we must attempt to reach out beyond our own group affiliation and make a legitimate, genuine effort to understand the cultural identities of others. It is not enough to dismiss lack of exposure to groups different from ourselves by geographic location; rather, educators must find ways to interact with those in different circumstances and communities. This class has helped me realize that pursuing social justice is not an option for me as an educational leader; rather it is a very real part of the job description! (Student 20-Essay 2).



The proposition of “every student learning” must go beyond vision and mission statements that are written in documents in so many of our schools but not acted upon. It is critical that all of our students not only believe in this, but they must possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to act on creating effective and equitable learning opportunities for *all* of our students. In our preparation programs, we must continue to help our students “in recognizing that there are substantial and persistent patterns of inequity *internal* to schools, that is, embedded within the many assumptions, beliefs, practices, procedures, and policies of schools themselves” (Skrla, Scheurich, García, & Nolly, 2010, p. 265).

### **Build on Diverse Social and Cultural Assets**

The disposition “Build on Diverse Social and Cultural Assets” is exemplified in the ISLLC Performance Expectation 6: The Education System (Sanders and Kearney, 2008). The narrative that underscores this performance expectation suggests that education leaders see schools as part of a larger local, state, and federal systems that support success of every student, while increasing equity and social justice” (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 28). Additionally, they “advocate for education and students in professional, social, political, economic, and other arenas” (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 28).

This finding, the fifth and last to report, was the least coded from the essays. In fact, for the students who wrote about this disposition, it was most often found only in Essay 2. It is quite possible that the notion of being able to influence a system at the district, state, or federal levels seemed to be something that someone other than school principals should do or are even capable of influencing to any degree. What many students wrote about in Essay 2 was the idea that indeed they were capable and should be advocates for students beyond the schoolhouse walls. One student noted:

For the past five weeks in this third foundational class we’ve studied social justice as it relates to education. My thinking about this subject has been challenged, and has also changed significantly regarding my role in perpetuating this ideal from my position as an educator. Up until now, I saw educators as occupying primarily a reactive role in dealing with social justice concerns. They deal with issues of racism, gender, class, and religion as they occur in the school environment—diffusing any potentially explosive situations as it were. This class has helped me see that educators, particularly those in leadership should instead pursue a more proactive role in working at rectifying the social imbalances seen within the sphere of education and beyond. Due to the influential nature of our profession, we have a special burden to not only teach social justice, but also to pursue it on a personal, local, and even political level. (Student 20-Essay 2)

For many students, it was difficult to imagine how principals would be able to have an impact beyond the schoolhouse walls. However, it is our responsibility in principal preparation programs to help candidates see that the role of the principal must be extended beyond traditional manager and leader of the school building to that as an advocate for social justice:

No longer is the building-level administrator strictly concerned with administrative and organizational tasks of the school building, but shoulders a much broader responsibility. While building-level responsibilities should never be minimized, today’s educational leaders must also work with the broader community in addressing their needs, provide them with the tools for self-sufficiency, and mobilize them politically for self-

determination. Such a vision, however, requires principals to ‘remove their blinders’ and be particularly reflective in their practice—engaging their own emotions and negative attitudes about the community while critically examining their pedagogical and curricular practices (López, González, & Fierro, 2010, p. 111-112).

### **Discussion**

Prior research has focused on how principal preparation programs have attempted to define and assess the dispositions of pre-service principal candidates (Lindahl, 2008; McKerrow et al., 2006; Rea et al., 2011; Schulte & Kowal, 2005) and others have documented how they have made connections to issues of social justice (Koschoreck & Allen, 2012; Surface et al., 2012; Wasonga, 2009).

Evidence clearly indicates that even in such a short time, our students’ beliefs, values, and commitments to leadership for social justice had changed in a positive way. We found that indeed there was a positive shift in the development of our students’ dispositions in five specific areas: (1) the common good over personal interests, (2) diversity as an asset, (3) a safe and supportive learning environment, (4) every student learning, and (5) build on diverse social and cultural assets.

At the outset of the course, most students discussed issues of social justice in very basic terms based on their somewhat limited personal and professional experiences (Essay 1). Their written essays from the end of the course were much more in-depth, and for many, the assignment resulted in critical self-reflection about their roles and responsibilities as future principals if they choose to be leaders for social justice (Essay 2). While we recognize that the assignments for this class were based on students’ written values, beliefs, and commitments, such critical self-reflection is paramount. For many social justice leaders, this type of reflection “is seen as a way for leaders to identify and come to grips with their prejudices and assumptions arising from their cultural backgrounds” (Furman, 2012, p. 197).

### **Implications**

Our findings have helped us better understand the effects of a social justice curriculum on pre-service principals’ beliefs, values, and commitments (dispositions) to issues of social justice. As a result, we offer three implications and discuss how they speak to theory, research, and practice. The first implication relates to future research. We believe that a longitudinal approach might better uncover the degree to which such attitudes and beliefs hold up over time, especially once these students become principals. We might also suggest developing additional tools and methodologies for measuring such a change. Such tools could include “behavior and characteristic checklists, ratings from observations of candidates in a variety of settings, inferences drawn from course assignments and classroom participation, evaluation of student journals and self-reflections, and letters of reference” (Wasicsko et al., 2004, p. 5).

The second implication relates to our understanding of how dispositions can change, even in a short period of time. When students are admitted to a pre-service principal preparation program, they bring with them a set of life experiences that has shaped their knowledge, skills, and dispositions up to that point in their lives. It is our responsibility as professors of educational leadership to help our students transform into professionals who are ready to take on new roles as

leaders of schools with complex issues, typically in a short period of time. Unfortunately, we have found “that the element that is typically missing or underdeveloped in the education and development of most leaders is the intentional integration of the research and practices for assessing and developing the deeply held core beliefs, attitudes, and values (what we call leadership dispositions) that play a primary role in leadership effectiveness” (Allen, Wasicsko, & Chirichello, 2014, p. 136). As a result, we believe that our intentional inclusion and focus on leader dispositions within our preparation program is paramount and that even in a short period of time (within one class, experience, fieldwork, etc.), the use of critical reflection can indeed impact dispositions in a positive way.

The final implication relates to our roles as professors of educational leadership. As professors of educational leadership, we should consider expanding our work regarding social justice leadership beyond one course. Even though our program has social justice as a core value, we have the responsibility as faculty members to dig deeper into how our programs can best address such issues. Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) provide a framework for educational leadership programs to consider as they evaluate the effectiveness of their programs. The framework focuses on how professors should attend to critical consciousness (what the literature refers to as dispositions), knowledge, and practical skills focused on social justice across curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. They suggest that “leadership development for social justice can only take place if professors intentionally create an atmosphere of emotional safety for social justice risk taking in their programs and in courses and other learning experiences in those programs” (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006, p. 220).

### **Limitations**

Throughout the development and implementation of this study, we took precautions to minimize potential limitations. The first potential limitation was that the study took place within one five-week online course. Even though we understood this was a short period of time, we had anecdotal evidence from previous iterations of the course that by intensely focusing the curriculum and related experiences, we could make a difference. According to Diez (2010), dispositions can be cultivated and developed while candidates are engaged in preparation programs. In fact, dispositions are “commitments and habit of thought and action that grow as the [candidate] learns, acts, and reflects under the guidance of teachers and mentors in a preparation program and in the first years of practice” (Diez, 2010, p. 15). While we believe our study reflects candidates’ development at one “point in time” within a principal preparation program, it is very difficult to know whether their beliefs, values, and commitments will hold up over time once they become principals. As suggested in the previous section, we would be interested in conducting a longitudinal study with this same group to assess their dispositions once they become school principals.

Second, as discussed in the method section, data were collected from students’ essays as self-reported accounts of how their thinking had developed throughout the course as related to issues of race, class, and sexuality. We were aware that students might only reveal information that they believed we wanted to hear in order to get a better grade. To offset this potential problem, a graduate student collected all informed consent forms and it was clearly stated that participation was voluntary and agreement or refusal to participate would not affect their grade in the class in any way. Additionally, we did not know whether or not any individual members of

the class had chosen to participate until after the grades had been submitted to the registrar's office at the end of the course. Indeed, we did not receive any data until after the class was over, and even then, the students were only identified by numbers as assigned by the graduate student.

The third limitation is that this study took place within one university in the United States. Although the online course had students representing different geographic regions within the United States, the majority of the students were concentrated within the Midwest. It would be beneficial to conduct a similar study across multiple universities representing a stratified sample of participants from across the United States and internationally.

### **Conclusion**

Given the scarcity of research on the impact principal preparation programs have on the development of positive dispositions related to social justice leadership, we hope that this study will contribute to that knowledge base so that throughout their careers, principals will continuously “analyze their assumptions, values, and beliefs as part of reflective practice” (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 6). We are reminded of what one student noted about making this a reality once she becomes a principal:

I still believe that the main focuses of social justice are equality and respect, I just now believe that educational leaders must do more than simply believing in social justice; they must demonstrate it in their actions every day. Respect for all people, regardless of their race, class or sexuality must be complemented by equitable opportunities in all areas. Administrators and other educational leaders are in the unique position to make decisions that can greatly impact the extent to which social justice is a reality as opposed to a value. (Student 16-Essay 2)

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### **Appendix: ISLLC Dispositions (2008) Related to Social Justice Issues<sup>3</sup>**

- Every student learning
- High expectations for all
- Examining assumptions and beliefs
- Diversity as an asset
- A safe and supportive learning environment
- Respect for the diversity of family composition
- The common good over personal interests
- Ethical principles in all relationships and decisions
- Advocate for children and education
- Build on diverse social and cultural assets

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<sup>3</sup> The dispositions listed here come from the *Performance Expectations and Indicators for Education Leaders: An ISLLC-Based Guide to Implementing Leader Standards and a Companion Guide to the Educational Leadership Policy Standards-ISLLC 2008* (Sanders & Kearney, 2008) and are not identified by the Council of Chief State School Officers as related to issues of social justice. All three authors of this journal article independently reviewed the set of 28 dispositional elements to determine this list of ten that we unanimously agreed related to social justice issues.



# What Factors Impact Why Novice Middle School Teachers in a Large Midwestern Urban School District Leave After Their Initial Year of Teaching

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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*This research investigated the experiences of new teachers employed in urban school districts and how these novice teachers' perceived school district and school administrators' support required to retain them as well as teacher's perceptions of their pre-service experiences and/or induction programs necessary to prepare them for an urban environment. The three middle schools selected were characterized by high poverty, low academic achievement, and not meeting Average Yearly Progress. The research outcomes revealed that teachers did not feel they were adequately prepared for the urban setting and that they were not provided adequate support. Administrators also acknowledged that novice teachers were not prepared to succeed in an urban school setting since they lacked classroom management skills and strategies; they did not spend enough time in urban schools in their pre-service training; and many had limited or no experience with urban, at-risk students.*

**NCPEA International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, Vol. 12, No. 1– Spring, 2017**  
**ISSN: 2155-9635 © 2017 National Council of Professors of Educational Administration**

Over the past three decades, teacher turnover has increased substantially in the United States public schools (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). This is historically more pronounced in underserved communities (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wycokoff, 2013). Nationally, the average turnover for all teachers is seventeen percent and in the urban school districts specifically, the number jumps to twenty percent according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2012). There are numbers and percentages of teachers who leave the profession but there is little research into determining why they leave the profession or just choose to leave the urban schools. Newcomers to school teaching often encounter many challenges, especially those who work in the urban environment.

Only sixteen percent of teacher attrition at the school level can be attributed to retirement. The remaining eighty-four percent of teacher turnover, results from teachers transferring between schools and teachers leaving the profession. (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). They are leaving because of the lack of support from upper level administration, school climate, and lack of resources, poor facilities, government policies, and community attitudes. Many leave and go to school districts with fewer minorities and poverty, while others just leave the profession (McKinney, Beery, Dickerson, & Campbell, 2014). Most efforts to solve staffing problems have focused on recruiting promising teachers into high-poverty schools, often with little attention to systemically supporting and retaining them once they are there (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

This study was created to investigate the experiences of new teachers employed in urban school districts. The data from the study will provide school leaders with a better understanding of what is missing from pre-service programs and what type of support is needed for new teachers within the first five years of their employment. The teacher and administrator participants from three selected middle schools fulfilled the following school district criteria; high poverty, low academic achievement, and not meeting Average Yearly Progress (AYP). Four out of every five students come from families challenged by poverty. These students move frequently from home to home and many are homeless. Nearly one in every five students spend less than a full academic year with the district, and for one in every seven students, English is their second language.

The district in central Ohio is the largest in the state and has over six thousand employees (6,000); three thousand seven hundred and seventy (3,770) are teachers. The district hires between three hundred and four hundred teachers every year. Demographically the student population of 57, 327 is represented as: 14.6% Limited English Proficiency Students; 16.9% Special Education Students; 70% Economically Disadvantaged Students and a 18.9% Student Mobility rate. As for student demographics by ethnicity the district data indicates that: 56% are African-American; 26% Non-Hispanic White; 9.3% are Hispanic; 5.7% are Multiracial; 3.1% are Asian; and <1.0% are American Indian.

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

The purpose of the qualitative research was threefold: (1) to ascertain how teacher preparation has prepared novice teachers for the urban environment; (2) to substantiate why a large number of teachers leave the urban environment in their first years of employment; (3) to identify ways by which building administrators can more effectively support novice teachers so they will continue within the school district.

The four research questions considered were:

1. Do new teachers feel prepared to work in the urban setting?
2. Do new teachers feel they are given the support needed to achieve academic excellence in the urban setting?
3. Do administrators feel that new teachers are adequately prepared for work in the urban setting?
4. Do administrators feel they give enough support to new teachers entering the urban setting?

### **Review of the Literature**

Over the past two decades researchers such as Ingersoll and Merrill (2012), Haberman (2005), Allensworth (2009), and Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013), DiCarlo, (2014), Johnson and Birkeland (2003), and Simon and Johnson (2013) have demonstrated that retention is closely related to the quality of the first teaching experience. The Analyses of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) administered by the National Center for Education Statistics established the correlation between the level of support and training provided to beginning teachers and their likelihood of moving or leaving after their first year (Haynes, Maddock, and Goldrick, 2014).

The majority of the studies on teacher turnover in high-poverty schools have focused on the characteristics of the students and their teachers rather than on the school climate or culture where they were employed. Therefore, these findings suggest that policymakers and practitioners who wish to retain talented, effective teachers in high-poverty, hard-to-staff schools must pursue retention strategies that are designed to improve the teaching environment (Simon & Moore Johnson, 2013). Research by Johnson (2012) surmised that the problem rests with the schools not with the students and that “teachers who leave high-poverty, high- minority schools reject the dysfunctional contexts in which they work, rather than the students they teach” (Johnson, 2012).

Factors related to the leadership attributes of the building principal have shown important reasons why teachers remain in urban schools. “Stability rates were higher in schools where teachers reported having high levels of influence over school decisions, trust in their principals who were strong instructional leaders and coherent instructional programming” (Allensworth, et al., 2009, p. 26). Research suggested that “schools where the principal and teachers work together to coordinate instruction and programs in a coherent and sustained way” (Simon and Moore Johnson, 2013, p. 16) are more able to retain teachers. This was further substantiated by Jennifer Waddell (2010) in her research at the University of Missouri, *Fostering Relationships to Increase Teacher Retention in Urban Schools* where she determined that one of the key external components of teacher retention was their relationship with their principals.

Teachers who are confident in the setting in which they are working are more successful and tend to stay longer. This is supported by Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory. Increasing the confidence of these new teachers, along with providing them the information to have a positive perception of the urban schools, better prepares them for success in the urban environment and helps the retention rate for new teachers in urban schools. The study found that the research on the success of traditional field experiences is in-decisive; however programs like the UI may positively impact the recruitment and retention of teachers in urban schools (Schaffer et al., 2014).

Research suggests that non-minority pre-service teachers may often resist pedagogies that address these inequalities if they, themselves, are directly implicated in the systems causing oppression for others (de Freitas & McAuley, 2008; Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008). As a result, pre-service teachers need to be given the tools and support to deal with this cognitive dissonance

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Existing research has generally sought to explain teacher turnover as a function of the characteristics of individual teachers. Moreover, most research has focused on narrow subsets of the total turnover and inter-organizational mobility of teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll purports to extend existing theory and research by examining teacher turnover from an organizational perspective. The theoretical perspective of his analysis, drawn from the sociology of organizations, occupations, and work, holds that teacher turnover and school staffing problems cannot be fully understood without closely examining the characteristics of the organizations. In particular, inadequate support from the school administration, student discipline problems, limited faculty input into school decision-making, and to a lesser extent, low salaries, are all associated with higher rates of turnover, after controlling for the characteristics of both teachers and schools (Ingersoll, 2001).

The practice of placing new teachers into the profession in the most difficult-to-staff schools also impacts teacher attrition and transfer levels. According to Haberman (2006), students attending high poverty schools are taught by more novice, uncertified, and less experienced teachers. Furthermore, many of these novice teachers were enrolled in a traditional teacher preparation program with little or no emphasis on urban school teaching (Haberman, 2006).

Dissatisfaction is often the reason teacher's make the decision to transfer. Furthermore, teachers leaving high-poverty schools tended to cite lack of administrative support as their reason for leaving, while those teachers leaving more affluent school districts mentioned salary as their reason for leaving (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002). Kotetz et al. (2006) reported that issues related to diversity (e.g., socioeconomic status and race of students) were included among teacher's reasons for leaving. Moreover, Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) descriptive analysis collected from teacher interviews found that teachers who left the profession after a brief tenure (three years or less), experienced high levels of frustration, with many viewing themselves as failures.

### **Methodology**

A phenomenology research paradigm which explored urban middle school teachers' perceptions of their first year experience and their struggles as well as how they could have been better prepared or provided with more on-site support served as the methodological framework.

Using inductive analysis (Patton, 2002) to address the study's research questions, this methodological approach included gathering and examining data comprised of individual and focus group interviews which were recorded, transcribed, and confirmed for accuracy through member checks. These methods supported the triangulation of the data which improved internal validity (Merriam, 2009).

Fourteen district wide educators within selected urban, middle schools (nine novice teachers and five building principals) were invited to participate in the study. The teacher participants were between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-seven. Five building principals were interviewed each of whom had a minimum of five years' experience in their respective middle school. The focus group consisted of teacher participants who were novices to the teaching field and who volunteered to participate in this group setting.

Participants in the face-to-face interviews were interviewed with eight open-ended broad questions in order to gain the most insight while the focus group was an open-ended set of questions based on the information from the face-to-face interviews. Interviews were conducted between October 12 and October 28, 2016. These interviews were recorded which insured accuracy and validity and followed a semi-structured format. Each interview was then transcribed and printed and then returned for member checks/respondent validation to ensure validity. Once the member checks were completed they were coded by themes, patterns, and sub-patterns.

The focus group consisted of four to six teachers selected from those who volunteered for the face-to-face interviews and was conducted on October 31, 2016. The 45-minute focus group permitted teachers to answer questions and exchange information with respect to their preparedness and support once they began their teaching responsibilities. The moderator asked participants to provide a written response to the final question which asked, how much support they believed the administrators provided them as a new teacher?

Raw data was reviewed multiple times with the researcher making notes in the margins and creating codes or categories based on themes (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

### Sample Demographics

A graphical representation of the teacher and principal participants summarizing their age, gender, certification, grade level, subject taught, degree level, and the university they attended is represented in the following tables:

Table 1  
*Demographics of the Selected Teacher Participants*

Name	Age	Male/Female	Certification	Grade Level	Subject Taught	Degree Level	University Attended
Teacher A	24	Female	4-6 ELA/SS	7	ELA	BS/MA	XXX
Teacher B	25	Female	4-6 Math/ Science	6	Math	BS	XXX
Teacher C	25	Male	4-6 Math/ Science	8	Science	BS	XXX
Teacher D	24	Female	4-6 ELA/SS	7	ELA	BS	XXX
Teacher E	26	Female	7-12 English	8	ELA	BS	XXX
Teacher F	24	Female	4-6 ELA/SS	6	ELA/SS	BS/MA	XXX
Teacher	24	Female	Mild/Moderate	6/7/8	Math/	BS/MA	XXX

G Teacher	25	Male	7-12 Math	8	Science Math	BS	XXX
H Teacher I	26	Female	4-6 Science/ Math	7	Math	BS	XXX
Teacher J	25	Male	4-6 ELA/Math	6	Math	BS	XXX

Table 2  
*Demographics of the Selected Building Principal Participants*

Name	Age	Male/Female	Certification	Degree Level	Years of Experience	Middle School Experience
Admin 1	39	Male	Admin	Master	7	7
Admin 2	41	Female	Admin	Master	3	3
Admin 3	52	Male	Admin	Master	16	14
Admin 4	29	Female	Admin	Master	2	2
Admin 5	67	Female	Admin	Master	41	41

## Results

Eight questions for teachers and eight questions for administrators consistent with the four research questions were generated by the researcher and used during one-on-one interviews. Questions aligned with Research Questions 1 and 2 were answered by teachers. Questions aligned with Research Questions 3 and 4 were answered by administrators. Both teachers and administrators were queried within their individual focus groups. There was also one additional question for participants in an open forum; participants' responses to that question were written on sticky notes to encourage candor in anonymity. Below, Table 3 provides a graphical representation of the research questions with the corresponding individual and focus group interview questions.

Table 3  
*A Compilation of the Research Questions with their Corresponding Individual and Focus Group Interview Questions*

Research Question	Interview Question
Research Question #1 Do new teachers feel prepared to work in the urban setting?	Interview Question #1: What do you consider was your greatest challenge working in the urban schools? Interview Question #2: Did you feel confident and prepared when you started the year, and did this feeling change as the year progressed? If so how and why? Interview Question #3: Did you have any urban experience during your pre-service and if so to what extent? Interview Question #4: What could your

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Research Question #2  
Do new teachers feel they are given the support needed to achieve academic excellence in the urban setting?

university have done to better prepare you for the urban setting?

Interview Question #5: What do you feel your needs were this year and were they addressed?

Interview Question #6: To what extent do you believe you were supported by the administration?

Interview Question #7: What can your administrator do to support you?

Interview Question #8: Were you offered any professional development by the school or district for new teachers?

Focus Group Question #1: Do you feel supported by your administrator? Explain.

Research Question #3  
Do administrators feel that new teachers are adequately prepared for work in the urban setting?

Interview Question #9: Do you feel universities are adequately preparing new teachers to work in the urban setting? Explain your response.

Interview Question #10: In your experience what area(s) do new teachers in the urban setting struggle?

Interview Question #11: What factors do you believe play the most significant role in the success or lack of success of new teachers in urban schools?

Interview Question #12: How would you describe the performance of new teachers in urban schools?

Research Question #4  
Do administrators feel they give enough support to new teachers entering the urban setting?

Interview Question #13: As an administrator what types of support do you provide for new teachers?

Interview Question #14: What is your biggest barrier to providing adequate support of new teachers?

Interview Question #15: On the average how much time do you spend working with new teachers during the school year?

Focus Group Question #2: How do you give support to new teachers?

## Research Question 1

The first research question states, “Do new teachers feel prepared to work in the urban setting?” In general, teachers felt unprepared and frustrated and these feelings did not improve as the year progressed. Teachers in the study expressed that they did not feel prepared for the challenges of working with urban, at-risk students. They wished that the university had done more to prepare them for this experience by providing additional pre-service hours in an urban classroom setting.

There were two themes and seven sub themes that manifested during this investigation. Findings of the study revealed during the individual interviews supported that the majority of teachers did not feel they had spent enough time in the urban schools and had not been prepared for what they faced when they started working. Four of the nine teachers interviewed did their student teaching in an urban school setting. Although their student teaching was completed in an urban environment, these teachers did not believe that they were afforded enough quality classroom time or exposure to working with urban, at-risk students. This was especially true for student teachers who took over a classroom in January that was already established by the current teacher. They shared that they would have liked to have more spent time in the urban classroom so they could immerse themselves in this experience and get to know the students.

Just as all new teachers, they were nervous as they began this initial teaching assignment; 89% of them were very candid in their assessment that as the year progressed they began to lose confidence in themselves. Six of the nine shared that there were multiple times during the school year that they wanted to quit and three shared they cried on multiple days on their way home from work. They were frustrated and felt as if they had no concept of what they were doing other than to think about how they would survive the school year. Three shared that they thought of quitting before the school year ended and one stated, “I called in sick some days, because I just couldn’t handle another day of it.” Their frustration came as a result of the challenges their students exhibited such as acting out, their home life, the transient population, and their poor attendance.

The teachers commented that they had not been prepared to handle urban, at-risk children and that teaching these middle school students was very different than teaching in other non-urban school systems. Teacher C stated:

I had a teacher that really took me under his wing and took care of me. He made me understand there is a better way and gave me a chance to see the value in education. He took me into his home. I want to give back what I was given. I completely understand these kids but some days are still tough. When I was in college, I used to sit in classes and think, you have no idea what school is like for urban kids. They just describe to you the perfect classroom where the majority of students want to learn and have a supportive family. They spend too much time teaching content.

They acknowledged that they required more time learning about the culture and value system of an urban school environment as well as spending time immersed in the classroom rather than so much time on curricular content. While all of the teachers had a semester in student teaching, not all of it was completed in an urban school building. Those teachers who did student teach in an urban community believed that they still needed additional time to learn and practice the necessary skills specific to their survival within this new classroom setting.

Teacher A felt her confidence decreased as the year progressed; she felt she did not have the necessary materials and support and felt like quitting many times. Teacher B expressed that



she was prepared to handle the instruction in her classroom because she had worked with at-risk children previously. Teacher C shared that she was nervous to start and “after the three-day orientation I was more nervous since during the three-day orientation it was too much information at once.” Teachers D, E, and I commented that they felt confident but nervous, but at some point during the first day they felt completely frustrated. They all also shared that as the year progressed that they lost confidence instead of gaining it and they all expressed that at some point in time they wanted to resign. Teacher D added she cried frequently as well as in the presence of her principal.

## Research Question 2

Research Question 2 states, “Do the teachers feel they are given the support needed to achieve academic excellence in the urban setting?”

From the individual interview questions, themes revealed that the teacher participants’ perceived support from administrators paralleled the responses from the focus group question: “Do you feel supported by your administrator?” as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

*Factors of Perceived Support or Non Support by Their Building Principal*

Supported	Not Supported
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Felt supported with discipline</li> <li>• Given a mentor in the building has time to help</li> <li>• Provided Professional Development and encouraged conference attendance</li> <li>• Open door policy</li> <li>• Provided resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrator does not have time</li> <li>• Needed someone in the building</li> <li>• Too many special education students in the class</li> <li>• Has unreal expectations</li> <li>• Did not support discipline</li> </ul>

The individual interviews and the focus group results indicated that administrators were not providing the support that the first year teachers required. The majority of teachers believed that their administrators were already over worked and overwhelmed and this was the reason that enough support wasn’t forthcoming. All nine of the teachers interviewed believed support was available but it was not sufficient to adequately address their critical areas of need. Novice teachers were often left to succeed or fail on their own and were assigned to the most challenging students with little to no resource or academic tools for successfully fulfilling their role in the classroom for improving student achievement.

Teachers A, C, D, E, and H, were cognizant of administrator support efforts which ranged in a variety of actions. Teacher B stated:

Yes and no. The administrator really wanted to support her and did with discipline. However, it seemed a lot of times I got pushed off on someone else because the administrator just did not have time for and all of my questions. I depended a lot on other teachers in the building but they were so busy and overwhelmed, it was difficult for them and they would help but I could see their frustration.

New teachers in the district have a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program that supports and evaluates them, however, the PAR consulting teacher is only in the building one

day a week to observe and they only met with the new teacher once every two weeks. Since the district provided new teachers with the PAR program then administrators relied upon that for teacher encouragement, however they did not believe this program really mentored them. The PAR consulting teacher was also not someone from the building so they did not necessarily know the culture and climate of the building and were unable to provide needed tools for improving new teachers classroom teaching skills. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the teachers or six out of nine did not feel PAR provided enough support or the kind of support they needed. One teacher stated, “PAR is just a program to get rid of the teachers they do not want and not a program to grow new teachers. New teachers need an immersion program that offers coaching and modeling, and provides feedback but is not evaluative. It needs to provide more support than PAR.” Teachers A, B, and C explained that the district had a PAR program and it was helpful but they all said they needed additional support than PAR could provide. Teacher A admitted that, “we needed someone in the building on a more consistent basis who knows the culture and climate of the building and someone I could interact with daily.”

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 states, "Do administrators feel that new teachers are adequately prepared for work in the urban setting?"

There were three themes and six sub themes that manifested during this investigation. Findings of the study revealed during the individual interviews that administrators did not feel new teachers were prepared for the urban school setting. They believed that novice teachers were deficient in: (1) Management: They were not strong in setting expectations, procedures, routines and following through with them, therefore the classroom management was weak and they did not possess the strategies to complete this work; (2) Relationship building: They did not understand the culture and social norms or all of the non-academic barriers and the degree of the non-academic barriers; (3) Lesson Planning and Delivery: They struggled, not necessarily in curricular content, but rather in planning and delivering strategies to urban, at-risk students.

One administrator acknowledged that novice teachers had not been provided with enough time and experience in an urban classroom. Some of them, not all, quickly figured out that they lacked the survival skills and strategies, they weaken as the year progressed, they began to frequently call in sick because they were frustrated and then it only got worse and they were in my office crying and wanting to resign. Principal 5 observed that “No university can prepare pre-service teachers for what they will see and experience with their students without immersing them into the urban schools.”

This observation was reiterated by the other participant principals who noted that new teachers seemed to struggle the most with classroom management.

They do not have the everyday survival skills to modify at the minute on their feet.

When a student acts up in the classroom and they cannot immediately redirect, they get frustrated and they cannot recover. They also think the best way to handle it is to just send them out to the office or a buddy teacher. Many times, new teachers, have not seen some of the extreme behaviors or have not had in a classroom of multiple behaviors so they don't know what to do when several students are acting out or acting off of each other. They don't know what it is like to come from an urban and poverty stricken

environment so they don't understand the cultural norms or value system because it is so different.

Other observations by the interviewed principals acknowledged that:

New teachers often lack tools for strategies. They need to get their toolbox filled with tools to work with kids. They come with big ideas or textbook ideas from college classes, but they have to build their own toolbox of things that they can make work. Strategies come with experience and I am not sure it is something you can teach. Each teacher needs to figure out what works for them and their students.

All five principals shared that new teachers did have skills in understanding their content area and having a bank of ideas to present the material as well as effective lesson plans with engaging activities. Three of the five shared that although they had all of these materials they did not know how to adapt to make it work in the urban school or adapt it when a school did not have the technology they had in college, "when they cannot make a lesson work the way they planned, they do not know how to adapt so they go to direct instruction and urban kids do not do well with direct instruction."

#### Research Question 4

The fourth research question states, "Do administrators feel they give enough support to new teachers entering the urban setting?"

There was one theme and three sub themes drawn out in this research. Findings of the study as delineated in Table 5 below revealed that building administrators did not feel they provided enough support to new teachers, but it was not because they didn't want to provide the support.

Table 5

#### *Perceived Factors Which Precluded Building Principals from Providing Support*

Enough Support Yes/No	Reasons
• Principal 1 – No	• Time Constraints
• Principal 2 – No	• Too much discipline
• Principal 3 – No	• Too much paperwork
• Principal 4 – No	• Day to day operations
• Principal 5 – No	• PAR
	• Union
	• New teachers don't ask
	• Not receptive

The major challenge for administrators was providing the adequate support with limited time options. The administrators responded that they themselves were overwhelmed with their responsibilities and that novice teachers had the Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR). However, the administrators did feel they provided enough professional development because the district allowed for three non-attendance days and professional development was provided. They also commented that they provided funds for teachers to go to professional conferences upon their request.

One administrator shared that he had good intentions but the day got away from him. He admitted to pushing new teachers off when they asked for help. He often told them to call their PAR, ask another teacher, or gave them someone in the district they could call. He stated,

I should help them make that call or find the answer for them. Another principal acknowledged that she never gets in the new teacher's room because they have a PAR consulting teacher. I am quick to let the PAR consultant know when the new teachers are struggling, but not so quick to provide support for them and I should since they are in my building daily.

Three of the five interviewed principals shared that their overriding barrier was finding time in the day which was generally consumed by dealing with student discipline issues and therefore resulted in not working directly to encourage their new teachers. One principal asserted that the union and PAR got in the way of principals supporting teachers. This was echoed by another building principal,

You know they have PAR so you convince yourself they have help but really they do need a lot more than just PAR. She shared that she communicates constantly through email, text, and daily updates so they get information but they may be unsure of what all the communication means and it may also be overwhelming to them. She has an open door policy but, "many times the line is long and I know they get frustrated. I wish I had more time for them".

## **Conclusions**

The research outcomes revealed that teachers often did not feel that they were adequately prepared for the urban setting. They felt universities did a commendable job of preparing them to teach and provided the content knowledge they required but not necessarily the skills and strategies to function in an urban classroom. They also added that it would have been beneficial to have had a rotation in an urban school. The participant teachers did not plan on working in the urban setting but that is where the job market was. They discovered that the challenges with urban, at-risk children were not similar to those a teacher encountered in a suburban or rural school system. They often felt frustrated when they could not redirect students and get them to follow directions thus actually escalating the behavior.

Teachers also did not believe they were afforded ample support once they entered the profession since the pre-service training they experienced resulted from entering a classroom mid- year and taking over a classroom where the rules, expectations, and procedures had already been established.

Furthermore, administrators did not feel teachers were prepared for the urban schools for a number of the same reasons: they lacked classroom management skills and strategies; they did not spend enough time in urban schools; and many had limited or no experience with urban, at-risk students. Building principals commented that novice teachers did not have the skill base to develop relationships with urban at-risk students or the skills to de-escalate behavioral classroom management events. One administrator observed that "New teachers see their students for the first time and you can see the fear in their eyes and it all starts going in the wrong direction from there. Urban kids can see and smell fear miles away. They take kindness for weakness and run all over teachers." Another administrator acknowledged that, "they just are not sure how to adapt

traditional lessons so that urban at-risk students will be engaged and when they are not engaged they are ready to hand out discipline and not find a way to connect and adapt.”

Seven out of the nine teachers interviewed admitted that their administrator wanted to work directly with them but it did not happen and the district central office did not provide enough resources or the right kind of skill-building tools. Building leaders did not have the time to assist these teachers or were frustrated with them since they needed so much help. Three of the teachers mentioned the realities of the PAR program. They stated, “Principals just rely on the PAR program to give us the support we need and they don’t have time either. Principals use PAR to tell on us”.

All of the selected school building administrators agreed that they had good intentions of providing support, and they would like to have had more time to provide substantive opportunities for growth, but they were remiss in providing this necessary professional development. Many of the reasons were a result of being overwhelmed with their own work and time constraints. They also shared that even though there was a mentoring/evaluation program encouraged by the school district that they (principals) did not have to add to this endeavor or that the PAR and the union created barriers. There was a consensus that as building leaders they should have provided more support except for one principal participant who surmised that “If you provide too much support you enable them (teachers) and then they expect you to do everything for them.”

### **Implications of the Research**

The focus of this qualitative, phenomenology research was to identify why novice teachers left the profession especially during their initial year in the school district. Why was teacher attrition higher in the urban setting? How could school systems better prepare teachers for the urban setting and once they were there how leadership could have been more supportive?

The problem was how school districts and school administrators provided the support that teachers required so that they were able to retain them in an urban school environment as well as what pre-service experiences and/or induction programs were needed to better prepare novice teachers.

First, there is a need for pre-service teacher preparation programs to better prepare teachers for work in the urban setting. Nationwide, there is a push to redesign teacher education programs in order to allow pre-service teachers the opportunity to participate in more comprehensive, first-hand, urban school field experiences. “Perceptions of pre-service teachers, like all other people, are influenced by media images and other socializing agents” (Gleich & Copich, 2014, p.23).

Although, the study captured feedback provided by teachers and building administrators, it excluded the perspective of teachers who actually left. The teacher participants provided valuable insight but it would have been more beneficial to interview the teachers who actually quit and determine what they are currently doing. Did they stay in education and go to a different type of school district, or did they leave education altogether.

A second implication for this study is the need for a strong support system for teachers once they enter their first year of teaching. The transition from pre-service to the first year of teaching is difficult. First year teachers need support in the form of coaching and modeling and require different types of professional development than veteran teachers. If they are not

provided the support and professional development, they often do not remain in the profession and especially in the urban setting. Teachers who receive a comprehensive induction package achieve higher in three areas: (1) job satisfaction, commitment, and retention, (2) classroom teaching practices and pedagogical methods, and (3) student achievement. Comprehensive induction programs that comprise multiple types of support, such as high-quality mentoring, common planning time, and ongoing support from school leaders, reduced the turnover rate by one-half when compared to those receiving none. However, few beginning teachers currently receive the ongoing training and support that constitutes comprehensive induction (Haynes, Maddock, & Goldrick, 2014).

Finally, in order to reduce the teacher attrition rate and especially in the urban setting, universities must provide pre-service teachers additional exposure and experience in the urban setting and provide them with better preparation in working with diverse populations, underprivileged students, and their families. Approaches taken by teacher preparation programs to prepare future teachers for success in urban schools need to include initiatives to: (1) increase their sociocultural competence, (2) foster high expectations for student achievement, (3) build collaborative skills, and (4) equip them with instructional strategies that promote learning within diverse populations (Voltz, Collins, Patterson, & Sims, 2008).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was a qualitative study that explored how new, urban school teachers perceived their pre-service experiences and the support and resources they received from school districts and administrators. It is often difficult for teachers to have a successful transition into the classroom from pre-service. This study also used a phenomenological approach since teachers would be explaining a lived experience. While the study provided useful information that can be used by universities and school districts, at times, the researcher felt participants were holding back information for fear of retaliation since the researcher was an administrator in the district. Therefore, the study should be replicated in other schools urban school districts where the researcher is not employed by the school district. It would also benefit the study to interview teachers who have left the district or left teaching completely and this was not allowed by the district in this study.

Future research on teachers who enter the profession from an alternative pathway vs. teachers who enter in the traditional pathway would also provide valuable information. Future research should also be conducted, comparing new teachers who have induction programs in their first years and new teachers who do not have induction programs during their first year. This additional research could help provide more evidence for universities and school districts to implement induction programs to help both at the university level for preparation and at the school level once teachers start teaching.

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# Increasing Principal Preparation Candidates' Awareness of Biases in Educational Environments

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 the study was to determine whether the study of diversity topics embedded in a Principal Preparation Program (PPP) internship changed candidates' self-awareness of their biases in educational environments and the biases they observed in their school community. In this study PPP candidates' perceptions of their biases and those of their schools were assessed at the beginning and end of the internship. The Anti-Defamation League's (ADL), Assessing Yourself and Your School Checklist, were utilized to obtain candidates self-perceptions. Throughout the internship monthly learning activities, PPP candidates studied various diversity topics that impact schools. Descriptive statistics were utilized to complete a pretest-posttest comparison to determine any changes toward their biases. The findings of this study demonstrated that diversity topics embedded in an PPP internship increased candidates' self-awareness of their personal biases in educational environments and the biases they observe in their school community. The study of diversity topics broadened PPP candidates' awareness of the challenges faced by groups and individuals in their school communities.*

## Literature Review

Next to teaching, school leadership has been recognized as the most important influence in improving student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Elmore (2003) found that when school leaders are ill prepared, student achievement suffers. Persistent gaps in student success in the areas of race, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, gender identity and sexual orientation reflect school leaders' inability to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Brown (2004) found that principal's beliefs are the basis for their perceptions, expectations and practice. According to Hawley and James (2010), many school leaders enter the principalship with few skills and strategies to address aspects of social justice. School leaders need to be culturally aware and responsible in order to be effective leaders for all stakeholders (Gao & Mager, 2011).

Schools are responsible for ensuring all students meet learning standards set by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) through desegregated data. Classrooms are made up of increasingly diverse populations of students and in order to increase achievement, school leaders must support and develop effective teachers and implement valuable organizational processes (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Schools must be environments that welcome and support all students (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). This welcoming environment must be created even though many teachers are White, middle class, and do not live in the neighborhoods where they teach (Feistritzer, 2001; Howard, 2006). Teachers and principals are responsible for educating students whose race, ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic status is very different from their own. Principals must have positive beliefs and expectations about students, families and communities in order to create a supportive school climate that supports all students in succeeding.

Literature suggests that leaders who have the ability to transform schools into environments focused on social justice are needed (Brown, 2006; Guerra, Nelson, Jacobs, & Yamamura, 2013; Theoharis, 2007). Aspiring school leaders need additional knowledge, skills and attitudes about cultural competence and bias free educational environments in addition traditional leadership, instructional, and managerial knowledge and skills. Hawley and James (2010) surveyed school leadership preparation programs at 62 universities across the US. Only 18 (30%) of the programs surveyed responded. Of those 18 programs, researchers found that diversity-related education occurred in a single course focused on broad societal conditions that affect students while failing to prepare school leaders to address these inequities in schools. This is supported by a study of 21 school leaders across the US that found diversity is talked about in principal preparation programs, but leaders were not prepared to build positive diverse community relationships (Henze, Norte, Sather, Walker, & Katz, 2002). McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) found that university principal preparation programs can develop leaders who are reflective and capable of leading school reform by helping future school leaders identify equity traps and deficit thinking. University programs can then reshape deficit thinking of principal candidates so that schools can be fair for all students.

Effective professional development is ongoing so that it can be transferred into practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Zepeda, Parylo, & Bengtson, 2014). Standards for effective professional development apply to principal preparation programs as well. According to Joyce and Showers (2002), follow up activities including coaching and study groups, after a

professional development session enable adults to acquire new knowledge and apply it to their practice. An effective principal preparation program incorporates study groups and coaching into the coursework and internship (Orr & Barber, 2005) to help candidates integrate new ideas into existing knowledge (Figueiredo-Brown, Ringler, & James, 2015). Joyce and Showers (2002) also found it is important for principal preparation programs to assess the specific needs of candidate.

Research has found that for principal preparation programs to develop school leaders that are able to meet the needs of racially, culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students, they must shift from the current practices. One recommendation for improving principal preparation programs is to integrate social justice knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the curriculum rather than offer one, add-on course (Brown, 2004; Hawley & James, 2010; Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002). Another recommendation is to encourage reflection that identifies taken-for-granted beliefs and biases and their impact on others, to consider multiple perspectives, and to take into account historical, social and political factors that influence individual's behavior (Brown, 2006; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Whipp, 2003). A third recommendation to improve principal preparation programs is to encourage principal candidates to value and promote relationships within the school and community (Dantley, 2005; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Shields, 2004).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Principal preparation programs have the opportunity to prepare administrators to promote bias-free educational environments. Often principal preparation programs focus on management and leadership when they should infuse learning about educating diverse student populations (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This article proposes enhancing the internship for principal preparation candidates by helping candidates identify their own biases and biases present in schools. To develop this framework, we combined Furman's (2012) theory that leadership for social justice is constructed on reflection and action, Harro's (2010) cycle of socialization, and Petersen's (2014) ideas of nonconscious biases that influence actions.

Harro's (2010) Cycle of Socialization describes how people progress through predictable stages of socialization starting first with families and close relatives that shape self-concepts, self-perceptions, and the way they see others. Through institutions such as schools, churches, and media, people are presented with messages about who should and who has power in society. These messages are reinforced through actions that are praised with public approval while actions that go against the social norms are punished or stigmatized. According to Harro the cycle can be interrupted by a new awareness or consciousness of different perspectives and biases, especially in educational environments. This may occur by listening to stories, reading books, and participating in classes that focus on different social perspectives. Harro (2010) states that, "once you know something, you can't *not* know it anymore, and knowing it eventually translates into action (p. 51)." It is fitting that the internship of a principal preparation program provide opportunities to listen to individuals and experts of various races, religion, gender, abilities, and cultural groups. These experiences help principal candidates identify their nonconscious biases.

Nonconscious biases are institutionalized in educational settings and may be unknown to an individual who means well. These non-cognitive biases can be found in everyday encounters,

processes, and actions that can be disconnected from one's actual intent (Petersen, 2014). These days, discrimination is based on an individual's nonconscious biases, therefore to help candidates find their own nonconscious biases principal preparation programs need to provide opportunities for self-reflection and conscious searching of biases in educational environments. Candidates need to be able to name the oppression present in school environments as part of their reflections (Furman, 2012). Opportunities for reflection and learning about biases should include application at both interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. Principal preparation programs should aim for personal and critical reflection on one's values, assumptions, and biases and how they affect leadership practice. Structured self-reflections and journaling are effective ways that programs may provide candidates with tools that they may practice during the program and continue using as practitioners.

To develop the capacity for principal candidates to move from understanding their biases to taking action to reducing biases, principal preparation programs should have students audit and critic their own school settings. Candidates should understand elements that promote bias-free educational environments. The Anti-Defamation League (2005) checklist provides a tool for candidates to inspect mission statements, student interactions, school symbols, parental involvement, harassment and bullying policies, instructional materials, and more factors that contribute to biases.

## **Study Design**

### **Context of the Study**

The principal preparation program (PPP) in this study is a two-year program that is offered in a cohort delivery model. The faculty developed the courses in the program collaboratively and therefore the syllabi used are the same for each course no matter the location. In order to maintain the integrity of the content of the courses, faculty participate in monthly curriculum meetings to discuss course content and assignments. All candidates follow the same sequence of courses regardless of the cohort meeting location. PPP candidates entering as a cohort enroll continuously for fall, spring, and summer semesters. Classes are typically offered at a local school or school district meeting room located in various counties located in the eastern North Carolina region.

The second year of the PPP includes an intensive internship for candidates. A principal candidate enrolled in the study's program completes one thousand hours of field experiences with practicing school principals and leaders. Interns engage in on-the-job learning opportunities that develop and refine their leadership skills as they contribute to the total school program. An intern must be directly involved in the many diverse activities a principal encounters on a daily basis. An intern is expected to examine the overall school vision, become immersed in the school's improvement process, and make a significant contribution to this vision and process as he/she refines his/her leadership skills.

As part of the ongoing collaboration with practicing principals that serve as site supervisors that provide meaningful administrative experiences, faculty gather feedback from these principals to use to improve the PPP internship. One source of feedback indicated that candidates needed to become culturally proficient. Through collaboration with practicing school leaders, faculty incorporated a focus on diversity into the internship experience. As result, interns

meet monthly to learn about a diversity topic in schools including race, socioeconomic status, linguistics, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation. During the monthly seminars interns are provided with current data and research regarding the diversity topic as well as interact with guest speakers from the community. The community speakers describe their experiences in school settings as a member of a diverse group. They also help interns understand what they can do to make schools a more welcoming and accepting place. Principal interns then take the information and examine their own schools through a new lens and write a reflection on how they see that diversity topic at play at their own campus. They also write about what things they could do to improve school experiences for all groups.

## **Study Questions**

The purpose of the study was to determine whether diversity topics embedded in a PPP internship changed candidates' self-awareness of their biases in educational environments and the biases they observe in their school community. To do so, several diversity topics described in the context of the study were studied at monthly seminars using the inside-out approach (Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009). The inside-out approach focuses on the individual person, encouraging them to reflect on their own individual understandings and beliefs (Lindsey et al., 2009, p. 23). The seminars provided opportunities for principal candidates to learn more about themselves and to acknowledge their current values and feelings of diverse people while encouraging change. The study questions that guided this study were: (1) To what extent did the inside-out approach to learning more about diversity topics affect principal candidates' self-awareness of their own biases in educational environments and (2) their perceptions of the institutionalized biases present in the school environments they work in?

To address these study questions principal candidates completed two Anti-Defamation League checklists, *Assessing Your Self* and *Assessing Your School*, prior to the initial diversity seminar and again at the end of the eighth seminar. The Anti-Defamation League (2005) checklists are available to the public on the Anti-Defamation Education Division, A World of Difference Institute. These checklists have been used extensively throughout the United States in school districts and other public institutions and are considered valid and reliable.

Each month PPP candidates participated in an inside-out diversity seminar where a topic was introduced with activities that helped build and deepen knowledge around each of these topics: linguistic diversity, gender and sexuality, race, religion, and poverty. During the time between seminars, approximately a month at a time, PPP candidates were encouraged to be keenly aware of that aspect of diversity at their schools, read several articles, learn from Ted talks recommended by the PPP faculty, and reflect on their learning with their internship principal.

## **Study Sample**

A total of 53 principal candidates participated in the diversity seminars where 31 (58%) of the candidates were female and 21 (42%) of the candidates were male. There were 21 candidates that completed their internship in an elementary school, 10 candidates completed their internship in a middle school, 14 candidates at high schools, 2 candidates in k-8 schools, and 5 candidates

completed their internship at private schools that offer k-12 education. Five (1%) candidates were Black, 2 (.04%) candidates were Hispanic, and 46 (98.96%) were White candidates.

## Data Analysis

### PPP Candidates' Self-Perceptions of Their Own Biases

PPP candidates completed an Anti-Defamation League survey, *Assessing Your Self*, self-assessment prior to the initial diversity seminar and again at the end of the internship. The instrument addresses eleven elements of effectively promoting a bias-free educational environment, asking participants to rate their implementation on a scale from (1) "I haven't thought about this" to (2) "I need to do this better" to (3) "I do this well". The response rate to the anonymous survey was 91% where 48 out of 53 PPP candidates completed both the pre and post surveys. As shown in Table 1, the majority principal candidates indicated that they had moved positively toward promoting a bias-free educational environment after participating in the diversity seminars.

Table 1  
*ADL PC Candidates Self-Assessment of Biases*

ADL Question	Median Pretest	Median Post Test	Pretest Average (n=48)	Posttest Average (n=48)	Gain/ Loss	SD
Have you recently read any books or articles, or watched any documentaries to increase your understanding of the particular hopes, needs and concerns of students and families from the different cultures that make up your school community and beyond?	2	3	2.28	2.67	0.39	0.28
Have you participated in professional development opportunities to enhance your understanding of the complex characteristics of racial, ethnic and cultural groups in the U.S.?	2	3	2.34	2.69	0.35	0.25
Do you try to listen with an open mind to all students and colleagues, even when you don't understand their perspectives or agree with what they're saying?	3	3	2.77	2.88	0.11	0.08

Have you taken specific actions to dispel misconceptions, stereotypes or prejudices that members of one group have about members of another group at your school?	3	3	2.53	2.61	0.08	0.04
Do you strive to avoid actions that might be offensive to members of other groups?	3	3	2.87	2.82	-.05	0.21
Do you discourage patterns of informal discrimination, segregation or exclusion of members of particular groups from school clubs, committees?	3	3	2.51	2.80	0.29	0.21
Do the curricular and wall displays in your classroom reflect the experiences and perspectives of the cultural groups that make up the school and its surrounding community?	2	2	2.15	2.26	0.11	0.13
Have you evaluated classroom materials and textbooks to ensure they do not reinforce stereotypes and that they provide fair and appropriate treatment of all groups?	2	2	1.94	1.97	0.03	.065
Do you use classroom methods, such as cooperative learning, role-playing and small group discussions to meet the needs of students' different learning styles?	3	3	2.66	2.86	0.20	0.14
Do students have opportunities to engage in problem-solving groups that address real issues with immediate relevance to their lives?	2	3	2.38	2.55	0.17	0.12
Do you use a range of strategies, in addition to traditional testing methods, to assess student learning?	3	3	2.77	2.83	0.06	0.04

*Note.* SD = Standard Deviation.

In reviewing difference of means, one of the areas where PPP candidates showed the most positive change of 0.38 points was their indication that they have recently read any books or articles, or watched any documentaries to increase your understanding of the particular hopes, needs and concerns of students and families from the different cultures that make up their school community and beyond. This can be attributed to the assigned readings and speakers from the seminars but also many PPP candidates indicated that each topic sparked an awareness and a realization that they did not know much about the topic. In an attempt to determine if the distributions of the pre and post differed significantly and because the data had a non-parametric distribution, we attempted to perform the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test on the pre and post medians (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). However, the calculations proved non-reliable because the data included many tied values and therefore the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was not appropriate.

Another area that showed a large positive change of 0.35 points in PPP candidates' self-awareness was their participation in professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of the complex characteristics of racial, ethnic and cultural groups in the America. This indicates a shift from "needing to do better" to getting closer to "doing this well". A third area that showed a large positive change of 0.29 points toward "doing this well" in PPP candidates' self-awareness was their actions that discourage patterns of informal discrimination, segregation or exclusion of members of particular groups from school clubs, committees.

Only one question, "Do you strive to avoid actions that might be offensive to members of other groups?" had a negative difference of 0.05 points, indicating that PPP candidates at first thought they did this well but at the end of the seminars they indicated that they needed to do better at this. PPP candidates also were asked to analyze their schools to determine if a bias-free educational environment was promoted.

### **PPP Candidates' Perceptions Their Schools' Institutionalized Biases**

PPP candidates' completed an Anti-Defamation League survey, *Assessing Your School*, prior to the initial diversity seminar and again at the end of the internship. The instrument addressed fourteen elements of how a school effectively promotes a bias-free educational environment, asking participants to rate their school's implementation on a scale from (1) "We haven't thought about this" to (2) "We need to do this better" to (3) "We do this well". The response rate to the anonymous survey was 92% where 49 out of 53 PPP candidates completed both the pre and post surveys. The pretest and posttest averages indicated that 11 of 14 questions (79%) showed a gain toward the school doing certain elements well while two elements denoted a move toward needed to do things better. Table 2 shows that the standard deviation from pre-test to post-test where principal candidates indicated that they perceived that their school showed little change (less than 0.17) in how it promoted a bias-free educational environment. Some of the elements that showed little change were those that asked whether the schools staff was representative of the diversity in the community's ethnic, racial and cultural groups. In an academic year there is not much fluctuation, however, PPP candidates became aware of the need to diversify their staff. Another element that did not show much change was any change in policy developed with the input of students, family and staff. PPP candidates commented that they were more aware of the benefits of engaging their school community in policy making. In an attempt to determine if the distributions of the pre and post differed significantly and because the data had a non-parametric



distribution, we attempted to perform the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test on the pre and post medians (Gall et al., 2007). However, the calculations proved non-reliable because the data included many tied values and therefore the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was not appropriate.

Table 2 also shows that PPP candidates recognized the need to do better in all of the elements that promote a bias-free environment since most mean scores in the pre-test and post-test are in the closer to (2) “We need to do this better” than to (3) “We do this well”. Anti-policies, respectful and equitable school vision, and participation in sports and extracurricular activities scored closest to 3. The element that scored in most need of addressing was related to ongoing evaluation of instructional materials used in teaching to ensure they reflect the histories, contribution, and perspectives of diverse groups. This may be achieved by collaborative work among teams, families and universities and will take time and resources.

Data analysis of the ADL surveys helped identify self-biases of PPP candidates and thus initiating the inside out approach toward cultural proficient leadership. PPP candidates were able to self-analyze how they differ from others, their own biases, and see how others are affected by biases. The ADL survey also identified institutionalized educational elements that are capable of changing and promoting a more bias-free environment. PPP candidates were able to see how a school’s culture facilitates learning for some students and impedes other students from learning.

Table 2  
*ADL PPP Candidates’ Assessment of Bias-Free School Environment*

ADL Question	Median Pretest	Median Posttest	Pretest Average (n=48)	Posttest Average (n=48)	Gain/Loss	SD
Does your school’s mission statement indicate values of respect, equity and inclusion?	3	3	2.53	2.69	0.16	0.12
Do students typically interact with one another in positive, respectful ways?	3	3	2.55	2.53	-.02	0.01
Do the school’s symbols, signs, mascots and insignias reflect a variety of cultural groups and holidays?	3	2	2.29	2.22	-.06	0.04
Do celebrations, festivals and special events reflect a variety of cultural groups and holidays?	2	2	2.12	2.27	0.14	0.10
Is the school staff (administrative, instructional, counseling and supportive) representative of the	2	2	2.37	2.39	0.02	0.01

racial, ethnic and cultural groups that comprise the surrounding community?						
Are staff or volunteers available who are fluent in the languages of families in the school community?	2	3	2.37	2.47	0.10	0.07
Do students, families and staff share in the decision-making process for the school?	2	2	2.27	2.29	0.02	0.01
Has the school community collaboratively developed written policies and procedures to address harassment and bullying?	3	3	2.45	2.55	0.10	0.07
Are consequences associated with harassment and bullying policy violations enforced equitably and consistently?	3	3	2.61	2.69	0.08	0.06
Do the instructional materials used in the classroom and available in the school library, including textbooks, supplementary books and multimedia resources, reflect the experiences and perspectives of people of diverse backgrounds?	3	3	2.47	2.51	0.04	0.03
Are equitable opportunities for participation in extra- and co-curricular activities made available to students of all gender, ability, and socioeconomic groups?	3	3	2.61	2.80	0.18	0.13
Do faculty and staff have opportunities for systematic, comprehensive and continuing professional development designed to increase cultural understanding and promote student safety?	2	2	2.12	2.33	0.20	0.14
Does the school conduct ongoing evaluations of the goals, methods	2	2	1.94	2.18	0.24	0.17

and instructional materials used in teaching to ensure they reflect the histories, contributions and perspectives of diverse groups?

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*Note.* SD = Standard deviation.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrated that diversity topics embedded in a PPP internship shifted the candidates' nonconscious awareness to self-awareness of their personal biases in educational environments and the biases they observed in their school community. Two areas indicating that work was needed were: improving student interaction with one another to make them more positive and respectful and to analyze school's symbols, mascots and insignias so they may reflect a variety of cultural groups and holidays. This may be an indication that PPP candidates realized that what they thought was positive interactions could be improved. The symbols are more of a challenge to change, however, it may be needed. For example, one PPP candidate indicated that the school's mascot was the devil and that the connotations associated with devils are not positive. Identifying and understanding what biases currently exist at a school is the beginning to understanding what should change to make the school bias-free.

The PPP achieved the first steps toward integrating social justice knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the internship. Experts indicate that PPP candidates should strive toward integrating social justice throughout the curriculum rather than offer one, add-on course (Brown, 2004; Hawley & James, 2010; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Pounder et al., 2002). Candidates in this study were actively involved in their school and community through the internship and were able to integrate the knowledge acquired through the diversity seminars into their practice. Many PPP candidates shared that they were simply not aware of many institutionalized patterns that segregate or marginalize certain students and groups in the daily functioning of schools. One PPP candidate noticed that at their school that had 60% Hispanic students, communications were sent home in English only and that none of the staff or teachers were fluent in Spanish. Another student noticed that in a school that enrolled 90% low socio economic families, some sports such as soccer and volleyball held practices at 7 pm yet did not provide transportation to and from practices. This meant that students that had a means of transportation were part of the team.

PPP candidates engaged in ongoing reflective conversations with their university faculty supervisors. Faculty were able to support candidates in moving beyond superficial reflections to deeper understanding of the topics and implications for practice. These reflections are encouraged in research to help identify taken-for-granted beliefs and biases and their impact on others, to consider multiple perspectives, and to take into account historical, social and political factors that influence individual's behavior (Brown, 2006; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Whipp, 2003). The self-assessment post survey indicated a large change in PPP candidates' self-awareness in their participation in professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of the complex characteristics of racial, ethnic and cultural groups in the America. Many PPP candidates shared with their faculty that they had talked with their principals about bringing professional development about diversity to their teachers and students because they saw the way they personally had been positively impacted by the diversity seminars. Many PPP candidates

also shared that they experienced a shift in their thinking to asset-based approaches, those of meeting the needs of underserved students, from deficit based approaches, those of helping underachieving families.

The PPP diversity seminars involved community members as guest speakers. The candidates were able to engage in dialogue with community members who were experiencing these issues of diversity first-hand. Candidates were encouraged to go back to their schools and continue the conversations with members of their school community. This practice improved the PPP because it encouraged principal candidates to value and promote relationships within the school and community (Dantley, 2005; Marshall & Olivia, 2010; Shields, 2004).

Unconscious bias was a topic of discussion at all seminars especially because the majority of the PPP candidates (98%) were 98% White. The diversity focused made PPP candidates realize that they had power and privilege simply because they were in the majority group. White PPP candidates in these seminars realized too that they did not act on their power because they were not aware it was inherent to them. Each time a topic was studied, PPP candidates indicated that felt compelled to do research and that they noticed more current event news surrounding these topics than in the past. At the end of the yearlong seminar series, White PPP candidates understood that it is their responsibility to be aware of institutionalized policies that oppress certain groups of individuals.

For the faculty in this program, the ideal is for PPP candidates to be self-aware of their own actions in promoting a bias-free educational environment and that they would rate themselves as doing this well. In reality, the context of schools makes every single school culture uniquely gifted with diversity. It is the goal of the faculty to instill in PPP candidates the desire to promote a bias-free educational environment in every action and interaction they are engaged in.

An area for further study would be to see how and if PPP candidates continue their study of diversity issues once they achieve roles as school leaders. A university program can prepare candidates and demonstrate best practices for understanding engaging in diversity issues, but the true test of the program is if it makes lasting change in the candidates' practice in the field.

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# University Strategic Planning: A Process for Change in a Principal Preparation Program

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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*This study describes a strategic planning process used for developing an educational leadership program that prepares principals for leading 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. The plan is based on recommendations received from the External reviewers representing Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Texas Education Agency, survey responses received from former students currently serving in school leadership positions, and focus group forums. Recommendations received were used to develop a strategic plan that resulted in a more rigorous and accessible, field-based program to better prepare school leaders.*

*Keywords: strategic planning, principal preparation, leadership development*

Historically, institutions of higher education have used traditional long-range planning to guide their actions and determine how to best use resources available. There has been a movement, more recently, for institutions of higher education (IHEs) to utilize a more “strategic thinking approach” which gives a new meaning to the strategic planning process. Essential components of this process include developing mission and vision statements; conducting internal and external environmental scans, setting strategic priorities, and developing an action plan (Hinton, 2012; Luxton, 2005; Paris, 2003). Implementing a strategic thinking approach, it is more sensory and stakeholder driven because it requires IHEs leaders to analyze and synthesize information that is presented by all stakeholders (Evans, 2007). This study focuses on the creation of a strategic plan by stakeholders comprised of the department of educational leadership faculty, school district personnel, school board members, and business community representatives. The importance of strategic planning and how the process was used to reignite an educational leadership program that remained stagnant for several years is discussed in this study.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning by Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) emerged in the 1970’s as a proactive solution to meet the changing demands of stakeholders. Since its inception, it was considered a means for IHEs to articulate a compelling mission and vision and to prioritize resources available. The process provided stakeholders an opportunity to collaborate in planning the direction of the IHEs. Due to lack of purposeful implementation of plans developed, the planning process was viewed as ineffective (Hinton, 2012). In the 1990’s, with increased demands for accountability, IHEs were required to develop strategic plans to fulfill accreditation requirements. Institutions of Higher Education were and continued to be expected to demonstrate the extent to which they are fulfilling their intended mission. Paris (2003) viewed strategic planning as the means by which “a department or university... will identify its unique niche... focus its resources on a limited number of strategic efforts, abandoning activities that could be, should be, or are being done by others” (p.1). Paris touts engagement of stakeholders as a key to creating advocacy. Rowley and Sherman (2001) expressed it is important “colleges and universities understand the competitive nature of their niche and determine a strategy that will reduce competitive pressures or allow the university to operate with a less confrontational approach to the marketplace” (p. 102).

Numerous planning models for use by IHEs emerged over the last two decades (Hinton, 2012; Luxton, 2005; Lerner, 1999) as accreditation standards have increased. Moreover, accreditation commissions have required that IHEs develop strategic plans to fulfill accreditation requirements (Hinton) which are an important aspect of strategic planning. The accreditation gives the IHEs the opportunity to be proactive in shaping its future and determining how it will respond to emerging challenges spawned by factors such as student enrollments, changing demographics, emerging technologies, increasing standards, and funding.

Strategic planning provides leaders a systematic, structured, and collaborative approach for examining current issues and future trends and their impact on the organization’s capacity to



attain its mission. It assists leaders to create a vision of what the organization must become to exist in new environment effectively. It further engages stakeholders in meaningful dialog to determine significant issues that are of concern to stakeholders and the organization. Strategic planning provides a setting for exploring and identifying actions required to respond to concerns and expectations of stakeholders and the organization (Metcalf, 2008). Moreover, strategic planning helps leaders ensure the organization is responsive to the clients it serves.

The strategic planning process requires leaders to identify needs, create a clear and compelling vision, determine priorities, set bold and pragmatic goals, and delineate strategies and resources required to become the organization envisioned by the stakeholders it serves (McKay, 2001). The strategic planning process also helps leaders focus resources available on the major strategies designed to help stakeholders better and attain the IHE's purpose (Paris, 2003). Strategic planning serves as a management tool to improve the performance of an organization (Carron, 2010). Performance measures are set to monitor progress and ensure that all organization members are focused on agreed-upon goals and strategies. Strategies and actions are controlled, monitored, and adjusted based on results attained and emerging needs. Ultimately, the strategic planning process yields "decisions about the future of the organization that will most likely lead to the best use of human talent and material resources" (Edwards, 2000, p. 48).

### **Planning Models and Associated Processes**

A considerable amount of literature exists about different models of strategic planning.

Strategic planning models have similar components that guide the planning process. IHEs utilize the model and associated method that best fits the needs of the institution. Usually, the planning process progresses through each of the models' components in sequence (Hinton, 2012). Although strategic planning occurs at the institutional level, strategic planning models may be applied at the college and department level.

Developing the vision and mission statements is the initial step in the process. The vision statement describes what the organization aspires to become. The vision statement communicates "what the institution *wishes* to be, whom it *wishes* to serve, and how it *intends* to get there" (Luxton, 2005, p. 23). The mission is a succinct statement of the institution's purpose and what it aspires to accomplish. Together, the vision and mission statement provide a compelling direction that guides overall development of the strategic plan (Hinton, 2012; Luxton). During the internal and external environmental scans, the institution conducts an analysis of internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). The analysis is followed by a gap analysis in which results are used to compare the institution's current status and desired future (Luxton). The gaps identified will inform "development of specific strategies and allocation of resources to close the gap" (Lerner, p. 21). After conducting the gap analysis, needs identified are prioritized. The strategic priorities guide the focus in the direction of the institutions' vision. Identification of strategic priorities leads to the setting of goal priority areas for which targets and strategies are developed. Strategic priorities help determine how resources may be best allocated for the benefit of the institution and its stakeholders (Hinton).

The action plan delineates what will be done to achieve the desired future. It identifies strategic priorities and similar focus areas, goal statements, and strategies to be implemented.

An action plan identifies what will be done, by whom, when, and how. In addition, included in the plan are resources to be allocated and performance measures to be applied in determining progress made (Hinton, 2012; Lerner, 1999).

A planning committee that includes representatives of both internal and external stakeholders typically guides strategic planning at the institutional, college or department level. Luxton (2005) writes, “whatever the size of the institution and whoever the major players in the strategic planning process will be, a central committee is needed to coordinate the planning” (p. 13). By participating in the process, stakeholders provide valuable feedback pertinent to strengths, needs, opportunities, and threats to the institution. Getting faculty engaged at every phase of the process, particularly in the implementation phase, is critical (Lerner, 1999). Engagement provides “stakeholders the opportunity to understand the nature of the competing demands on resources” (Hinton, 2012, p. 27). Engagement coupled with clear communications helps stakeholders understand the rationale for decisions made. Engagement fosters confidence in what the IHE is doing to attain its vision and goals (Luxton). Overall, engaging stakeholders in the planning process ensures that their recommendations are considered and engenders their support and commitment (Hinton).

## **Principal Preparation**

In the United States, researchers in the field of educational leadership have affirmed that the capacity of leadership required by school and district leaders is highly dependent on the quality of their leadership preparation experiences (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007; Archer, 2005; Azzam, 2005; Hess, Kelly, 2005). Over the last five years, according to Michelle Young, Director of the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA, 2011), researchers in the field of educational leadership have made extraordinary advancement in acknowledging the features of university-based leadership preparation programs that are identified with effective leadership practice. Hence, increasing numbers of educational leadership programs, particularly those in UCEA institutions, are engaged in restructuring programs to demonstrate these new research findings and to create programs more efficacious for the leaders they prepare.

The Wallace Foundation supported six urban school districts to address the critical challenges of supplying schools with effective principals (Turnbull, Riley, & MacFarlane, 2015). The results of this policy study revealed steps school districts might consider as they engage in strengthening school leadership. Numerous researchers have suggested that one critical component of an exemplary principal preparation program should be the inclusion of field-based experiences in the program (Creighton, 2005; Lauder, 2000; Reams, 2010). However, other researchers have found that just increasing the amount of time spent in the field is not sufficient to create an effective principal; the activities must be of high quality, relevant to the future leader’s responsibilities, and well-structured (Bizzell & Creighton, 2010). Kersten, Trybus, and White (2009) suggest aligning the activities to professional standards. Such measures may be derived from state or organizational policy. Field experience activities have the greatest impact when incorporated continuously throughout the program, based on course content (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007). Darling-Hammond, et al., also stipulate that excellent program field-based activities help interns construct new knowledge, facilitate opportunities for deep reflection, and help interns link theory to practice by using actual real-world experiences within the school and community.

To add to the discourse, a 2006 survey by Public Agenda, a nonprofit research organization that reports public opinion and public policy issues, found that nearly two-thirds of principals believe that traditional graduate leadership programs “are out of touch” with today’s realities. Principal preparation programs place too much emphasis on lectures, theory, and not enough on the application (Martin & Papa, 2008). The Southern Regional Education Board (2005) stated that “traditional models of training principals are still out of sync with the challenges faced by today’s leaders” (p. 3). Therefore, it is prudent that principal preparation programs become more innovative and include extensive authentic coursework and field experiences (Orr, 2006).

The demand for a continuous increase in student achievement and school improvement has spawned much debate about whether leadership preparation programs have stayed abreast of the changing requirements of the field. Several studies have documented the lack of principal preparedness (Archer, 2005; Azzam, 2005; Hess, et al., 2005). In a 2003 survey, 67% of the administrators revealed that leadership training in schools of education did not develop them for their role as instructional leaders (Farkas, Johnson & Duffett, 2003). Again, in 2007, 69% of the principals shared the same sentiment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

The accountability requirements, both at the state and at the national level, with the No Child Left Behind legislation, also place tremendous pressure on principals to improve student achievement. In this era of high-stakes testing, the role of the principal has developed into one of an instructional leader (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). This new principal role is more defined in the area of instructional leadership, which includes expertise in instruction, curriculum, assessment, data analysis, and data-driven decision-making.

Baker et al., 2007, ascertain that the multitude of preparation programs currently available have no means of evaluating how well they are accomplishing their goals due to the lack of data and support for program improvement.

### **Method and Procedures**

The strategic planning process guided the researchers in determining data collection methods, analysis procedures, and needs identification. A mixed method approach was employed to determine the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents and suggestions from external program reviewers. The research design facilitated the collection and analysis of data by using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods to respond to the research problem (Creswell, 2012). Overall, this descriptive design allowed the researchers to review the attitudes, knowledge, and opinions of the survey participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The following section explains methods and procedures utilized for examining a university’s educational leadership preparation program.

### **Participants**

Participants in this mixed-method research included elementary, middle, and high school campus principals and assistant principals in six school districts along the Texas-Mexico border. These participants consisted of practicing university educational leadership program graduates. Out of 121 participants, 42 responded to the survey. The focus groups were composed of school

superintendents, central office staff, practicing principals and assistant principals representing all school levels, school board members, and business leaders.

## **Instrumentation**

*Survey.* A Likert-scale survey, which included one open-ended question was designed and used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The rating scale consisted of four choices: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. This survey was completed by practicing principals and assistant principals.

These data collection techniques suggest a mixed method approach for the study. Collectively, these data provided evidence about the research questions (Creswell, 2012). When one combines quantitative and qualitative data, it creates a potent complex mixture of a social phenomenon for study (Miles & Huberman, 2014; Greene, Benjamin, & Goodyear, 2001). This survey was completed by practicing principals and assistant principals.

*Focus Groups.* The researchers facilitated stakeholder focus groups on three, two and half-hours sessions. In the first session, participants were divided into small groups of six to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities. The responses were transcribed and grouped by the researchers. In the second group session, participants prioritized the challenges into focus areas and related goals. In the third session, participants were asked to review the strategies and actions to be implemented. At each session, participants worked in small groups and presented to the whole group for validation of their feedback.

## **Research Questions**

To address program needs, the researchers created the following research questions to guide the study:

1. What do program graduates who are practicing school administrators say about the principal preparation program in an IHE?
2. What do focus groups composed of stakeholders say about a principal preparation program in an IHE?
3. How does the process of strategic planning in IHEs inform the need for change in a principal preparation program?

**Quantitative data.** Surveys were sent to principals and assistant principals from 38 school districts along the Texas – Mexico border. Frequency counts were used to determine the administrators’ perceptions in various program areas addressed in the survey. The survey questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section contained 12 items and used a 4-point Likert-type scale to assess cognitive dimensions to identify educational gaps. Participants responded to 12 items by selecting one of four possible choices: *Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.*

**Qualitative data.** Data were collected from practicing principals and assistant principals by including one open-ended question on the survey. The open-ended question on the survey asked participants “How can the Department of Educational Leadership better prepare public school administrators?” Four questions guided the focus group Discussions. Those questions were:

- What are the strengths of the current program?

- What are the challenges experienced by the current program?
- What opportunities exist and what recommendations do you have for strengthening the current program?

One set of data consisted of the summarization of the responses to the open-ended question expressing understandings and insights from school administrators and their familiarity with the Department of Educational Leadership. The second set of data included the responses to the four questions asked in the focus group discussions. The researchers assembled the responses from the focus groups into strengths, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations. Responses to the questions were further analyzed and collated into themes based on similarity of intents as agreed upon by the focus group members. Each theme identified served as the basis for the goals addressed in the strategic plan.

## Results

Results of the two data sets collected are described in the following sections. The data gathered from surveys indicate perceptions of practicing principals and assistant principals. The data gathered from the focus group sessions yielded program strengths and challenges as well as opportunities and recommendations for improving the program.

The data from the survey responses are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Administrators' Responses to Questions on Survey*

SA	Percentage			A
	SD	D		
1. Admission criteria into the principal preparation program was rigorous	2.5	22.5	67.5	7.5
2. Prepared with knowledge of different programs to aid in student achievement	4.9	9.8	70.7	14.6
3. Prepared with knowledge about programs that educate the Rio Grande Valley student populations	7.3	19.5	56.1	17.1
4. Courses emphasize building interpersonal relationships and group process skills	10.0	12.5	50.0	27.5
5. Prepared to be a data-driven decision maker	10.0	25.0	42.5	22.5
6. Prepared to address the socio-cultural issues of English Language Learners and Economically Disadvantaged students	7.3	19.5	48.8	24.4

7. Prepared to be a curriculum and instructional leader	9.8	12.2	61.0	17.1
8. Prepared to apply the appropriate supervisory and leadership strategies to meet teachers needs best	4.9	17.1	58.5	19.5
9. Prepared on the function of staff development for continuous improvement	4.9	19.5	56.1	19.5
10. Equipped with knowledge of state and federal accountability systems	7.5	21.0	55.0	17.5
11. Your enrollment into the master's program was a result of recruitment by the Educational Leadership department	34.1	53.7	12.2	0
12. Your enrollment into the master's program was a result of a recommendation from a school administrator	19.5	26.8	26.8	26.8

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*SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree*

The data helped determine perceived program strengths. Program strengths were determined by totaling the percentage of responses indicating *strongly agree* and *agree*. To determine perceived program areas needing improvement, the percentage of responses indicating *strongly disagree* and *disagree* were totaled.

The top-ranked strength revealed by 85.3% of the participants was that program graduates were prepared with knowledge of different programs to aid in student achievement. The second-ranked strength identified by 78.1% of the participants was that program graduates were prepared to be a curriculum and instructional leaders. The third-ranked strength indicated by 78% of the participants was that program graduates were prepared to apply the appropriate supervisory and leadership strategies to meet teachers' needs.

Results revealed that 35.0% of the participants expressed program improvement was required in developing leaders to be data driven decision makers and 28.5% of the participants indicated the need in preparing leaders with knowledge of state and federal accountability systems. Furthermore, 26.8% of the participants indicated the need to address the socio-cultural issues of English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged students.

Items 11 and 12 were not intended to procure perceptions about the principal preparation program. The purpose of these questions was to determine potential factors that influenced enrollment in the program. Only 12.2% indicated the enrollment into the master's program was a result of recruitment by the Educational Leadership Department. In contrast, 53% reported the enrollment into the master's program was a result of a recommendation from a school administrator.

**Themes from Open-Ended Questions.** In addition to the 12 Likert-type survey items, practicing school administrators responded to one open-ended question at the end of the survey. The Course Preparation section summarizes the results of the open-ended question that asked respondents to provide suggestions on how the department could better prepare future school

leaders. Data were analyzed, and responses were divided into two themes: course preparation and pedagogy.

**Course preparation.** Respondents were complimentary of the program's faculty. Feedback received indicated that the "Educational Leadership Department is doing a marvelous job preparing public school leaders. Students are coming out of the program more prepared to assist and lead." The program faculty was perceived as being devoted to the program and supportive of students. One respondent stated, "Professors were devoted to teaching them."

**Pedagogy.** The faculty's experience was lauded as a program strength. Sharing real-life experiences by professors was perceived as a positive aspect of the program. One respondent commented, "Professors had a broad range of experiences as professors." A different respondent indicated that he/she "would have benefitted a lot more if the professor would have shared real-life experiences from scenarios they have dealt with as opposed to (hearing) from other students ... who have not been administrators before." Respondents indicated appreciation for program pedagogy as evidenced by the following comment. "I do appreciate the methodology, research-based practices, and training I received in the program."

Several pedagogical challenges were pointed out. Respondents indicated the program needed to increase its emphasis on instructional leadership, data-driven decision-making, instructional practices to address the needs of diverse learners, and field-based experiences.

About instructional leadership, a respondent stated, "there is a great need for instructional leaders in our schools. We need leaders in our schools that know all aspects of running a school, the managerial, and the instructional. We should be curriculum experts." Another indicated there is a need for a "heavy dose of instructional leadership and best practices" essential for creating more effective schools.

Survey responses indicated the need to prepare data-driven school leaders. One respondent stated, "The statistics course should be tailored to (help us) understand our state reports and how to use them for instructional curriculum decisions." Another respondent said, "More emphasis needs to be placed on knowing about PEIMS data and how it affects the campus." PEIMS is the state's Public Education Information Management System. A third respondent expressed the need to "prepare administrators by teaching them how to desegregate data that will drive instruction and assessment."

The urgency for the program to better address needs of diverse learners was also noted. Responses submitted by the participants indicated a need to "include using data to make instructional decisions to help close the achievement gap and provide a heavy dose (of strategies) for the creation of a positive school culture." The respondents also stated there is a need to better prepare candidates in special education "by informing them of programs such as 504, RTI, and dyslexia." A respondent also mentioned that inviting practicing school administrators to present about real-life experiences related to what is being taught in class would strengthen the program. One responded a need exists for the program to "include classes targeting the different instructional programs relevant to our student population. (Also needed is) an intense focus on the importance of creating a climate and culture that fosters organizational excellence."

Respondents commented that field-based experiences could be enhanced by "providing real-world opportunities through more rigorous mentor/mentee relationships and an inquiry-based internship." Another respondent also indicated the need for candidates to "work with the cooperating principal and his/her campus leadership team to desegregate data and map out instruction for the school." A respondent indicated that the program "could better prepare

candidates as public school administrators by allowing candidates to work in close collaboration with experienced school administrators and candidates get assigned a mentor that comes and observes them at least twice through the semester working on different administrator duties.”

### **Focus Group Sessions**

Distinct themes surfaced in the focus groups’ responses, which aided in answering the three focus group questions of the study.

**Strengths.** The focus group identified specific strengths of the education leadership department and its graduate program. Patterns emerged suggesting that the department’s faculty were experienced in school leadership, familiar with its local population and its culture, knowledge of the accountability systems for public schools and formed personal connections with students. The university’s proximity to and accessibility with the surrounding school districts was also cited as a strength.

The faculty’s knowledge of personal and cultural needs of both the graduate students and the local school districts was viewed as a positive aspect in program development. The “graduate program faculty’s ability to understand our graduate student on a personal level is a plus,” stated one focus group member. Another participant added the “program’s ability to be very familiar with the needs of local school districts helps in creating potential school leaders that are culturally responsive to the needs of local school students and school districts.”

**Challenges.** The focus groups voiced leadership skills that graduates needed to develop further while in the graduate program and several concerns that were programmatic in nature. Their responses produced the following themes, as priority needs:

- Prepare graduate students to have appropriate supervisory skills to meet teacher needs;
- Emphasize the building of interpersonal relationships and group process skills in curriculum coursework;
- Actively recruit potential graduate students at their place of employment;
- Prepare graduate students to be managers and instructional leaders in schools;
- Make the admission criteria into graduate program more rigorous; and
- Prepare graduate students to educate at-risk students such as English Language Learners, bilingual and special needs students.

Focus group members also voiced that the graduate program must meet the needs of the “technology savvy” students. One response was, “Develop all traditional graduate programs - Master’s in Educational Leadership, superintendent, and doctoral - into online programs.” Another response was, “Make graduate program courses more accessible across the geographical area and online.”

**Opportunities and Recommendations.** The focus group identified specific opportunities and recommendations for the education leadership department and its graduate program. Their responses produced the following suggestions:

- work closer with the local Regional Education Service Center;
- develop a better partnership with members of the K-12 Educational Community;
- create cohorts of school administrators in school districts;



- connect current students working on their Bachelor’s Degree in the Educational Leadership Program;
- continue to develop all programs (master’s, superintendent, and doctoral) coursework to an online program; and
- continue to develop administrators that are responsive to the unique demographics of students: English-language Learners (ELLs), the importance of being bilingual and bi-literate, and the importance of serving our special needs students.

### **Discussion**

The strategic planning process employed by this university was similar to strategic planning processes used by other Institutions of Higher Education. The process provided the Department of Educational Leadership faculty the opportunity to examine its institutional capacity by identifying strengths and areas that needed attention. Stakeholders comprised of superintendents, principals, district level administrators, school board members, and business community representatives were engaged throughout the process in providing valuable insights and recommendations.

The faculty received feedback from stakeholders to make changes in the program that would affect the development of school leaders. The outcome of this particular planning process was a strategic plan comprised of a mission statement that accentuates a commitment to improving leadership development and goals aimed at eliminating needs that were identified via the survey. Important outcomes that emerged were strategies and actions supported and strengthened by recommendations procured from surveys and focus groups, resources and funds required for implementation, and formative and summative measures essential for monitoring progress made and determining program effectiveness.

The mission statement and goals provide direction and serve as catalysts for the strategies and actions identified. Hence, presented next is a synopsis of the department’s mission statement and goals. “The mission of the Department of Organization and School Leadership is to continuously improve leadership development through teaching, research, and service that includes the cultural and linguistic history of the Texas-Mexico border.” The goals identified are listed below:

1. Develop and implement rigorous criteria that will ensure identification of highly qualified candidates;
2. Develop a marketing plan for recruiting;
3. Develop a systemic, broad-based planning, research and evaluation process, the ongoing pursuit of departmental effectiveness and continuous improvement among programs (Master, Principalship, Superintendent, and Doctoral) services and personnel;
- 4a. Develop capacity to implement instructional strategies that will enhance student technical, personal/interpersonal, and process skills;
- 4b. Develop leaders who can lead schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;
5. Create university - district partnerships for enhancing leadership effectiveness and conducting investigations of educational policies, practices, and issues that are of importance to the university, districts, and the educational community;
6. Evaluate the principal preparation program continuously to ensure candidates are prepared to lead schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; and

## 7. Host an Annual International Critical Issues Leadership Conference.

The creation of university and school district partnerships to enhance leadership development was one of the most significant goals of the strategic plan. The success of these partnerships was the creation of a diverse pool of talented professionals committed to collaborating with each other for needed change. Perhaps the greatest challenge was gaining the commitment of districts to engage in partnerships specifically designed to help districts build their leadership capacity. These partnerships provide aspiring leaders' real-life, district-based field experiences that will assist them to become successful change agents.

The school districts and the university benefitted from the strategic plan in that a stronger and more talented pool of candidates will be admitted to the leadership program thus creating a higher caliber of prospective principals. Because of the strategic planning process, a stronger relationship between the schools and the educational department was created. The IHE and districts served have a vested interest in developing school leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary for leading schools that meet the needs of diverse learners.

Implementation of a strategic planning process that utilizes "strategic thinking" was essential for bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders to determine strengths, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for developing a strategic plan. The planning process provided the department of educational leadership a venue to re-establish trust and credibility with its stakeholders. Praiseworthy was the stakeholders' willingness to engage in a one-year strategic planning process that required open and honest discussions essential to recreating the principal preparation program. Moreover, after this one-year process, these stakeholders agreed to serve on the department's leadership council to support, monitor, and adjust the strategic plan over the next five years.

## Conclusion

In this study, researchers employed a mixed-method approach to gather data and ascertain the effectiveness of a principal preparation program. Also, a strategic planning process was utilized to develop a strategic plan that addresses the needs expressed by its stakeholders. As a result of this process, the educational leadership department re-established trust and credibility with its stakeholders. A significant outcome of the process was the formation of a leadership advisory committee to maintain relationships created and to elicit feedback for continuous improvement. The strategic planning process resulted in the following actions being implemented to enhance the principal preparation program: (1) new admissions criteria; (2) increased marketing and recruitment; (3) improved scheduling for program accessibility; (4) revised program curriculum (5) created university – school district partnerships; (6) committed to a program evaluation for continuous improvement; and (7) establish an annual international critical issues leadership conference.

The stakeholder feedback was aligned to the latest research and best practices espoused by the features of the UCEA Model for Principal Preparation. Areas one through six is consistent with the features of the UCEA Model for Principal Preparation that is associated with effective leadership practices (Baker et al., 2007). Action seven emerged in response to the need to keep educational leaders abreast of major trends and issues affecting education.

This study enabled the department's faculty to celebrate strengths and proactively address needs and challenges that compelled the department to review and revise its educational

leadership preparation program. The strategic planning process employed by this Department of Educational Leadership provides valuable insights that inform and facilitate the work of faculty in IHEs who are responsible for preparing school leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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# Automatically Discounted: Using Black Feminist Theory to Critically Analyze the Experiences of Black Female Faculty

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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*Black female faculty (BFF) automatically face a number of (un)conscience struggles as they enter into the academy as junior faculty. As a result, there is often a sense of burnout and over-compensation to mitigate the oppressive experiences related to race and gender. This article conceptualizes a thorough review of the literature of the struggle that many BFF contend with in institutions of higher education. The authors emphasize the importance of studying the role BFF can play in transforming and diversifying the culture and climate of these institutions, in order to increase awareness and access to other BFF in the academy.*

*Keywords: Higher Education, Black Feminism, Female Faculty, African American*

The exclusion and marginalization of African American women in the academy is well documented from historical and contemporary perspectives. In the fall of 2013, of all post-secondary degree-granting institutions, only 6% of faculty were Black (NCES, 2014). Although the numbers are not disaggregated by gender, the number of full time Black women represented would be far less than 6% of all faculty working in 2013. In addition to paltry numbers, Black women in institutions of higher education are less likely to be hired, continue in tenure track positions, or receive promotions (McCray, 2011). Much of the research regarding faculty in higher education is focused primarily on race and ethnicity. Few studies in comparison have reported information about faculty that is gender specific for races other than white (Dace, 2012; Gutierrez, Niemann, Gonzalez, & Harris, 2012; Croom & Patton, 2011; Turner Kelly & McCann, 2013; 2014).

However, African American women have a unique perspective of educational and social injustices due to their positioning in society. Many African Americans are still confronted with issues, such as racism and discrimination, as they pursue careers in higher education. When the additional minority status of female is attached, the issues are compounded. African American women are struggling to navigate discriminatory practices related to gender and ethnicity in institutions, including higher education.

The political climate of many higher education settings are dominated by cultures that have not been socialized to account for the unique position of Black women. As a result, many in the academy automatically discount the standpoint of the African American woman and the benefit their unique perspectives can bring to the institution (Horsford, 2012). Namely, women tend to be transformational and collaborative (Herrera, 2012). Here, we explore how African American women navigate and transform the social structure of the ivory tower when confronted with the “double bind” reality of being female and of color. Through that exploration, we conceptualize the role and socialization of African American women in academia as discussed in extant literature.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the literature regarding the holistic experiences of Black female faculty (BFF) in academia through the lens of Black Feminist Theory. The authors illuminate the biases that affect Black women regarding cultural and gender identification. In order to encourage and support African American women in the academy, one must understand their unique standpoint at the university level. A thorough analysis of the literature will highlight themes and gaps in the research regarding the effects of race and gender in the academy, specifically within the context of historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs). In addition, it will inform the educational community of future research that will add to the body of literature regarding this subject.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Black feminists engaged in specific feminism rhetoric in the mid-nineteenth century, but it was not until the 1970s the term Black feminism was coined. These feminists made the case that socially and politically Black women have to deal with the concept of the “double bind” which refers to being Black and being a woman. More recently, Black feminists have expanded the notion to include issues of class and sexuality, in addition to race and gender. Each of these social identities place the Black woman in the position to fight not just one status, but the intersectionality of all labels that lead to discrimination (Salzman, 2006).

Black feminist theory is characterized by some very specific ideologies, as it relates to the justice movements for African Americans and for women. For instance, the civil rights movement, led predominately by men, effectively and tirelessly fought for Black rights as a racial minority while largely ignoring the rights and needs of women who were a part of the same movement. Conversely, the popular feminist movement that took hold in the sixties and seventies sought to fight gender discrimination in a manner that ignored the unique needs of minority women in regards to equality. Thus, two of the most important civil rights movements at the intersection of race and gender essentially excluded the needs and ultimately the voice of Black women (Salzman, 2006).

Hill Collins (2000) effectively added to the dialogue of Black feminism by fostering a fundamental shift in the paradigm of oppression. She has conceptualized the notion that the many systems of oppression are interlocked as opposed to additive. For African American women pursuing a career, they must contend with possible racism that their White counterparts do not experience and sexism that their male counterparts will not contend with. This situation makes a very different journey from others in the position that are affected by race or gender solely. Therefore, minority women view the world from an intersected positionality of both race and gender (Collins, 1998), but are often faced with the choice of dedicating themselves to one cause or the other, rather than both (Crenshaw, 1993; Roane & Newcomb, 2013). As a result, the Black feminist standpoint, can be seen as divisive leading to “tensions Black feminists experience with both Black men and white society at large...” (Taylor, 2014, p .33). Salzman (2006) explained,

Furthermore, Black feminists have resisted for generations the separatism of their white feminist counterparts who have not traditionally included racism and classism as part of the women’s rights agenda while simultaneously questioning the patriarchal beliefs of their African-American male leaders who often choose to ignore sexism in the fight for racial justice. (p. 758)

Therefore, the journey to eliminate sexism, racism, and classism should not be the fight for Black women, but should be entangled in the fight for social justice for all people. (Salzman, 2006). The standpoint of the Black feminist is one that must encompass and embrace the intersectionality of women whose social construct is filtered through a dual lens that is minoritized from race and gender standpoints. This complex duality frames the way in which extant literature on Black female faculty members is critically analyzed and discussed.

## **Literature Review**

Experiences of Black female faculty members (BFF) in academia comprise a growing body of scholarship from an interdisciplinary perspective (Bonner, 2001; Croom & Patton, 2011; Davis & Reynolds, 2011; Edwards, 2015; Guy-Sheftall, 2006; Hinton, 2010; Patton & Catching, 2009; Sule, 2014; Turner Kelly & McCann, 2013, 2014). As efforts to diversify the professoriate continually increase, it is important to document difficulties and successes faced by faculty of color as they navigate the complex terrain of academe. Equally important in documentation of these experiences is that certain voices do not become invisible under umbrella terms like “faculty of color” and “women” (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wong, 2011, as cited in Turner Kelly & McCann, 2013). Illuminating nuanced experiences of those occupying multiple minoritized identities is crucial to the deconstruction of hegemonic practices and policies in the academy that



are pervasive (Croom & Patton, 2012). The review of literature will discuss the marginalized experiences Black female faculty endure through the tenure and promotion process. The authors then examine socialization processes as it relates to the campus climate for Black female faculty before discussing empirical studies that focus on these issues in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Finally, the authors will conclude with a critical discussion of implications for this population and how future research should focus on these experiences in specific institution types.

### **Marginalization of Black Female Faculty Members**

Extant literature paints a tough picture of academic experiences for Black female faculty members. Primarily defined by marginalization, BFF persist through a multitude of difficult circumstances compounded by the intertwining elements of race and gender. When both social identities are considered, the alarmingly low numbers of Black female faculty exacerbate the difficulties due to lack of community. Croom and Patton (2012) discuss how the dearth of Black women at the level of full professor exposes them to dangerous “racially toxic environments that act as the catalyst for their numerical underrepresentation, as well as their invisibility” (p. 16). Hinton (2009) delineates aspects of tokenism, completing extra work, and invisibility as significant to the BFF experience. The result of managing such difficulties can manifest in what Padilla (1994) calls cultural taxation, or fatigue from having to take on extra tasks such as serving on committees to represent “diversity.” The inherent contradiction in taking on extra tasks to be the tokenized representative of all things diverse is that it often results in invisibility because the task is completed for appearances only. In other words, while intending to make a meaningful contribution when serving in this capacity, their suggestions often go unacknowledged, reminding them that it is not their engagement in the work that matters, so much as their simple representation to keep up the appearance of diversity and inclusion.

Hirshfield and Joseph (2012) build on Padilla’s concept of cultural taxation by focusing on the specific difficulties faced by BFF as it relates to the intersections of race and gender. Identity taxation “encompasses how other marginalized identities may result in additional non-academic service commitments for other faculty” (p. 213). In addition to being overburdened by service demands, BFF are often thought of as “mothering figures” wherein they are placed in a nurturing role that goes well beyond the expectations of a typical advising relationship (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012). The implications for tenure and promotion are significant since these nurturing responsibilities (and the identity fatigue that accompanies) come in addition to, rather than instead of, the other responsibilities associated with advising.

A number of empirical studies focus on broader minoritized populations, such as Black faculty members of two genders (Patton & Catching, 2009), or female faculty specifically, but of multiple races and ethnicities (excluding White) (Turner Kelly & McCann, 2013, 2014). Patton and Catching examine experiences of 13 Black faculty members teaching in graduate programs in higher education and student affairs. Through application of the powerful metaphor of “driving while Black”, they describe factors influencing experiences of Black faculty in these programs including lack of respect, having to defend credentials, having teaching skills questioned, and challenges with diversity courses (p. 718). In a longitudinal study of three women of color faculty who departed their tenure-track positions, Turner Kelly and McCann (2014) found that racialized tokenization and isolation, a need for more in-depth mentoring, and

poor institutional fit significantly impacted their experience (p. 681). Clarity of role, self-efficacy, and social acceptance are also documented challenges emerging from the same longitudinal study conducted by Turner Kelly and McCann (2013).

Managing social acceptance amidst feelings of tokenization and isolation contributes to the practice of “shifting” or changing voices, attitudes, and postures to meet the cultural codes of workday America (Hinton, 2009, p. 397). Navigating social perceptions for BFF is important due to a pervasive stereotype of being an *angry Black woman* when voice is used to express any level of dissent on an issue. While the same dissent expressed by a person with dominant identities may be seen as standing up for their beliefs and desires, it is often seen as complaining, defensive, or intimidating for Black female faculty members. These specific aspects of marginalization highlight the complexity of being a Black woman in academia, and how the heavy burdens of cultural and identity taxation are both fully present and likely hazardous to the mental, physical, and professional wellbeing of this population.

Marginalization and difficulty are not the only defining factors of the Black female faculty experience. Despite many obstacles, current research documents the ways in which this population persists to find professional success (Dowdy, 2008; Gaetane, 2006; Hinton, 2014; Howard-Baptiste & Harris, 2014; Sule, 2014). Creating community on the margins with other Black female faculty members (Hinton, 2009), and using agency to strategically transform institutional norms (Sule, 2014) are two ways in which BFF find success in academia. Turner Kelly and McCann (2014) discuss the helpful aspect of intrusive mentoring, and how it plays a significant role in the success of BFF in promotion and tenure. Interventions such as research boot camps and “sister networks” address many of the aforementioned challenges facing Black women in tenure-track positions (Davis & Bertrand Jones, 2011). Edwards, Beverly, and Alexander-Snow (2011) found that Black female faculty define success as a journey, marked with publishing and giving back to the community. It is thus important to acknowledge the resilient nature of BFF that allows them to overcome the many obstacles present in academia. However, equally important is the warning against embracing the mythical image of the “*strongBlackwoman*,” as it further marginalizes and creates consequences for Black women (Hinton, 2009, p. 396). A fine line must be tread in acknowledging barriers and success for Black Female Faculty.

## **The HBCU Context**

To date, most of the research addressing Black women in academia is contextualized in the environment of predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Less present is attention to socialization processes for Black women at HBCUs. Edwards (2014) investigates Christian privilege for Black female faculty at HBCUs and problematizes the ability for these institutions to provide “an uncommon space of authenticity, while simultaneously supporting a privileged system that could silence different religiously-identified students” (p. 263). Jean-Marie (2006) captured the historical experiences of three Black female administrators at HBCUs and also highlighted the powerfulness of agency in the pursuit of success. However, studies examining faculty experiences for Black women in this institution type are fewer and far between. Bonner (2001) discusses the difficulty in addressing issues of gender inequity and discrimination at HBCUs because these schools have long been considered laudable institutions through which the

consequences of racism and discrimination were subverted to provide social, economic, and political advances for the Black community.

However, acknowledging these important contributions made by HBCUs, should not also negate the important issue of highlighting the “significant pressures related to gender for Black women in these particular U.S. academic settings” (Bonner, 2001, p. 181). In a study on the experiences of Black women (faculty and administrators) at a large HBCU, Bonner found significant fear among participants in responding to the survey, which suggested a “lack of comfort this group of HBCU women had about answering some of the questions posed” (Bonner, 2001, p. 179). Also significant was the 45% of respondents reporting the experience of gender discrimination. The study revealed a bifurcation in race and gender that presents itself in the context of the HBCU because Black women must often set aside the struggle for gender equality to fight the larger issue of racial discrimination (Bonner, 2001, p. 189).

Although Bonner called for more research to address the intersections of being Black and female at HBCUs 10 years ago, we have not seen a proliferation of this topic in extant literature. Here, we reiterate the importance of further nuancing research on female faculty of color to focus on these issues in HBCUs specifically. As a follow up to this conceptual article, we are currently designing a qualitative research study to capture socialization experiences of BFF at HBCUs. Doing so may provide more asset-based literature for these institutions, while also allowing a very scarcely covered topic to be better understood and visible. We now move to a discussion of our synthesis of extant literature regarding BFF experiences in academia.

## Discussion

After reading numerous studies on experiences of Black female faculty members, an apparent concept emerged through the multiple aspects of marginalization often experienced by this population. It seems that Black female faculty are automatically discounted on a number of levels in academia. An automatic discount is assumed on credibility, collegiality (the “angry Black woman” stereotype), sufficient credentials, ability to teach effectively, and make valuable contributions in committee work. The discount can also come in the form of fiscal allocations, as BFF are often asked to take on more tasks and responsibilities for less pay. Therefore, the automatic discount is two-fold, in that institutions receive a discounted price for a faculty member to have a fuller plate than others, and BFF experience a chilly campus and academic department climate due to this automatic discounting that is both pervasive organizationally and (un)consciously enacted by colleagues, students, and other stakeholders in higher education.

The resilience with which Black women persist through being automatically discounted is courageous and problematic at the same time. In addition to identity and cultural taxation (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; Padilla, 1994), Black women must work to not only prove their capabilities, *but to also disprove automatic discounts* that assume an inability to perform well as a scholar, teacher, and colleague. The struggle is thus complex and not singular in nature due to the double bind (Hill Collins, 2000) of being both female and Black. While it is important to highlight the unrelenting strength inherent within persistence in the academy, it is dangerous not to also acknowledge that this persistence against several discounts generates significant damage to the minds, bodies, and spirits of Black female faculty members. At some point, the process of working to disprove becomes so automatic that the negative assumptions may become internalized in that BFF are unable to separate that which they work against from what they

believe about their own abilities. Said differently, by fighting against the automated behavior imposed on them from the start, BFF may automatically begin to discount themselves, getting lost in the pervasive messages and actions that significantly influence their everyday experiences. If Black female faculty can resist this internalized oppression than their plight in academia is three-fold: fighting to prove their worth, fighting to disprove automatic discounts, and fighting to resist the internalization of automatic discounts. And while there are many BFF who both persevere through this tripartite interlocking struggle, there are many who may not. Those that do, do so with significant implications from mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing standpoints (Hinton, 2009; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012). Although this has been well documented for Black female faculty in PWIs, a gap of research remains regarding BFF experiences in HBCUs and how the double bind of being Black and female manifests in these institutions.

### **Conclusion**

The review of the literature shows a noticeable absence regarding research looking at Black female faculty in HBCU's. This is a topic that needs to be more thoroughly addressed because HBCUs are an important employer of Black women faculty. An analysis of the role the Black female faculty play in historically Black colleges and universities will foster a nuanced understanding of the sociopolitical climate at these institutions. In addition, the research will also lay a foundation for Black women to understand how their role affects matriculation through the tenure process and promotion to leadership positions in various institutional types.

More research is needed to investigate the current realities that face Black female faculty at historically Black colleges and universities, where many women face the *double bind* status in regards to promotion and tenure. HBCUs are in the unique position where the cultural ties of ethnicity are the status quo as opposed to being the minority. After reviewing extant literature on experiences of Black female faculty members, the questions remain:

Does gender play a more significant role than race when looking at the socialization of BFF in HBCUs? Or, in situations where Black females are not the ethnic minority, do Black women stereotypes still prevent women from advancement?

The authors hope to address such questions in the aforementioned proposed research study of Black female faculty in HBCUs.

A thorough review of the literature still shows that Black women are contending with many issues that are preventing the same success enjoyed by other faculty members of a different gender and/or race. These issues are characterized by fighting to prove their worth, disprove stereotypes, and maintain the self-efficacy necessary to persist through the automatic discounts that are pervasive. However, despite these issues that inevitably create a heavy burden for Black female faculty, many still thrive in academia, particularly in different institution types. It is thus important that more research is conducted to address the needs of Black female faculty, specifically in HBCUs. As a result, Black women may empower each other and create a space for Black feminism that continues to address these unique issues faced by Black females in the academy.

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