Culturally Relevant Practices and Community: Increasing Minority Leadership in School Administration to Improve School Climate

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Culturally Relevant Practices and Community: Increasing minority Leadership in school administration to improve School Climate

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Chapter I
Introduction

Background of Study

Gaps and disparities are common in the American educational system (Adams et al. 2012, p. 12.). The achievement gap is one of the most common elements of disparities (Hanuschek et al., 2019, p. 16). Students who are most vulnerable to the achievement gap experience disparities that could include but are not limited to low socioeconomic status, gender, race and ethnicity, gender, and lower grades on standardized test scores.

African American children’s academic and behavioral outcomes are depressed relative to those of White children because African American children disproportionately come from low-income families, it is generally understood that the disadvantaged social and economic conditions from which many of these children come to school predict these depressed outcomes (Morsey, 2019, P.4). These depressed outcomes include disciplinary action, reduced gifted and talented assignment, problems with attendance, and school dropout as possible behavioral outcomes.

Poorer academic achievement leads to inequity in markers of adult success (such as educational attainment and occupational status), which leads to enduring poverty, mental health disorder and possible criminal activity (Slominski et al., 2011, p. 320).

Minority students are subjected to disadvantaged education experiences. By definition, the achievement gap, “gaps occur when one group of students grouped by race/ethnicity,
gender outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020, p.2).

It is important for culturally relevant approaches to be implemented to ensure students have a positive experience in schools which we hope will ultimately lead to better academic performance and improved behavioral outcomes. Educators should be aware of current research, “Culture and poverty have proven to be significant barriers to equitable education for students from culturally linguistic or diverse backgrounds (CLD) backgrounds. When they intersect with disability, the barriers can appear insurmountable. Every aspect of these students’ schooling experiences (e.g., placement, completion rates, disciplines referral, suspension, expulsion, post school outcomes) has been proven inequitable to their White counterparts with and without disabilities” (Brown, 2019 p. 304).

As a concept, culturally relevant pedagogy garners attention because these practices are probably needed in classrooms and communities. “An increasing amount of evidence shows that alignment in the racial or ethnic identity of teachers and students is associated with a range of positive student outcomes, from test scores to disciplinary actions to teacher expectations. Due to the underrepresentation of teachers of color in the current workforce, minority students stand to disproportionately benefit from efforts to increase teacher diversity” (Hansen, 2018, P.1). Representation in schools matters, the diversity and makeup of the student body should be reflected in the staff that serves students, There is research by Hansen that suggests that minority students will benefit directly from a diverse school staff, “because minority students tend to benefit uniquely from diverse teachers, teachers of color will be most beneficial in schools serving large
numbers of minority students. Thus, any new teachers of color are often steered whether covertly or overtly toward high-minority schools” (Hansen, 2018, P.1). The inequities present in the American school system are made known as the issues of intentional efforts aimed at increasing diversity and representation in schools are scarce and often completely absent from schools. “Taken to an extreme, given the tenacious grip of racial segregation on America’s schools, we could have a school system where the teacher workforce is every bit as diverse as its students—and perhaps every bit as segregated” (Hansen, 2018, p.3.)

In this study, we define culturally relevant practices as the actions and pedagogy rooted in any teacher’s ability to display cultural awareness and appropriately communicate in cross-cultural or multicultural settings, “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a pedagogical framework that grounds and informs every aspect of a teacher's practice” (Escudero, 2019, p. 129). This type of approach should be included in an educators daily practices across all grade levels. “Students entering pre K–12 schools in the United States should expect to be treated equitably, to have qualified teachers who can meet their educational (academic and behavioral) needs, and to be prepared to enter a global society in which they are able to contribute” (Brown, 2019 p. 304). Teachers and other community practitioners using this method encourage all students and community members to relate course content to his or her cultural context.

1. Teachers who use Culturally Relevant Practices (CRP) can be more likely to help Black students succeed both academically and behaviorally
“Having a diverse administrative staff within a school environment can improve relations and climate among Black students. The quality of a school’s leadership is key to its performance and the opportunities it provides” (Grissom, 2019, p. 210).

2. Having a diverse administrative staff has the potential to improve relations and climate among Black students.

One can consider that proper training in culturally relevant practices is beneficial to teachers and administrators of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Teacher education with a critical agenda intends to tap into the political, ethical, and emancipatory dimensions of teaching. Primarily grounded in the works of Paulo Freire, critical teacher education intends to prepare teachers who are empowered to transform the unjust status quo; teachers who can play an active social role by creating the context for positive action and by drawing the attention of their students to the less privileged. With a heightened awareness of their professional roles and identity which incorporates the social, cultural, and political realities of their environment, teachers are both able and willing to explore possibilities for change. (Sardabi, 2018, p.618)

3. Proper training for teachers in CRP is beneficial.

All educational practitioners have the potential to become functional and efficient in culturally relevant practices. “As the demographics of urban schools in the U.S. continues to shift, teachers must be equipped with the cultural knowledge and pedagogical skills to teach and understand culturally diverse immigrant students’ life
experiences inside and outside school to help meet their educational needs” (Kumi-Yeboah, 2021 p.220).

“...teachers must understand, value, the cultural knowledge, rich cultural diversity, and different educational experiences that Black immigrants students bring to school, and use culturally relevant instructional methods to help them participate in the learning process.” (Kumi-Yeboah, 2021p.220)

4. Determine if culturally relevant instructional methods are critical to success.

It is essential that all students witness representation of their cultures, race, and ethnicities in the classroom and also with the staff and faculty members within the school. Culture, heritage, and symbolism of Black students is rationed and to the discretion of the decision makers or people in power, who are usually White. If students do not feel supported and empowered, they are not likely to do well. “Within diverse student environments, there can be unconscious interactions, which foil a student's ability to be successful. As such, it is imperative to diminish micro aggressions and to advocate for an environment, which supports micro affirmations” (Samuels, 2020, p. 300). We have had our personal encounters with the disheartening realities in our education system. As a team of two African American women, one elementary school teacher, and one middle school administrator, we have personally experienced incidents where we were made to feel inferior in a school setting. These biases can appear as either implicit or explicit. For example, people in a meeting who are Black are assumed to need extra explanations whereas people who are White do not receive the same experience. These encounters can
be explicit and are communicated to students through curriculum, disciplinary policies, and pedagogy between students and staff.

In summary, our research explores these propositions:

1. Teachers who use Culturally Relevant Practices (CRP) are more likely to help Black students succeed both academically and behaviorally.

2. Having a diverse administrative staff has the potential of improving relations and climate among Black students.

3. Proper training for teachers in CRP is beneficial for Black students.

4. Culturally Relevant Instructional Methods are critical to Black students’ success.

The purpose of our research is to reveal the relationship among school culture and climate and having increased diversity in thinking, training, and among educators and leaders in public schools. It is to provide data from student surveys that give insight into the positive effect of having diverse leadership in buildings. Additionally, it is also important to address the needs of diverse demographics of leadership in the school setting. Diversity is often a topic for deep conversation. Culturally relevant practices are a focus of our research; another focus is that there is a deficit of minority educators, and leaders in education.
This research will explore the trauma and detriments resulting from deficiency of minority representation in educational settings and propose meaningful solutions, as well as the tremendous significance of Culturally Relevant Practices as well as teacher training in those Practices and Culturally Relevant Instructional Methods. Understanding the overwhelmingly negative stigma associated with Black people in St. Louis, the opportunity to shift the narrative is available by implementing more minority leaders and teachers in academic settings to foster positive relationships and improve perceptions. In an effort to have sufficient data to back our research, we will use, in part, an SEL, Social and Emotional Learning Data Survey that was given to all students at a local middle school in the St. Louis, Missouri area. This data set will encompass the findings from March 2020 to March 2021. During this time, a local middle school added a Black female administrator as an Assistant Principal. These middle schools had never in their 25 year plus existence had a minority person on their leadership staff. Although the school has over 700 White students it also has roughly 70 Black students, 60 of whom reside in the city of St. Louis and are bused in. The survey has approximately 845 responses all of whom are students of middle school. Tracking this data may give some insight into the relevance of having a Black administrator and demonstrate through numbers if the presence of the Black administrator has a positive effect on the student body.

**Problem Statement**
Professional development is often built around the topic to equip educators with the tools to be effective and inclusive in the classroom. Literature and discourse stem from this topic yet we are still missing the mark. Noticeable disparities impact minorities, and they are the most vulnerable to inequities. Deficits in achievement, attendance, and socioeconomic status are indicators of these inequities (Hanushek, 2019, p.8).

These circumstances are crucial from a student standpoint, and many minority students do not perceive their teachers as being supportive or culturally responsive (Thomas-Richmond & O’Quinn, 2018, pp. 54).

Point 1. Teachers who use Culturally Relevant Practices (CRP) are more likely to help Black students succeed both academically and behaviorally.

Point 4. Culturally Relevant Instructional Methods can be critical to success.

(Geiger 2018 p.2) points out that the demographics of educators are not as diverse as their students. “Racial and ethnic minorities accounted for 20% of all public elementary and secondary school teachers according to the data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). That makes teachers considerably less racially and ethnically diverse than their students-as well as the nation as a whole” (Geiger, 2018 p.2).

Point 2. Having a diverse administrative staff has the potential of improving relations and climate among Black students.

This suggests that school districts need to hire and retain administrators of color who will serve a multicultural student demographic with the goal of having a direct and
positive impact on removing or reducing educational inequities, resulting in better academic achievement. Moreover, policy makers need to understand the importance of, and engage in decisions about principal and teacher preparation programs that will address the necessity of providing quality education for all students by implementing processes to recruit, train, and infuse leaders into a diverse school system.

Point 3. Proper training for teachers in CRP is beneficial and helpful.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed method research is to reveal the perspective of teachers and administrators through qualitative narrative research interviews of hiring practices and culturally relevant practices and to examine the quantitative results of an SEL survey in the St. Louis Missouri area with respect to data that is taken from over 800 students that tracks, climate, safety, academic progress and feeling welcome.

Many public schools will continue to have a large population of minority students and there could then be a disparity of minority teachers and leaders available for these students. Bringing awareness to this shortage of leaders and then putting systems in place to hire additional African American teachers and administrators could help improve student perceptions and improve school climate, as measured by the standardized SEL test, described in more detail in Chapter Three.
Research Questions

The questions that will be addressed in this research study are:

1.) To what extent does having diverse leaders in the school administration improve school culture and climate as explained by SEL reports?

2.) What negative implications are students susceptible to when they are not represented culturally, racially, or ethnically in their classrooms or buildings as it relates to their ability to engage in their education and in their life choices as explained by the SEL reports and interviews with teachers?

3.) What reasons do decision makers in school districts give for their difficulties in attracting, hiring, and retaining minority teachers and leaders in their buildings?

Theory of Change Model

![Theory of Change Model Diagram]
This model demonstrates how coupling culturally relevant practices with school leaders from diverse backgrounds can lead to improved school climate and student outcomes if effectively implemented.

In order to reach the improved school climate and student outcomes, our literature will first give historic and cultural background information that will provide context for present issues such as the dynamics of the Black family and other mothering, as well as contemporary issues. Our research will look deeply into the data that is collected from the student surveys to examine if CRP has a positive effect. When examining the impact that culturally relevant practices and diverse leadership will have on the Black community, we will discuss pre-service teacher preparation programs in Chapter Five.

Lastly, we will delve into the need for diverse administration and explain the current issues in education research and leadership.
Chapter II.

Review of Literature

Introduction

Researchers are seeking to define the importance of aligning classroom experiences with students' home culture in efforts to enhance social, academic and cultural enrichment of all children.

In the early childhood learning environments, there is an increase in the diversity of identities and cultures represented. On this basis, there should be a shift in the way in which we direct these children to interface and embrace with identities that differ from their own. The effect of culturally relevant teaching practices should begin at a very early age. The defining determinants of what is culturally relevant and effective seem to be conditional. Implementation of these pedagogical practices and strategies in children during early childhood learning experiences can serve as a catalyst for future positive academic progress. Early onset of this type of critical pedagogy will refine and evolve as children age; these methods and outcomes described within the article would potentially be synonymous with a culturally responsive learning environment that would also transcend in home life and community external to school and classroom.
Literature Concerning Research Question 1

1.) To what extent does having diverse leaders in the school administration improve school culture and climate as explained by SEL reports?

We believe that diversity in school leadership can lead to improved school climate through culturally relevant practices. Having Black leaders is a culturally relevant practice but there are other culturally relevant practices and some of them will be discussed in chapter four. Culturally relevant practices are multifaceted subjects with layers of intersectionality. The culturally relevant methods are typically introduced in academic settings yet the importance and need for these types of conversations and practices are applicable to the community as well. The student population of American schools has always been culturally diverse whether the schools are situated in the east or southwest. Even schools that are from a predominant racial group are representative of a variety of cultures. A group such as African Americans, whom many Americans assume are monolithic have long included persons of mixed ancestry to include Afro-Latinos, Afro-Asians and other persons of mixed heritage.

The school climate is based on how relationships are fostered throughout the building. One of the key factors in relationship building is drawing commonalities. Visibility and intentional efforts to make the learning environment inclusive is an important culturally relevant practice.

Diverse leadership is powerful in aiding the processes of culture responsiveness and cultural tolerance because it offers an additional perspective. Social and emotional makeup of a school can be directly linked to the efforts made by districts and schooling
systems to add diverse leaders while simultaneously implementing culturally relevant practices, “Although some schools might have greater challenges with diversity than other schools, all must recognize an increasing diversity within their respective communities, states, and the nation as a whole” (Gardiner, 2015). The United States as a nation is shifting to a nation of minorities in regard to demographics. These shifts can be witnessed in the classroom, “More than half of students attending public schools identify as minorities” (Schaeffer, December 2021).

Tasking the spread of culturally relevant pedagogy does not shift the responsibility of inclusion solely upon the teacher, but it would also hold students accountable for their interactions in the classroom community as well due to early fostering of such practices. “When planning for critical literacy with a social justice emphasis, teachers should consider the following principles of critical literacy: challenge assumptions and values, explore multiple perspectives, examine differences in relationships of power and reflect on ways to take action on social issues.” (Bennett, Gunn, and Gayle-Evans, 2018, p.244) This is a notion that at early stages, students can develop a socio-political consciousness and look through a broader lens. This article speaks to using culturally relevant pedagogy in early onset to empower the youths and leaders and decision makers. Schools should serve as the initial touchpoint wherein students are immersed in the pedagogical practices that will be most pertinent when they are outside of academic context and engaging with the community.
Empowering students with the relevant toolset at a young age can establish them as mentors in their community, equipping them with the ability to become social advocates for civil liberties, this can lead to positive outcomes because they are able to effect change.

Culturally relevant teaching practices are very important in classroom and community settings. There is no shortage of research that proposes that elements of culture and curriculum must intertwine to successfully provide students with equitable and representative access to education. However, the culture training and professional development are usually teacher centered. Research conducted by Christy Byrd sought to provide students’ insight on their perception of the culturally inclusive learning environments.

This research seeks to define the relationship between cultural inclusivity and academic successes, “Culturally relevant teaching centers students’ culture in teaching practice through three primary approaches, high expectations, promoting cultural competence, and promoting critical consciousness.” (Byrd, 2016, p.1)

If students are represented and assured of their visibility when they are learning they are likely to be more successful and strive more academically based on the relevant content. Student perspectives must be considered when broaching a volatile topic of culturally relevant practices, if not implemented correctly the effects can be damaging to the student and discourage them for the future academic and social progression.
Literature Concerning Research Question 2

What negative implications are students susceptible to when they are not represented culturally, racially, or ethnically in their classrooms or buildings as it relates to their ability to engage in their education and in their life choices as explained by the SEL reports and interviews with teachers?

Amid this phenomena, there is limited African American representation in leadership, principals and assistant principals to service the mirroring student demographic. This is concerning and problematic; as an African American educator and administrator, we understand the disparities amongst our peers. Other African American principals, assistant principals, and superintendents, are not being promoted or transferred to other schools within the district for leadership opportunities.

The results of this investigation reflected the personal experiences, views and perceptions of six African American superintendents as they obtained their desired positions. The findings of Fields, Jones, & Korelich revealed in their article Study proves Black teachers have a significant impact on Black students.

There were some barriers and challenges facing aspiring African American superintendents: (a) lack of networking, (b) lack of mentors, (c) lack of school district pool of potential African American candidates, and (d) lack of professional educational and equity associations. Recommendations that resulted from this investigation included that as aspiring African American superintendents, they must learn to develop a professional and personal network of contacts. As aspiring African American superintendents seek superintendent
positions, they need to research the demographics, culture and needs of the district, stakeholders and board members. Finally, professional educational associations need to be inclusive and expand their membership pool to include underrepresented African American educators (Fields, Jones, & Korelich, 2019, P. 17).

Exploration of teacher self-awareness highlighted the teacher disposition regarding how their needs impacted diverse student learning. This assisted in highlighting the necessity for positive supportive, affirming attitudes toward a solution. These ideas are beneficial to teachers who are unable to focus completely on the needs of the students versus the ‘suggested’ curriculum, as well as for those who feel the pressures of the administrator’s classroom pacing expectations. Unexpected situations and attitudes might deter the lesson progression and might increase tension from both the teacher and students (Samuels, 2020, p. 301).

Nearly any economic, societal, and public health shift in our nation will have elicit and direct implications on the African American family. One of the most visible criticisms of the Black family is the absence of the African American male as the head of household and father figure in many African American households (Semak, 2004, p.18).

There are many reasons to explain the absence of an absent Black father in African American households.

Notably, systemic racism, economic marginalization, and minimal opportunities for advancement contribute to the plight of the African
American male. As a direct result of the narratives written for African American males, their counterparts the African American woman inherits a negative characterization as well.

One of the most substantial experiences that is distinctive to African-Americans is the innate interconnectedness this community has to its members due to being bonded by slavery. Slavery is used as a reference point that encapsulates and explains the significance of many things in the community. Ironically, slavery, history, and heritage of this community also leaves unanswered questions, unresolved internal and external conflict, and well as inherited trauma.

Slavery can be looked upon as the model for many modern cultural nuances that exist within the African-American family. “The dwelling of several different tribes together gives way to broader familial and kindred networks. The African-American family consists of many blood relatives as well as members who are not genetically linked but still recognized as family. Survival tactics during the enslavement era were reliant on shared unity and responsibilities and alliance with one another. These principles were the blueprint for African American familial structures” (Semak, 2004., p. 19).

The Black family is not often depicted in the traditional modes in which we revere family. The dynamics of the Black family become increasingly complex in blighted areas. Black Americans who are born economically disadvantaged, are much less likely to experience economic mobility than those in other racial groups, especially Whites. Many components are at work, including educational inequalities, neighborhood
effects, workplace discrimination, parenting, access to credit, rates of incarceration (Winship, Reeves, & Guyot, 2018, p.40). Because poverty imposes factors on families that leaves them susceptible to fragmented homes, it is not uncommon for the black families in blighted areas to be predisposed to generational poverty to be inherited, “the big finding is that race gaps in intergenerational mobility largely reflect the poor outcomes for black men. The report is another contribution to the growing literature showing that race gaps in the intergenerational persistence of poverty are in large part the result of poor outcomes for black men” (Winship, Reeves, & Guyot, 2018, p.42).

“Unfortunately, wealth in this country is unequally distributed by race—and particularly between white and black households. African American families have a fraction of the wealth of white families, leaving them more economically insecure and with far fewer opportunities for economic mobility”(Hanks, Solomon, & Weller, 2018, p. 27).

In consequence to the prevalence of the absentee father in the Black household, Black women are charged with being the head of household and sole parental figure. Labeling Black women as dominant, stressed, or angry is a stigma that perpetuates negativity and blame for the circumstances of their families.

Other-mothering is the practice of women rearing and caring for children, families, and/or kin who are not biologically related to them. (Georgia State University, 2014, p.2) In addition to examining the family systems, researchers also use historic context to understand the leadership styles of African-American females. An account that depicts the depths of African-American female leadership, a Black feminist depicts the story of slavery: “Black women’s African heritage and history as slaves in the U.S.
influenced their social and economic subordination in modern society, as well as their roles in church and community” (Sernak, 2004, p. 75).

As told by historian George Gregory Jackson, women endured the hardships of slavery using syncretistic reasoning, a combination of European values and their homeland culture. This is a technique that allowed slaves to balance the exploitation of slavery while maintaining a connectedness to their motherland. African-American woman as a mother and leader. Slave auctions left children displaced and separated from their families. When a motherless child would appear on a plantation, slave women would assume a mothering role. This is an instance of historical context being a contribution that adds context to discussions about the opportunity gap among various other missed opportunities. Additionally, this idea explores age as a distinguishing factor because although a younger woman may assume the role of other-mother when serving children, she may not gain the respect of the community. Conversely, a woman of age, typically 40 or over the community will exercise respect and reverence towards her. Other-mothering was prominent in the work of principals before the Brown vs. Board of Education court decision. In the era of school segregation, principals often were the vessels to serve as liaison among the community and economic strongholds. Other-mothering can assist in creating a better environment for Black students in St. Louis because, Other-mothering is an ethic of care, “Creates an institutional culture where all students are affirmed and valued, builds a sense of belonging, Fosters student communalism and school engagement” (Mayberry & Gill, 2019, p.3).

**Literature Concerning Research Question 3**
3. What reasons do decision makers in school districts give for their difficulties in attracting, hiring, and retaining minority teachers and leaders in their buildings?

When considering the nuances associated with what is to be considered culturally relevant pedagogy in urban settings, putting African American teachers in front of students who share similar likeness may be somewhat of a remedy. Our research has been anchored in determining how to best equip pre-service and current teachers with the knowledge and pedagogy most relevant and resonant with students.

Upon reading this article it occurred to us that all educators also need to be equipped with the knowledge of how to communicate and navigate difficult conversations and topics that may infringe on the teachers who are minorities, Brown defines micro aggressions within the article as, “Micro-invalidations include communications aimed at denying, rejecting, and invalidating experiences of racial discrimination among people of color. Such invalidations often leave perpetrators unaware of their offensive actions and people of color offended but unsure of the source of those feelings.” (2019) if this is the impact of misinformation and perpetual stigma leaves on instructors the impact is potentially more devastating for the students. To understand the trauma and impact of micro aggressions and furthermore identify when they are occurring teachers and community stakeholders need to determine what is culturally relevant as well as what is culturally offensive.

Visibility must exist for the most relevant practices to be implemented when reaching students. To achieve true visibility, the students as well as the teacher must acknowledge who is in the room as well as those who are not. As we reflect, internalize and introspect ourselves as educators, it is important that we do so in such a way that we
can first challenge our own belief systems before projecting and being critical of others, particularly the students. In order to honor and include all students, teachers cannot operate from a source of assumptions or stereotypes, although some of the mores and beliefs are inherited we must challenge them and look beyond ourselves to educate. We get there by educating our teachers through professional development, book studies and opportunities to attend conferences on this topic.

Based on previous research, minority students who see teachers and leaders that are minorities that are from the same background as the students, are willing to take more academic risks, they have higher self esteem and feel more connected to their academic experiences. In order to know how to educate and lead students of diverse backgrounds it is advantageous to have someone of that same heritage working to develop solutions. In a study done by the University of Iowa, researchers found that African American principals felt a responsibility to be role models. Three themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews from school principals. First, African American principals relied on their spirituality for guidance to buoy or buffer them psychologically in their daily work. Secondly, some believed that they were constantly scrutinized by colleagues and superiors. Race played an important part in their perception of feeling scrutinized, yet they felt scrutiny was sometimes self-imposed and affected their interactions with their White colleagues. Third, these African American principals made a conscious effort to serve as role models for all students, but especially for the few African American students and faculty, they led. In addition, these principals recognized that they served as racial bridge builders between the majority and minority cultures of the school. As school leaders and role models, the principals felt uniquely complicated tensions that
were embedded in race and self-imposed perceptions about their daily work. (Brown, 2017, P. 183).

As the demographics of the nation’s student body change, the demographics of the educators do not mirror those of the student body. School districts need to hire and retain administrators of color who will serve a multicultural student demographic. Moreover, policy makers need to understand this so as to engage in decisions about principal and teacher preparation programs that will address the need to provide a quality education for all students by putting in place processes to recruit, train, and infuse leaders into a diverse school system. (Hazan 2016, P.1).

As Hazan (2016) indicates, hiring and retaining staff that mirrors the changing student population, will have to be intentional, from the district office down to the building level. This effort begins when the school board and the district recognize the need for a diverse staff of educators and leaders. Prioritizing the staffing of diverse personnel is crucial to ensuring the cultural shift occurs. Implementation of diversity in teaching staff and administration without action, in other words, using what was taught and applying it to the classroom lesson and school leadership, will not improve the climate of schools. Researching this area gives opportunity to expose what is lacking and to create a plan to start closing the gap. For some districts, this research will give them steps to put in place to find and hire more minorities.

Perhaps attending historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) career fairs to inform potential educators of the awarding career education can be for them and the need
for more minority teachers and leaders for the next generation of scholars. Districts can also hold diversity job fairs on their campuses and for minority hiring and recruitment. The literature exists and the data supports the proposition that we need more educators and leaders that mirror the ever-growing population of Black and brown students. There is also a tremendous need for courageous leadership to step in to make this type of change, change that will forever positively impact not just minority students, but all students and all staff.

If CRP is introduced in pre-service teaching (training before the teacher begins teaching in the district) experiencing an increase in positive outcomes would become a trend, “As teacher educators it is our responsibility to prepare our students to be culturally responsive teachers” (Howard, Overstreet, & Ticknor, p. 2 2018). ———“Too often, the only categories of diversity acknowledged are related to race. Race is highly associated with terms such as diversity and multiculturalism because of its relatively high degree of availability in individuals’ minds” (Howard, Overstreet, & Ticknor, 2018, p. 2).

Preparation for developing the skill and tenacity needed to become a culturally effective educator should be developed during the course of study leading to teacher certification for all teachers. New teachers should be versed in context associated with the school they will be teaching in, not just the content taught.

———A case study written by Hammerness and Matsko (2013 p.5) explains the relationship existing among attrition and retention rates of new teachers: "Teacher turnover and new teacher retention in urban and other settings have been consistent
educational policy concerns for decades.” This article anchored the research in citing the connectivity between teacher attrition rates and school frameworks. Culture is a large component of the success a teacher will experience when entering urban school settings. This is an attempt at the erasure of a heritage, history, and legacy of people marginalized and underrepresented. Efforts such as the legislation to ban this type of curriculum is a contradiction to the messaging in our research that suggest representation of the various cultures particularly those that are Black is beneficial in improving climates.

The literature demonstrates the growth of more and more Black and brown students attending schools in the United States, but the opposite is true on the professional side, “Total enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools increased from 49.4 million students to 50.7 million students between fall 2009 and fall 2018. In addition, racial/ethnic distributions of public school students across the country have shifted” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). More and more Black and brown adults are either not going into education as a career, are leaving early before or at five years, or not being promoted to administrators when they have returned to college and earned their administrative degrees. Either way, the data supports that as the population of minority students increases, the educators and leaders who look like them are not, “…minority students disproportionately attended schools in which the combined enrollment of minority students was at least 75 percent of total enrollment in fall 2018. This does not necessarily mean, however, that minority students attended schools with many students of their own racial/ethnic background. Students from less populous racial/ethnic groups, in particular, were less likely to attend schools with many peers of the same racial/ethnic group, compared with students from more populous groups. In fall
2018, some 47 percent of White students were enrolled in public schools that were predominantly composed of students of their own race” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Many public schools that experience the increase of the Black and Brown population of students are not staffed according to the demographics of the student body. “All students benefit from having teachers of color, research revealed that when taught by teachers of color, students of color have better academic performance, improved graduation rates, and are more likely to attend college” (Huebeck, 2020).

The roles of African-American mothers are conveyed in the leadership practices of African-American females. These results are the foundation for understanding the intricacies of African-American female leadership and also propose that these temperaments better position African-American females in relating to African-American male students. The discoveries presented in this discussion demonstrate how motherhood and values of caring and nurturing are consequential in how African-American females execute their roles as educational leaders (Loder, 2005). Becoming versed in the dynamics of the African-American family can assist school districts in partnering and supporting these families in purposeful ways. As the various research presents, history is expressed in African-American female leadership practices including other-mothering.
Conceptual Framework

In order to construct systems of educational equity and enhancing diversity, this study seeks to produce data driven results that affirm that preservice teachers need training in both content and context of the communities they serve. Dissecting these types of nuances will catapult positive results for multiple facets that allow achievement gaps to exist. Moving towards more culturally relevant practices allows pre-service teachers to become more knowledgeable about the territories in which they will enter and will likely minimize or prevent teacher turnover. This type of training will allow teachers to make conscious decisions about the districts that are the best fit for them whereby instruction is not inhibited due to midyear resignations or retention rates plummeting because teachers will not return for successive years.

Teachers will learn techniques about relationship building and culture as part of teacher preparation programs and student teaching which will allow them to gain trust of their students and make them feel comfortable and valued in the classroom setting. Once trust and norms of operation are established, learning can commence which will promote greater academic outcomes in students, which can be measured.

The last facet this study will seek to demonstrate is that having diversity within administration will lead to less disciplinary referrals and a greater sense of connectivity among minority students in the school setting.
Chapter III.

Methodology

Methods

This is a mixed methods research project and includes SEL survey data, autobiographical narrative research, and structured interviews with teachers and decision makers. In regard to the ethnographic portion responses will be elicited to form conclusions surrounding their perceptions of the culture within the school and gain feedback. The narrative research will be broached to gauge dialog among the principals and upper administrators to gain insights regarding their career trajectories as well as any insights they have from conducting observations of culturally relevant practices within the school setting. The SEL survey will be used to show data to support our theory.

Mixed Methods Embedded Case Study

This method relies on holistic data collection strategies for studying the main case and then call upon surveys or other quantitative techniques to collect data about the embedded analysis. In this situation, other research methods are embedded within case study research.
Methods for Research Question 1

To what extent does having diverse leaders in the school administration improve school culture and climate as explained by SEL reports? Are climate scores for Black students in the first year statistically different from non-Black students, specifically White students?

The SEL survey questions will be focused on a local middle school building. They will center on the subject areas of Climate, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision Making, Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Social Support. These questions will give depth of knowledge into the function of the school and if school leaders are making a positive impact. It also gives data to support student voices.

Climate: Will look at the interpretation of how students feel supported or not in the school.

Relationship Skills: Gives data on how students and staff relate to each other.

Responsible Decision Making: Will provide data on how decisions for the building are being received.

Self-Awareness: Data that will focus on student mental health as it relates to their school climate.

Self-Management: Uses data to analyze the effectiveness of how students manage their time for school related issues.
Social Awareness: Will use data that focuses on students’ ability to be aware of their peers’ influences and their own actions as it relates to the function of the school student body.

Social Support: Data will provide insight into if students feel supported by school leaders and teachers.

Our methods will include looking at the SEL taken in back-to-back years at a local middle School from 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 school years.

While the data will cover all the different races within the school, White, African American, Asian, Mixed Race, Pacific Islander, Indian and Hispanic, the primary focus will be on Black student’s scores versus White students’ scores, by using a survey that breaks feedback into categories of race. In order to answer research questions one about climate and culture, we will average all scores together and look at the standard deviation.

Methods for Research Question 2

2.) What negative academic implications are students susceptible to when they are not represented culturally, racially, or ethnically in their classrooms or buildings as it relates to their ability to engage in their education and in their life choices as explained by the SEL reports and interviews with teachers?

We used the same survey questions from research question one for research question two. We looked for negative perceptions. We used the percentage of yes-no
answers from Black and Whites students to the questions on the survey. We looked at how many students have unfavorable responses. We compared answers to specific questions in the SEL survey that relate directly to negative feelings. We compared those responses in year one versus year two of the survey. We use a graph model to visualize the results. We also considered teacher interview responses relevant to this research question. Appendix A1 has the interview questions. Appendix A2 has the invitation to all teachers.

Methods for Research Question 3

What reasons do decision makers in school districts give for their difficulties in attracting, hiring, and retaining minority teachers and leaders in their buildings?

We interviewed decision makers to explore Research Question 3. We used qualitative methods using documentation, scribed and interview methods. Appendix B1 lists the interview questions used, and Appendix B2 is the invitation used for decision makers. Decision makers are the people who have direct influence over whether or not the leaders hired are Black or not.
Sampling

Within the St. Louis area, we used convenience sampling. Participants were selected from people we already had previous relationships with and some whom we worked with.

A convenience sample allows the research to include individuals who are the most accessible. Convenience sampling is an inexpensive and not very complicated way to gather information. It may not be able to provide evidence that the sample is representative of the entire population, and in some cases it may produce generalizable results.

Measures will be taken to use an SEL survey for students and approximately 800 students from a local middle school in the St. Louis area, using the back to back school years of 2019/2020- 2020/2021. The researchers compared the results using scores from different themes broken out by race; Black, White and Other. The researchers were given a limited amount of data from the people who controlled the data.

Lastly, interviews were conducted with superintendents, Human Resource directors and building level staff including principal and teachers from the St. Louis area.
Chapter 4:

Findings

This chapter describes the findings of this study. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of minority teachers, leaders and students in the K-12 educational setting by investigating their experiences, perceptions and hiring practices of some leadership. One part of the findings focus on student surveys and the other on narrative interviews. Our student surveys include back-to-back years at a local middle School from 2020 and 2021 school years. We sent out 15 invitations for narrative interview participants, some in district leadership positions and some teachers. Eight respondents agreed to be a part of our research.

While the data covers all the different races within the school, White, African American, Asian, Mixed Race, Pacific Islander, Indian and Hispanic, the primary focus will be on Black student’s scores versus White students and Other, by using a survey that breaks feedback into categories of race. In order to answer research questions one about climate and culture, we will average all scores together.

We use the same survey questions in back to back years to gauge negative perceptions. The percentage of yes- no answers from Black and Whites students to the questions on the survey were calculated to determine how many students have unfavorable responses. Answers to specific questions in the SEL survey are compared to those that relate directly to negative and positive feelings. We compare those negative and positive responses in year one versus year two of the survey. The interviews of
district leaders, we used triangulated data analysis, where the researcher was able to identify four emergent themes amongst the district hiring personnel.

Our findings were such that it is best to set up Chapter 4 starting with research question 3 and working backward. This will allow the research to demonstrate from the top down, district leaders to teachers then students, the full impact of diverse leadership and culturally relevant practices in public schools K-12.

**Research Question:** What reasons do decision makers in school districts give for their difficulties in attracting, hiring, and retaining minority teachers and leaders in their buildings? **The themes are:**

1. **Best practices when attempting to hire minority (African American) school leaders.** Each of the participants reported the practices used to attempt to hire minority leadership and the methods used to attract them.

2. **Overcoming the lack of applicants:** Each participant experienced various levels of difficulty in getting minorities (African Americans) to apply or attend their job fairs.

3. **The effort for minority leaders to support and improve hiring practices.** Each participant reported ways they have used to support minority (African American) leaders and the difficulty in finding effective methods.

4. **Retention of minority leadership.** All the participants expressed they struggled with retaining minority leaders and discussed methods used and consideration for future methods, as well as the risk involved when minority leaders leave their positions.
The findings were based on the data analysis process, which allowed the researcher to gain an increased knowledge and a better understanding of the hiring practices of decision makers when considering minority leaders within their districts. In this study the following questions for building leaders were used to conduct the interviews.

1. What is your practice when it comes to looking for/ recruiting diverse candidates in particular African American candidates?

2. Is it difficult to recruit minorities to your school district, particularly African Americans and if so, why?

3. What efforts have you taken to improve your hiring practices for minorities?

4. How are you retaining minority leaders and teachers in your district/school?

5. What are the reasons minorities, particularly African Americans, give for not applying to your district/school?

6. What are your current minority, particularly African Americans teachers and administrators saying about working in your district/ school?

7. How are you supporting minority leaders and teachers in your district/school?

8. What role does funding, or the lack of funding, play in your attempts to recruit and/or retain minority leaders and teachers in your district/school?

9. What role does your authority, or your perceived lack of authority, play in your attempts to recruit and/or retain minority leaders and teachers in your district/school.
In an effort to describe the contextual demographics of the participants, data was collected on each of them for this study. Each participant was at the time of the study, employed in a leadership/ hiring position in a public-school district. The participants were from four different school districts in the St. Louis, Missouri area and one from southern Missouri. To protect their identity each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

*Hiring practices when attempting to employ minority (African American) school leaders.*

Each participant reported they understood the enormous responsibility of their role. Their answers to questions about hiring minority leaders and staff demonstrated a keen understanding of the direct impact their role, as hiring personnel, has on the lives of many. The participants reported the continuous lack of minorities in leadership nationwide has impacted many students, parents and teachers so they take careful consideration with their decision making. Additionally, each participant discussed the fear of many African Americans to even attempt to interview because of the lack of leaders visible in public school settings.

The respondents detailed the types of recruitment strategies, interviewing panels and ways to attract potential minority leaders to their districts, and the importance in doing so. The personal pressure participants put on themselves to improve the diversity in their school leadership was discussed by all participants.

*Hiring Level Staff Participant Profiles:*
Dr. Land- Black Male early forties. Head of Human Resources for a large school district. He oversees recruiting, hiring, training and retaining employees. He has been principal, assistant principal and teacher before this role. This is his second year in his position.

Dr. France – White Female, mid-forties, Head of Human Resources for a large rural school district. She oversees recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining employees. She has been principal, assistant principal, athletic director, and teacher before this role. This is her third year in this position.

Dr. King – Black Female, early fifties, Superintendent for a small urban school district. She oversees the entire district staff including teachers, financial officers, assistant superintendents, diversity and Inclusion, curriculum, and each school. She has been principal, assistant principal, assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, and teacher before this role. This is her first year in this position.

Dr. Homes- Black Male, late thirties, Head Principal for a middle school for a small school district. He oversees recruiting, hiring, training, supporting and leading all teachers and employees in his school. He has been an assistant principal and teacher before this role. This is his second year in his position.
Hiring practices when attempting to employ minority (African American) school leaders.

Dr. Land proclaimed that his role was first and foremost to build relationships with potential leaders of color. When current staff who have been identified as potential leaders, he sets time aside to meet with them regularly and to support them in their efforts.

“First and foremost, you have to build relationships with individuals. All recruitment starts with retention. You must have continual conversations with different people, especially people of color, if you want them to feel valued and that they have a chance to be a leader in your district. You must provide a space for diverse voices whether in focus groups or mentorships, people of color have to know their voices matter if you want them to work with you.” (Dr. Land)

Dr. France stated that she uses job fairs as a way to find minority applicants and potential employees.

“Our area does not have a strong African American community. If you do not have a reason to live here, you do not come. There are not a lot of people who want to live in this rural setting. We use job fairs as a primary resource for finding applicants. We use local and national job fairs, many which are focused on African American job seekers. We also go to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, (HBCU), to recruit.” (Dr. France)

Dr. King uses an introspective approach when looking for minority candidates.

“I approach each potential candidate first knowing who I am and showing them that they can be a leader of color. I start with having conversations with current staff to get to know that and to assess their leadership qualities. With outside candidates, I meet one on one to get to know them better. This all helps with the recruitment process.” (Dr. King)

Dr. Homes believes that it takes intentional practices and a focus on equity when you are attempting to hire minority candidates.
“When I was an AP I diversified the hiring practices. I tried to mix up so that I had at least one person of color on the panel. I am now really intentional about the questions we ask. There are going to be at least two questions around diverse topics in the interview so I can get a chance to extend the questions to find out more. I make sure we are vetting the people we interview and that we are vetting our interview recruiting practices. (Dr. Homes)

Each of the participants acknowledged that there must be an intentional effort to seek after, recruit and hire minority leaders, in particular, African American ones, if they were to indeed have a respectable representation within their districts

**Overcoming the lack of applicants**

Dr. Land spoke of creating an equity-based screening platform, which is a practice that focuses on initial questions and scenarios that focus on equity and diversity in a way that gives insight into the applicant's thought pattern. This allows districts to be accountable when recruiting. He said that doing so gives applicants a better sense of trust thus they are more willing to apply with your district.

“I have a very diverse learning community that I collaborate with when making decisions on how to attract applicants. I just lead an equity within the interview process. It included hiring processes, standard operating procedures and pathways for success. This puts an accountability measure in place. We want to gain the applicants' trust so they want to apply and believe when they do so, they have a legitimate chance to be hired.” (Dr. Land)

Additionally, Dr. Land said there is always room for improvement.
“Sometimes we are successful in gaining trust in our potential applicants and sometimes we are not. We can do better; we must do better. Some folks feel like they just do not have a chance in being hired by us.” (Dr. Land)

Dr. France spoke from a level of frustration when commenting on her efforts of overcoming the lack of minority applicants.

“I am actually presenting to our superintendent cabinet next week and one of our focus areas is minority recruitment. We are using data to help us develop a plan that shows improvement and areas where we need more work. We just can’t seem to find a clear path to attaining a consistent strong minority applicant pool.” (Dr. France)

Human Resources is a significant partner in the attracting of candidates in Dr. King’s district. She uses them as the primary source of data, past and present practices and future planning.

“I look at current practices within our Human Resources department. How does HR recruit, what is their protocol for recruiting? We are spending more time in the area of minority recruitment and what will be our best practices, since this is my first year as the Superintendent.” (Dr. King)

Dr. Homes

“I think all of us, every person of color, supremely believes that the best is yet to come. We have to continue to work at it. Working toward excellence is a lot better than working toward perfection. Excellence speaks about a journey, perfection can burn people out. We know we are going to have to be Harriett Tubman for our people."

Why are they not applying; History, down the street from my school is the “black” school and it was the black school used before segregation. It was a school for black students. They are concerned about what it will be like to work here. The political climate also plays a part. “(Dr. Homes)

Additionally, Dr. Homes believes that having minority leaders in hiring positions already in the district will help with attracting more applicants.

“I am not trying to profess that I walk on water, but I believe we are getting more applicants of color because I am there. When it comes to looking for minority candidates
its word of mouth first, am I going to be ok out there, am I going to have support during those tough times. When I applied for the principal position, it was the same for me. What allowed me to continue through the process was the HR person was black and he helped me to feel more comfortable. I am super excited to be able to hire someone who will help their kids to be their best self. We can cut through all the barriers if we have at least one who can help us lift each other up!” (Dr. Homes)

All participants indicated that they have room for improvement when it comes to attracting minority applicants. The sense of applicants being fearful was also a recurring theme. There was a common theme of gaining trust and that some potential applicants felt they would not have a chance to be hired, so they did not apply at all.

**The effort for minority leaders to support and improve hiring practices.**

Dr. Land felt his work to support minority leaders was extremely important and necessary for the success of the leaders and the success of the district.

“We are a well-resourced district so that helps a lot with what we are able to offer in regard to support. Professional Developments, literature and seminars are offered regularly. We also have a minority leadership program and I work with an open-door policy, so no one feels alone.” (Dr. Land)

Dr. France used a similar approach of peer groups as a method of supporting their minority leaders, however she acknowledged that it is a work in progress.

“Our minority staff and especially our leaders know they are underrepresented. So, we have developed affinity groups to provide a way of support amongst each other. The hope is that this will be a safe space for them to support each other, talk about their experiences. We also use exit interviews to find out ways we can support future minority leaders and staff.” (Dr. France)
Dr. King admits that supporting minority leaders in her first year as a superintendent was challenging.

“Support for our African American leaders has been a bit of a challenge. I have used scheduled and unscheduled visits to schools. I use that time to walk with leaders and talk to them. I also try to check on their family life and make sure they have a balance. They like that I do that. I am still getting to know them so that I know how to best support them as individuals.” (Dr. King)

Dr. Homes acknowledged the fears and resistance of some leaders to shake things up in order to be supportive.

“Some leaders are hesitant to do things that might ruffle feathers so sometimes you have to bring people in and invite them to the party. I used book studies to bring people in and to open up a door to communication. This supports a different ideology and it helps to bring an authentic community with like-minded individuals and that is where your support comes from and again, we might all look different but support feels the same.” (Dr. Homes)

Although each participant had different personnel and varied perspectives on supporting minority leaders, they all had a common thread of using support systems in the building and at the district level.

Retention of minority leadership.

Dr. Land shared his educational experiences and thought around retention and how he valued it for his staff and future staff.

“Sometimes we are successful in retaining our minority staff members and sometimes we are not. We use job fairs to recruit and they can be performative in nature but networks build relationships. We focus on building networks for our staff of color to help them see support in action and that helps to lead to retention.” (Dr. Land)
Dr. France is still working on effective retention methods.

“We are not doing very well. We are trying to offer support daily and support groups. When we do lose some minority leaders it is usually because they want to live in a bigger city or a metropolitan area where there are more minorities and I understand that.” (Dr. France)

Dr. King focuses on areas where she knows there is the greatest turnover rate.

“I use check in’s to make sure staff know I (we) care. I especially check in on our new staff. The greatest turnover is during the holiday season and spring break, young staff especially. I try to embrace them at these times. Additionally, I have building principals reach out throughout the year to check on those staff members and ask how they are doing, how we are doing as a district. Give them a voice. ‘(Dr. King)

Dr. Homes also uses check in’s as a way to help retain minority leaders and staff.

“Constant check in’s Hey I see you, how are things going. Occasionally talking about things that are not education. See each other without the badge and the tie. Across the district I check on my people of color. In my building I retain by building a team around them and supporting them so they have support and can sustain the pressure. We have to have a team around the team.” (Dr. Homes)

All four decision makers saw retention of minority leaders as extremely important for their students and staff and also an area where they need to improve upon. From effective retention methods to slowing down turnover rates, the participants spoke to their commitment of retaining minority leaders.

In addition to interviewing building leaders and decision makers, we also interviewed current teachers to gain their insight about the importance of culturally relevant practices in their classrooms and the impact for students. 4 teachers across four
districts in St. Louis. One of the overwhelming themes drawn from the responses is that the implementation of CRP in school environments and curriculum tends to motivate students more. This theme is demonstrated through the interview questions 1, 2, 4 and 5. All of the interview questions asked of teachers were linked to research question 1.

**Research Question 1:** What negative academic implications are students susceptible to when they are not represented culturally, racially, or ethnically in their classrooms or buildings as it relates to their ability to engage in their education and in their life choices as explained by the SEL reports and interviews with teachers?

To gain insight from current educators about the connections between culture representation and academics, the responses from the educators will describe their perspectives as to whether there are any positive or negative academic effects on students when representations of their culture, race, and ethnicity are present and when they are not.

**Importance of Culturally Relevant Practices**

The teacher’s interviewed were asked a series of questions as it relates to CRP. Throughout the entirety of our research we have sought to support our claims of the importance of implementing CRP in the classroom. Sociopolitical consciousness is a trait that teachers should possess when they actively seek to educate both themselves and the students. “It is very important to have Culturally Relevant Practices in curriculum and
lessons because representations matter. Students need to see themselves to know that they are able to be successful. As an African-American woman, I take pride when an individual from my culture is successful. It gives me hope and belief that I, too, can do what they did”. - S. Payton

Affirmation from the curriculum and through the representation of the instructor. The teacher speaks to the pride she feels personally when someone of her culture is successful. Based on Payton’s statements the pride that she feels as an educator can be felt by students if they can see and witness representation it can instill the belief that they too can achieve and succeed.

Wilkerson also stresses the importance of culturally relevant practices, believing that it should be the central focus for students and the foundation of what learning experiences are built on. “I believe it is important to have CRP as the central focus of any lessons and curriculum building in the community. In order for students to trust that we have their best interest at heart, we have to show them that they can be successful. So seeing themselves and having cultures represented is important, but what is more important is making sure we have students.” Wilkerson believes that it is important to implement CRP as a way of gaining the trust of students and letting them know their best interest is always being considered. Wilkerson explained that we can show them that they can be successful by representing the culture but cited the most important thing is “ensuring we have students” in context we interpret this to mean having students cared and accounted for through the use of CRP and not just merely to have students in attendance. CRP being included in lessons has also been described as a necessary element based on practicality, “CRP should be present in the curriculum because it represents the
true diversity of the world we live in. Students are more invested and interested when content presented is something they can relate to. CRP in lessons gives students something they can connect to.” Cannon describes CRP implementation as something that students can connect to because when it is present in curriculum it represents the “true diversity of the world we live in.” This is a profound statement as Cannon states implementing the CRP in curriculum and lessons will help to acclimate students to the world we live in which is a diverse society. “CRP should be present in the curriculum because it represents the true diversity of the world we live in. Students are more invested and interested when content presented is something they can relate to. CRP in lessons gives students something they can connect to.” Cannon's response describes CRP as an anchoring tool that can give students something to connect to. CRP makes content appealing and which in turn gives students a desire to invest in their learning.

The aforementioned responses of the interviewees support our research because as two African-American women, an educator and an administrator, we have knowledge and personal experiences that guide our belief that CRP is necessary in the classrooms. Based on the interview questions given to the interviewees for the various school districts across St. Louis, we also found research that also supports our stance that developing students with access to CRP through their curriculum and school staff can lead to better outcomes for students.

The consensus among all the educators is that the presence of CRP in curriculum is necessary for student success. Centering culture as a focus of learning environments
provides students with a sense of belongingness and connectivity. If the students feel connected to content and images presented in their schools this can lead to increased academic achievement because they are more likely to be invested in the learning process.

**CRP leads to increased student motivation**

When students feel affirmed in the learning due to properly implemented CRP the associated benefits for the students include higher self-esteem and increased motivation to achieve, “It is definitely beneficial for students to see themselves represented in their academics because it helps to motivate students to show they are capable. It also provides students the ability to make connections. We know when students are able to connect with something, they are better able to retain it and apply it to different aspects of life” this comment made by Payton support our claim that CRP can lead to better student outcomes, Payton’s response suggests when students can recognize their likeness in a lesson it boosts engagement and makes the information interesting. Students are willing to be more invested in the learning when they feel they are being represented.

Wilkerson’s response was similar to Payton’s, “Students being able to see themselves in their academics and in the people teaching them is important because that is how we can allow them to be safe and comfortable enough to take safe academic risks” This comment can be interpreted in two ways, the first being that the lack of CRP prevents students from taking academic risks due to lack of interest because content is not representative of them or just the opposite that when CRP is present it is a safe space for
the students to explore and to take stake in their learning process. The climate of safety can be established through the inclusion witnessed via the staff and within the curriculum. “There are multiple benefits associated with students being able to see themselves in their academics. This can lead to intrinsic motivation that allows students to tap into their inner greatness from their likeness being presented to them.” Wilkerson states, “I will say I have had my best engagement when I am talking about things relevant to students and their experiences. They have so many questions about Black History and the creation of their own communities. I see such great engagement when I am connecting lessons to their lives. In classes and lessons when students don’t see themselves, which I haven’t noticed in my class, but overall, students get frustrated easier. Students need to see themselves in every curriculum and every class.” In this response Wilkerson explains the intentionality in engaging students in CRP lessons during Black History Month. Based on intentionality and purposeful implementation, students became motivated and began asking questions because the content is relatable. Wilkerson also notes that the level of interest is not as great when students do not see themselves and that they become frustrated easier. Wilkerson’s statements were in alignment with the other respondents Payton states, “Students are less motivated when they cannot see themselves in lessons as they are unable to make connections and may show little to no interest in the lesson. It can be very challenging for students to want to participate and be a part of the lesson.” This response does not specifically cite inability to engage, it does indeed imply they do not want to engage due to lack of interest due to lack of CRP in lessons. Wilkerson responded that students should be able to see themselves in their academics as well as in their instructor. Representation in both forms would allow students to be enabled to take
academic risks. The multiple lines of intersectionality among shared history, life experiences, and race or ethnicity could provide deeper understandings for students. All the educators responded that there are student benefits associated with them seeing themselves in their academics, the explanations and reasoning differed among the interviewees.

“...when we feel that something does not include us, the motivation to learn and master it is low. Students need to know that success and mastery includes who they already are” Dyson’s response shows affinity with the students and the amount of motivation needed to master and learn content that does not immediately resonate or affirm. Dyson took the inclusionary approach to explain how lack of the CRP decreases motivation towards mastery because the content is not inclusive. Dyson also says “we” and “us” in the response which may be a reflection of personal experiences. Students should feel affirmed and connected to success as they are.

There was a consensus that CRP can lead to students having increased motivation. Payton stated, “It is definitely beneficial for students to see themselves represented in their academics because it helps to motivate students to show they are capable.” This statement by Payton can be echoed by Cannon, “There are multiple benefits associated with students being able to see themselves in their academics. This can lead to intrinsic motivation that allows students to tap into their inner greatness from their likeness being presented to them.” Both Cannon and Payton infer that students seeing and learning about concepts, topics, and people that mirror them can initiate an increased amount of motivation for students, “Culturally Relevant Practices promote a sense of belonging and self-awareness. Students are encouraged and feel they can be successful with the task at
hand... Payton’s response implies that students are intrinsically motivated when CRP is implemented in lessons. This motivation stems from the sense of belongingness students have when they can identify with a lesson based on shared experience, values and cultural awareness. Cannon’s response highlights intrinsic motivation being fostered when students see themselves represented in their learning processes. When CRP is absent in learning environments it can lead to students feeling detached and isolated. Students should be able to see themselves in their academics as well as in their instructor. Representation in both forms would allow students to be enabled to take academic risks. The multiple lines of intersectionality among shared history, life experiences, and race or ethnicity could provide deeper understandings for students.

**CRP leads to increased self-esteem in students**

In addition to representation of images and students likeness in the learning environment, we sought to ask these teachers why they believe so many positive benefits would derive from the implementation of CRP, or if there are benefits for students once they see themselves represented in academics. Additionally, self-esteem can be impacted either positively or negatively based on CRP.

Self-image is very critical to students as they navigate through the various stages of their education. The responses to this question suggest that the implementation of CRP in the learning environment and curriculum is linked to belongingness and self-awareness. Dyson states, “I think student’s think more highly of themselves and their abilities when they see themselves in the lesson”. “...Students need to be able to see themselves in their lessons. When learning something new, it’s important to validate what
students already know”. Students’ outlook about themselves and their culture are pride points and they should be able to feel assured of themselves based on the representation witnessed by CRP in the lesson.

Cannon states, “When students can’t see themselves in their lesson, they may have a lowered self-esteem due to not being able to connect or feel represented in their learning. Not feeling proud or represented in the content.” The themes of this response suggest that when CRP is not present the lack of representation can cause lowered self-esteem due to lack of connection to the content.

Payton states, “Culturally Relevant Practices promote a sense of belonging and self-awareness. Students are encouraged and feel they can be successful with the task at hand.” Based on this response, students can be encouraged by CRP and willing to persevere through academics.

Wilkerson states, “When students don’t see themselves in lessons and in staff they feel that they don’t belong in school. They are less likely to take academic risks that will help them grow. When students don’t see themselves in the curriculum they aren’t as invested in their learning and they have to do an extra layer of translating to retain the information being presented to them.” Wilkerson’s point brings many points forward that have been discussed in our research. Wilkerson’s response notes that students should see themselves in content as well as in the staff to foster belongingness in schools. If these conditions are not present Wilkerson states the students are less likely to be invested enough in their learning to take academic risks. Wilkerson states that a lack of CRP results in an extra layer of translation to retain information. The educational environment
should be defined by the various ethnic, racial, and cultural dynamics of the student body. Every single student should feel represented and included in lessons and school activities, the diversity of the cultural backgrounds of all students should be celebrated.

Summary of interview themes

District Leaders were aligned in their perceptions about the lack of minority applicants for leadership positions, reasons ranging from lack of trust to location of districts. They also were in lock step when it came to the absolute necessity for support for minority leaders as well as retention. The responses indicated a willingness from all four participants to be more intentional in recruiting, hiring, supporting and retaining minority leaders.

The educators seem to draw a correlation between representation in the learning environment and student motivation. Based on the responses received suggest that increased success in academics can be expected when CRP is implemented. The content becomes relatable to students and allows them to connect deeper with the content presented based on their prior knowledge.

“When students fail to see themselves in their lessons, the motivation is lackluster. When the images and content do not encompass them they are not invested
and participation is minimal.” Cannon’s response indicates students will be less likely to invest in their learning due to lack of CRP noting that the motivation level would be lackluster. Dyson gave a very succinct response, “Disinterest. Hesitancy in execution.” The overwhelming theme of these responses is that current educators have noticed shifts in the engagement levels of students in a positive manner when CRP is implemented in the classroom and learning environment as well as a negative response or decreased level of engagement when CRP is not included in the lesson.

The educators interviewed have expressed the importance of empowering students through CRP. Students of underrepresented backgrounds can feel limited in settings that do not include CRP. Limitations placed on personal exploration and self-efficacy lead to some students feeling detached from the learning environment. In order to foster inclusivity CRP should be included in the lessons whereby students can build on personal experiences. In instances when the content is resonant with the students, they feel encouraged, they are motivated to take greater academic risks. When learning experiences are inclusive of all students, the likelihood of increased achievement and self-esteem is greater.

**SEL Survey findings—**

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does having diverse leaders in the school administration improve school culture and climate as explained by SEL reports? Are
climate scores for Black students in the first year statistically different from non-Black students, specifically White students?

The survey questions as seen in the charts attached, shows a noticeable positive change in the second year of the survey, which was the year an African American Assistant Principal was hired and worked in the school. The years of focus are 2019/20 then 2020/21 and in some cases 2022. The first set of years, 2019/20, there was no minority/African American leadership in the school, the second set year 2020/21 there was an African American Assistant Principal for the first time in the 25 years existence of the school.

The questions centered around the climate and culture in the building with an emphasis on the students' perceptions of their building community, how staff treated them and their level of comfort in the school setting. The majority of the African American students who took the survey reside in the city in an urban setting and are a part of the school districts integration program.

The findings show the survey questions and then results indicated by disaggregated data into different races, White, Black and other (which are all other races combined). The lettering and number show the percentage of growth from the first year to the second year. The categories are grouped per the different questions that were asked. All categories showed growth with the presence of African American leadership in the building. The disaggregated data gives insight into how much more supported, welcomed and safe African American students felt seemingly with the presence of an African American leader in the building. The results also show a growth in academic success. There were four themes on the survey, Safe Climate, Feel Welcome, Supported
and Academic Success. The total of students surveyed were 862 with subgroups reporting 743 White, 77 Black/ African American and 42 others. When comparing the quantitative data over the two consecutive years, with the first year all white leadership and the second year when an African American leader was hired, the results show on Table 2 an increase in all categories. Using an unpaired t-test using the average scores of all students, the standard deviation went from 0.12 to 0.09 for Safe Climate, 0.24 to 0.05 Feel Welcome, 0.24 to 0.06 Feel Supported and 0.15 to 0.1 for Academic Success. While one may argue that other factors could have also contributed to the student results, the results still indicate that in some way, the presence of an African American leader coupled with the building goal to teach culturally relevant lessons that connected with all students, had a positive effect on not just the Black students but the entire student body.

Table 1
Average Scores on the SEL Survey: 2 Years, 4 Themes, and Three Student Groups
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1, 2019/2020</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>All Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Climate Mean</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel Welcome Mean</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Mean</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Mean</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2, 2020/2021</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>All Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Climate Mean</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel Welcome Mean</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Mean</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Mean</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2**
Unpaired T-test of All Students, Year 1 to Year 2; Two-Tailed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR 1, N=862</th>
<th>YEAR 2, N=860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Climate</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel Welcome</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1**

2019-2020 SEL Survey Results
2019/20
SEL STUDENT SURVEY

- Safe climate: White 89%, African Americans 67%, Others 71%
- Feel welcome: White 89%, African Americans 43%, Others 80%
- Supported: White 86%, African Americans 41%, Others 79%
- Academic Success: White 85%, African Americans 56%, Others 78%
Figure 2

2020-2021 SEL Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Safe Climate</th>
<th>Feel Welcome</th>
<th>Supported</th>
<th>Academic Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3

Difference after One Year within Student Groups for Each Survey Theme
Summary

This chapter, in summary, presented the findings that came from the measures and interviews in this study. For the leadership portion of this study the findings presented four themes that emerged using the data that was collected after a review of interview transcripts. In this study the researcher used the participants’ own words in order to best represent the participant’s experiences and perceptions. The educators interviewed also shared their voices and perceptions on culturally relevant practices through a narrative research format.

Different leaders, both male and female, ages 30’s – 50’s all with different vantage points but similar goals participated. They all understand the need for minority staff and leaders. Each participant acknowledges the advantage for all students to have minority staff and leaders and why it is important. They all want to attain, retain, and attract minority staff and leaders, particularly African Americans, but they also have shown that they know there is not a one size fits all method, and that it will take time to achieve this.

Of the educators interviewed the results were nearly unanimous around the importance of CRP being included in the lessons presented to students. When students can witness themselves in the lessons, their self-esteem and focus on the content presented is higher and they participate more. The representation is critical for all students as they will feel affirmed, valued and seen. Lessons that are void of student representation can cause students to distance themselves from content being presented which can negatively impact their achievement. The educators interviewed were from
four different districts yet have very similar themes about the importance of incorporating CRP into student lessons.

Survey results show the overall improvement of school climate, and social and emotional well-being as compared to the first year without minority leadership to the second year with minority leadership. The data can be interpreted as having minority leadership, at least in this building and in some form, had a positive impact on students. The quantitative data using the student surveys, assessed to a degree the respondents feeling of support, being welcome, academic support and the feeling of safety. Students responded to yes or no as their choice, yes indicating a positive response and no indicating a negative one. Studies across the school student body were *internally consistent* in the overall results. The data was then compared and the two sets of scores were able to be correlated. By testing in back to back years, a truer measure of the potential impact of having a minority leader was able to be established and or deemed as reliable data. This type of reliability is commonly known as *test-retest reliability*.

Chapter five will address the explanations and conclusions as well as the implications for the body of the research.
Chapter 5:

Explanations and Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter describes the explanations and interpretations of the findings of this study. The purpose of this study was to increase knowledge about the experiences of four different hiring leaders in a K-12 public school setting from four different school districts. It also interprets the survey data of students in a 6-8 middle school who did not have a minority leader in their building the first year but did in the second year.

The teachers interviewed included two elementary school teachers and two middle school teachers. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight about the importance of intentionally planning for including CRP in lessons and the impact it has on others. Culturally responsive teachers connect academic concepts to the everyday lives of their students, this strategy makes learning experiences more personally meaningful, engaging, and effective.

Summary of Themes

The hiring level staff who chose to participate in this study shared their interpretations and experiences of being a school leader with hiring responsibilities. Throughout the process of the research interviews themes emerged in the areas of best practices when attempting to hire minority (African American) candidates, overcoming the lack of applicants, the effort for minority leader support and improving hiring practices, and
retention of minority leadership. A discussion of these four themes follows. Classroom teachers included in this study gave their perspective about the relevance of CRP in their instructional practice and the impact it has when these practices are not present.

**Best Practices when attempting to hire minority (African American) school leaders**

The prevalent theme here was shown in the answers to the research questions about hiring practices. Four out of four of our participants indicated that there needs to be continuous focus on how minority candidates are recruited, screened and interviewed.

The respondents detailed the types of recruitment strategies, interviewing panels and ways to attract potential minority leaders to their districts, and the importance in doing so. The personal pressure participants put on themselves to improve the diversity in their school leadership was discussed by all participants.

Two of the four participants cited building relationships as a primary focus when they approached hiring staff from already within the district. The research showed that there was a strong correlation from these two leaders in building relationships first and their ability to then connect and convince minorities to apply.

All participants agreed that they have much work to do still with improving hiring practices.
Overcoming the lack of minority applicants

Two of our four participants used new and innovative ways to attract applicants. The research showed that Dr. Land created an equity based screening process to help ensure that minority applicants were getting a fair opportunity if and when they did apply. Dr. France presented to her board of education the topic of the lack of minority applicants in an effort to look at new ways to create a stronger pool of minority candidates.

All participants agreed their districts struggled with attracting minority applicants and that more effort was needed on their end.

All four participants spoke to some degree of the fear or lack of trust from minority applicants when it came to applying for their districts. One participant noted that there was not a large population of minority residents and that was a deterrent for some potential candidates. The research showed that over all districts there is a low turnout of minority applicants for leadership positions.

The effort for minority support and improved hiring practices

The research showed that all four districts have some sort of focus on support for minority staff and leaders. Two of the districts have affinity groups or peer groups set up specifically to give minority staff a place to meet and share experiences. Two of the four participants spoke about taking time to check in on the minority leaders, walking and
talking with them in their buildings. One of them even expressed taking time to make unexpected visits to the building just to check on their wellbeing. Overall, the research shows minority support in all four districts is a priority and systems are in place to continue to approve.

*Retention of minority leadership.*

Retaining minority leadership was a concern for all four districts, the research shows. One participant focused on where the greatest turnover rate was and then used those times to beef up visits to school and touch base. The research showed that each district was aware that retention was a problem. Various reasons were given for the lack of retention but the overall consistent one was that minority leaders did not seem to feel like they belonged or were accepted.

*Importance of Culturally Relevant Practices in your curriculum and lessons*

The research suggests that the importance of relevant practices being intertwined with curriculum and lesson planning is very critical to the student experience. Subjects interviewed expressed the need for students to see themselves to validate learning experiences, relate to the content, and to trust the instructor has their best interest in mind,
Benefit of students seeing themselves represented in their academics

Research suggests that when students feel lessons are not inclusive and representative of them, the motivation to learn and master the content lowers. Students need reassurance that success and mastery includes who they already are. When students can witness themselves in their learning, they feel belonging and are confident enough to take an educational risk. The research suggests they are willing to participate more because they are encouraged by seeing their likeness and self-awareness.

Advantages students have that they see themselves in their lessons

The research suggests that students have certain advantages when they see themselves in their lessons. Interview participants expressed that there seems to be only advantages associated with equitable representation and that the motivation and engagement increases. Students can deepen their understanding and make connections due to their personal experiences. Students are likely to work harder because the end goal and favorable outcomes seem more attainable.

Impact of Culturally Relevant Practices on student self-esteem
Research states that CRP is present and it makes students value themselves. Students think more highly of themselves and their abilities when they see themselves in lessons.

When students are unable to see themselves reflected in lessons and in staff they can struggle with belonging, additionally they may be less likely to take the academic risks that will help them grow. If the curriculum is not reflective of the student population, they are less likely to be invested in their learning, this requires the teacher to do additional work in order to promote the retention of information presented. CRP positively affects the self-esteem of students when it is present, however it presents negative effects when it is not.

*When students do not see themselves in their lessons, how does it affect their motivation?*

Research suggests that students experience hesitancy and distance when they do not see themselves in their lessons. Students are less motivated when they cannot see themselves in lessons as they are unable to make connections and may show little to no interest in the lesson. It can be very challenging for students to want to participate and be a part of the lesson that is not inclusive and representative of them.
SEL survey results

The research shows that when a minority leader is in a school, notwithstanding other potential variables, the climate and the culture improves in every area. It also shows that Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is strongly impacted in a positive manner and that students benefit from minority leadership in their buildings. The results showed a positive trend upward using the same questions in back to back years. Noting there was not a presence of an African American leader in 2019/20 and there was one in 2020/21. Students from all races in total showed an increase in positive school culture.
Explanation

The research showed in four different school districts in Missouri, there was a common theme that minority leadership, particularly African Americans, was a very low percentage compared to their white counterparts. Research also showed that African Americans who held certifications in leadership and teaching certifications were still fearful to apply at the four districts represented for fear of not being hired or if hired, not being supported.

The participants all stated that they were trying various ways to show support of African Americans in their public school districts but even in their efforts, the staff retention was still an issue. The research showed that hiring leaders, although knowing there was a shortage of minority leadership and a need to have Culturally Relevant Teaching, were still trying to find ways to provide this for their schools. Research also showed through student SEL data, that students responded favorably when there was leadership that represented an African American and that in all categories surveyed, there was an increase in positive responses. The research shows that culturally relevant Teaching is underutilized but needed as well as is minority leadership in K-12 public school settings.

The research shows that minority students thrive socially and emotionally when they see themselves in their classes, classwork and in building leaders and teachers. The research also supports that all students benefit from a diverse educational academia and staffing.
Summary of Study

The purpose of this research was to increase knowledge about the lack of African Americans in educational leadership positions and the need for Culturally Relevant Teaching practices in K-12 public schools by investigating district and building level hiring personnel and teachers with explanations and background knowledge of the experiences they have had. The study was extremely important as it addressed the need for more minorities, particularly African American, leaders and culturally relevant teaching practices in the K-12 public school setting. Through the opportunity to hear the voices of hiring leaders, educators and students, a more in depth understanding was gained and a contribution was made to the ever growing body of research in the areas of culturally relevant teaching practices and the need for minority leaders in the educational setting of public schools.

Future Research

The research did not cover surveys for students individually to get a person to person indicator and to compare one living community to another. A survey like this may provide even deeper insight into student perceptions of climate in their school. The researcher also did not interview assistant principals, counselors or social workers to find out their perceptions of being a leader in their school environment. Those types of research opportunities could include data from school student and parent surveys comparing year to year to examine how they viewed the climate. Research involving
those types of leaders may also provide a deeper understanding of the importance of
minority leaders, teachers and curriculum. Surveys from minority teachers and school
leaders would be helpful in being able to get specific answers to more personal questions.
This type of survey would be able to give a deeper insight into the emotional state of
minority staff and if anonymous, the answers may be more authentic. Future research
may be looking into the effect of minority leadership and CRP when schools were
segregated and had all Black teachers. Future research could also detail the importance
of minority representation across various professions and not limited to just education.

In future research it may be advantageous to look at other mitigating factors that
could also have positively affected the student body, such as being back after Covid-19.
Would that be a positive because students were just happy to be back in school and
therefore would indicate as such in a positive manner on their surveys? Was there a more
concerted effort to connect more with African American students after the death of
George Floyd and the national and local call for more social justice reforms? These are
areas that were not researched in this dissertation and if they had been could have given
more depth to the quantitative results.
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Appendixes

Appendix A1 Teacher questions
1. Is it important to have Culturally Relevant Practices in your curriculum and lessons? Explain your answer.

2. Does it benefit students to see themselves represented in their academics? Why or Why not?

3. What advantage, if any, do students have that they see themselves in their lessons?

4. How is a student's self-esteem affected when they see themselves in their lessons or if they do not see themselves?

5. What have you observed when students do not see themselves in their lessons, as it relates to their motivation?

Appendix A2
Dear Educator,

As a part of our dissertation on Culturally Relevant Practices, (CRP) we are conducting interviews of teachers in your district. We would greatly appreciate your feedback on the questions we provide. Would you be willing to be interviewed by us around the topic of the use of Culturally Relevant Practices in schools and classrooms and the effect it has on students who are and are not exposed to CRP? If you are willing please respond to this email with a time that you would be available between -------- and---------. This is an anonymous interview and your name will not be shared, just your occupation and school district,

We appreciate your willingness to assist us with our dissertation topic.

Sincerely,

Joy Rogers and Cassandra Suggs

UMSL EdD Heritage Leadership, Social Justice, Sustainability and Participatory Practice students.

Appendix B1. Decision Makers Questions
1. What is your practice when it comes to looking for/ recruiting diverse candidates in particular African American candidates?

2. Is it difficult to recruit minorities to your school district, particularly African Americans and if so, why?

3. What efforts have you taken to improve your hiring practices for minorities?

4. How are you retaining minority leaders and teachers in your district/school?

5. What are the reasons minorities, particularly African Americans, give for not applying to your district/school?

6. What are your current minority, particularly African Americans teachers and administrators saying about working in your district/school?

7. How are you supporting minority leaders and teachers in your district/school?

8. What role does funding, or the lack of funding, play in your attempts to recruit and/or retain minority leaders and teachers in your district/school?

9. What role does your authority, or your perceived lack of authority, play in your attempts to recruit and/or retain minority leaders and teachers in your district/school?

Appendix B2
Dear Education Decision Maker

As a part of our dissertation on Culturally Relevant Practices, (CRP) we are conducting interviews of teachers in your district. We would greatly appreciate your feedback on the questions we provide. Would you be willing to be interviewed by us around the topic of “What reasons do decision makers in school districts give for their difficulties in attracting, hiring, and retaining minority teachers and leaders in their buildings?”

If you are willing, please respond to this email with a time that you would be available between -------- and--------. This is an anonymous interview, and your name will not be shared, just your occupation and school district,

We appreciate your willingness to assist us with our dissertation topic.

Sincerely,

Joy Rogers and Cassandra Suggs

UMSL EdD Heritage Leadership, Social Justice, Sustainability and Participatory Practice students.
Survey questions under the Safe Climate and Academic Success categories.

Q01 Each Student has an equal opportunity to learn and succeed in school.

Q02 Adults in the building encourage students to respect themselves and others.
Q03 Regardless of background, every student has the same chance to succeed.

Q04 I feel diversity is valued at our school.

Q05 I believe I'm treated fairly at my school.

Q06 I feel teachers understand the way I learn.

Q07 I feel teachers value different opinions and views in their classrooms.

Q08 My teachers believe that I will be successful.

Q09 I have a leadership role in my school.

Q10 I feel safe at school.

**Survey questions on students feel welcome and supported**

Q11 At my school adults value my opinion

Q12 Adults at school care about me

Q13 I have felt supported when I need help

Q14 I feel like I belong at school

Q15 When I have a need, I can talk to at least one trusted adult at school

Q16 I feel the adults at my school help me to do my best.