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A Mixed-method Inquiry into Rural School Principal Perspectives Regarding Inclusion Through Social Justice Leadership

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of school building leaders (SBLs), also referred to as principals, regarding their facilitation of social justice leadership (SJL) and culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) practices to support student inclusion and belongingness within the K-12 educational setting in NYS. This research study fills the knowledge gap related to student belongingness through the principal's perspective and illuminates how SBLs support inclusion. First, nine high-need rural school principals participated in semi-structured interviews, and second, 101 SBLs from across NYS completed a survey using the Social Justice Behavior Scale (SJBS). Findings and results of this study include affirmation that SBLs equally apply CRSL to facilitate SJL, SBLs focus more attention on the personal and interpersonal dimensions of the SJL framework to accelerate SJL, and confirmation the need resource category (N/RC) of the school building in which the school principal serves have no impact on the responses obtained on SJBS. Implications of this study include insights into professional development and leader preparation program needs, self-reflection and self-awareness, and communal, systemic, and ecological change. The school building's N/RC is independent of how a SBL implements, facilitates, or supports SJL in the school building. In practical terms, evidence from this study underscores the importance of allocating time and resources to nurture the growth and development of SJL and CRSL practices by SBLs as a priority function when implementing DEI and student belongingness initiatives.

Keywords: social justice leadership, culturally responsive school leadership, school principal, inclusion, belonging

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family. I am incredibly grateful to my supportive husband, Terry Konz, whose words of encouragement and flexibility kept me motivated for all these years. Also, our daughter, Ashley Konz, has always been an extraordinary cheerleader through any endeavor I take on.

As a child, I dreamt of one day completing the work required to earn my doctoral degree. I had no idea what that would entail then, but I do now. I dedicate this dissertation to my loving parents, Ken and Angie Deuel, for creating a childhood where I could read, learn, grow, and eventually reach my long-term goal in adulthood.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my many friends who have supported me. I will always appreciate all they have done, especially Chrissy Choi for being my sounding board for any topic, Daphne Cunningham for always lending an ear, Carolynne Mather for constant messages of inspiration, and Gina Pell for providing access to her expertise day or night.

Finally, I dedicate this work and give special thanks to our dog babies, Karma and Rhea, who sat and sometimes slept beside me for hours with unwavering love and affection.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In May 2021, the New York State (NYS) Board of Regents delivered an immediate call to action for all school districts with the adoption of a policy statement outlining a framework for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in schools (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2021b). The demand for support of diverse student populations within the educational setting in various needs/resource capacities (N/RC; NYSED, 2011) is not a new initiative but a goal yet to be attained (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). Educational environments supporting a more equitable experience for all students can be a momentous undertaking (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013). School-building leaders (SBLs) play a critical role in realizing learning environments that accept and encourage the success of diverse learners (Fullan, 2011; Marzano, 2012). Social justice leadership (SJL) is one methodology principals use to support diverse student populations and develop inclusive learning environments where all students can feel a sense of belonging (Brown, 2004b; Chiu & Walker, 2007; Komba, 2013; Stevenson, 2007). SJL includes culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), a common framework employed by many current educators, which also falls under the umbrella term of SJL (L. Johnson, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; Shah, 2018). Despite the numerous studies conducted on SJL to date, SJL is still an under-researched leadership framework, and there is a call from scholars for additional studies, specifically in the educational setting and with a focus on SBLs (J. G. Allen et al., 2017; DeMatthews, 2015). Additionally, a need for studies of SJL to be conducted using a methodology other than a qualitative case study exists (Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Conducting an exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study (Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013) to understand the shared experiences (Patterson, 2018) of school principals across central New York regarding inclusion and SJL is a means of addressing the current call to action by scholars and the NYS Board of Regents.

Statement of the Problem

Belonging is a fundamental human need (Maslow, 1943). In the classroom, student belonging translates to student success (Ainscow, 2020b; Dyson et al., 2004). Research has shown that when students feel welcome and included in the school setting, attendance is improved (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Croninger & Lee, 2001), test performance is more remarkable (Faust et al., 2014; B. Sanchez et al., 2005), and discipline referrals are fewer (Catalano et al., 2004). Moreover, student inclusion fosters positive school-to-home relationships and promotes greater parent engagement (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012). Inclusion is an ongoing process and should be viewed as a "never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity" (Ainscow, 2020a, p. 126). As such, inclusion is arguably the most challenging issue educational leaders face in the school setting globally (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Zollers et al., 2010). The creation of learning environments that foster a sense of belonging and support an atmosphere of inclusion can be challenging, as schools face competing priorities (Pollock & Briscoe, 2020), lack access to sufficient professional development to support inclusion initiatives (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013), and encounter differing opinions across stakeholder groups regarding inclusion and belongingness (Winters, 2013). Inclusion is also an understudied area of research (Bouck, 2006). Inclusionary and belongingness practices are constantly evolving, and so is the associated body of research. Over the last century, academics have called for more research in the field of inclusion, especially on how inclusion applies to student populations (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012; Anderman & Freeman, 2004).

Policymakers and practitioners worldwide still need clarification on the best course of action to support student belongingness due to differing ideas of what inclusion for all students looks like in the educational setting (Brantlinger, 1997; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). According to many scholars, the role of the SBL is to provide leadership crucial to implementing processes of belongingness for all students (Lambert, 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Riehl, 2000). As the leaders of the school building, school principals are depended upon by the school superintendent, district leaders, staff, parents, students, and the community at large

to be the "mythical superhero of the school building" or to be "everything to everyone" (Copeland, 2001, p. 532). As such, tackling ongoing and challenging school improvement initiatives, such as belongingness, can be a feat (Peck et al., 2013; Pollock & Briscoe, 2020). The demanding leadership role of the principal can take a mental toll, leading to heightened stress and eventual burnout (Friedman, 1995; Horwood et al., 2021; Karakose et al., 2016). The burnout of SBLs in the educational setting leads to increased turnover rates, which impact associated stakeholders such as students, staff, families, and the greater school community (Beausaert et al., 2016; DeMatthews et al., 2021).

SJL and CRSL are two modern frameworks SBLs use to encourage DEI initiatives in the educational setting. Since the turn of the century, researchers have studied various aspects of SJL in the academic environment (Bogotch, 2002; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). CRSL, a school leadership framework under the umbrella of SJL (L. Johnson, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; Shah, 2018), has also been a topic of scholarly pursuit in the school setting (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Campos-Moreira et al., 2020; de Lourdes Viloria, 2019; Magno & Schiff, 2010) and is tangential to the culturally responsive and sustaining framework being used in the resources published by NYSED to support the implementation of DEI initiatives in NYS (NYSED, 2021a). According to Khalifa et al. (2016), CRSL is bound by four pillars: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, (c) engaging students and parents in community contexts, and (b) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation. Khalifa et al. showed that the use of these four pillars by SBLs to support the inclusion of all students alleviates many of the stressors leaders face in creating educational settings where students feel like they belong. Furman (2012) identified the SJL framework in the school setting through a lens of dimensional praxis to provide a fuller picture of this conceptual framework. A multi-layered approach to SJL, Furman's five dimensions of SJL praxis address the interplay between personal, interpersonal, communal, systematic, and ecological dimensions of SJL in the educational setting.

Notwithstanding the many studies conducted in the last 20 years, SJL and CRSL are still viewed as an emerging and under-developed area of study, with many gaps in research needing to be filled (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; C. Marshall et al., 2010; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). Multiple researchers have also highlighted the lack of SJL and CRSL research conducted at the school-building level (J. G. Allen et al., 2017; DeMatthews, 2015). The aim of the current research study was to fill the knowledge gap related to student belongingness through the principal's perspective and illuminate how SBLs support inclusion (see J. G. Allen et al., 2017; DeMatthews, 2015).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of SBLs, also referred to as principals, regarding their facilitation of SJL and CRSL practices to support student inclusion and belongingness within the K-12 educational setting in NYS.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions have been designed to illuminate the perspectives of SBLs across NYS regarding the facilitation and implementation of SJL and CRSL frameworks to support student inclusion in the school setting. Also included are quantitative questions based on the categories presented on the Social Justice Behavior Scale (SJBS; Flood, 2019). As an exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study, qualitative questions are presented first followed by quantitative questions and hypotheses.

Qualitative Questions

RQ1: How do high-need rural school principals facilitate SJL?

RQ2: How do high-need rural school principals facilitate CRSL?

RQ 3: What leadership practices do high-need rural school principals perceive to encourage or discourage inclusion for all students in the school building?

RQ4: What leadership barriers or challenges do high-need rural school principals experience to support inclusion (if any)?

Quantitative Questions

RQ5: Is there a variance between the community-minded (CM) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H1_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the CM beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

$H1_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the CM beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

RQ6: Is there a variance between the school-specific (SS) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H2_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the SS beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

$H2_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the SS beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

RQ7: Is there a variance between the self-focused (SF) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H3_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the SF beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

$H3_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the SF beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

Significance of the Research

Conducting an exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study (Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013) to understand the lived experiences and collective narratives (Patterson, 2018) of school principals across central New York is a means of addressing the current call to action by scholars and the NYS Board of Regents (NYSED, 2021b). Through the engagement of school principals in NYS, this dissertation will significantly grow the current body of research.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to understand the perceptions of SBLs, also called principals, more deeply regarding their facilitation of SJL and CRSL practices to support student inclusion and belongingness within the educational setting in NYS consisted of two frameworks. The first conceptual framework was Furman's (2012) dimensions of SJL as a praxis, which focuses on the following five critical attributes of SJL: (a) the personal dimension, (b) interpersonal dimension, (c) communal dimension, (d) systematic dimension, and € ecological dimension. The second conceptual framework applied in this study was the CRSL framework developed by Khalifa et al. (2016), which is made up of four pillars: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, (c) engaging students and parents in community contexts, and (d) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation.

Methodology

Research conducted in this mixed-methods phenomenological study followed an exploratory mixed-methods model (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the qualitative section of this dissertation, a phenomenological practice was used as this strategy best captures reflections on current issues and has been proven helpful in drawing out common themes across interviews to build conceptual connections (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Additionally, a narrative inquiry model was an embedded framework, as stories serve to understand people's identities, mindsets, experiences, and actions within a given setting (Patterson, 2018). The quantitative portion of this study involved the use of the SJBS (Flood, 2019) to quantify school leaders' perspectives regarding inclusion. School leaders in NYS received and completed the SJBS survey instrument via email. The ethical considerations for this study included following the institutional review board (IRB) process and obtaining informed consent from all participants to ensure the ethical parameters of the study remained intact throughout.

Data analysis was a multi-step process. The first part was the analysis of qualitative data was completed using MAXQDA and In vivo coding to "cull words

and phrases that stand out" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 121). A subsequent phase was translating the coded notes using the template presented by Creswell and Poth (2018) in Table 8.4 *Example of codebook entry for theme "Fostering Relationship"* (p. 192). Quantitative analysis procedures using SPSS and Microsoft Excel were leveraged to process the data. After cleaning the data, descriptive statistics were presented and discussed. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), inferential statistics are appropriate when examining a hypothesis. The analysis used for research questions 5-7 was MANOVA tests to assess significance.

Scope Limitations and Delimitations

The scope of this study was the state of New York. New York has over 700 school districts, translating to approximately 4,782 school principals (NYSED, 2021d). In New York, school buildings are defined as elementary, middle, senior high, junior high, junior-senior, or K-12 (NYSED, 2021d). SBLs working in high-need rural NR/C schools versus other SBLs were the target participant group for the qualitative portion of this study, whereas the breadth of SBLs in the state of New York was the target of the quantitative portion of this study. SJL is an expansive conceptual framework, and this study focused specifically on CRSL, one of the many possible SJL frameworks. This study was also limited in race and gender diversity. Delimitations within the qualitative portion of this study include the focus on only one of the six needs resource categories and the sensitive or personal nature of some questions asked.

Definition of Terms

Belongingness. Inclusion and belongingness are terms used interchangeably (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012). Belongingness at school is evident when students "feel close to, a part of, and happy at school; feel that teachers care about students and treat them fairly; get along with teachers and other students, and feel safe at school" (Libbey, 2007, p. 52).

Communal Dimension. The communal dimension is defined as "social justice leaders work[ing] to build community across cultural groups through inclusive, democratic practices" (Furman, 2012, p. 209).

Community Schools. As defined by NYSED (2023a), "community schools are public schools that emphasize family engagement, strong community partnerships, and additional supports for students and families."

Culturally-Relevant Teaching. Similar terms include culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay and Kirkland (2003) defined the fundamentals of culturally relevant teaching based on the interconnectivity between educational equity and multicultural education, teacher accountability involving self-reflection and critical consciousness, and a more profound development and awareness of what is being taught, to whom, and how. Correspondingly, Samuels (2018) defined culturally responsive pedagogy as "a student-centered approach to teaching that includes cultural references and recognizes the importance of students' cultural backgrounds and experiences in all aspects of learning" (p. 22).

Culturally Responsive. Cazden and Leggett (1976) identified culturally responsive as "all school systems bringing the invisible culture of the community into the school through parent participation, hiring and promotion of minority group personnel, and in-service training for the school staff" (p. 17). Similar terms include culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012).

Culturally-Responsive School Leadership (CRSL). CRSL is action-based and encompasses antioppressive/racist leadership, transformative leadership, and social justice leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). Khalifa et al. (2016) defined CRSL as grounded in four key pillars: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, (c) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and (d) engaging students and parents in community contexts.

Culture. Researchers have produced more than 100 different definitions of the term culture (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). According to Lederach (1995), "Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them" (p. 9).

Curriculum. NYSED (2018) defined curriculum as the "what" that facilitates student acquisition of skills and knowledge. Curriculum can include resources, materials, manipulatives, tools, and strategies that provide students access to learning.

DEI Audit. A DEI audit is a method of looking deeply at curriculum, materials, and resources through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, or justice as a means of dismantling bias (Porosoff, 2022).

Diversity. NYSED (2021b) defined diversity as "including but not limited to race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, genetic information, and learning styles" (p. 6). Moreover, "diversity can be mandated and legislated" (Winters, 2013, p. 206).

Ecological Dimension. The ecological dimension is the most exterior dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL praxis. Furman explained, "The ecological dimension involves acting with the knowledge that school-related social-justice issues are situated within broader sociopolitical, economic, and environmental contexts and interdependent with broader issues of oppression and sustainability" (p. 211).

Engagement. Coates (2007) described engagement as "a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as non-academic aspects of the student experience" (p. 122). Engagement is synonymous with involvement and interest (Axelson & Flick, 2011). Engagement occurs by constructing genuine, interrelating school-community spaces (Cooper, 2009; Ishimaru, 2012) where parents and students feel welcome to participate in the educational process (Khalifa et al., 2016; Senge et al., 2012).

Equity. NYSED (2021b) defined equity as "the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of all groups" (p. 6).

High-Need Rural School District. A high-needs rural school district is one of NYS's six identified needs resource categories. According to NYSED (2011),

two elements define a high-needs rural school district. First, a high-needs rural school district is "a district with fewer than fifty students per square mile or a total enrollment of students less than 2,500 and fewer than 100 students per square mile" (p. 1). Second, NYSED established a statistical model for "high-need," ranking districts statewide on the combination of the percentage of free and reduced lunch population in the district and the number of students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). Districts in the 70th percentile or higher are categorized as "high-need" (NYSED, 2011).

  Inclusion. NYSED (2021b) defined inclusion as "authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources" (p. 7). Furthermore, "inclusion stems from voluntary actions" (Winters, 2013, p. 206).

  Interpersonal Dimension. The interpersonal dimension "reflects the central role of relationships in social justice work" (Furman, 2012, p. 207), which includes building trusting relationships with multiple stakeholder groups such as staff, students, and parents.

  Needs/Resource Capacity (N/RC) Categories. N/RC is a measure of a New York school district's ability to meet the needs of its students using local resources through a calculation resulting in a ratio of the estimated poverty percentage. There are six N/RC categories: (a) high N/RC: New York City, (b) high N/RC: Large city districts, (c) high N/RC: Urban-suburban districts, (d) high N/RC: Rural districts, (e) average N/RC districts, and (f) low N/RC districts (NYSED, 2011).

  Personal Dimension. As outlined by Furman (2012), the personal dimension is the most central dimension of the SJL praxis and focuses on "deep, critical, and honest self-reflection" (p. 205).

  Praxis. Freire (2000) defined praxis through experience. He wrote,

  It is only when the oppressed find the oppression out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve

action; nor can it be limited to mere activism but must include serious reflection; only then will it be a praxis. (Freire, 2000, p. 65)

School Principal/School Building Leader (SBL). B. Pont et al. (2008) identified that school principal and SBL are interchangeable terms. A school principal or school building leader is defined as the consummate multi-tasker charged with 21 key responsibilities, which include affirmation, change agent, contingent rewards, communication, culture, discipline, flexibility, focus, ideals, input, intellectual stimulation, involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, knowledge of curriculum, teaching, and assessment, monitoring and evaluation, optimization, order, outreach, relationships, resources, situational awareness, and visibility (Marzano et al., 2005).

Social justice leadership (SJL). SJL "focuses on … those groups that are most underserved, underrepresented, and undereducated and that face various forms of oppression in schools" (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 23). SJL is also a means of "addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). Practitioners of SJL "investigate and pose solutions for issues that generate and reproduce societal inequities" (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 20).

Systematic Dimension. The systematic dimension transforms "the system, at the school and district levels, in the interest of social justice and learning for all children" (Furman, 2012, p. 210).

Summary

An immediate call to action for all school districts with the adoption of a policy statement outlining a framework for DEI in schools was conveyed by the NYS Board of Regents in May 2021 (NYSED, 2021b). Principals play a vital function in the establishment of school settings that accept and encourage the success of diverse groups of learners (Fullan, 2011; Marzano, 2012). Employing SJL is one way SBLs support diverse student populations and cultivate inclusive environments where all students feel a sense of belonging (Brown, 2004b; Chiu & Walker, 2007; Komba, 2013; Stevenson, 2007). Numerous studies have been conducted in this area; however, SJL is still an under-researched leadership

framework, and additional studies in the educational setting focusing on SBLs are needed (J. G. Allen et al., 2017; DeMatthews, 2015). To restate, the purpose of this exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of high-need rural SBLs, also referred to as school principals, regarding their facilitation of SJL and CRSL practices to support student inclusion and belongingness within the K-12 educational setting in NYS.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Inclusion is an unending progression executed in the school setting to support the many diverse populations of students found in the classroom (Ainscow, 2020a, p. 126). As such, inclusion is one of the most daunting tasks educational leaders will encounter (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Zollers et al., 2010). The role of the school building leader (SBL) is to provide leadership to sustain belongingness for all students despite the many challenges they confront (Lambert et al., 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Riehl, 2000). Social justice leadership (SJL) and culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) are two modern frameworks employed by SBLs to encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the educational setting. Various studies have been conducted to date; however, SJL is still an under-researched leadership framework, and further studies in the academic setting focusing on school principals are necessary (J. G. Allen et al., 2017; DeMatthews, 2015). This chapter contains a literature review of prior studies of DEI initiatives, inclusionary practices at school, the role of school principals, and SJL and CRSL conceptual frameworks completed to enhance this mixed-methods study.

Defining DEI in Learning Settings

NYSED (2021b) defined diversity as "including but not limited to race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, genetic information, and learning styles" (p. 6). Furthermore, NYSED (2021b) defined inclusion as "authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources" (p. 7). Diversity and inclusion require an in-depth review to clarify the breadth of DEI initiatives in the educational setting (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012).

Definitions of Diversity

Although a gap in the literature exists regarding the application of DEI initiatives in the K-12 school setting, a plethora of research outlines the many definitions of diversity (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Conflicting definitions of diversity and varied understandings of the promotion of diversity exist (De Anca & Aragon, 2018). In the school setting, a lack of a standard definition of diversity complicates the establishment of diverse and inclusive learning environments in today's school buildings (Fordham, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Salinas & Reidel, 2007). As explored below, many definitions of diversity exist in education-based research, some lengthy and others just a few words. Definitions of diversity can be found in multiple types of documents, from academic studies to policy briefings. According to De Anca and Aragon (2018), diversity can be categorized into three types (see Table 1).

Table 1

Types of Diversity

Category	Definition
Demographic Diversity	Identified characteristics such as origin, gender, race, and sexual orientation
Experiential Diversity	Inclusive of different abilities, interests, and/or affinities
Cognitive Diversity	Based on problem-solving styles and methods of thinking

Differently, the Board of Regents established a new definition of diversity within the NYSED framework for DEI. NYSED (2021b) defined diversity as "includes but is not limited to race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, genetic information, and learning styles" (p. 6). Pollock and Briscoe (2020) defined diversity as the "difference or 'unlikeness' between individuals or groups of people" (p. 520). Ryan (2007b) expressed diversity in schools as a representation of "heritages, histories, and cultures of students" (p. 9). Ladson-Billings and Tate

(1995) asserted that educational diversity is a term interchangeable with educational multiculturalism, whereas Wood (2003) considered diversity a myriad of individual characteristics that differentiate student populations. Different still, Arce-Trigatti and Anderson (2020) defined diversity as a term that "simply indicates the presence of dissimilar elements" (p. 6). In Dewey's (1916) *Democracy and Education*, diversity is not defined but is conveyed through examples of community relationships and social development to support student learning of cultural differences. Diversity in the classroom implies that various voices, languages, traditions, and ideologies are equally respected and promoted in the U.S. educational system (Faist, 2010; Zhou, 1997). To date, diversity in the education environment does not maintain one standard definition, but concerning DEI, demographic diversity is the primary focus (Wood, 2003).

An Exploration of Inclusion and Belonging at School

Diversity and inclusion go hand in hand (Tapia, 2009; Winters, 2013). As distinguished by Tapia (2009), "Diversity is the mix. Inclusion is making the mix work" (p. 12). Winters (2013) noted that diversity is defined as a noun, whereas inclusion is a verb by which action must be included. Belonging is a related term that addresses how students feel in the school building and the positive relationships developed in the educational environment (Libbey, 2007). Schools have an acute responsibility and unique opportunity to influence the sense of belonging school-aged children feel in the academic environment (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012). Through a deeper exploration of the importance of belonging for students and the actions taken in school buildings to support student inclusion, including the use of DEI audits, curriculum materials and resources, instructional strategies, and professional development opportunities for educators, a more holistic understanding of belongingness in the educational environment is discernible.

Students' belonging must be prioritized (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012) in the educational setting. NYSED (2021b) defined inclusion as "authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to

opportunities and resources" (p. 7). Furthermore, "inclusion stems from voluntary actions" (Winters, 2013, p. 206). Inclusion and belongingness are terms to be used interchangeably (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012) as belongingness at school is evident when students "feel close to, a part of, and happy at school; feel that teachers care about students and treat them fairly; get along with teachers and other students, and feel safe at school" (Libbey, 2007, p. 52). A sense of school belonging is a significant predictor of student motivation, effort, academic self-efficacy, academic success, positive attitude, and positive attendance (Battistich et al., 1995; Croninger & Lee, 2001; Roeser et al., 1996; B. Sanchez et al., 2005). School belongingness also supports decreased fighting, vandalism, bullying incidents, and disruptive behaviors, as well as increased student completion rates and classroom engagement (Connell et al., 1995; Klem & Connell, 2003; Wilson & Elliott, 2003). Allyn and Morrell (2022) noted that educators who provide a sense of community and belonging in the classroom allow students to develop courage and confidence in their ability to learn and express their ideas.

A series of literature reviews have been conducted on student belongingness in the learning environment (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Korpershoek et al., 2020; Osterman, 2000). Osterman (2000) reviewed peer-reviewed scholarly works related to belongingness at school, which were available through the ERIC database. Osterman found five common themes in the literature, which included belongingness as a basic psychological need essential to student success, academic attitudes and motives, social and personal attitudes, academic achievement, and engagement and participation in the school setting. Students thrive in educational environments where they feel a sense of belonging (Osterman, 2000). Ainscow and Sandill (2010) conducted a literature review of international research about inclusive education practices and creating inclusive school environments. The scholars found that inclusion at school begins with "some degree of consensus amongst adults around the values of respect for differences" (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010, p. 405), participation in the school community by all stakeholder groups, a leadership style from the SBL that is committed to inclusion, and policies that support inclusive practices at school (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Korpershoek et al.

(2020) conducted a meta-analysis of 82 correlational studies about student belonging from peer-reviewed journals published from 2000 to 2018. The researchers found that grade level did not affect student belongingness (Korpershoek et al., 2020). Regardless of grade level, all students desire to belong at school (Korpershoek et al., 2020). Korpershoek et al. also found positive correlations between student belongingness and academic achievement, motivational outcomes, engagement, and agency and negative correlations between student belongingness, attendance, and dropout rates.

Multiple studies of student belongingness in overseas educational settings have been completed (O'Connor et al., 2010; Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Research completed in Australia by O'Connor et al. (2010), using data from the Australian Temperament Project, a large longitudinal study recording data associated with adolescent development, revealed that participants aged 19–20 reported a greater sense of well-being if they had a positive perception of their secondary school experience. Their positive perception included a sense of belonging at secondary school, where they could voice their thoughts and were respected (O'Connor et al., 2010). Rowe and Stewart (2011) conducted a multiple case study design of three schools in Australia to investigate structures and processes in the school building that support student belonging and school connectedness. The study followed a theory-building approach, including a secondary school, primary school, and school for students with special needs (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Rowe and Stewart conducted in-depth interviews with 38 educators, administrators, parents, community social workers, and health service representatives and 12 student focus groups and a series of informal student interviews. The findings revealed that students felt a tremendous sense of belongingness, participation, and engagement when whole-class activities were facilitated in class, as students had the opportunity to have ownership over their learning and a voice in the curriculum and associated learning activities (Rowe & Stewart, 2011).

Belonging is a critical human need that impacts student acceptance, self-esteem, and positive interpersonal relationships, specifically in the middle school years (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Faust et al., 2014). Researchers have focused

most heavily on American elementary and middle school students when conducting inclusion and belongingness studies (Cunningham, 2007; Hinton, 2018; Zollers et al., 2010). Cunningham (2007) conducted a quantitative analysis of 517 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students from 11 different Catholic elementary schools in an urban city in the mid-southern United States. Using attachment and bonding scales, general norms scales, and risk factor scales, Cunningham learned that students who would categorize themselves as bullies at school feel a greater sense of belonging at school, whereas students who reported themselves as victims of bullying felt a lesser sense of school belongingness.

       Zollers et al. (2010) conducted an ethnographic study of inclusive practices at a northeastern elementary school. Through data collection and analysis, Zollers et al. found that supporting diverse learners in the school setting depends on shared language and values exemplified by the modeled behavior of administrators and staff, value-driven principal leadership, and a broad vision of the school community to encompass all stakeholders. Bouchard and Berg (2017) completed a series of semistructured interviews with seven students in Grades 4–7 and four teachers in a qualitative study to obtain student and teacher perspectives of belongingness in the classroom. The researchers found common themes between participants, which included belonging as foundational, commitment to belonging, and the complexities of belonging (Bouchard & Berg, 2017). The interviews with students revealed a repeated articulation of the significance of feeling a sense of belonging at school. Teachers also addressed the commitment required to foster and maintain a connection with each student to support belongingness in the classroom (Bouchard & Berg, 2017). Finally, teachers highlighted the complexity of understanding student belongingness as barriers and triggers of belonging in the educational environment are varied and multifaceted (Bouchard & Berg, 2017).

       Hinton (2018) studied the belongingness of Grade 7, 8, and 9 students in the lunchroom over 3 years in an American school building. Using a survey of 800 students, Hinton found that the greater the grade level, the less sense of belonging a student feels. Students who felt a sense of belonging at lunch felt happier and had a greater sense of belonging in the classroom and the school building (Hinton, 2018).

Lastly, Renick and Reich (2021) studied student belongingness in a California middle school, surveying 1,226 students. Explicitly focused on belongingness as related to the demographic makeup of the student population, Renick and Reich found that girls had a lesser sense of belonging at school than boys, sixth graders had a greater sense of belonging than eighth-grade students, and race was an inconclusive predictor of belongingness.

Examples of DEI in the K-12 Environment

NYSED put forward a call to action in May 2021 for every school district across the state to adopt a board policy to support DEI initiatives for all students (NYSED, 2021b). DEI is a familiar idea, yet an objective still to be achieved (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). A review of significant applications of DEI initiatives in school settings is needed based on studies conducted related to the implementation of DEI initiatives; research regarding DEI audits of resources, materials, curriculums, and instructional strategies used in the classroom; and scholarly works about professional learning opportunities offered to educators to support the implementation of DEI initiatives in the K-12 learning setting.

Applications in School Environments

Research shows that infants as young as 9 months are aware of ethnicity and race (Telzer et al., 2013), and preschool students understand constructs of social categorization such as age and gender (Bigler et al., 2001). Discussing DEI with students at an early age in the classroom is vital to providing learning experiences that recognize diversity and promote empathy, collaboration, belonging, and intellectual curiosity (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Blais-Rochette et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2021; Marks et al., 2020). G. K. McKenzie and Zascavage (2012) argued that the Montessori methodology of school instruction for early childhood education is the longest-standing and most effective means of supporting DEI in the classroom due to its focus on three fundamental principles: (a) teaching academic skills, (b) teaching life skills, and (c) modeling social skills.

Elements of DEI have been studied in the K-12 learning environments through the lens of culturally relevant teaching, practices, and pedagogy (Danielewicz, 2001; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Over the last two decades, various aspects of culturally responsive teaching have been studied, from framework establishment to instructional practice, standard implementation, and teacher development (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Muniz, 2019; Portes et al., 2018; Roessingh, 2020). First, Gay and Kirkland (2003) defined the fundamentals of culturally relevant teaching based on the interconnectivity between educational equity and multicultural education, teacher accountability involving self-reflection and critical consciousness, and a more profound development and awareness of what is being taught, to whom, and how. Later, Samuels (2018) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as "a student-centered approach to teaching that includes cultural references and recognizes the importance of students' cultural backgrounds and experiences in all aspects of learning" (p. 22). Lavin et al. (2021) addressed the critical attributes of teachers who are prepared to support learners with culturally responsive teaching practices, which include transitioning classroom focus from assessments to students, challenging the status quo, and thinking reflexively and with social awareness. In the classroom, Portes et al. (2018) studied using an instructional conversation intervention with upper elementary English language learners as a positive instructional strategy to support culturally relevant teaching practices. In analyzing state assessment results, Portes et al. found a possible correlation between culturally responsive pedagogy and ELL success on standardized assessments.

Roessingh (2020) classified culturally relevant pedagogy into five critical research-based teaching strategies for vocabulary acquisition when working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners in the elementary classroom. According to Roessingh, culturally responsive pedagogy methods include direct instruction, recycling tasks, using a language experience approach, storybook reading, and object-based learning. In an article, Muniz (2019) analyzed the 50 U.S. states to determine which states have incorporated culturally relevant teaching practices into their mandated teaching standards. Muniz found that all 50 states

included standards to address family and community engagement and 47 of the 50 states included a standard of high expectations for all students; however, "no state explicitly addressed how low expectations are commonly associated with race, class, culture, language, gender and sexual orientation, or disability status" (p. 20). Muniz also identified a fundamental flaw within New York's teaching standards related to culturally responsive pedagogy, which included being responsive to students; however, the state did not guide how a teacher is to be responsive.

Focusing on teacher learning related to culturally relevant teaching and pedagogy, Clark and Andreasen (2018) conducted a quantitative study of 523 elementary education preservice teachers from six teacher education programs in a western U.S. state. Clark and Andreasen discovered that all programs required future educators to participate in at least one course related to student diversity; however, most programs did not require or provide the opportunity for students to participate in authentic experiential culturally responsive teaching or pedagogy practice. Karatas and Oral (2019) conducted a similar study in Turkey and produced results analogous to those found by Clark and Andreasen. A year earlier, Samuels (2018) completed a qualitative study of active elementary educators, collecting data through focus groups, and found that teachers reported that implementing culturally relevant teaching was not without daily challenges. Challenges presented by the educators interviewed included their comfort level and skill set with discussing potentially controversial subjects related to diversity, personal beliefs, and biases, dialogue to support student climate and belonging, and a need for additional professional development to support the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy. Most recently, Mburu (2022) conducted a qualitative study of a preservice teacher who completed her student teaching in a third-grade math classroom to understand better future educators' knowledge and practice of culturally responsive teaching. Through a series of interviews, Mburu found that although the preservice teacher believed she was knowledgeable about culturally relevant teaching, in practice, she minimally used culturally relevant pedagogy strategies.

Although most extant studies concentrated on diversity, equity, or inclusion singularly in the K-12 school setting or on DEI through the framework of culturally relevant teaching or culturally relevant pedagogy, studies focused on the application of DEI initiatives in the school setting in those specific terms expressly are in short supply (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). In the K-12 learning environment, few studies about the particular topic of DEI initiatives have been published, and those that have been conducted could be considered the fringe of or tangential to the elementary educational setting (Rummel et al., 2021). For example, Ponzini (2022) reviewed the financial formulas used to fund K-12 public schools in the United States and determined that school funding disparities are evident and contribute to the continued uneven educational opportunities based on race and class. Another study conducted at the K-12 level did not focus on DEI and funding but at DEI concerning school leadership. Meyer et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study of 10 equity directors from nine school districts across the United States to learn more about districts' efforts to support DEI initiatives in the classroom. Participants in the study by Meyer et al. reported challenges in implementing DEI initiatives in the K-12 school setting related to climate, priority, professional development, and an ability to address diverse populations.

Leggins (2021) presented an article for high school students and guidance counselors to support students conducting a college search to determine whether an institution of higher learning values DEI. Leggins (2021), "When colleges were created, they were meant for middle- and upper-class white males; therefore, being aware of DEI and increasing DEI on campuses and the surrounding areas is critical. Colleges need to be student-ready instead of students being college-ready" (p. 38).

Rummel et al. (2021) wrote of a partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Mahomet-Seymour School District to leverage social-emotional learning (SEL) survey data collected to support DEI promotion. Ninth-grade students at the local high school underwent a series of SEL screenings in the fall of 2018, and the collected data were used to implement support for students through a lens of DEI (Rummel et al., 2021). The researchers found from the survey data that LGBTQI+ students reported intolerance and bullying at school,

low-income students reported feelings of disengagement and exclusion, and students of color reported experiences of racism and racial microaggressions (Rummel et al., 2021). In partnership with the university, the school implemented social and curricular support in the high school. However, it was not until the fall of 2020 that schools in Illinois were required to implement DEI awareness in the K-12 educational setting (Rummel et al., 2021).

Three studies most closely related to the application of DEI initiatives in the elementary classroom were conducted by Dudley-Marling and Paugh (2004), Tobia et al. (2019), and Varner (2022). Dudley-Marling and Paugh tapped into students' voices to collect the DEI perspectives of elementary students. Students commented that book illustrations did not look like them, and neither did their teachers. Researchers have argued that learning spaces for children need to affirm students' cultural, social, and individual identities through constructive social discourse, visuals, curriculums, materials, and resources (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2004). Tobia et al. studied children's well-being following a methodology similar to the study of the university-district SEL partnership described above. The researchers gave the Questionnaire on School Wellbeing to students in Grades 3–5 and 6–8 to determine whether wellbeing differed by gender and grade level. The data from the survey were also used to determine which DEI initiatives were appropriate to implement to support student well-being and needs (Tobia et al., 2019). Tobia et al. found greater student well-being in the primary grade levels than at the middle school level; girls in primary grades felt greater gratification with positive school results and had better relationships with their teachers. With these findings, educators were able to adjust DEI practices in the school building to support the DEI needs of male, primary-aged students (Tobia et al., 2019). Most recently, Varner studied the general music classroom in elementary, middle, and high school buildings. Varner cited first the alignment between SEL and DEI initiatives, similar to that of other researchers predating this study, and then reviewed the social awareness and self-management skills needed by educators, specifically those in the children's music classrooms, to think through the history of classic children's songs such as "I've Been Working on the Railroad" and "Levee Song" before

incorporating such musical standards into lesson plans. In support of DEI initiatives in the music classroom, Varner wrote:

> Often rooted in folk songs, some might appear perfectly innocent at first. However, by digging deeper, we learn that some general music selections have been 'whitewashed' and often reinforce an offensive and racist history that has no place in the general music classroom. (p. 2)

The connection between the classroom and the application of DEI initiatives is currently evident and continues to be studied.

In closing, some school buildings have established community schools to support DEI initiatives for students and families (Casto, 2016). According to NYSED (2023a):

> Community Schools are public schools that emphasize family engagement, strong community partnerships, and additional support for students and families. Community Schools are designed to counter environmental factors that impede student achievement. Fundamentally, Community Schools coordinate and maximize public, non-profit, and private resources to deliver critical services to students and their families, thereby increasing student achievement and generating positive outcomes.

Research has shown that integrating community school practices into the learning environment benefits student success (National Center for Community Schools, 2011). Basch (2010) wrote of the importance of ensuring students have access to on- and off-site mental and physical health services, which can be equitable for all learners without the availability of community schools. Otherwise, students' educational progress will be profoundly limited. Moreover, more than 40 years of research have confirmed the triumph of family engagement in student learning and success (Epstein, 1995).

DEI Audits: Curriculum, Materials, Resources, and Instructional Strategies

A DEI audit is a method of looking deeply at curriculum, materials, and resources through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, or justice to dismantle bias (Porosoff, 2022). According to Porosoff (2022), a thorough DEI audit is not a singular activity but a multi-step process that requires a fundamental review of

diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice questions, issues, and efforts within a school district, school building, or school classroom (see Table 2).

Table 2

Types of Curriculum Audits

Type of Audit	Definition
Diversity Audit	Curriculum, materials, and resources which embody individuals of different backgrounds, characteristics, experiences, and viewpoints
Inclusion Audit	A learning experience in which individuals, especially those from marginalized subgroups, are integrated into environment
Equity Audit	An educational system that ensures all members of the school setting can meaningfully participate with full access and undue burden
Justice Audit	The act of righting wrongs, preventing harm, healing disservice, and creating learning environments that promote happiness, flourishing, belonging, and liberation.

D. L. Stewart (2017) advocated for rhetoric to be used during an audit. D. L. Stewart wrote the following questions for consideration:

> Diversity asks, "How many more of [pick any minoritized identity] group do we have this year than last?" Equity responds, "What conditions have we created that maintain certain groups as the perpetual majority here?" Inclusion asks, "Is this environment safe for everyone to feel like they belong?" Justice challenges, "Whose safety is being sacrificed and minimized to allow others to be comfortable maintaining dehumanizing views?" (p. 3)

The materials used to support learning are significant in progressing DEI initiatives in the school setting (Armstrong, 2021). According to Armstrong (2021), research indicates that educators contextualize lessons and activities based on students' experiences, interests, identities, and cultures; students who previously resisted academic content may respond more positively to content that reflects themselves and their values. Auditing library collections through the lens of DEI has a semirobust history in the K-12 setting (Duval, 2020; V. Wells et al., 2023). Texts selected to support DEI should include various racial, ethnic, and gender

groups and an intersection of diverse populations in underrepresented settings, and locals should continue to support DEI initiatives in the classroom (Armstrong, 2021). R. S. Bishop (1990) wrote, "One of the reasons literature exists is to transform human experience and reflect it back to us so we can better understand it" (p. 3). N. J. Johnson et al. (2017) related the student's experience with a book to be like that of a sliding door as "books that serve as sliding doors invite readers to step through and into an experience that may change them" (p. 572).

Conducting a DEI audit of reading materials in the classroom and school libraries is a necessary activity in the learning environment (Grenier & Lynn, 2022; Koss & Paciga, 2022). Many researchers have analyzed the content of children's media and educational materials, finding the increased inclusion of diverse learning materials to support DEI conversations in the classroom over the last 40 years (Klein & Shiffman, 2009; Northrop et al., 2019; Sheldon, 2004). Little and Aglinskas (2022) conducted a text diversity audit based on the work of McLean Davies (2012) at a rural Catholic school in Australia. Following a three-stage process, Little and Aglinskas conducted an audit of texts for Grades 7 through 11 (Little & Aglinskas, 2022). According to Little and Aglinskas, Stage 1 required gathering texts, Stage 2 required reviewers to act on reflection and analysis, and Stage 3 required implementing change. Through the audit process, the English educators conducting the audit could propose an updated text list that reflected female voices, not just male voices, and multiple cultural representations, not just representations of the majority group (Little & Aglinskas, 2022).

Stocking shelves with Caldecott Medal winners in classrooms and school libraries is a common practice (Martinez et al., 2016). Martinez et al. (2016) analyzed 111 Caldecott books and found a predominance of books about White characters. The scholars also found no Asian or Native American characters; only one Latino/a main character; no books set outside of the United States during contemporary times; and a minimal variety of characters representing other subgroup populations such as economically disadvantaged, disabled, or older generations (Martinez et al., 2016). Boudrye (2021) also noted that schools should

to consider whether to keep books written by authors who voice biased behaviors, thoughts, actions, and feelings in the school's collection or discard them.

Concerning instructional strategies to support DEI initiatives, Ladson-Billings' (1995) seminal presentation of culturally relevant pedagogy practices to support diverse learner populations delivered a method for teachers to connect with students, their families, their communities, and their daily lives based on a study of eight teachers, which had been published a year earlier (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Twenty years later, Ladson-Billings (2014) authored an article exploring an updated or "remixed" approach to culturally relevant pedagogy to support DEI. Renamed culturally sustaining pedagogy, off the suggestion of Paris (2012), who noted that today's youth culture is based on a global identity, Ladson-Billings (2014) evolved multicultural curricular and instructional practices to embrace students' changing times and interests. For example, K-12 lesson plans included hip-hop and spoken word resources to engage and excite students. A second study of instructional strategies that support culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching practices was conducted by Rezvi et al. (2020). Rezvi et al. highlighted the importance of instruction that does not advocate telling a single story, as addressed initially in a TED talk by Adichie (2009), specifically for female students and mathematics instruction. According to Rezvi et al., middle school and high school teachers need to confront the negative stereotypes about mathematics and promote a positive association with the discipline through visible exemplars of individuals who flourish in mathematically challenging situations through widespread text implementation in the classroom.

Professional Development for K-12 Educators

Teachers need sustained learning experiences to reduce educator bias, as well as professional development experiences about relevant history, policy, and research to support the promotion of positive dispositions toward diversity and social identities and reduce prejudice (Gonzales et al., 2021; Kumar & Hamer, 2013; F. Lopez, 2017). Teachers also need professional development opportunities to learn strategies that support student belongingness through authentic learning experiences in the classroom (Pupik & Herrmann, 2022).

In a study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adult support is a factor that fosters belongingness in the school setting (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2009). School staff must dedicate interest, attention, time, and emotional support to students; however, not all staff have the skills to emotionally support students and foster student belongingness in the learning environment (CDC, 2009). According to the study, professional development is essential for teachers and other staff members to empower them to meet children and adolescents' diverse mental, social, and emotional needs (CDC, 2009). An inclusion equation was developed by Winters (2013) to support inclusion in the workplace and other settings such as schools. According to Winters, "inclusion = values + effective systems + cultural competence + emotional intelligence" (p. 210). Professional development opportunities can support the creation of inclusive learning environments (Ferdman, 2013). In a study conducted by Ferdman (2013), operationalizing inclusive behaviors in the professional or other learning environment includes the following elements: "creating safety, acknowledging others, dealing with conflict and differences, showing an ability and willingness to learn, having and giving voice, and encouraging representation" (p. 40). In a survey of New York City teachers, Bryan-Gooden and Hester (2018) found that less than one in three teachers received ongoing professional development to care for issues of ethnicity and race in the classroom.

School Building Leaders

School principals, also referred to as SBLs, though in many instances believed to be a model of shared or distributed leadership practices to manage a school building successfully, are often faced with the responsibility of universal leadership to maintain accountability for school improvement and student-leading and welfare (Bush, 2022). School leaders are challenged with an ever-growing list of roles and responsibilities within the educational environment (Peck et al., 2013). In particular, in a time of DEI initiatives, school building principals face mounting challenges to support the successful creation of learning settings that foster student inclusion and belonging (Goddard, 2010).

Roles and Responsibilities

Goddard (2010) described principals as responsible for providing leadership in a pluralistic society. As the instructional leader for the school building, the principal is also responsible for maintaining curricula and pedagogy used in the school and is frequently required to promote values and beliefs of the majority culture, not always reflective of diverse student populations (Goddard, 2010). According to Goddard (2010), the role of a principal is to encourage teachers to differentiate their teaching practices, support more inclusive classrooms, and make positive contributions to the school climate and culture. Peck et al. (2013) conducted a literature review of principal-focused scholarly research, policy documents, and academic accounts from 2001–2011 and found three resounding themes regarding the role of principals as SBLs. According to Peck et al., principals are essential to school improvement, must assign leadership responsibilities, and must acknowledge final liability for school academic success. Recognizing students have diverse personalities, Solberg et al. (2021) conducted a study of students in elementary schools across Norway to identify how students more prone to shyness were made to feel a sense of belonging in the classroom by their teacher and the benefit of their belongingness within the educational environment. Solberg et al. found that although different schools implemented varying strategies, the most tremendous success was achieved with the support and guidance of the school's leadership. Principals should provide direction, allow discretion, and support teachers in identifying vulnerable students who struggle to belong in the classroom (Solberg et al., 2021).

The school principal also has a role to foster a positive image of the educational experience within the school building for families and students (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Medina et al., 2014). Principals are responsible for creating supportive and inclusive learning environments for diverse populations of students (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006). Karpinski and Lugg (2006) documented that daily professional lives of principals of both primary and secondary schools are steered by many statutes, regulations, and court decisions that may negatively impact the well-being of many children. School administrators must negotiate the

demands of the job and the success of diverse student populations under the various policies in place (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006). Medina et al. (2014) conducted a study of two Latina U.S. primary school principals to gain a greater perspective from the perception of leaders in high-need schools of their role as SBL. Both principals attested to leadership being a moral craft that requires them to move beyond the role's technical, day-to-day managerial functions to that of an aspirational SBL who engages stakeholders through example and practice in supporting all stakeholder groups (Medina et al., 2014).

Leadership Challenges

The role of a school principal is complex and challenging (Foskett & Lumby, 2003; Fullan, 2003). Fullan (2003) argued that SBLs, not only in the United States but also around the globe, are victims of unrealistic expectations and unreasoned educational policies that simultaneously increase prescription and lessened coherence. Of the role of a principal, Foskett and Lumby (2003) conceded that "managing the 'here and now' is a major challenge, but a key element of the task is to move the institution on, to align it with what society will demand of education and training in the future" (p. 153).

Various studies of the challenges principals face related to DEI initiatives have been conducted in the 21st century (Hoff et al., 2006; Pollock & Briscoe, 2020). In a study of 90 emerging school administrators, Hoff et al. (2006) found that through the collection of survey data and the conducting of interviews, educational leaders had "little understanding of specific concepts related to diversity" (p. 243). Hoff et al. also found that educational leaders are only "somewhat" prepared to, comfortable with, and have a sense of responsibility for addressing diversity within their school community (Hoff et al., 2006). Pollock and Briscoe (2020) conducted 59 semistructured interviews with principals about their work and student diversity. Key themes emerged, including a common belief that all students are the same regardless of demographic differences, visible differences versus less visible differences are more frequently recognized by educational leaders when describing diversity within student populations, and the practices of

principals most heavily influence leadership in the school building associated with student diversity (Pollock & Briscoe, 2020).

Principal Leadership in Rural School Buildings

In rural America, the school building is often the heart of the town (Jenkins, 2007; Maxwell et al., 2013). School buildings are the source of education by day and entertainment by night and the place for town hall meetings, voting, and community events, and the rural school district is often multi-generational, with grandparents, children, and grandchildren all spending their formative years in the same building day after day, sharing similar memories decades apart (O'Rourke & Ylimaki, 2014; Rey, 2014). This dichotomy makes the rural school district distinctly different from other school districts across the United States (Monk, 2017; Preston & Barnes, 2017; Preston et al., 2013). The school principal is not only the educational leader of the building but also the community leader (Surface & Theobald, 2015; Tieken, 2014). As such, rural SBLs can be influenced by various factors not encountered by urban or suburban school principals, including public interests, fiscal practices, familial ties, and community traditions (Jenkins, 2007; O'Rourke & Ylimaki, 2014; Rey, 2014).

Rural school leaders encounter various positive and negative aspects of the role (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Hansen, 2018). Second to the classroom experience, school leadership has the most significant impact and influence on student learning (Hardwick-Franco, 2019). In a quantitative study, Beesley and Clark (2015) found that rural SBLs believe they have more significant influence over curriculum and instructional strategies utilized in the educational environment. J. E. Sanchez et al. (2017) found that rural school principals expressed genuine optimism about the efforts of staff to support student success.

Conversely, in the school building, the rural principal performs various roles to fill organizational infrastructure gaps at times, including the bus driver, the school custodian, and the athletic director, among other responsibilities outside of the traditional role of the school building leader (O'Shea & Zuckerman, 2022). In a study of rural school principals' lived professional

experiences conducted by Hatton et al. (2017), one participant is quoted as saying,

> It's just like you are at the circus, and you see that guy spinning all of the plates. That is how I feel about all of my programs. You know, like I've got to keep that one spinning and this one spinning and hope that one does not fall over there. (p. 3)

J. E. Sanchez et al. (2017) found that SBLs articulated feelings of loneliness and a sense of a heavy weight on their shoulders. Concerning school improvement, school districts also face the problem of principal turnover, as rural school principals reported leaving leadership roles in the rural school setting due to personal, environmental, and institutional factors (Hansen, 2018; J. E. Sanchez et al., 2022). Rural school buildings are often insulated from diverse student populations (H. N. Bishop & McClellan, 2016; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Tooms et al., 2010). As a result, rural SBLs must also be able to recognize and resist personal biases, implicit or not, more so than other school principal populations (H. N. Bishop & McClellan, 2016; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Tooms et al., 2010). Rural SBLs also encounter the challenging stressors of a lack of resources, conflict, personal and professional task management, and instructional demands (Klocko & Justis, 2019).

As rural SBLs, principals face professional isolation, and, in turn, access to leadership development programs and professional development opportunities can be a challenge endured by rural school administrators (T. Wells et al., 2021). According to a qualitative study conducted by Cothern (2020), rural SBLs desire professional development topics, including using data, improving instruction, enabling change, and growing personal leadership practices. In a descriptive qualitative study, Angelle et al. (2021) explored the experiences of four rural school leaders obtaining professional development to support socially just practices for marginalized student populations in their school settings. The researchers discovered that the implementation of learning experiences for administrators related to social justice practices are likely to take time to bring building-level change, and therefore, daily embedded practices are the most

viable strategy in rural school districts (Angelle et al., 2021). Principals of rural school buildings often need more opportunities for professional collaboration (C. Stewart & Matthews, 2016).

Conceptual Frameworks

This study focused on how principals support DEI in high-need rural school buildings through the lens of SJL and CRSL. SJL "focuses on … those groups that are most underserved, underrepresented, and undereducated and that face various forms of oppression in schools" (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 23). SJL is also a means of "addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). Under the umbrella of SJL, CRSL is action-based and encompasses aspects of antioppressive/racist leadership, transformative leadership, and SJL (Khalifa et al., 2016). The conceptual frameworks for SJL and CRSL are grounded in a literature review through the lens of global research, national studies, historical perspectives, challenges, and leadership preparation. The breadth of the SJL and CRSL studies conducted over the last two decades can be viewed in Table 3, titled "A Timeline of Global, National, and Historical SJL and CRSL Studies in K-12 Learning Settings," located at the end of this section. The conceptual frameworks for SJL and CRSL are best understood through the work of Furman (2012) and Khalifa et al. (2016). Exploring quantitative survey tools, such as Flood's (2019) SJBS, to support SJL applications is also valuable to review.

SJL

A Global Perspective. Researchers worldwide have obtained a global perspective of SJL in the educational setting. Studies have been conducted from the viewpoint of leaders, teachers, students, and families to gather a comprehensive impression of SJL on six of the seven continents. First, studies were conducted in Turkey and Israel in the Middle East. Tomul (2009) collected questionnaire data from 147 elementary school principals in Turkey to capture their opinions about harnessing SJL practices in the learning environment. Tomul found that the majority of primary school building administrators believed SJL practices need only be used with student groups who are low income, have adjustment difficulties,

are academically low performing, or have a disability. Gender, culture, language, and ethnic differences were not considered target populations for SJL behaviors. Tomul (2009) also noted that elementary principals reported systemic work implementing SJL behaviors that needed improvement at the primary education building level.

Seven years later, Arar et al. (2016) conducted a comparative study of SJL practices by educational leaders in Turkey and Israel that encompassed in-depth, semistructured, narrative interviews with six Israeli school principals and five Turkish school principals to gather information about what SJL practices these high school, middle school, and elementary school principals used in support of student inclusion in the learning environment (Arar et al., 2016). Arar et al. found that principals from both countries believed SJL practices provided equal opportunities for all educational stakeholders, which these principals asserted eliminated the feelings of otherness and supported inclusive environments for learners and their families. Finally, principals from both countries also reported that leading through a lens of social justice gives value to diversity and significance to equity and positively influences educational policy and school practices (Arar et al., 2016). Over a decade after Tomul's (2009) seminal study, Kocak (2021) conducted a research study of 549 high school students in Turkey to determine whether SJL in education improves a student's sense of belonging. In this quantitative study, Kocak collected survey data from students attending 22 different high schools. Students completed three surveys: one related to SJL and another about belongingness and resiliency (Kocak, 2021). Students responded to the SJL survey with their opinions on how their school principal's behaviors aligned to the SJL scale and the two belongingness and resiliency surveys with their views of themselves and the connectedness and support they feel at school (Kocak, 2021). Kocak found a positive effect between students' beliefs that their school principals were socially just leaders and their sense of belonging at school.

Several fundamental SJL studies in the school setting have been conducted in Africa over the last few decades. Jansen (2006) studied two principals of schools in South Africa to learn more about their SJL tendencies. Jansen observed both

leaders who held strong convictions for practicing SJL in their school buildings, consistently reflected on their racial identities and how their fear impacted the way they lead, and that both principals were relentless in their desire to integrate the school community and their families despite ongoing pressure from the communities. Bosu et al. (2011) coordinated a multi-site case study of three schools, two in Ghana and one in Tanzania. In this qualitative study, Bosu et al. spoke with the head teachers of each school to gain insights into the SJL practices used in these African educational settings. Bosu et al. received positive reports of social justice practices from the school principals, citing leadership activities conducted to ensure fairness, equity, recognition, and redistribution. Bosu et al. noted that head teachers who are empowered and provide leadership agency can promote social justice in the classroom and offer students a quality education within their schools.

On the Asian continent, various educationally based SJL studies have been completed in the 21st century. In their article, Chiu and Walker (2007) outlined various economic, psychological, and sociological research to illustrate the many ingrained inequities in Hong Kong schools. Chiu and Walker wrote, "Shifting values is more difficult than altering structures, but neither can endure without the other" (p. 734). These researchers addressed how school principals' promotion of SJL could alleviate injustices such as unequal allocation of resources, status differences, teacher bias, and perceptions of bias (Chiu & Walker, 2007). Gautam et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative case study to understand further how the school leader, also referred to as the head teacher, of an urban, high-needs Nepalese school implemented SJL practices to sustain school improvement. Gautam et al. highlighted two fundamental SJL practices effected by the head teacher at the school to sustain the needs of students, staff, and families. First, the school principal portrayed a commitment to fostering learning for all through the provision of staff development, mentoring, and coaching opportunities, and second, the head teacher strengthened student achievement through the integration of the community and school's rich histories into classroom lessons (Gautam et al., 2015).

SJL has also been studied in Australia and South America. Gurr et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative case study of two school principals in two different buildings in Australia. In this study, Gurr et al. uncovered that SBLs serving in high-need school environments were acutely aware of the social justice implications of their work. Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) conducted a critical qualitative case study collecting observations and facilitating open-ended interviews with various staff, volunteers, and participants at a local "neighborhood center" in Caracas, Venezuela, to obtain data about the SJL practices employed by the administrator of the Bolivar Community Center, which served educational, social, and cultural needs of the local community. Goldfarb and Grinberg pointed out that education does not take place only in the classroom or in schools, and, as such, educational leaders can be found in various settings. Using a social justice framework lens of critical perspectives and praxis, Goldfarb and Grinberg found that this educational leader exemplified the social justice practices of ownership and empowerment of participants and staff, with many of those interviewed sharing that the leader of the center made them feel included and active contributors to the success of the Bolivar Community Center.

In Europe, studies of SJL practices have been focused on a specific country, and comparative studies have looked at the SJL practices of different European countries. Stevenson (2007) conducted five case studies at five different schools across England, focused on collecting interview data from SBLs, students, staff, and parents to capture and affirm sentiments about using SJL in the educational environment. Stevenson found that all five SBLs were challenged by the pressures of external forces created by the national policy. Despite the tension school-building leadership faced, they all still had a personal commitment to social inclusion through SJL practices (Stevenson, 2007).

A series of comparative research studies were completed by Slater et al. (2014), Norberg et al. (2014), and Angelle et al. (2015). Slater et al. conducted a study in two different countries, Costa Rica and England, to examine the context of SJL in school settings through an internal lens. The researchers conducted interviews with two school leaders, one in each country, and found varying

perspectives of SJL in the school setting according to each leader's point of view (Slater et al., 2014). Slater et al. concluded that more research is needed to collect educational leaders' perspectives to evaluate better how SJL is being harnessed in schools worldwide. Norberg et al. studied the global context of SJL and the actions of socially just educational leaders, interviewing two Swedish and two U.S. principals. The researchers found that the actions of school leaders practicing SJL empower people, recognize the need to support marginalized student populations and redistribute resources and experiences to ensure equity (Norberg et al., 2014). Angelle et al. conducted a comparative qualitative study of SJL behaviors by principals in Sweden and the United States through a meso, or school-building level, lens. The scholars found that Swedish principals had a different approach to SJL from that used by U.S. administrators, mentioning that Swedish leaders focused more on diversity and equity awareness, student rights, and prejudices (Angelle et al., 2015). In contrast, U.S. SBLs expressed the importance of modeling socially just behaviors and elevating student voices (Angelle et al., 2015). Swedish principals also reported no obstacles hindering their ability to apply SJL practices in the educational setting (Angelle et al., 2015).

In North America, studies have been conducted in Mexico and Canada. DeMatthews et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative case study of one elementary school principal in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to learn more about the SJL practices related to family engagement. Through interviews and observations with parents, teachers, and other administrators, a vignette of the SJL practices employed by this elementary principal, Mrs. Donna, to engage families was apparent to the researchers (DeMatthews et al., 2016). DeMatthews et al. reported Mrs. Donna's actions as a practitioner of SJL, which included an understanding of the complexities of the community in which the school resided, the creation of a safe, supportive, and caring learning environment, and providing students and parents with meaningful experiences and learning opportunities. Lastly, Shah (2018) used Furman's (2012) praxis-dimension-capacities framework to study the SJL perspectives of four White, middle-class school principals in a Canadian school district. Interviews with participants touched on all five sections of the dimensions

addressed by Furman's framework (Shah, 2018). Of most relevance, the researchers found that White leaders engaging in SJL practices need strategies to communicate and facilitate dialogue across different stakeholder groups (Shah, 2018).

A National Perspective. As many SJL studies have been conducted around the globe, an equally large number of research studies have been completed in the United States in the 21st century. Studies have been conducted in the state of New York, in other states across the country, in regions of the United States, and with a national focus. These studies have been primarily qualitative.

Shields (2004) highlighted the presence of the status quo in education, the challenges of changing the status quo, and how SJL practices support progress in the educational setting. Although educational leadership can be complex and challenging, according to Shields, school-building administrators can create more progressive and inclusive learning environments by applying SJL practices, such as facilitating moral dialogue, acknowledging ethnicity, and recognizing class.

Wasonga (2009) conducted a series of focus groups with SBLs to gain principals' perspectives on applying SJL in the educational setting. Each focus group comprised six to nine participants (Wasonga, 2009). Wasonga completed three focus groups with middle school principals and two focus groups with high school principals and found that SJL practices in the educational setting require the development of relationships between the school principal and stakeholder groups such as students, parents, teachers, and the community. The principals interviewed shared a need for collaboration, advocacy, and social control to move forward SJL practices in the school building (Wasonga, 2009).

In a qualitative study using a grounded theory methodology, Theoharis (2010) focused on the actions of two elementary principals, two middle school principals, and two high school principals from the United States during a single school year to lead through a social justice lens. Theoharis completed in-depth individual interviews and focus groups with the selected principals, conducted site visits, reviewed documents and materials, and held discussions with school staff members. Theoharis found that these six SBLs used various SJL strategies to

disrupt injustice within the learning environment, which included disparate and low student achievement, a disconnect with the families of the school community, a deprofessionalized teaching staff, and school structures that marginalized and impeded on student success. SJL practices explicitly employed by the elementary principals interviewed included eliminating pullout classes, which has created segregation among students, and addressing the issues of race and equity with staff monthly at faculty meetings to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities (Theoharis, 2010). Theoharis also witnessed these leaders using various strategies to disrupt injustices within the school setting. SJL practices witnessed included altering school structures that impede achievement, creating a more welcoming family environment, and empowering teaching staff (Theoharis, 2010).

Shields (2010) interviewed two principals of schools in the United States to determine the overlap between transformational leadership and SJL. Shields found that the SJL actions of these two principals align, in part, with a transformational leadership framework; however, Shields also concluded that SJL might also be a component of a distributed leadership framework or an authentic leadership framework. Key to note is that regardless of the identified leadership style of the school principal, the attributes of SJL are omnipresent (Shields, 2010).

Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) conducted multiple instrumental case studies of two urban elementary principals and found that the support for teachers and principals brings the most significant positive student academic achievement outcomes. Theoharis and O'Toole found that these two principals supported SJL initiatives by implementing professional development for staff around the needs of diverse student populations and using collaborative co-teaching models in classrooms.

Scanlan (2012) conducted a qualitative case study to gather social action, subjective experiences, and conditions influencing the experiences and actions of five Catholic school principals who were educational leaders at learning institutions located in the Midwest that primarily serve the needs of marginalized student populations including ELLs, students with disabilities, free and reduced lunch populations, and students of color. Examples of SJL practices in these schools

included a philosophical commitment to saying yes and figuring it out later, modeling socially just practices through creating inclusive learning environments, and overcoming capacity limits concerning curricular and classroom structures, professional development, and hiring (Scanlan, 2012).

Rivera-McCutchen (2014) examined how four New York City secondary principals would respond to hypothetical scenarios of teacher prejudice to determine whether these leaders were equipped to handle situations of inequity using SJL behaviors. Common strategies grounded in SJL best practices emerged, including communicating openly with staff, teaching and developing staff towards a social justice orientation, and setting and maintaining the school's values (Rivera-McCutchen, 2014). Rivera-McCutchen also concluded that these four principals' leadership practices grew out of their moral grounding and aimed to fight inequities and injustices encountered at their schools.

DeMatthews (2015) conducted a qualitative case study of one elementary school principal in an urban school district in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States to learn more about the orientation of the social justice leadership practices utilized by this school building leader. Principal Lee spoke of direct and indirect teacher resistance, the challenge of individual student behaviors, and a lack of knowledge supporting all learners when creating socially just and inclusive learning environments (DeMatthews, 2015).

Historical Perspective. Over the last few decades, researchers have conducted studies of SJL in educational environments through a historical lens (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Lugg & Shoho, 2006). Lugg and Shoho (2006) presented a historical review of SJL practices in education by analyzing George Counts' 1932 speech on social justice and making comparisons to today's educational leadership landscape. George Counts, a professor at the Teachers College, presented a landmark speech to the Progressive Education Association in which he called for academic leaders to embrace social justice practices through progressive educational reform and make the school the center of the community (Lugg & Shoho, 2006). Lugg and Shoho identified that a school principal's choice to use

socially just practices in the educational setting was, in the time of Counts and still is today, a politically fraught action writing,

> For school administrators with a social justice orientation, the job of leading schools where all children are valued (especially marginalized children whose voices are often silent or ignored) can be a perilous voyage full of obstacles and barriers to change. (p. 202)

In 2006, Lugg partnered with Karpinski to further study SJL through a historical focus. Karpinski and Lugg (2006) authored a historical essay to examine a single educational leader as an exemplar of SJL practice in the learning venue. J. Rupert Picott was a Virginia African-American teacher and school principal in the 1940s (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006). Picott spearheaded social justice objectives such as equal pay, maternity policies, retirement plans, smaller class sizes, and paid sick leave, according to Karpinski and Lugg. As an educational leader, Picott embodied SJL practices that promote equity and advocacy for marginalized populations (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006).

Implementation Challenges. The implementation of a SJL framework in a school setting, whether nationally or internationally, is not without challenges (Angelle et al., 2015; Berkovich, 2014; Bogotch, 2002; Capper & Young, 2014; Gautam et al., 2015; Theoharis, 2007). Most recently, Angelle et al. (2015) expressed the challenges U.S. SBLs face in implementing SJL practices, including a lack of a school structure for socially just practices, a lack of time, competing priorities, and differing school building populations, both in size and demographic makeup. Similarly, and halfway around the world, Gautam et al. (2015) found comparable challenges in a Nepalese school. The participant in the study by Gautam et al. was a Nepalese school principal who brought to light internal and external challenges encountered in implementing sustained SJL practices. From an internal perspective, Gautam et al. noted that the critical challenge is encouraging and motivating teachers to change instructional practices to support all learners versus remaining with the status quo, even if it worked in the past. Gautam et al. reported external challenges to SJL practices for SBLs, including a lack of governmental resources and policies that hinder progress.

Bogotch (2002) wrote of the challenge in an analysis of educational leadership and social justice practices, stating of the SBL,

> Educational leadership as practice is caught inside the tensions created by the cultural images and power of having to be perceived publicly as a strong leader, while intellectually and morally recognizing the worth of others, inside and outside of schools. (p. 154)

Theoharis (2007) echoed analogous ideas to Bogotch's seminal work just a few years later. Theoharis conducted a critical, qualitative, positioned-subject, autoethnographic study of seven SBLs. The seven principals shared through reflective conversations the challenges and resistance they faced when employing SJL practices in the educational setting (Theoharis, 2007). Reasons for resistance to SJL identified by this group of school administrators included fear of change, a lack of time, educator biases, formidable bureaucracy, and uninspiring leadership preparation programs (Theoharis, 2007). As such, Theoharis identified two consequences of continued resistance and challenges faced by school building leaders from the school, immediate community, district office, and higher education related to the implementation of social justice leadership practice: an insistent sense of discouragement and a tremendous personal toll that was felt physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Finally, Capper and Young (2014) and Berkovich (2014) highlighted the collaboration and structural challenges of SJL in educational settings. Capper and Young identified that a challenge of SJL for the school principal to put into practice is the need for SJL to be collaborative in practice; however, the school principal is often viewed through the lens of a superhero or a leader meant to go it alone. Capper and Young asserted that school-building leadership must be supported by district leadership to grow the social justice capacity of the school-building staff, educators, and support staff for SJL to be successful in the educational setting. Berkovich developed a macro-level framework for educational SJL through a social-ecological perspective. Many SJL barriers and challenges in the academic setting are presented (Berkovich, 2014). Difficulties in promoting SJL for educational administrators addressed by Berkovich (2014) included traditional

community values, contradictory social justice goals, ethical commitments to uphold rules, hindering policies, and a convergence of multiple socio-economic challenges.

Leadership Preparation to Support SJL. Over the last two decades, researchers have also invested considerable time and energy in understanding the preparation needed for leaders to support a SJL framework and practice (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). To date, educational leaders in the United States and abroad have been participating in programming that minimally or does not address the skills needed to implement SJL practices in the school setting (Blackmore, 2009; K. B. McKenzie et al., 2008). Researchers have presented ideas within existing research about developing, growing, and expanding SJL offerings and experiences to SBLs to support the use of a SJL framework (J. G. Allen et al., 2017; Bruner, 2008; Capper et al., 2006).

Scholars have identified various reasons in support of SJL preparation for future school principals. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) presented the need for higher education programs to develop leadership programming that provides school principals with the skills to support SJL. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy cited the following reasons for this need: the implementation of learning standards, a lack of diversity in current school leadership, a developing achievement gap, and the privatization of educational institutions. Jean-Marie et al. (2009) conducted an exhaustive literature review to explore themes of social justice and educational leadership preparedness. Through their research, Jean-Marie et al. found that educational leadership pedagogies were moving towards more socially just practices; however, more significant connections between international and local social justice practices needed to be understood by school leadership to extend and grow the practice within U.S. school buildings. According to Blackmore (2009), Australian universities started developing preservice leadership programs in the 1970s; however, the Australian government did not align leadership development to professional learning standards until the 21st century. Leadership preparation programs in Australia also lack social justice experiences

for future principals, as internships for real fieldwork experiences are nonexistent (Blackmore, 2009).

Examples of the implementation of SJL preparedness programming exist. In an article, Bruner (2008) used the movie *Crash* (Haggis, 2004) in an educational leaders' preparatory program as a critical reflection instructional tool to bring attention to diversity and the use of SJL practices. Bruner conducted a qualitative, exploratory study to explain the connection between self-reflection through essay writing, following the viewing of *Crash* (Haggis, 2004), and actions class participants intend to take as school administrators that were aligned to SJL behaviors. Bruner found that participants wrote primarily of leading in the educational setting with a greater focus on developing student relationships through caring, hopeful, and compassionate actions. About a decade later, J. G. Allen et al. (2017) conducted a study of 117 pre-service principals enrolled in a five-week online course in which participants completed several activities, including readings, discussions, and reflective essay writing, to develop their social justice awareness. The researchers found that participants' understanding and importance of SJL practice increased from the beginning to the end of the course by including activities promoting SJL (J. G. Allen et al., 2017). Areas of increased awareness included equity, diversity, and inclusion in the learning environment (J. G. Allen et al., 2017).

Academics have also proposed possible structures for SJL education to occur for SBLs. Capper et al. (2006) presented a potential framework for conceptualizing the preparation of educational leaders for social justice in the school location. Through the completion of a review of 72 pieces of literature, Capper et al. determined that educational leaders need preparation in three key areas: critical consciousness, knowledge, and practical skills focused on SJL. According to Capper et al., these three domains of SJL preparation should be applied to SJL training for educational administrator as they relate to curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. K. B. McKenzie et al. (2008) authored an article that suggested a structure for an educational leadership program to support future principals with SJL work is necessary. The researchers argued that "preparation

programs must acknowledge that leadership for social justice requires knowledge and skills that reach beyond the traditional notion of instructional leadership" (K. B. McKenzie et al., 2008, p. 124). After completing a principal leadership training program and after 1 to 3 years of on-the-job experience as a SBL, K. B. McKenzie et al. recommended principals enter a secondary leadership program to obtain the skills and support needed for the practice of SJL in the school setting.

      Furman's (2012) Framework. Furman (2012) presented a conceptual framework for SJL as praxis. Furman's conceptual framework for SJL is structured around three central concepts. First, leadership for social justice was visualized as praxis, as interpreted by Freire (2000), encompassing reflection and action (Furman, 2012). Second, according to Furman, SJL spans numerous dimensions, which serve as grounds for this praxis. These dimensions include the personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological (Furman, 2012). Finally, each dimension within the framework necessitated the maturity of capabilities on the part of the educational leader (Furman, 2012). Under Furman's SJL conceptual framework, aptitudes for reflection and action had to be addressed.

      SJL Survey Tools. Quantitative data regarding SJL are limited (Flood, 2019; Torres-Harding et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2018). A primary reason for the lack of quantitative SJL data is the lack of validated survey instruments researchers can use to conduct SJL studies, particularly in an educational setting (Flood, 2019), despite many scholars call for such survey tools to be developed to facilitate quantitative studies (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Nilsson et al., 2011; Otunga, 2009). Over the last two decades, instruments have been created that align tangentially with SJL but do not specifically address the topic of SJL in the school environment (Flood, 2019). Only within the last decade have instruments focused specifically on SJL been developed and validated (Flood, 2019; Torres-Harding et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2018).

      Measurement tools used to collect quantitative data related to SJL in the educational setting are varied and in short supply (Flood, 2019). In a seminal work, Brown (2004a) attempted to study principals' perceptions of diversity, equity, and social justice quantitatively through a historical review of existing instruments

across the 20th century, including the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (Henry, 1986), the Survey of Multicultural Education Concepts (Moore & Reeves-Kazelskis, 1992), the Bogardus Social Distance Scale (Bogardus, 1926), the Learning to Teach study (Tatto, 1996), the Cultural Survey (Tran et al., 1994), the Professional Development subscale (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996), and One Question based on a reworking of Sleeter and Grant's (1994) and Five Approaches to Race, Color, and Gender (Haberman & Post, 1990). None of these instruments were reported to be psychometrically valid or reliable. Brown also shared two valid and reliable survey tools developed at the turn of the century that progressed towards reliably gathering quantitative SJL data: The Cultural and Educational Issues Survey (Pettus & Allain, 1999) and The Personal and Professional Beliefs About Diversity Scales (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001).

M. J. Miller et al. (2009) published the Social Issues Questionnaire (SIQ). The SIQ was a 52-item instrument to measure a participant's interest in social justice (M. J. Miller et al., 2009). M. J. Miller et al. conducted two SIQ tests on just over 500 doctoral-level college students. The SIQ comprised four scales, including self-efficacy, outcomes expectations, and interests, and each scale was found to have a reliability rating from good to excellent (M. J. Miller et al., 2009). The Social Issues Advocacy Scale (SIAS) was a 21-item scale developed by Nilsson et al. (2011) and used to measure a participant's self-reported level of social justice advocacy. The SIAS was determined valid and reliable through a series of studies with almost 1,000 undergraduate and graduate student participants in the combined sampling groups (Nilsson et al., 2011). Although these two instruments were determined to be strongly reliable (M. J. Miller et al., 2009; Nilsson et al., 2011), and some members of the participant groups were education majors or future employees in educational settings, the participant groups were not wholly educational leaders, nor was the topic of the survey specifically SJL.

Torres-Harding et al. (2012) presented a psychometric evaluation of the Social Justice Scale (SJS) in 2012. Though not perfectly aligned with the desired actively employed K-12 educational administrator audience, the SJS was developed for practitioners, educators, students, and other community stakeholders (Torres-

Harding et al., 2012). Of note, the participants used to validate the SJS were not educational leaders but undergraduate and graduate students, some of whom were education majors(Torres-Harding et al., 2012), similar to the study by Nilsson et al. (2011). The final 24-item questionnaire tested four subscales, including social justice attitudes, social justice subjective norms, social justice behavioral intentions, and social justice behavioral control (Torres-Harding et al., 2012).

O'Malley and Capper (2015) developed their 33-item instrument to examine preservice principals' perspectives on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning (LGBTIQ) understanding and commitment to social justice practices for the LGBTIQ community. Like many of the earlier peripheral SJL survey tools, this questionnaire did not have validity or reliability data (O'Malley & Capper, 2015). Diemer et al. (2017) developed and validated the Critical Consciousness Scale for use with teens. Diemer et al. initially tested this instrument with 46 items; the final survey comprised 22 items on the participants' beliefs about perceived inequalities, egalitarianism, and social action (Diemer et al., 2017).

In the same year, Windsor et al. (2015) published the Diversity and Oppression Scale (DOS) to gather the perspective of students who recently completed graduate-level social justice coursework for a social work degree through self-reporting. The DOS was developed by a research team of scholars from Rutgers University and the University of Texas at Austin in 2008. In the fall of 2008 and the fall of 2009, 329 graduate students, some of whom would find future employment in school settings as social workers and counselors, responded to 62 survey questions regarding their awareness of oppression, social justice, empathy, and cultural competence (Windsor et al., 2015). Reliability, stability, desirability, and predictive validity studies were conducted in 2010 (Windsor et al., 2015). Windsor et al. presented a valid and reliable survey instrument, but it was not explicitly designed for use by educational leaders.

Over the last decade, scholars have developed and validated two principal SJL instruments for gathering quantitative research data through studies of educational leaders (Flood, 2019; Zhang et al., 2018). Zhang et al. (2018)

constructed the Social Justice Questionnaire (SJQ) as a quantitative survey tool to collect SJL data, specifically from educational leaders. Through a series of revisions, Zhang et al. narrowed the SJQ to 32 items divided into four sections: (a) school leader, (b) policy context, (c) school context, and (d) community context. Zhang et al. found the SJQ valid and reliable in its final format; however, scholars recommended additional research harnessing the SJQ, as the participant group in the first round of testing was only 22 school building leaders and even fewer, 19, in the second round of testing.

Most recently, Flood (2019) developed the SJBS. The SJBS is divided into three sections with subscale themes: (a) a self-focused theme, (b) a school-specific theme, and (c) a community-minded theme (Flood, 2019). To create the SJBS, six experts were convened to review and provide feedback on potential survey questions (Flood, 2019). In the initial review, 11 questions were altered, and, in the end, 38 items were agreed upon for the study (Flood, 2019). According to Flood, to provide convergence, the first draft of the SJBS was given in tandem to participants with the SJS and the Global Belief in a Just World (GBJWS; Lipkus & Siegler, 1993). Flood conducted ANOVAs to determine relationships between participant groups based on submitted demographic information. In this study, 227 principals from 27 states submitted their responses to the three surveys for review. After data analysis, the SJBS was narrowed to 23 items, still divided into the original three subscales, and found to have Cronbach's alpha reliability ratings of .872 to .916 (Flood, 2019).

CRSL

Global Perspective. Like SJL, scholars worldwide have constructed a global viewpoint of CRSL in the K-12 educational setting. Although less abundant than SJL research, studies have been conducted from multiple perspectives to assemble a broad imprint of CRSL in numerous regions of the globe. First in North America, specifically Canada, A. E. Lopez (2015) studied the CRSL and critical praxis practices of 14 educational leaders in the Toronto area. A. E. Lopez found that CRSL began with the leaders reflecting on their values and beliefs. Culturally responsive school leaders focused on DEI as an ongoing practice rather than a topic

for sporadic consideration at celebrations or holidays (A. E. Lopez, 2015). Finally, A. E. Lopez also found that culturally responsive school leaders regularly created opportunities for staff members to grow in their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies to be applied in the classroom to support the diverse populations of students. Over two years, Guo-Brennan and Guo-Brennan (2021) conducted a cross-sector qualitative study in a Canadian school to acquire more excellent knowledge about the CRSL and teaching practices enacted to support diverse subgroups of students in a welcoming and inclusive school environment. Guo-Brennan and Guo-Brennan found that educational leaders and teachers were insufficiently prepared to help students with culturally responsive practices. Additional funding was needed to update the curriculum and resources to support all learners and create welcoming and inclusive learning environments.

In South America, Levitan (2020) explored CRSL practices at a rural Peruvian secondary school in the Andes Mountains by collecting student and parent voices. Levitan collected the viewpoints of 146 students and 50 parents in this collaborative ethnography qualitative study. Through survey analysis and the coding process for common themes, Levitan determined that students and parents value a school leader who focuses the school's lessons more on the community's values than academics. This finding is significant as it is through the employment of CRSL practices over other leadership styles that the desires of the student and parent groups might be achieved (Levitan, 2020).

In Europe, Brown et al. (2022) conducted an in-depth literature review of culturally responsive leadership in educational settings in four countries: Ireland, Austria, Spain, and Russia. Brown et al. found synergy in all four countries, namely, the utilization of CRSL practices by educational administrators in the building strongly correlates to an effective school. Finally, in Asia, specifically Malaysia, Razali and Hamid (2022) conducted a study of CRSL practices in small schools or schools with fewer than 150 students. Razali and Hamid learned from interviews with school leaders, headmasters, and teachers that CRSL strategies that principals successfully implemented included critical self-reflection, forming

culturally sensitive teachers, practicing parent and community involvement, and creating inclusive school environments.

National Perspective. A national focus on CRSL has produced various studies from across the United States. First, L. Johnson (2007) reanalyzed three earlier U.S. case studies of female urban elementary principals and found standard CRSL practices employed by all three primary school leaders. Shared CRSL practices these three elementary school leaders applied included creating a trusting learning environment for students and establishing an educational setting where parents and the community felt secure (L. Johnson, 2007).

Boske (2009) completed a quantitative study of 1,087 chief school executives, also called principals, in U.S. school buildings through electronic survey data focused on the cultural responsiveness of leaders. The survey data showed a need for SBLs to think interculturally and for more leadership preparation opportunities in higher educational programming to support CRSL practices to support diverse, marginalized student populations in the academic setting (Boske, 2009).

Magno and Schiff (2010) identified the exemplary CRSL actions of a secondary principal in Connecticut to encourage the academic success and sense of belonging for an increasing English language learner subgroup of students in the school building. Called Mr. Bolls, in Magno and Schiff's article, his leadership practices supported the diverse needs of a growing immigrant population in the school building by creating a warm and welcoming learning environment through institutional adjustments and encouraging teachers toward academically enriched classroom teaching that incorporated the experiences of immigrant students into their lessons (Magno & Schiff, 2010).

Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) conducted a study of one high school principal in Texas, and, through daily shadowing of the leaders, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews with the leader, staff, and parents, Madhlangobe and Gordon found six essential CRSL practices in action on three levels. CRSL practices witnessed included developing relationships with staff, students, and the community, being present, modeling culturally responsive

behaviors, fostering culturally responsive attitudes between stakeholders in the school building, practicing empathy, and using persistent and persuasive communication skills (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). CRSL practices were found on multiple levels, including personal, environmental, and curricular (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012).

Just over 5 years later, S. L. Marshall and Khalifa (2018) conducted a six-month-long case study to examine instructional leaders' role in promoting culturally responsive practices in schools to create more inclusive and humanizing educational environments for minority students and communities. S. L. Marshall and Khalifa found that the CRSL practices of the school principal significantly impact the success of culturally responsive practices, specifically the promotion of culturally relevant pedagogies implemented in the school building. SBLs with a strong CRSL stance were able to develop trust, fend off teacher pushback to curricular change, harness the power of self-reflection to inform their practice, and employ staff and students to embrace the benefits of shared learning spaces with diverse populations (S. L. Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

Using an autoethnographic methodology, de Lourdes Viloria (2019) reflected on her 12 years of experience as an elementary school principal in South Texas to identify CRSL practices she used during that time. de Lourdes Viloria cited that the most significant CRSL practice she implemented as a SBL was to support teacher efficacy, noting high academic achievement from marginalized student populations due to teachers continuously trained in and regularly applying culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. According to de Lourdes Viloria, accountability mandates imposed on schools by state and federal governments are achievable when SBLs and teachers take culturally responsive, student-centered actions in the educational setting daily.

Finally, in 2020, two additional studies of CRSL were conducted, one during school hours and one after school hours. Ezzani (2020) conducted a qualitative case study, interviewing and observing the leadership practices of the school principal and assistant principal at a California K-6 elementary school. The researchers sought to learn more about the CRSL of these school leaders to support

diverse student populations in the elementary building (Ezzani, 2020). Ezzani found that the actions of culturally responsive school leaders that supported closing academic achievement gaps at the elementary level included parent engagement, student empowerment, and the celebration of successes with all stakeholders. I. A. Miller (2020) conducted a bound qualitative case study of educational leaders' CRSL practices supporting students in out-of-school time programming. The two leaders studied facilitated programming for students in a Western U.S. metropolitan city (I. A. Miller, 2020). As with a traditional school setting, this after-school program served high-school students' academic, social, and emotional needs through organized mentoring (I. A. Miller, 2020). I. A. Miller found that regardless of the educational leader being employed to support students after school versus during traditional school hours, educational leaders supported students through the application of four critical CRSL practices: the creation of an inclusive environment, the development of culturally responsive educators or mentors, the promotion of critical self-awareness, and the continued engagement with parents and students in a community context.

  Historical Perspective. Analogous to SJL, academics have explored the historical perspective of CRSL. Gertrude Elise MacDougald Ayer was the first African American woman principal in New York City. She was a SBL in Harlem in the 1930s and 1940s. L. Johnson (2006) constructed a historical case study of Ayers' life to illuminate CRSL characteristics Ayers portrayed despite the historical, political, and social contexts in which she led. L. Johnson asserted that Ayers exemplified CRSL practices such as sensitivity and intellect for the community the school resided in, innovation and creativity for implementing a child-centered curriculum, and elevation and activism in support of social issues impacting staff and students of the educational community.

  L. Johnson (2014) authored an essay to examine additional historical examples of culturally responsive educational leaders, this time more globally. L. Johnson wrote the following about Lloyd McKell, a longtime educational leader in the Toronto Public School District in Canada in the late 20th century and early 21st century: his utilization of CRSL practices eased the tensions in the community

during a time of refugee influx. McKell advocated for the needs of the African Canadian community, developing Afrocentric curriculum units in 2008 and creating the Consultative Committee, which provided Somali families a forum for voicing their concerns to the Toronto District School Board (L. Johnson, 2014). L. Johnson also wrote about Len Garrison, a Black educational leader in Britain in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. As a community activist, Garrison supported the educational needs of African-Caribbean immigrants living in London by developing the African-Caribbean and Black British curriculum materials in 1977 (L. Johnson, 2014). These resources and professional development opportunities around London gave teachers and librarians the tools to embed a multicultural education within the educational setting (L. Johnson, 2014). L. Johnson closed the essay by citing the need for U.S. educational leadership preparation programs to evolve and focus more time and resources on CRSL practice, SJL, and critical reflection through participating in community-based practicum experiences.

      Implementation Challenges. According to Brown et al. (2022), challenges of CRSL practices include a sense of burden, an appearance of deficit, and an inconsistent desire to be an ongoing learner. Palmer et al. (2022) also noted that a challenge of implementing CRSL for SBLs was the reality in many educational settings that not all teacher staff educate students through a lens of equity, and, in turn, changing educator perceptions from equality to equity can be challenging. Palmer et al. further identified disparities such as teacher-to-student demographics, exceptional education support, ELL resources, and overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic student populations in discipline referrals, which all presented challenges for principals to lead through a lens of CRSL.

      In Gay's (2002) seminal work, the attributes of culturally responsive teaching practices are outlined and include designing a culturally relevant curriculum, building a learning community, demonstrating cultural caring, engaging in cross-cultural communications, and using culturally congruent classroom instruction. Callahan et al. (2023) found SBLs struggled to apply CRSL best practices, as a lack of access to professional development for educators to develop culturally responsive teaching practices was omnipresent. Participants in

the study identified the SBL as appearing to have a desire to support CRSL best practices and professional learning for teachers; however, due to a lack of resources, the principal was not able to provide enough time to staff for training or access to knowledgeable professionals who could support the development of culturally responsive practices in the school building (Callahan et al., 2023).

Anyon (2005) addressed the significance of familial support for students through a longitudinal examination of urban schools' educational policy, economic status, and academic achievement. According to Anyon, familial support is more prevalent when a family is financially secure, increasing students' educational attainment. A challenge SBLs experience in using CRSL best practices has been a lack of community empowerment and presence in the learning environment (L. Johnson, 2014). According to L. Johnson, CRSL has the power to bridge home and school; however, a lack of trust between parents and school leadership has challenged the fostering of positive community relations.

Leadership Preparation to Support CRSL. During the 21st century, educational leadership preparation opportunities to support CRSL have increased but are not a staple of all academic programming for future SBLs across the United States (Palmer et al., 2022). Brown et al. (2022) identified that CRSL preservice learning opportunities for future educational leaders are also slowly increasing at European universities. Young et al. (2010) indicated that principals must be more prepared and equipped to lead diverse schools and implement practices and procedures in response to diverse issues within a school building. School principals also sometimes need help articulating and facilitating meaningful discourse around DEI (Young et al., 2010). CRSL provides educational leaders with a framework to support multicultural student populations and learning settings, and, as such, the inclusion of CRSL training is critical learning for SBLs (Khalifa et al., 2016).

To prepare leaders, Brown (2004b) argued that school leaders must transform through critical reflective praxis to become culturally responsive leaders who prioritize social justice. Such activities that promote social justice and equity through CRSL practices and self-awareness praxis for SBLs include cultural autobiographies, life histories, prejudice reduction workshops, and reflective

journaling (Brown, 2004b). Preservice learning programs must offer educational leaders the opportunity to develop self-awareness and critical reflection skills supporting CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016). Bakken and Smith (2011) also identified essential attributes for developing culturally proficient or responsive school administrators in their article. According to Bakken and Smith (2011), culturally responsive principals can establish a vision for their school building, participate in active school improvement planning, cultivate positive communication practices with parents and community members, recruit and retain staff members who support culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom, provide ongoing professional development opportunities for educators, and make accessible culturally relevant curriculum and resources for classroom learners.

Khalifa et al.'s (2016) Framework. Khalifa et al. (2016) produced an exhaustive literature review of CRSL and identified four strands or behaviors of CRSL from the body of literature. The CRSL framework focuses on (a) critical self-reflection, (b) developing culturally responsive teachers, (c) promoting culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and (d) engaging students, parents, and community stakeholders (Khalifa et al., 2016). According to Khalifa et al., the potential of CRSL is far-reaching, and the implications of employing the CRSL framework in school buildings by principals "will ultimately help all children reach their fullest potential" (p. 1297).

Table 3

A Timeline of Global, National, and Historical SJL and CRSL Studies in K-12 Learning Settings

Year	Author(s)	Title	Educational Setting(s)	SJL/ CRSL
2002	Goldfarb & Grinberg	Leadership for social justice: Authentic participation in the case of the community center in Caracas, Venezuela	Afterschool Programming	SJL
2004	Shields	Dialogic leadership for social justice: Overcoming pathologies of silence	N/A	SJL

Year	Author(s)	Title	Educational Setting(s)	SJL/ CRSL
2006	Johnson	Making her community a better place to live: Culturally responsive urban school leadership in historical context	N/A	CRSL
2006	Karpinski and Lugg	Social justice and educational administration: Mutually exclusive?	N/A	SJL
2006	Lugg and Shoho	Dare public school administrators to build a new social order? Social justice and the possibly perilous politics of educational leadership	N/A	SJL
2007	Chiu & Walker	Leadership for social justice in Hong Kong schools: Addressing mechanisms of inequality	N/A	SJL
2007	Johnson	Rethinking successful school leadership in challenging U.S. schools: Culturally responsive practices in community relationships	Elementary	CRSL
2007	Stevenson	A case study in leading schools for social justice: When morals and markets collide	Secondary	SJL
2009	Boske	Children's spirit: Leadership standards and chief school executives	N/A	CRSL
2009	Tomul	Opinions of administrators on social justice practices in elementary schools	Elementary	SJL
2009	Wasonga	Leadership practices for social justice, democratic community, and learning: School principals' perspectives	High and Middle	SJL

Year	Author(s)	Title	Educational Setting(s)	SJL/ CRSL
2010	Shields	Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts	N/A	SJL
2010	Theoharis	Disrupting injustice: Principals narrate the strategies they use to improve their schools and advance social justice	High, Middle, and Elementary	SJL
2011	Bosu et al.	School leadership and social justice: Evidence from Ghana and Tanzania	N/A	SJL
2011	Theoharis and O'Toole	Leading inclusive ELL: Social justice leadership for English language learners	Elementary	SJL
2012	Madhlangobe and Gordon	Culturally responsive leadership in a diverse school: A case study of a high school leader	High	SJL
2012	Scanlan	The role of an epistemology of inclusivity on the pursuit of social justice: A case study	Elementary	SJL
2014	Gurr et al.	High-need schools in Australia: The leadership of two principals	N/A	SJL
2014	Johnson	Culturally responsive leadership for community empowerment	N/A	CRSL
2014	Norberg et al.	Global conversations about social justice: The Swedish-US example	N/A	SJL
2014	Rivera-McCutchen	The moral imperative of social justice leadership: A critical component of effective practice	High and Middle	SJL

Year	Author(s)	Title	Educational Setting(s)	SJL/ CRSL
2014	Slater et al.	Understanding social justice leadership: An international exploration of the perspectives of two school leaders in Costa Rica and England	N/A	SJL
2015	Angelle et al.	The practice of socially just leadership: Contextual differences between US and Swedish principals	N/A	SJL
2015	DeMatthews	Making sense of social justice leadership: A case study of principal's experiences to create a more inclusive school	Elementary	SJL
2015	Gautam et al.	Sustaining school improvement through an external and internal focus: A case study of a high-need secondary school in Nepal	N/A	SJL
2015	Lopez	Navigating cultural borders in diverse contexts: Building capacity through culturally responsive leadership and critical praxis	N/A	CRSL
2016	Arar et al.	A cross-cultural analysis of educational leadership for social justice in Israel and Turkey: Meanings, actions, and contexts	High, Middle, and Elementary	SJL
2016	DeMatthews et al.	Social justice leadership and family engagement: A successful case from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico	Elementary	SJL
2018	Marshall and Khalifa	Humanizing school communities: culturally responsive leadership in the shaping of curriculum and instruction	N/A	CRSL

Year	Author(s)	Title	Educational Setting(s)	SJL/ CRSL
2018	Shah	Leadership for social justice through the lens of self-identified, racially, and other-privileged leaders	N/A	SJL
2019	de Lourdes Viloria	Culturally responsive leadership practices: A principal's reflection	Elementary	CRSL
2020	Ezzani	Principal and teacher instructional leadership: A culture shift	Elementary	CRSL
2020	Levitan	Incorporating participant voice in culturally responsive leadership: A case study	N/A	CRSL
2020	Miller	Passing the mic: Towards culturally responsive out of school time leadership	Afterschool Programming	CRSL
2021	Guo-Brennan and Guo-Brennan	Leading welcoming and inclusive schools for newcomer students: A conceptual framework	N/A	CRSL
2021	Kocak	Does social justice leadership in education improve the school belonging and resilience of students?	High	SJL
2022	Brown et al.	Challenges and opportunities for culturally responsive leadership in schools: Evidence from four European countries	N/A	CRSL
2022	Razali and Hamid	Culturally responsive leadership in Malaysian small schools context: A preliminary survey	N/A	CRSL

Summary

Belongingness is vital to student success (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012). The role of SBL continues to expand, and principals continue to encounter a multitude of challenges, and yet are tasked with encouraging the fostering of learning environments inclusive of all students (Lambert et al., 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Riehl, 2000). Evidence for the utilization of SJL and CRSL frameworks abounds from a global, national, and historical perspective; however, SJL and CRSL remain deeply under-theorized and under-researched frameworks in the educational setting (J. G. Allen et al., 2017; DeMatthews, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016). Research has shown that challenges in the implementation of SJL and CRSL by principals still exist and have yet to be overcome (Angelle et al., 2015; Berkovich, 2014; Bogotch, 2002; Brown et al., 2022; Capper & Young, 2014; Gautam et al., 2015; Theoharis, 2007). Leadership preparation programs, including SJL and CRSL best practices, are also still in their infancy and not commonplace in preservice educational leadership preparation programming (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2022).

Chapter 3 – Methodology

School districts across New York State (NYS) are addressing, or struggling to address, the call to action presented by the NYS Board of Regents in May 2021 to support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in school buildings statewide using social justice leadership (SJL) and culturally responsive school leadership ([CRSL]; NYSED, 2021b). Conducting a mixed-methods, exploratory, phenomenological study (Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013) to understand the shared experiences and collective narratives (Patterson, 2018) of rural school principals across NYS was needed (Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). An outline of the methodology harnessed is provided in this chapter.

Rationale for a Mixed Methods Approach

There is a demand from the field for studies of SJL to be conducted using a methodology other than a qualitative case study (Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Furthermore, quantitative data regarding SJL are limited (Flood, 2019; Torres-Harding et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2018). The aim of exploratory research is to explore the main aspects of an under-researched problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). To meet the identified need for expansion in methodology, this study engaged rural SBLs in NYS through a phenomenological mixed-methods approach that followed an exploratory mixed-methods model (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018), in which interview data were collected first followed by survey data collection.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns in research require amplified attention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Applying IRB best practices is necessary (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). This study adhered to ethical considerations outlined by the American Psychological Association (2017), such as beneficence and nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, and respect for

people's rights and dignity and specific elements such as informed consent, recording, and transcription.

Informed Consent for Interviews

Before participant interviews, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants (see Appendix B). Participants also received a signed copy of the informed consent form as a PDF document shared via email (Denissen et al., 2010).

Recording

As available time is at a premium for SBLs (Peck et al., 2013), the interviews occurred in person or via Zoom, an online conferencing platform with SBLs given the choice of setting. In either setting, the researcher collected a recording of the interview, as video recordings allow for additional review and reflection of not only words but also mannerisms, body language, and expressions not otherwise captured in a transcription (Cransborn, 2010; Perry et al., 2021). Interviews were confidential, so participant names were replaced with pseudonyms. If a participant agreed to be interviewed but not recorded, an "opt-out" option was built into the informed consent form for interviews (see Appendix B) to collect this lack of consent (Kaewkungwal & Adams, 2019).

Transcription

Initial recording and transcription of interviews occurred through Zoom's transcription feature and using the Otter.ai application. For the security and privacy of the participants, transcription files were deidentified, and a copy of the transcript was provided to the participants for verification of accuracy and completeness (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The researcher completed the final transcription.

Informed Consent for Survey Instrument

Before beginning the SJBS (Flood, 2019), all survey participants provided informed consent electronically. Informed consent included the research's purpose, risks and benefits, voluntary participation, and procedures utilized to protect confidentiality (see Appendix A; Groenewald, 2004). In place of an electronic signature, a clickable "I agree" option was required for participants to access the

survey questionnaire (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2012). If the participant wanted a PDF version of the consent form, a downloadable version was available (Denissen et al., 2010).

Participants

As of the 2021–2022 school year, NYS comprised over 700 public school districts, with more than 4,000 school building leaders (NYSED, 2022). School districts are classified into six needs/resource categories (N/RC), and high-need rural is one of the six categories. A high-needs rural school district is defined by the NYSED (2011) as "a school district with fewer than fifty students per square mile or a total enrollment of students less than 2,500 and fewer than 100 students per square mile" (p. 1). The NYSED established a statistical model for "high-need," ranking districts statewide on the combination of the percentage of free- and reduced-priced lunch population in the district and the number of students who are ELLs. Districts in the 70th percentile or higher are categorized as "high-need" (NYSED, 2011). These two attributes of the New York school district environment—high-need and rural—narrow the list of districts in NYS significantly. As of the 2021–2022 school year, NYS had 155 high-need rural school districts (NYSED, 2022). NYSED also requires a primary SBL to be identified publicly for each Basic Educational Data System code within the school district, which can be queried through the SED Reference File (SEDREF; NYSED, 2023b). This file also includes the years the school building leader has been in the role at the listed school building. As of the 2021–2022 school year, 373 rural SBLs were reported in NYS (NYSED, 2023a).

Qualitative Phase

Admitted to the Union in 1788 and with an ever-evolving backdrop, the state of New York is a diverse landscape of cities, suburbs, farms, mountains, lakes, and rivers (Britannica, n.d.). Established in 1948, the over 700 public school districts within the 62 counties of NYS are divided into 37 Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) by geographic region (BOCES of New York State,

2017). The 37 BOCES in NYS are further grouped into nine Joint Management Teams (JMTs; NYSED, 2021c). JMTs are located in similar state regions (NYSED, 2021c). Every JMT has at least one high-need rural school district, and 25 of the 37 BOCES have at least one high-need rural school district (NYSED, 2022). Not all 25 BOCES are located in the same geographic region or environmental setting or border one another (NYSED, 2022). The selection criteria for interview participants were based on the district's location within a single JMT. The JMT selected included four of the 25 BOCES in NYS with high-need rural school districts.

Each interviewee was identified in SEDREF as the primary SBL. Using the above criteria elements, participants were sourced through purposive and convenience sampling strategies (see Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). A series of SBLs participated in interviews, and had saturation not been achieved, additional principals would have been sourced using the criteria previously mentioned and interviewed until saturation was achieved (see Boyd, 2001; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Groenewald, 2004). Interviews were scheduled through Zoom or in person for 60 minutes each (see DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Quantitative Phase

Following a staged multi-design practice for this exploratory phenomenological research framework, the quantitative portion of the mixed-method study takes place after the qualitative portion of the research, as Davison (2014) explained. The researcher contacted SBLs from across NYS via email to complete the SJBS (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants responded to additional demographic questions before beginning the survey for deeper data analysis. Demographic information collected about participants included education level, number of years in service, number of years in the classroom, number of years as an assistant principal, and number of years as a SBL. Optional demographic information collected included race, gender, and ethnicity data.

The researcher also leveraged professional contacts to target SBLs, gauge interest in completing the survey, and encourage participant completion of the SJBS (see Appendix C; J. Ponto, 2015). Per Hair et al. (2018), when a minimum sample size is below 100, a sample size of 100 participants is recommended for a

quantitative study. Based on the G Power 3 (see Appendix D), the minimum sample size is 60, but following Hair et al. (2018), 100 was the minimum for this study.

Data Collection

Compiling data is the first step in Yin's (2016) five phases of data analysis. Data collection occurred in two stages during the summer and fall of 2023. The first stage involved semistructured interviews aligned with an exploratory mixed-methods approach (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After the interviews with principals, the researcher used a survey instrument to glean a deeper understanding of SJL practices by SBLs of high-need rural school buildings in NYS.

Qualitative Data Collection

The five primary approaches to research design are narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using a phenomenology research design is the best choice of the five primary qualitative research design methodologies as phenomenological studies best capture reflections on current issues and lived experiences and have proven helpful in drawing out common themes across interviews to build conceptual connections (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). The data collection process has multiple steps outlined in detail below. Interviews took place during a three-month window of time from May to July 2023.

Approach to Interviewing. First, the researcher contacted participants via e-mail to engage their interest in being interviewed for this study. All 10 candidates contacted initially responded as willing and expressed interest in participating in this phenomenological study about SJL and student belongingness, so no further requests outside the initial e-mails were sent. If saturation had not been achieved following the initial interviews, additional contact with other potential interviewees would have been made via email; however, saturation was achieved at nine participants.

Following the guidance provided by Saldaña and Omasta (2018) regarding interview preparation, scheduling, and arrangements, the researcher scheduled

interviews for 60 minutes at the most convenient time for the participants. Interviews occurred in the participants' offices or via Zoom at times convenient to their schedules. Before conducting the interviews, the participants signed an informed consent form. The participants then responded to questions identified in the *Interview Protocol* in Appendix E. The interviews were recorded on the researcher's cellular phone using the Otter.ai application and the Zoom platform. Following the interviews, the researcher downloaded the audio files and saved the transcription from the Zoom meeting as well as the video file to a personal computer. The researcher completed corrections to transcription errors and e-mailed the corrected copies of the transcripts to the participants for their review and feedback.

For the credibility of the collected data, the researcher used more than one validation strategy (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, through the participant's lens, member checking of the collected transcripts was completed (Bazeley, 2013; Huberman & Miles, 1994). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Second, from the researcher's lens, corroborating evidence through triangulation of data from different sources, such as researcher notes, Zoom recordings, and Otter.ai transcripts, were leveraged in reviewing interview data (see Bazeley, 2013; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2016). In line with the guidance outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018), "for this validation strategy, we begin considering how various data sources can be used in tandem…then as data is collected, we further explore evidence of corroboration and use these insights in our interpterion and writing" (p. 260).

Interview Rationale. The study was an exploratory mixed-methods study using a phenomenological approach designed to understand an under-researched field of study better. As such, the interview questions identified in the Interview Protocol (see Appendix E) were not only related to SJL but also broader in scope (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A narrative inquiry model was an embedded framework, as stories serve to understand people's identities, mindsets, lived experiences, and actions within a given setting, as Patterson (2018) explained.

Quantitative Data Collection

In an exploratory mixed-methods study, the quantitative portion of the research is conducted after completing the qualitative data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the quantitative portion of this study, the data collection instrument used was the SJBS (Flood, 2019) to quantify the perspectives of high-need rural SBLs regarding SJL and inclusionary practices. The electronic survey was distributed to SBLs across NYS in the early fall of 2023.

Survey Instrument. Flood (2019) developed the SJBS, which is divided into three sections with subscale themes: (a) a self-focused theme, (b) a school-specific theme, and (c) a community-minded theme (Flood, 2019). In total, the survey comprises 23 questions, each using a 7-point Likert scale (Flood, 2019). The SJBS has a Cronbach's alpha reliability ratings of .872 to .916 (Flood, 2019). The researcher obtained permission from Dr. Flood to use the SJBS in this study. A copy of consent is included in Appendix F. A copy of the SJBS survey instrument is shared in Appendix G. Additional demographic questions were included in the survey to collect the following demographic information about participants: education level, number of years in service, number of years in the classroom, number of years as an assistant principal, and number of years as a SBL. Optional demographic information collected included race, gender, and ethnicity.

Approach to Distribution. The researcher contacted the target survey participant group of SBLs in NYS via email through their work email address listed on the public SEDREF directory (NYSED, 2023b) and requested each complete the SJBS. Participants responded to additional demographic questions before beginning the survey. Per Hair et al. (2018), when a minimum sample size is below 100, a sample size of a minimum of 100 participants is recommended for a quantitative study. Based on the G Power 3 in Appendix D, the minimum sample size is 60, but 100 was the minimum for this study. As such, the researcher leveraged professional contacts to target SBLs, gauge interest in completing the survey, and encourage participant completion of the SJBS (J. Ponto, 2015). The email used is provided in Appendix C. The distribution of the SJBS occurred via a Google Forms link included in the initial email sent to school principals, as Google Forms is a popular

and highly-used survey platform in the educational setting (Hsu & Wang, 2017; Rayhan et al., 2013).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was a two-phase process. The first step was the analysis of qualitative data. The second step was quantitative data processing. As an exploratory, phenomenological mixed method study, the quantitative analysis is built on the initial qualitative analysis to draw out common themes across interviews and survey data to construct conceptual connections (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the 5-step process developed by Yin (2016). The five steps include compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2016). For qualitative data analysis, the software MAXQDA helped disassemble the data, with In vivo coding used to "cull words and phrases that stand out" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 121). To assemble the data, in step three of Yin's (2016) process, the template presented by Creswell and Poth (2018) in Table 8.4 *Example of the codebook entry for the theme "Fostering Relationship"* (p. 192) was used to translate coded notes into themes. Finally, in alignment with Yin's (2016) fourth and fifth phases, the researcher assessed or interpreted the data and drew conclusions. The researcher also considered various lenses in interpreting the data, including micro, meso, and macro life levels (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The detailed steps that Huberman and Miles (1994) identified were harnessed to bolster the depth and richness of data analysis. Detailed steps included counting the frequency of codes, noting relationships among variables to build a logical chain of evidence, and making contrasts and comparisons (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Conclusions related to qualitative research questions 1–4 were drawn. Qualitative research questions 1–4 are as follows:

RQ1: How do high-need rural school principals facilitate SJL?

RQ2: How do high-need rural school principals facilitate CRSL?

RQ 3: What leadership practices do high-need rural school principals perceive to encourage or discourage inclusion for all students in the school building?

RQ4: What leadership barriers or challenges do high-need rural school principals experience to support inclusion (if any)?

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis procedures followed qualitative data analysis. The software used to process quantitative data were SPSS and Microsoft Excel. After cleaning the data, descriptive statistics were presented and discussed. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), inferential statistics are appropriate when examining a hypothesis. For quantitative research questions 5–7, the analysis used was MANOVA tests to assess differences statistically. Additional ANOVA and pairwise analysis were completed. Related data tables can be viewed throughout Chapter 4. Quantitative research questions and related hypothesizes are as follows:

RQ5: Is there a variance between the community-minded (CM) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H1_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the CM beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

$H1_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the CM beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

RQ6: Is there a variance between the school-specific (SS) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H2_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the SS beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

$H2_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the SS beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

RQ7: Is there a variance between the self-focused (SF) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H3_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the SF beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

H3$_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the SF beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

Limitations and Delimitations

A limitation of this study was a lack of racial and gender diversity among interview participants. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Education (2023), 77% of public K-12 principals were non-Hispanic White during the 2020–2021 school year. Moreover, 63% of public school K-12 principals were female (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). These same skewed demographics related to race and gender are evident in this study and, thus, a limitation.

A consideration and delimitation of this study is that the data are only as good as the participants' honesty in responding to a sensitive question set. "Sensitivity" of a question, according to Barnett (1998), is based on a respondent's perceived expense for responding to the question. Difficulty collecting data that are considered sensitive has occurred before and has been addressed by numerous researchers (Sloan et al., 2004; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). When collecting data on a sensitive topic, creating an environment of safety and security for participants is vital (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In the current study, the researcher maintained anonymity using pseudonyms.

NYS is made up of more than 700 public school districts and over 4,000 school buildings (NYSED, 2022). The qualitative portion of this study addresses only one of the six N/RCs within NYS. High-need rural school districts make up one-fifth of the districts in NYS (NYSED, 2022). A second delimitation of this study is that it did not target all public school districts and SBLs within those districts for their insight and experience with SJL and student belongingness.

Summary

As outlined in this chapter, data collection and analysis occurred in the summer and fall of 2023. Although not without limitations and delimitations, this mixed-methods study followed an exploratory phenomenological methodology (Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013), as it provides the best framework to understand the lived experiences and collective narratives

(Patterson, 2018) of rural school principals across NYS as related to SJL, CRSL, inclusion, and belongingness (Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

Chapter 4 – Findings and Results

The aim of this mixed-methods, exploratory phenomenological study (Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013) of school building leaders (SBLs), specifically leaders of high-need rural school buildings conducted during the summer and early fall months of 2023 was to understand the lived experiences and collective narratives better (Patterson, 2018) of rural school principals across New York State (NYS) as related to social justice leadership (SJL), culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), inclusion, and belongingness (Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). The qualitative findings are shared first followed by quantitative results. Commentary on the overlapping themes between the interviews and survey results acquired in this exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study is also addressed.

Qualitative Findings

Interviews with the participants occurred via Zoom from late June to early August 2023. Interviews were confidential, so participant names were replaced with pseudonyms. According to Boyd (2001), Creswell and Poth (2018), and Groenewald (2004), 10 is an ideal number of interviews; however, interviews can stop once saturation is achieved. Saturation was achieved after the completion of nine interviews. All SBLs interviewed serve students in high-need rural school buildings. Table 4 contains some demographic characteristics of the nine elementary principals interviewed.

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics of Principals Interviewed

Principal Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Years in Current Position
Principal Harper	Male	Multiracial	3
Principal Parker	Female	White	5
Principal Cameron	Female	White	1
Principal Quinn	Female	White	10
Principal Dylan	Female	White	10

Principal Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Years in Current Position
Principal Drew	Female	White	3
Principal Remy	Female	White	3
Principal Scout	Female	White	11
Principal Blake	Female	White	7

All participants answered nine interview questions to acquire narratives of their lived experiences as school principals in high-need rural school districts. The analysis of the data collected followed using MAXQDA in alignment with Yin's (2016) five phases of analysis to answer the following four qualitative research questions:

RQ1: How do high-need rural school principals facilitate SJL?

RQ2: How do high-need rural school principals facilitate CRSL?

RQ 3: What leadership practices do high-need rural school principals perceive to encourage or discourage inclusion for all students in the school building?

RQ4: What leadership barriers or challenges do high-need rural school principals experience to support inclusion (if any)?

The findings are expanded upon in the next series of pages and tables.

RQ1: How do High-Need Rural School Principals Facilitate SJL?

As defined in Chapter 1, SJL "focuses on … those groups that are most underserved, underrepresented, and undereducated and that face various forms of oppression in schools" (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 23). Furman's (2012) dimensions of SJL as a praxis is a conceptual framework that focuses on the following five critical attributes of SJL: (a) the personal dimension, (b) interpersonal dimension, (c) communal dimension, (d) systematic dimension, and € ecological dimension. Semistructured interviews allowed deeper insights into the inclusion and belongingness practices and perspectives maintained by high-need rural SBLs. According to the school principals interviewed, they actively engage in practices to support SJL in the elementary school building. The shared narratives of lived experiences from these school principals also illuminate the actions taken,

aligned to the five dimensions of Furman's framework, to support SJL in high-need rural school buildings. The SBLs also spoke about more prevalently employing actions aligned to the personal and interpersonal dimensions of Furman's SJL framework, compared to the communal, systemic, and ecological dimensions of the given framework.

Diversity within the School Building. Cumulatively, the nine SBLs identified diversity within their student population to include race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, language, socio-economic status, family structure, foster children, homelessness, migrant status, refugee or immigrant status, children of military families, gender identity, and academic and physical abilities. Many of the responses from leaders to a question about what diversity exists within their school building were one-word answers or a listing of demographic subgroups. Tables 5 to 11 convey expanded commentaries about different student populations from the principals interviewed.

Students from military families. As defined by the NYSED (2022), students of military or active-duty families are

> Student(s) with one or more parent or guardian who is a member of the Armed Forces and on Active Duty. The Armed Forces are the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, or full-time National Guard. Active duty means full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. Such term includes full-time training duty, annual training duty, and attendance while in active military service at a school designated as a service school by law or by the Secretary of the military department concerned.

When interviewing the nine school principals, four of them spoke of students from active-duty families as an element of diversity within their buildings. Table 5 indicates the diversity of students from military families.

Table 5

Additional Observations of Interviewed Principals Related to Students of Military Families

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
Students from military families	Principal Harper	Our school bounces around 70-80% military because of our proximity to the local Army base. My students are not from here. They're from all over the place. They are military kids. Military adds a ton of diversity here.
	Principal Parker	We have a 93% military population.
	Principal Drew	We are located near an Army base, so we have a lot of variety in terms of population of students. We have community-people who have grown up here, and then we also have some students who are transient moving in from the Army base, so that in itself creates some diversity in terms of experiences.
	Principal Scout	We are directly related to the military base. About 55 to 60% of our population would come in from the military base.

Language. When interviewed, most of the SBLs addressed diversity related to language within their school building. Some identified language diversity among students as students who are English Language Learners (ELLs), Multi-Language Learners (MLLs), or English as a New Language (ENL), whereas others described language diversity in their buildings to be related to students with disabilities who used a communication device to speak with peers, educators, and building personnel. Table 6 highlights some participants' observations regarding language diversity between students.

Table 6

Additional Observations of Interviewed Principals Related to Language Diversity of Students

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
Language	Principal Dylan	Language is definitely one that we encounter, especially now that we've brought inclusion students back to building. We've always students of different races, students of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Now students maybe speak different languages, and when I say language, currently we've got a lot of kids using communication devices, and that is their language.
	Principal Parker	We have several different languages spoken in the building. Currently we have students who speak Japanese or Chinese. We had students who spoke Mandarin two years ago. We also have Spanish speakers, of course. Spanish is our biggest language, so we have language diversity.
	Principal Harper	Right now, our student population is about 350 students and 52 of those students are ENL students. We have many, many languages, and nationalities in this in this building, which is kind of different for our area. Our area is very homogeneous, but not our school building. We're very heterogeneous. We have got kids that speak Russian, French, Chinese, Korean and Romanian. We have all these different languages and things going on.

Family Structures and Foster Children. In 2022, less than 1% of the NYS student population was identified as being a child in foster care (NYSED, 2022);

however, despite this, almost negligible percentage reported, a third of principals interviewed noted at greater length the diversity around student family structures and more specifically, students in the foster care system. The principals spoke of the diversity of family structures and the diversity of who the student's primary caregiver is, as depicted in Table 7.

Table 7

Additional Observations of Interviewed Principals Related to Family Structures and Foster Children

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
Family structures and foster children	Principal Quinn	We have a high population of foster students that are being raised by relatives, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Additionally, I have a very high population of students that are fostered and students of color. I would say out of my cohort of foster students that 97% are students of color.
	Principal Scout	We experience a lot of differing family structures like single moms, single dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles raising children.
	Principal Blake	Our students come from just so many different family types.

Ethnicity and Race. Every principal interviewed identified race and ethnicity as an attribute of diversity among students, whether present or not in their student population. Although some were quick to offer different races or ethnicities of student groups in their buildings, such as Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Asian, or Multiracial, a couple of elementary principals pointed out the lack of racial or ethnic diversity within their school buildings, noting an overwhelming population of White students versus other race and ethnic student subgroups. Table 8 depicts some of the comments shared by the participants of this study.

Table 8

Additional Observations of Interviewed Principals Related to Ethnicity and Race

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
Ethnicity and race	Principal Parker	There's also ethnic diversity. We have kids from all over the world here and from every background. I think we're about 25%, Hispanic this year and close to 30% some years. We have an African American population of about 8 to 12%. We also have a large population of German students. You know, anywhere our soldiers go, they bring back wives and kids.
	Principal Remy	We have no students of color, no mixed-race students in my particular building and a very small percentage district-wide.
	Principal Scout	The word diversity is often attached to skin color or race.
	Principal Blake	We don't have a hugely diverse population by color.

Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Status. In NYS, the percentage of students from an immigrant household from 1990 to 2021 increased from 21% to 35% (Camarota et al., 2023). The percentage of students registering in rural school districts as immigrant, refugee, and migrant status also increased during this period (NYSED, 2023c). As with other student subgroups, some principals addressed the diversity within their school building regarding immigrant, refugee, and migrant student populations. Table 9 contains the comments made by leaders about this specific student subgroup.

Table 9

Additional Observations of Interviewed Principals Related to Immigration, Refugee, or Migrant Status

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
Immigrant/Refugee/Migrant status	Principal Quinn	We have students that have come in on refugee status from Myanmar Burma. Also, we have a very strong migrant population.
	Principal Cameron	We have recently had a big influx of immigrants into my school.

Socio-Economic Status. Like race and ethnicity, all SBLs spoke to the socio-economic diversity in the school building. In NYS, economically disadvantaged student populations are defined as

those who participate in, or whose family participates in, economic assistance programs, such as the free or reduced-price lunch programs, Social Security Insurance (SSI), Food Stamps, Foster Care, Refugee Assistance (cash or medical assistance), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Safety Net Assistance (SNA), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), or Family Assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). If one student in a family is identified as low income, all students from that household (economic unit) may be identified as low income.

Table 10 contains selected commentary from the elementary principals interviewed regarding the diversity of student populations based on socio-economic status, specifically students who face poverty.

Table 10

Additional Observations of Interviewed Principals Related to Socio-economic Status

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
Socio-economic status	Principal Quinn	We have about 62% free and reduced income students. We have children living with food scarcity.

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
	Principal Remy	I would say because we are a small rural school district the primary type of diversity that we experienced here is socioeconomic diversity. We have students that live in extreme poverty and then we have students that live with families that have moderate to high end jobs with some wealth which creates economic diversity.
	Principal Scout	Poverty is probably one of the biggest diversities between students.
	Principal Blake	Geographically, we cover a very large area with lots of different communities. In being rural, we have very high poverty rate, but some areas of our district there's much more struggle than other areas and so I think a lot of times you do see those challenges, more so in some of our communities then and others.

Gender Identity. Finally, four of the nine principals interviewed identified gender identity as another source of diversity within student populations in their school buildings. These leaders addressed various gender identity transitions experienced by students. Table 11 displays observations made by SBLs about transgender student groups.

Table 11

Additional Observations of Interviewed Principals Related to Gender Identity

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
Gender Identity	Principal Parker	We have had some transgender children, even at this young age. Last year, we had a little girl that want to identify as a cat. That was a new experience for us.
	Principal Quinn	We have recently had students that are identifying as other than their birth gender assignment.

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
	Principal Drew	We have what seems to be a newer type of diversity, transgender students.

Teacher Diversity. The goal of refining educational equity has been a concentration of the NYS Board of Regents at least as far back as 1978 when the NYS Special Task Force on Equity and Excellence in Education (also known as the Rubin Commission) was assigned to analyze the issue (NYSED, 2019). More than 40 years later, discussions regarding educator diversity are still a primary focus when addressing equitable educational opportunities for all learners in NYS (NYSED, 2019). Although the school building leaders interviewed recognized a range of diversity within their student populations, multiple principals also identified a need for more diversity within their teaching staff. Table 12 contains a list of observations made by a few of the principals interviewed.

Table 12

Additional Observations of Interviewed Principals Related to Teacher Diversity

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
Teacher diversity	Principal Cameron	My teachers don't look like the population that we serve. My school staff is primarily female, white female teachers. I do not have a male teacher in my building so that sort of lends itself to not being a diverse teaching population in my building right now. Because of that limited diversity in my teaching staff, I think it spotlights a lot of the differences we have. I think the inability to hire diverse people hurts. Again, the people that apply for elementary jobs tend to be white women, and it's not representative of the world and that hurts. We want people that look like our population, and we don't have that.

Identified Diversity	Principal Name	Observation
	Principal Harper	It gets kind of interesting because we have all these military students and all these people from all over the world, but our staff, aside from a very few, like members of our ENL staff, they all went to school in this district. They're all Caucasian. They're all Christian. They check the boxes that people in this area do. .
	Principal Quinn	Our teachers, many of them, grew up in our community.

SJL Facilitation Through the Personal Dimension. According to Furman (2012), the personal dimension is the most central dimension of the SJL as a praxis framework and is focused on "deep, critical, and honest self-reflection" (p. 205). Exemplification of the personal dimension by school leaders is evident in their ability to "explore their values, assumptions, and biases regarding race, class, language, sexual orientation, and so on and, in turn, how these affect their leadership practice" (Furman, 2012, p. 205). In the interviews, the nine principals expressed the personal dimension by exploring where they grew up, their experiences in their careers before becoming elementary principals that shaped their leadership practice, and current experiences that have engaged them in critical self-reflection.

Growing Up. In talking with nine SBLs, these leaders consistently discussed growing up in the local area and having a sense of duty to their community to remain employed as school principals in their hometowns. Many of the examples shared by the interviewed principals align with the personal dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL framework. Table 13 displays evidence of the SBLs' insight into how they facilitate SJL within their daily leadership practice related to their self-reflections on growing up in rural NYS.

Table 13

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Personal

Dimension Related to Growing Up

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	I am from Northern New York, but I'll be honest, I'm much more aware of it than others. I went to school at the district not too far from here. My grandfather came here because he was a physician. He was born in Hawaii, and he couldn't get a job anywhere in America, even though he was a very talented physician. He finally found a town that would hire him in the 50s. This little town in upstate New York and that's how we ended up here.
Principal Parker	I was born in central New York and moved to the area when I was seven. I went to school at a very small rural school a couple districts from here. I grew up in a very small town and I didn't go back to school to get my teaching degree until after my children were in school. I was a farmer's wife for 14 years and still married to the same guy 37 years later. I did not have the background that maybe would have made me so passionate about making sure that everyone's included. I was so blessed to have grown up in a two-parent household and in a very middle-class lifestyle. I did have to work hard, but I had every opportunity. There weren't big barriers, like so many faces.
Principal Cameron	This is my home. I've lived here my whole entire life. What has traditionally happened is anybody who has had higher education has left for higher level jobs, and there are very few people that have stuck around to try to fight the good fight and keep it going. We've lost a lot of industry. We've lost a lot of good paying jobs and with that, we have lost a lot of the people that would make a positive change. You're sort of left with, not left but, you're left with a lower population who is procreating and they're just here. It's just science. You're not getting any higher-level students from lower educated people, and I say that in the most loving way possible, because I do love my community and I obviously I'd stayed here but it's been tough.

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Remy	I'm a product of this district. I graduated from this district and left here and went to a university in central New York, which is highly diverse and a totally different shift from here. I had no idea about transgender students, or I had never met someone who was Jewish, or I had never really ever been around people that were Black or Asian. It's a big wow for me. I think that it's a disservice from an educational institution to not have had exposure to diversity.

Previous Experiences. Before becoming SBLs, the principals interviewed spoke of experiences as classroom teachers or district leaders that influenced their current leadership practice. More specifically, the experiences endured by these leaders were a source of critical self-reflection, a highlighted practice in the personal dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL framework. Table 14 depicts the previous experiences of the SBLs interviewed.

Table 14

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Personal Dimension Related to Previous Experiences

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	When I was taught seventh grade science, I had this little girl who was Korean. I am still friends with her today. Her father was Korean. Her mom was Caucasian of some sort but was half Korean. Her brother was Korean too and we had a joke that we had like a gang called the Asian invasion. Years later she goes to college and then she comes back to talk about her experience here in my former district. She's talking to the staff about really not fitting in and you know, she said the first time I felt that I fit in was when I was in seventh grade and my science teacher was like, Oh my God, you're Korean. That's so awesome and was asking about Korean foods. I took them out to a Korean restaurant later because their father was adopted so we didn't even eat Korean. They were just so excited. I would bring them in Korean snacks and for the first time ever they really felt excited about being Korean. Before that it was always like, eehh, because they were the only ones in the district. I still stay in touch with her and her brother. That one makes me very happy.

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Parker	She was the most annoying child ever. It didn't matter what you said to her, it never sunk in. She was so low, and her writing was so bad. I was just starting to make some gains with her, and she left for three weeks to go see her grandfather in another state. They were military and that was their block leave. When she came back, we were a few weeks out from the ELA state assessment, but I was like I am going to catch this little girl up. The prompt was writing about her experience while she was on vacation seeing her grandfather and she said she said she didn't know how to write it. So, we talked about it first. She started talking about it. Her grandfather really didn't like her mom, and this came out during the conversation and her grandfather didn't like her either and didn't really want them there. She was so excited about going on this trip and seeing her grandfather and thought it would be really wonderful. It was really terrible. He called her fat. It was a really horrible experience so no wonder she didn't want to write about it. Shame on me for not being able to pick up on that sooner. I will never forget the way that I had prejudged that of course that trip was wonderful and there would be something in there that she could write about, and there wasn't. Having an open mind to all of those kinds of situations and what these kids are bringing to school that we have no idea about.
Principal Dylan	I was fortunate at the time that that my boys were able to go to the same school that I worked at, and I'll never forget, my son was in fifth grade, and he had a severely autistic student in his class. That student invited I don't know how many kids to his birthday party. I remember it vividly, which is probably why I say things like parents just want their kids to be loved and feel part of something. He invited kids to a bowling birthday party, and our son was one of the only classmates that showed up and that mom was just so appreciative. They had fun and they bowled, and it was a fun day for him. I think not only a life lesson for me as a mom and an educator, but also for our son. It was years later, and our son was probably a junior or a senior in high school. He had transferred to another school when he left eighth grade and so he never really saw that student much past fifth or sixth grade. He ran into that student in a restaurant. And, you know, that child came right up to him and remembered him and, you know, that kind of stuff is impactful.

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Blake	I was dean of students in one of our elementary buildings. At that time, our 12-1 program was in the building. I was spending time with the students in that classroom, which really became important to me. As I grew into principal, working to get them more and more included and when they would graduate up to middle school the different things that that parents would say to you knowing that it really made a difference and because of me pushing to have them out with other kids and to really be part of the school. You know, that meant a lot to families.

Current Experiences. SBLs report reflecting on their current leadership practices. Honest self-reflection is an element of the personal dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL as a praxis framework. Table 15 displays the recent experiences of multiple SBLs related to open and honest personal reflection to facilitate SJL per Furman's SJL framework.

Table 15

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Personal Dimension Related to Current Experiences

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Cameron	I'm a softy when it comes to my poor students. I have bought them clothes so that they can look the part and look equal. I have heard their terrible stories about how life is for them and trying to help support them and give them the resilience to believe in themselves and that they can do something. I think that's just sort of my MO. Life gets hard, and you have to rise above it, and you have to be better, and you can be better and believe in yourself.
Principal Dylan	I can say that this year was very challenging. We did bring a good chunk of students back. We were not sure if we were ready for this, but when teachers would share videos of these kids participating and I would see their classmates holding their hand and letting them be the helper of the day, those are the things that make all the hard work worth it because you know, they are included. My hope is that we're creating these very empathetic, accepting human beings at all levels and that it's just going to be second nature to them when they hit middle school. Yeah, that is my hope.

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Drew	As a building principal, I can think of so many students that when they first started, they're crying in the hallways and throwing tantrums and now they're in fourth grade and they no longer have trouble in the classroom. I'll remind staff this is why we do we're doing what we're doing. Imagine what it would have looked like for this student if they remained in that 8-1-1 classroom surrounded by other students who struggle to self-regulate and manage their emotions and handle themselves. They deserve the best opportunity as possible. I think it's just always been who I am and probably part of the reason why I am in education is the opportunity to reach all students.
Principal Scout	A kindergarten student already had lunch. They were in the library for library class. The library teacher noticed he had his hands in his hoodie pocket. The library teacher said honey take your hands out and when he did, she noticed that he had chicken nuggets in his pocket. She didn't get upset about it but brought him to me. And at first, I was she was like, that's kind of gross, but in talking to him, he's said, I only had six nuggets at lunch, but I saved three of them because I know I don't have any food for dinner tonight. And I want these three nuggets for tonight. And I might share one with my brother. Of course, that just rips you apart. So, it makes you realize he was keeping food because he was hungry but at the same time, he had a purpose. He really wanted to hold on to them and I'm not to take them away. He was finally in control of something in his life.

SJL Facilitation Through the Interpersonal Dimension. The interpersonal dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL framework "reflects the central role of relationships in social justice work" (p. 207), which includes building trusting relationships with multiple stakeholder groups such as staff, students, and parents. Developing authentic relationships is also a vital attribute of the interpersonal dimension (Furman, 2012, p. 207). According to Furman, care and respect are required to act within the interpersonal dimension. The nine principals interviewed described their lived experiences within the interpersonal dimension to facilitate SJL, describing relationship building with staff and families. Specifically, the principals interviewed identified modeled behaviors with staff, had intentional conversations with staff members, and supported thoughtful engagement with

families to develop authentic, caring, respectful, and trusting relationships with key stakeholders.

    Modeled Behaviors With Staff. The school building is composed of various types of staff members, including teachers, support staff, nurses, and librarians, among others, and it is the SBL who is charged with unifying and supporting this population of adults into a cohesive team to sustain the needs of students daily (Bush, 2022; Goddard, 2010; Peck et al., 2013). Developing trusting relationships with building staff is a crucial characteristic of the interpersonal dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL framework. To grow positive relationships, multiple principals acknowledged the practice of modeling behaviors with staff members to support the facilitation of SJL in the school building, which is expanded upon in Table 16.

Table 16

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Interpersonal Dimension Related to Modeled Behaviors for Staff Members

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Parker	I don't like to make decisions by myself. I like to be part of a team and take a team approach. We do so much better together.
Principal Cameron	I think it's just modeling inclusivity. You have to model it. You have to show them what you want and what you are looking for. I go around and hug my children and I go around, and I tell them I love them, and I go around and give high fives and it's just modeling the practices that you would like them to see is what I do is as a leader.
Principal Dylan	As a building leader, you are constantly trying to remind people that all of these little things do matter. Like saying thank you for stepping outside and being out there for bus duty. It matters. Thank you for doing this. It matters. Just reminding people of how important our roles are in the lives of kids. I send out weekly notes and feature things that people are doing. For example, if our problem-solving team had a week of meetings, and we found some celebrations, we might share that out so that people are learning from one another and asking questions of each other when somebody did a really great job. In a classroom, differentiating a lesson

Principal Name	Example Provided
	so all of the kids could feel included. We're sharing that our good classroom practices, featuring that, and saying go ask so and so, when you have a minute about how they did this or why they did this.
Principal Remy	I think the other thing is that faculty and staff see me treat students, faculty and staff, and families exactly the same. I'm not favoring a family that comes and brings me coffee once a week. I have equity among all. How I treat students and my expectations for them is the same. A teacher came to me a couple of weeks ago and said, you know, you're very predictable. And I said, well, what does that mean predictable? And they said, we always know exactly how you're going to respond. And I was like, oh, and they're like because you always respond exactly the same way.
Principal Blake	It's always been very important to me as a leader to be to be visible. Getting to know every child's name, getting to know a little bit about them, their family, getting right into classrooms and sitting alongside them if they need a little extra help, or if they need to go for a walk, or to cheer them on for an accomplishment. That's been one of the things that has been really important to me as a leader.

Intentional Conversations With Staff. Not only is modeling behaviors of inclusivity and equity important to high-need rural school principals in NYS when facilitating the interpersonal dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL framework, but having intentional and targeted conversations with staff about positive practices related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging is also an essential action for these principals. The crucial communications school principals had with staff when developing authentic and healthy relationships from the perspective of the SBL are elaborated in Table 17.

Table 17

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Interpersonal

Dimension Related to Intentional and Targeted Conversations with Staff Members

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	We're working on the language that we use with the staff across the district. What is a microaggression? What does it look like? How are you perpetuating? As a district, we are moving the ship very slowly.
Principal Parker	Our focus with our teachers is to really be mindful of being inclusive and looking at the intentional language that we use. Do we have to say boys and girls? Can we say friends? Should we be saying guys? Does that mean male and not female?
Principal Dylan	I'm always telling staff I don't take for granted how blessed I am to be able to come here each day and to work alongside everyone here because genuinely 99.9% of the time people are rolling up their sleeves. They want to do the hard work. They love kids and they want an overall generally inclusive environment where everybody feels included and like they're part of something.
Principal Drew	I don't think it's ever about people not wanting to do what's best but sometimes they just don't know, and they may feel that they can't do it. They just need constant encouragement, education, reinforcement, and support so they don't feel like they have to do this on their own and that it is okay to take a risk and it is okay if we put this beautiful plan together and it doesn't work. It's not personal. It's not about them. It's just spotlights that we need to come back together and work through that because we thought this was going to be amazing and was actually a flop, so we need to like go back and revisit, why did this happen? What were some triggers? What were some things that hindered the plan from going the way that we wanted it?
Principal Scout	The way you interact with your faculty demonstrates the way that you would interact with anybody that came in the building, so it's not I'm going to talk to you differently than I'm going to that person down the street. That worked well for me to make sure that my consistent reactions and actions I was able to develop that trust over time.

Thoughtful Engagement With Families. Families are a critical stakeholder group in a school-building community (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Medina et al., 2014). Principals are often charged with supporting positive interactions and thoughtful engagement with families to support an inclusive atmosphere through the lens of SJL (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Medina et al., 2014). How SBLs in high-need rural school buildings approach thoughtful family engagement through the interpersonal dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL framework is expanded on in Table 18.

Table 18

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Interpersonal Dimension Related to Thoughtful Family Engagement

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Blake	We're very big on relationship building. We really try to make sure parents feel like they're part of the team. We do a lot of communication on different social media platforms. We use ClassDojo so teachers and parents can text back and forth because we find that works really well for a lot of families.
Principal Scout	Families came in and we gave them a tour of the building and made sure that they had connections, whether it be internet connections, or Parents Square, to be able to communicate back and forth, to weekly newsletters, and tidbits and things that as a principal I would send out. Having those newsletters and items to help them feel like they understand what's going on in their child's world. It really was more of a family thing than versus just a student teacher thing.
Principal Dylan	We have good communication with families. We have them take part in problem solving so that family knows what we're what we're working towards. They're not left in the dark.
Principal Quinn	For me, it's just been about sitting down with parents and talking to them about why it's not okay for their children to be saying these things, to be doing these things, for this type of bullying and harassment to happen.

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Cameron	We bring in families. We have family nights in all buildings. We have family nights trying to get parent engagement into our schools. The lower grade levels get more parents that are involved. We try to get parents in the door as much as we can and try to get them to be involved. And then again, we have the notion of the school, and the community are one big, united front to support children and that is what we are here to do.
Principal Parker	Even when I send out a parent flyer. I don't want to send it with a bunch of nice little white kids at the top of the page. I want to pick clipart that is what we have here.

SJL Facilitation Through the Communal Dimension. According to Furman (2012), the communal dimension of SJL focuses on "leaders work to build community across cultural groups through inclusive, democratic practices" (p. 209). For socially just leaders to elevate the communal dimension in the school building, they will leverage team building, open communication, and inclusion (Furman, 2012). SJL facilitated through the communal dimension, according to Ryan (2007a), will "allow diverse and marginalized groups to participate in influence processes and have their voices heard" (p. 345). Of the dimensions addressed thus far, elements of the communal dimension used by the principals to facilitate SJL are less prevalent; however, facilitation of SJL through the communal dimension was evident related to student voice and parent voice.

Student Voice. The principals interviewed addressed diverse student populations within their school buildings. Diversity noted by SBLs included various marginalized groups such as students with disabilities, students of different races, nationalities, and ethnicities, and students living in poverty. The examples shared by these SBLs highlighted the development of relationships and a sense of community with students, which allowed students to voice their thoughts and feelings through words, actions, or activities. Table 19 displays examples of student voice shared by SBLs interviewed.

Table 19

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Communal

Dimension Related to Student Voice

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Remy	I think if you asked kids about their school, they would say this is the best school ever and we love our school, and they know that their teacher would do anything for them. It is very important for them to walk in every morning and feel like they belong, that they're included, that they're important.
Principal Harper	We have a huge multicultural fair here. It really becomes a building wide thing. A lot of our ENL students make posters and talk about their countries.
Principal Drew	We had a percussion group come and they were in our gym. They were performing, and it was very loud. We were well-prepared for students that we knew might like headphones, but we had additional headphones for kids that were just feeling very uncomfortable and wanted to put their headphones on whether they had an IEP or not. We just made them available for all kids. I think that seems like a small example, but we're just getting to a place of understanding that certain kids definitely need this but we're going to make it accessible to all students because if one can benefit, ten more can benefit. The way that I interact with staff and students is consistent and fair. I try to make everyone feel like they have a voice at the table. Even if we don't agree that it's okay. We can still learn and grow from each other.

Parent Voice. Similar to student voice, a few examples of school principals supporting the facilitation of SJL through the communal dimension related to parent voice were expressed. As communicated by the SBLs, sometimes parents initiated conversations, and at other times, principals engaged parents to obtain their perspectives. Commentary on parent voice is displayed in Table 20 through the viewpoint of high-need rural school principals.

Table 20

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Communal

Dimension Related to Parent Voice

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	One of my favorite stories was during Ramadan in April. We had a pair of siblings here that were fasting during the day. I didn't know anything about Ramadan, so I called up the father and I said, Listen, I know nothing about Ramadan. I understand your children are fasting. Let's chat about it. So he's like well listen, fasting is sort of a devotion thing and he explained to me a little about the religion and then he said, the way I tackle with my kids at lunch is that I believe that their devotion and their willingness to participate really is up to them. So, if my child wants to eat lunch, they can eat lunch, there's no judgement from me.
Principal Quinn	I have had parents come in and say we're coming to you because we know that you will get something done. Our child was called this name on the bus and no one's doing anything, and our older kids don't want anybody involved. They don't want to make the situation worse. I think that I maybe I overcompensate, but I don't think that it's possible to do. I think that needs to happen.
Principal Drew	We had one family in particular with a student starting kindergarten and she almost didn't enroll her daughter into school because she was just so worried that we wouldn't be able to do all the things that needed to be done or that she'd get hurt in school. We really worked with that family, and she had a wonderful kindergarten experience. There's a lot of conversations at the school with parents, in particular with parents of students with IEPs. For example, I had a student who was leaving one of the elementary classrooms at a different building and would be coming into my building the following year, and they were very hesitant about it because they felt comfortable at that school. They wanted to stay at that school. They were worried about all these things, so we invited them, and they came, and they did a tour of the building, and they got to meet the teachers in advance, and they were still very hesitant, but the student came, and the student has grown in leaps and bounds. Mom was adamant she was so worried about brushing their teeth

Principal Name	Example Provided
	every day, just like more life skills, and now the student is reading and writing.

SJL Facilitation Through the Systemic Dimension. The systemic dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL framework addresses the school and district's policies, systems, practices, and procedures that support or challenge injustices and barriers to learning. K. B. McKenzie et al. (2008) noted that leaders should "recognize structures that pose barriers to students' progress and create proactive structures and systems of support for all students" (p. 126). Activities to support the facilitation of SJL through the systemic dimension include professional development opportunities, evaluation of current practices, and communication to support incremental change (Furman, 2012).

Professional Development Opportunities. The leaders interviewed discussed various professional development opportunities in their school building and district to support developing and implementing socially just learning environments that celebrate DEI. These experiences included book studies and guest speakers, among others. The opportunities for professional development identified by the principals interviewed are expanded in Table 21.

Table 21

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Systemic Dimension Related to Professional Development Opportunities

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Parker	This school district has always been a diverse place and so we've always had some type of diversity training. We've also had inclusion training. We had people from the LGBTQ community come in and give professional development trainings and then following up with some smaller group work and then bringing that training and group work down to the building level.
Principal Cameron	We do DEI training, and we have poverty simulations.
Principal Quinn	We are encouraging and paying teachers to be part of book studies after school. We've had several book studies. Most

Principal Name	Example Provided
	recently, *How to Be an Antiracist* and Ta-Neshi Coates' book.
	We keep on revisiting ACES training. Having book studies to see with ACES how to literally go through and think about yourself as a teacher. How many of these indicators did you grow up with because that will set the tone for your internal bias that you weren't even aware of. That kind of self-reflection among my staff and faculty members.
Principal Dylan	We used to use a CARES program, which was a Responsive Classroom program, and all of our teachers were Responsive Classroom trained. Also, I always have a professional development section in my notes each week.
Principal Drew	We have a partnership with a consulting company. We sent people before COVID, which was great to their programming. It was in person at a university, professional development sessions that were about a weeklong. Now we still do it but it's virtual, which just it's not exactly the same. They brought in a lot of outside guest speakers to speak on differences, whether it's gender or autism.
Principal Remy	During the last school year, we did a book study to try and help teachers understand that students that live with or have experienced trauma come into school with a whole different "backpack" than the students that don't and so we have really tried to work together as a building to become trauma informed. I really look at this as just another layer of diversity. We call this the Bible in our building, *Building Resilience in Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences, A Whole Staff Approach*. We worked through the book over the last nine months, and we had 21 of our faculty members participate in the yearlong study.
Principals Scout	Our ENL department for the district also will have various, short PDs or faculty meeting mini sessions that will just give us some background on some of our people or cultures that we have in our community.

Evaluation of Current Practices. Furman (2012) addressed that policies and practices are vital attributes of the systemic dimension of the SJL framework.

The high-need rural school principals interviewed, identified, evaluated, and
provided commentary on current practices and policies that support inclusion and
belongingness in the school building and across the school district. In Table 22,
examples of systems and procedures currently employed are outlined.

Table 22

*Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Systemic
Dimension Related to the Evaluation of Current Practices*

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	We have DEI teams that are deployed to different buildings. The High School is the group trying to get ahead of this. They've been working really since the DEI framework came out from the state because our student makeup in the district is very different from the rest of the student makeup in the county. They are working to make a better school for all of the students who are here. The middle school is starting a DEI committee. Then at the elementary level, it's more of a slow shift.
Principal Quinn	I have many zero tolerance practices. One racial slur you're suspended for five days. Any major DASA violation, our immediate district reaction is suspension.
Principal Scout	At the district level, we have the strategic plan and a charge for equity for all whether it be for our services that we provide but also the curriculum that we provide.

Communication for Incremental Change. As the systemic dimension of
Furman's (2012) SJL framework speaks to policy, procedures, systems, and
practices, leaders recognize that change within this dimension requires an extended
timeline and continuous communication. According to the principals interviewed,
communication for incremental change takes place within the school building and
across the school district. Table 23 contains commentary from SBLs on facilitating
SJL under the systemic dimension focused on communication supporting
incremental change.

Table 23

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Systemic

Dimension Related to Communication of Incremental Change

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Remy	As shared with staff, families, and the community, we have really decided as a district that we're going to approach DEI and diversity education slowly and with two lenses, one allowing students to have equal experiences while they're here, but also providing them with awareness of what's outside of here.
Principal Harper	We're working on the language that we use with the staff across the district. What is a microaggression? What does it look like? How are you perpetuating? As a district, we are moving the ship very slowly.
Principal Blake	I think looking ahead to the future we are really looking at continuing those things. Slow and steady. We do seem to be getting more and more students who have higher and higher needs. It could be nonverbal. It could be on the spectrum. It could be hearing impaired, so really educating ourselves on how to support different students and communicate to staff opportunities we have to support students, so they feel like they belong.

SJL Facilitation Through the Ecological Dimension. To visualize the

five dimensions of SJL, Furman (2012) created a figure, which is recreated as

Figure 1, in which the ecological dimension is the exterior circle of the graphic that

envelopes all other dimensions.

Figure 1

The Dimensions of Social Justice Leadership Praxis Recreated
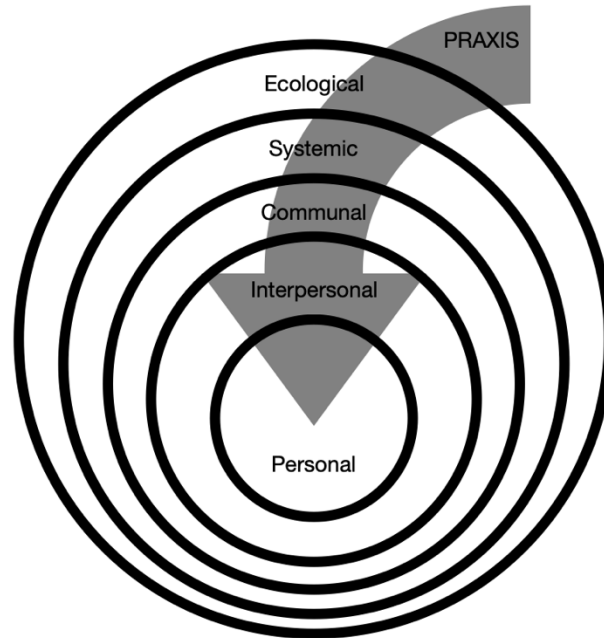
Note. Adapted from "The Dimensions of Social Justice Leadership Praxis," by Gail Furman, 2012, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *48*(2), p. 205 (https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11427394). Copyright 2012 by Sage Journals.

The ecological dimension, as the outermost dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL framework, is focused on the relationship between SJL in the school building and SJL "situated within broader sociopolitical, economic, and environmental contexts and interdependent with broader issues of oppression and sustainability" (Furman, 2012, p. 211). Furman asked SBLs to consider where their roles and responsibilities lie related to the promotion and support of SJL within the larger social justice landscape. Similar to the communal dimension, the ecological dimension was largely not addressed by the principals interviewed; however, these SBLs commented on the ultimate role of the school setting and learning for students and the environmental setting of the school building as rural, which align well to the ecological dimension.

The Role of the School and Learning for Students. The principals
interviewed reflected on the ecological dimension of the SJL framework through
shared sentiments about the greater purpose schools and how learning should serve
students understand the world at large and acquire qualities that would make them
good people in society. Feedback from the SBLs associated with the facilitation of
SJL through the ecological dimension is displayed in Table 24.

Table 24

*Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Ecological
Dimension Related to the Role of the School and Learning for Students*

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	The beautiful thing about our district is that there is so many ways that we influence kids.
Principal Drew	It's much bigger than then you and it's much bigger than our school, but this is where it should start and it's a great place. We have kids for a very long time and for a long period during the school day. It's a good place to start implementing those practices so it is just kind of how the world works, and it is not so much about what's different and how the world makes us feel like we don't belong. A school is purposeful, well beyond just the academics.
Principal Remy	Our district mission is to prepare our students for the world. To make them civic ready and career ready and you can't do that if you leave DEI out, especially in 2023.
Principal Blake	I think has been helpful for all of us to really understand more about the differences that people have and just help us be better, kinder, more empathetic people.

Rural Setting. According to Furman (2012), considering the environmental
setting is a characteristic of the ecological dimension. All principals interviewed are
leaders of rural elementary school buildings. Multiple elementary principals
addressed the impact of a rural location (see Table 25).

Table 25

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating SJL Through the Ecological

Dimension Related to a Rural Setting

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	I think all rural areas are very often overlooked. They are much more challenging than urban areas. If you take a child who's hungry, and you drop them into a downtown city, within a 10-minute walk, I bet he can find a place that will give him food, but if you dropped that same child into wherever rural New York, they're not finding food in five minutes. They don't prioritize rural New York.
Principal Quinn	Is it more detrimental to live in a rural community and be poor or is it more detrimental to live in an urban setting and be poor? And, you know, for me, I always say rural, and I'm out here seeing what happens. At least in an urban setting, I go out the door of my house or wherever I'm living, and I have access to so much more. I have visual access; I have access to more people. In a rural community you have access to just your small group. So where are you going? You're now isolated in many aspects.
Principal Remy	The senior leadership, the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent both really want what's best for kids and there's a mindset that just because we're a small rural district and we have a high percentage of poverty doesn't mean that our students shouldn't have access to the same thing that any other student across our state has access to. That strong mindset, I would say, transfers through the community and leadership and faculty within the district.

Furman (2012) identified five dimensions of the SJL as a praxis framework, including personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological dimensions. In the interviews, nine principals of high-need rural buildings in New York State provided countless examples of facilitating SJL through the direct and indirect support of these five dimensions. Although the personal and interpersonal dimensions were more frequently discussed, the communal, systemic, and ecological dimensions were all still present when implementing SJL in the high-need rural elementary school building.

RQ2: How do High-Need Rural School Principals Facilitate CRSL?

CRSL is action-based and encompasses antioppressive/racist leadership, transformative leadership, and SJL (Khalifa et al., 2016). Khalifa et al. (2016) synthesized literature from which they generated the CRSL framework as a sub-framework of SJL. The four elements of the CRSL framework by Khalifa et al. are critical self-awareness, culturally responsive curricula, and teacher preparation, a culturally responsive and inclusive school environment, and engaging students and parents in community contexts. From the interviews, a more significant understanding was attained from the perspective of high-need rural SBLs regarding facilitating all four pillars of CRSL.

Critical Self-Awareness. School leaders need an awareness of their personal values, notions, beliefs, and dispositions when supporting children in their building, specifically economically disadvantaged students of various races and ethnicities. Khalifa et al. (2016) identified, "The principal's critical consciousness of culture and race serves as a foundation to establish beliefs that undergird her practice" (p. 1281). To support critical self-awareness, the principals interviewed spoke of their approach to leadership. Some of the examples shared are shown in Table 26.

Table 26

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating CRSL Through Critical Self-awareness

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	I am the person that people don't feel comfortable saying those kinds of things around because I'm that guy and I'm fine with that. In terms of leadership that's important to me. It's important to me that we create a place where people are being good people.
Principal Parker	You can't judge kids. That that's not okay. You never know where they're going to go.
Principal Cameron	Not having it be an us versus them. We are one. We are together and we need to accept differences and we need to embrace differences and that message of a family, and that

Principal Name	Example Provided
	family looks to include everybody regardless of special education, skin color or socio-economic status.
Principal Quinn	My own nieces and nephews are biracial and seeing how they've grown up and what they've had to endure. I'm not black enough for the black community. I'm not white enough for the white community. I'm somewhere in limbo. Having seen that has definitely influenced my practices as a leader.
Principal Dylan	I've always described being a building leader as kind of being like the conductor of an orchestra. There are all these moving parts, but it turns into this beautiful symphony, when all the moving parts are working together and playing together.
Principal Drew	I think diversity is something that as a school building leader and you're constantly having to navigate and work through and also check your own self and your own biases or your own political thoughts and views to make sure that they're not overstepping the work that you're doing.
Principal Remy	My motto is always every student every day. I'm responsible for every student every day and they should all get the best of what we have every day.
Principal Scout	My experiences are very different than everyone else's. We all grow at a different pace until our brains open up a pathway and ah, there it is and then you realize I've been thinking about it wrong my whole life. It's kind of like listening to the song on the radio and you say the wrong words and then someone tells you the right words and you're like, that makes sense.

Culturally Responsive Curricula and Teacher Preparation. According to Khalifa et al. (2016), culturally responsive school leaders enact culturally responsive curricula in the school building and support teachers in executing such curriculum, resources, tools, and instructional strategies to support diverse populations of students. CRSL also requires SBLs to counsel teachers who struggle to recognize and employ culturally responsive educational practices (Khalifa et al., 2016). Regarding the curricula and teacher preparation pillar of CRSL, principals addressed current efforts to apply culturally responsive instructional practices in the

school building and instances of the challenges these leaders face regarding teachers and mindsets opposed to culturally responsive practices.

  Culturally Responsive Curricula. Curriculum can include resources, materials, manipulatives, tools, and strategies that provide students access to learning (NYSED, 2018). Ladson-Billings (1994) identified culturally relevant pedagogy practices as a means for teachers to connect with students, their families, their communities, and their daily lives. In Table 27, multiple examples of culturally responsive curricula in school buildings are outlined as described by the SBLs.

Table 27

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating CRSL Through Culturally Responsive Curricula

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	We ordered crayons for our rooms now with different skin tones so if a kid is writing and drawing about something they did this summer, that a kid that looks like me doesn't have to go over and say okay, I can take black, gray, or white. Instead, they can say this one looks like me.
Principal Quinn	For our pre-K curriculum, we've moved to a curriculum that the toys that the children are playing with are racially representative of everyone.
Principal Dylan	To be able to help give our students another experience and an opportunity to work with people who are in uniform and with people who look different or who sound different than us. I think all of those opportunities are important.
Principal Scout	My music teacher is very good at bringing to our attention when she's selecting musical pieces for her performance. Being aware our students have different backgrounds and that you're not making students feel excluded by doing a song that they have no relationship with.

  Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparation. In alignment with CRSL, instructional leaders are responsible for supporting classroom teachers in developing a mindset of culturally responsive teaching and providing guidance when needed, as not all educators know how to deliver a culturally responsive

educational experience for all learners (Khalifa et al., 2016). A few of the school principals interviewed highlighted their experiences preparing teachers to be culturally responsive in the classroom environment. Table 28 contains a list of these shared experiences.

Table 28

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating CRSL Through Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparation

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Parker	How about having kids get their planner signed? Well, a lot of kids can't get their planner signed, so do they miss recess for that? Is that Is that a fair practice? You want to have some accountability on the part of students, but what should that accountability look like?
Principal Harper	Do you want some Chinese? And he said, I don't eat Chinese food. There are cats in there. I said, no, there's not cats. He said, yes there is. I used to live in a city and stray cats were everywhere. We had a Chinese family move in, and the cat started to disappear. So, we needed to sit down and have a conversation about how incredibly inappropriate that is.
Principal Quinn	I don't generally move children out of rooms. We all need to learn to function and work with people that we might not necessarily get along with, but I have had to move students over the years out of classrooms because of the inherent racial bias that a teacher has and is not recognizing.
Principal Remy	We have teachers who sometimes say, why do we have to do all this for our students? Why are we the teacher, the parent, and all those other roles? Why are we having to lose instructional time because our student has to get their teeth cleaned? Mindsets of teachers can be challenging, but the underlying reality is that you can't teach if other basic needs haven't been met.
Principal Scout	So, they don't know how to zip their coat because they've never really had to put a coat on. Now we're going to have to teach them how to do that rather than saying what do you mean you don't know how to zip a coat. I am here. Let me help you.

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Drew	We also had a student that came to us in kindergarten that was a transgender student. We had to really navigate and do some work around the education of staff and their personal feelings on that and how we had to really work and manage leaving what we may think we know, or our own personal opinions really need to not be part of the conversations in terms of what we need to do for the student.

Culturally Responsive and Inclusive School Environments. The aptitude of high-need rural school principals to use assets to pinpoint and promote a culturally encouraging school environment is paramount (Ainscow, 2005; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riehl, 2000). According to Robinson (2010), "school leaders develop effective processes and strategies that successfully reform their schools because they sincerely love all children, and they believe all children are capable of learning if given an equal opportunity to excel" (p. ii).

In the interviews, various SBLs addressed their strategies, mindsets, and points of view of affection for students when supporting inclusive school environments through CRSL, which are displayed in Table 29.

Table 29

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating CRSL Through Culturally Responsive and Inclusive School Environments

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	We've got a mural in the building. It's a picture the world with some little children. It's very stereotypical with a sombrero and maracas and a poncho. Then there's a little Chinese boy with his eyes like this and a rice paddy hat. We're in the process of painting over that but it was painted by a staff member and that person has since retired, but there's a lot of people who don't want it changed, but we have to change.
Principal Parker	I had a little girl who was the only girl in the classroom because four of the girls didn't show up and one transferred out, so we have six girls in the class and then there were none. In the class we ended up one little African American girl with 12 white boys. Where's her tribe? Where are her people? Inclusion has to be part of everything that we do and all of the decisions that we make.

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Cameron	I'm working on inclusion in the school building. I think there's a lot to improve upon, so I we're working on it. This is a work in progress building right now. I'm not trying to blame anybody, previous or not. It's just that there's a lot of work to do, so I am rolling up my sleeves and doing it.
Principal Quinn	I know that personally, I engage probably, and it may be an overreaction, but I engage more with our students of color getting off the bus in the morning. I seek them out for high fives and sidearm hugs. I may engage with them more because I want the parents to see that they're included and loved in our building. And I want the other students to see that.
Principal Dylan	I think it's the attitudes of people. From front office to custodians to aides to teachers to, you know, everybody. Everybody knows that their role is important, and that everybody interacts with students in a positive way. Everyone understands that we're here for kids. That is our purpose. We're here to serve students and families. I think those things encourage an inclusive environment.
Principal Blake	We recently became one building for our whole district, so we're all housed together, which is really phenomenal. I think that it allows students to see differences in each other, but it allows staff to see differences in families and other staff members. I think has been really good for us moving forward and just being open and accepting to differences that people have and inclusive of all.

Engaging Students and Parents in Community Contexts. The fourth pillar of the CRSL focuses on a school leader's capacity to engross students, families, and communities with culturally suitable methods. Examples of behaviors include the promotion of home or native languages, accommodation of parents' lives and needs, and creating school environments that embrace not only the learner but also the community. The SBLs interviewed repeatedly highlighted the significance of the school building as the center of the community in a high-need rural area. Expanded upon in Table 30, the facilitation of CRSL, according to the school principals interviewed, to support the engagement of students and parents in

a community-based context is emphasized, and the impact of the school as the heart of the community is underscored through community-based partnerships.

Table 30

Examples of Interviewed Principals Facilitating CRSL Through Engaging Students and Parents in Community Contexts

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Parker	Sometimes we have Cornell Cooperative Extension here with resources and different community agencies just to kind of help out and bridge that gap between home and school. That can be a wonderful thing.
Principal Cameron	My work with outside agencies and trying to get them in the building for open house is also important. I just sent out an email to all these agencies and then working with Community Connected Schools to get agencies in our building to support our students so that parents have an opportunity to see all that is available.
Principal Remy	I think that as a whole, this community is very supportive of bringing each other up. Many are second and third generations going through the school system. They look to the school as the center of the community and the school will help us. I think families feel comfortable coming to the school for that additional piece of help.
Principal Scout	And then you had the families that were local and knew our school as being that helpful community or family. That was their school because really the school was one of the only operating entities in the community and that's brings people in the community together for them, so they feel connected with the school in that format.
Principal Blake	This time of year, on our athletic fields, we have little league teams and club teams that will use our fields. We're very, very open to that. There are different community groups that come in and use the gym for something or we will have different offerings in the building. We have a summer rec program too. Our kids weren't all having the same opportunity, so we worked with the different townships, and we took over the summer recreation program. It's all at the school. We have what we call Super Stage for Kids, so they learn a little about theater and put out a production in the summer. We've had different soccer camps, basketball

Principal Name	Example Provided
	camps, and volleyball camps. All kinds of different opportunities that all of the students in our district can attend.

Khalifa et al. (2016) outlined four foundational pillars of the CRSL framework: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, (c) culturally responsive and inclusive school environment, and (d) engaging students and parents in community contexts. In the interviews, the nine school principals of high-need rural buildings in NYS provided various examples of facilitating CRSL by implementing the four pillars. Unlike SJL, CRSL practices by the elementary principals equally addressed all four pillars as essential focus areas of practice in developing and supporting a culturally responsive and inclusive school setting.

RQ3: What Leadership Practices do High-Need Rural School Principals Perceive to Encourage or Discourage Inclusion for All Students in the Elementary School Building?

Leadership practices that encourage or discourage student inclusion varied by the principal interviewed. Some principals highlighted the importance of modeling welcoming, friendly, and warm behaviors for all demographics of the learner population. Other SBLs found only encouraging practices to be part of their daily practices in the learning environment and determined practices to discourage inclusion to be lacking in their interactions with students. Other leaders, however, spoke of leadership practices that simultaneously encourage and discourage student inclusion. Leaders interviewed did not identify one consistent set of practices they perceived as encouraging or discouraging student inclusion and belongingness in the educational setting.

Encouraging Student Inclusion. In speaking with nine high-need rural school principals, it is evident that personal perception is at the core of leadership practices that are thought to encourage or discourage student inclusion. Concerning encouraging student inclusion in the school setting, the principals recognized that the primary means of making a student feel a sense of belonging, in their opinion,

is to model positive, welcoming behaviors for all subgroups of students. The
principals interviewed identified leadership behaviors that encourage student
inclusion (see Table 31).

Table 31

*Perceptions of Principals Regarding Leadership Practices Related to Encouraging
Student Inclusion*

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Dylan	Our building messages are to be respectful, be kind, be safe, and be responsible. We like having a common language that everybody uses. Everybody is really on the same page and sending the same message to our students. I think that encourages inclusion.
Principal Remy	We do have practices that encourage inclusion. There has been a lot of discussion around students that lived with trauma or that have experienced adverse childhood trauma and how to ensure these students belong and are supported.
Principal Scout	I would say our PBIS structure encouraged positive interactions which were fostered from the teacher modeling that welcoming environment from the building to their classroom. I think the biggest thing is always saying hi and always giving them a hug. We're talking about littles. Kids that are four and a half to five years old all the way to about nine to 10 years old so helping them to know that we're there to help them and not be authoritative over them.

No Discouraging Practices. In the interviews, almost half of the leaders
only acknowledged practices encouraging student inclusion in the school setting.
Actions that discourage student inclusion were not identified. The dissenting
responses regarding practices that discourage inclusion are expressed in Table 32.

Table 32

*Perceptions of Principals Regarding No Discouraging Leadership Practices
Related to Student Inclusion*

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Quinn	I don't know what we're doing to discourage inclusion in our building.

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Dylan	I really can't think of any practices that have discouraged inclusion.
Principal Remy	I wouldn't say that we have any practices really that discourage inclusion.
Principal Scout	I can't think of anything right now.

Discouraging Student Inclusion. Some of the school principals who were interviewed recognized actions that might deter student inclusion, which are also coincidently aligned to actions that might be considered activities supportive of inclusion in other contexts. The SBLs interviewed addressed various behaviors that might unintentionally discourage a student's sense of belonging, including funding concerns, access to school-sponsored activities, and the impact of instructional practices on students' feelings. According to the principals interviewed, multiple practices could discourage student inclusion (see Table 33).

Table 33

Perceptions of Principals Regarding Leadership Practices Related to Discouraging Student Inclusion

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	For example, if the summer camp application was due on Wednesday, but my neighbor brought it on Thursday. I think as hard as we try as a district or on an individual basis, people look out for their own, which is expected. They look out for their neighbors and their kids and their friends' kids, and the teachers' friends' kids, and all of those things. I always feel like local kids have greater access to somethings not by district design, but by individual design.
Principal Parker	There are a lot of practices that, just by nature, discourage inclusion of children. First, anything that doesn't provide busing cuts kids out. Also, any after school activities that involve parents having to come in encourage and discourage inclusion at the same time.
Principal Drew	I don't think we do things intentionally to discourage but I'm certain there's probably things that depending on the student or the family that could feel that's happening. I think

Principal Name	Example Provided
	sometimes things that can be discouraging even when we have best intentions. For example, I think about one first grade student. He had green break cards and so he would come down to the office and be so happy to have these green break cards. But you know, maybe that wouldn't work for all kids because they would feel singled out.
Principal Blake	Everybody's best intention is to encourage students to feel like part of the group. I think sometimes students may feel different because of it. We do a lot of small group instruction at the elementary level. A lot of our teachers will share kids and do different levels. For example, with ELA skills, we'll assess where students are and there is a lot of times where we'll have our 12-1 or our 15-1 students pushing into the classroom and they may end up in a in a group that's working on a lower level skills than the others, but we do that as a way to make sure students have all of the foundational skills that they need and to move them along at a pace that's appropriate for each of them. I think that that can kind of go both ways, depending on the group. As students get older, they recognize that a group is doing something different than we are, so I think goes both ways to encourage and discourage belonging.

From speaking with these nine school principals from high-need rural school districts in NYS, it is evident that thoughtfulness related to positive and negative leadership behaviors aligned to students' inclusion and belongingness in the school building are a part of their everyday consciousness. Interestingly, leadership practices that encourage or discourage student inclusion vary. Some leaders addressed just practices that support inclusion, whereas others spoke of behaviors that discourage inclusion as a byproduct of a well-intentioned action. Still, some leaders focus solely on encouraging practices, unaware of any leadership practices that might discourage student inclusion.

RQ4: What Leadership Barriers or Challenges do High-Need Rural School Principals Experience to Support Inclusion (if any)?

School principals are confronted with a long list of roles and responsibilities within the school building (Peck et al., 2013). Moreover, in a time of DEI initiatives, leaders face intensifying challenges to encourage the positive creation of

school settings that foster student inclusion and belonging. (Goddard, 2010). In the interviews, all nine SBLs spoke of obstacles, barriers, and challenges to supporting inclusive initiatives. Hurdles leaders addressed fit into two essential categories: hiring and staffing challenges and negative mindsets of stakeholder groups such as educators, families, and community members related to race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender identity.

Hiring/Staffing. Principals interviewed desire a staff that reflects the demographic makeup of the student population they serve. Some leaders voiced a need for more diversity in staffing. Other SBLs acknowledged a need for more understanding and experience from current educator populations with diverse student groups as a challenge that hinders the creation of inclusive learning environments in the rural school building. The principals identified challenges related to hiring and access to a diverse staffing pool as barriers to creating an atmosphere of belonging and implementing a sense of inclusivity in the educational environment. Comments about current educator populations and the hiring of new staff as obstacles experienced by high-need rural SBLs are expressed in Table 34.

Table 34

Perceptions of Principals Regarding Hiring and Staffing as a Barrier to Inclusion

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	We are about 99% White for staff and a lot less than that for student population. It moves much quicker at middle and high school than it does at the elementary level with regards to shifts with staff and teaching.
Principal Cameron	We have students of color. We have recently had a big influx of immigrants into my school, so now our teachers don't necessarily look like our student population, which I think is problematic. When hiring we try to attract people that are reflective of the world at large. It doesn't go well, but we try.
Principal Quinn	I am very careful with my hiring practices now to make sure I'm hiring diverse staff. I'm hiring staff that's not from this community. That's one of the things that I've been doing here is to make sure that we're hiring and staffing with

Principal Name	Example Provided
	people who understand the need for inclusion all the way around. I pull any application of someone who's come from a broader area, bigger universities where I know that some of their educational practices are definitely more diverse than maybe a local community college. If we can hire teachers of color, teachers with diverse backgrounds. Just anything I can do to make sure that our school community is reflective of the actual world at large. It's difficult at times, but that's we're working on it.
Principal Dylan	I think another barrier is not having people, the right people. Everyone talks about the staffing shortages, and it is a real thing. For the future we are just looking at how we continue to be able to sustain what we started this year.
Principal Blake	When it comes time to have people retire and we have to fill those spots, I think it will be a little bit tougher, but I think part of that is just the location of where we are. It's just the way. There are fewer and fewer people coming into education. We're always looking for the best. We're always trying to think ahead, and we know we're going to have these openings coming up, so these are the kinds of people we're looking for and how do we get those people kind of in here now.

Negative Mindsets. When asked to address barriers to inclusion and belonging, SBLs discussed issues related to closed or negative mindsets from various stakeholder groups that limit or hinder their ability to cultivate a sense of belongingness or inclusion for all students in the learning environment. Stakeholder groups include staff members, families, and community members serving on the Board of Education. Challenges addressed included inherent and implicit bias, racism, sexism, prejudice, hate, and discrimination. Tables 35 and 36 encapsulate various examples of negative mindsets from stakeholders, which create a barrier to school leaders employing an inclusive setting in the school building.

Table 35

Perceptions of Principals Regarding Negative or Closed Mindsets as a Barrier to Inclusion by Stakeholders Within the School Building

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Cameron	I think people who go into education, very few of them have had a tough time growing up. You go into education because you're good at it. You're good at school. You're good at learning. You were able to go to college. They typically are your upper population and I think that sometimes hinders because they don't understand struggle. They don't understand poverty. They don't understand learning disabilities. They're just good at school and had opportunities, so I think that is one thing that hinders.
Principal Quinn	We do not do well with students of color, and we do not do well with the LBGTQ+ community, but we do better than then we do with our students of color.
Principal Remy	If we started to talk about inclusivity, as far as religion and gender and race and all those types of things, there likely would be a little bit more pushback and as we traverse down that road within the next year or so I anticipate that to happen.
Principal Scout	Some teachers are very good about understanding backgrounds, but other ones rely on skin color to denote diversity. Sometimes they'll even question the registration form. They have preconceived notions of what a certain race of student should look like. The form might be marked that the student is Asian, but the student doesn't look Asian to them. Don't rely on looks alone.

SBLs encounter negative mindsets from stakeholders within the school building, and encounter closed mindsets towards diverse populations from stakeholder groups outside of the learning environment. According to SBLs, community members, parents, families, and the board of education present challenges or barriers to supporting student inclusion and belongingness. Commentary provided by high-need rural school principals in NYS is expounded on in Table 36.

Table 36

Perceptions of Principals Regarding Negative or Closed Mindsets as a Barrier to Inclusion by Stakeholders Outside of the School Building

Principal Name	Example Provided
Principal Harper	If you take the military out of it, we are very rural, very red and the -isms run through the community. You always feel like there's a lot of pushbacks. I had a conversation with a mother last year that was incredibly upset that one of my kindergarten teachers had read a book and, in this story, the main character had two fathers. The little girl went home, and Mom called me upset, but I told her I'm a big fan of that. There may be a little boy in that class that has two fathers and says, oh, there's somebody like me. My teacher is not sitting there telling kids about sexuality. All she's doing is reading a book has two fathers and it just gives kids a way to identify. Previously I was at an elementary building that had 650 students. I had two African American students in the building. I was there two years. Both years the kids were called the N-word. Both years. I mean, every single year, those kids are called the N-word. That's upsetting. One of those students who used that word, his father was actually an administrator in a different district. I called him and he didn't seem too fazed by it.
Principal Cameron	Additionally, I think my community tends to have that underlying current of racism. It does exist. They hear it at home. There's racist language at home. There are Confederate flags being hung. Not to get too into politics but there's still Trump signs and FJB signs and that is not promoting inclusivity. It's not an inclusive environment. It's working against it and when they go home to that, and then you're coming here and we're trying to have inclusivity, it's difficult. It's very difficult to fight. I think again it's that undercurrent of racism that exists. It's poverty that exists.
Principal Quinn	Lately I can say that we have had a problem with students who are less inclusive of students of color. That has been that's been district wide. It's become a problem. We've seen in the last two years, especially this year, an uptick in the use of racial slurs against our students of color. Primarily our black students. It's happening in the hallways, on buses and during unstructured time, but it's

Principal Name	Example Provided
	happening. When I'm calling parents to say this is what happened, they are like so. The parents act like they don't understand, or they don't recognize or don't care. They find that kind of language okay. Most especially, there is an underlying vein of racism that exists in this community, and I would suspect some other rural communities as well.
Principal Dylan	It's not always rainbows and butterflies and it is hard. There are always political barriers that we can't avoid.
Principal Drew	I think that that probably is fair to say that there is an underlying sense of racism. It just depends. We are in some ways a rural community. For example, I had a phone call to a parent. One student had said to another student in PE that they couldn't tell her what to do because the student was black. I talked through it with the student and then when I called home, I was surprised when the parent was just like, oh. So some of it is overcoming the political pieces that we can't really control in home environments that are coming into school, and how those thoughts align with our systems that we have in place and our expectations of how we treat each other. It's not always the same and so there's some pitfalls or some hoops that we have to jump through to educate not only students but families and how do we do that tactfully without creating such an upheaval? Which right now feels like there's a lot of contentious air.
Principal Blake	I think the biggest obstacle are families and what they're hearing at home about what parents' views are of somebody from a different classroom or of a different race or things like that. I do feel like those are the things that we have the least amount of control over and no matter what we say or how we say it, or how we model treating everybody, we're here six or seven hours a day and what they see at home has been ingrained in them a little bit longer so that I think that does present some challenges for us.

SBLs face barriers and challenges in supporting inclusive learning environments where all students feel they belong. Hurdles or obstacles that get in the way include hiring and staffing challenges and negative mindsets of stakeholder

groups such as educators, families, and community members related to race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender identity. In speaking with these nine principals from high-need rural school districts, the specific examples they offered might differ from one leader to the next. However, the common themes of challenge and a desire to recognize and overcome the barrier prevailed.

Qualitative Closing

Collecting feedback from nine rural school principals in the summer of 2023 through the completion of semistructured interviews supported gathering data on the successes and challenges SBLs face related to student inclusion and how high-need rural school principals in NYS facilitate SJL and CRSL. Leaders shared how they facilitate the four pillars of CRSL with equal weight. School principals also facilitated the personal and interpersonal dimensions of Furman's (2012) SJL as a praxis framework more frequently than the other three dimensions. SBLs also spoke to the practices they believe encourage or discourage inclusion and barriers and challenges related to staffing and with stakeholder groups such as families and community members.

As this study was a mixed-methods, exploratory phenomenological study (Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013), qualitative findings were analyzed first. Following the analysis of qualitative data, quantitative results were then processed. Quantitative results are detailed in the next section.

Quantitative Results

The researcher distributed the SJBS developed by Flood (2019) via email using Google Forms to public SBLs across NYS listed in the public SEDREF directory (NYSED, 2023b) from late August to early September 2023. A minimum of 100 respondents is ideal for most quantitative research studies (Hair et al., 2018). In total, 101 SBLs completed surveys were received within the given survey window. The following quantitative results section consists of the results of the survey data collected and the results of the analysis to answers to the following three research questions:

RQ5: Is there a variance between the community-minded (CM) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H1_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the CM beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

$H1_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the CM beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

RQ6: Is there a variance between the school-specific (SS) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H2_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the SS beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

$H2_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the SS beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

RQ7: Is there a variance between the self-focused (SF) beliefs related to SJL of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups?

$H3_0$: There is no significant value difference between the elements of the SF beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

$H3_a$: There is a significant difference in value between the elements of the SF beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

After receiving all completed surveys, data were cleansed, processed, and analyzed in Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Descriptive statistics, reliability tests, one-way ANOVA tests, MANOVA tests, and pairwise analysis were all complete, and the results were shared. The findings are expanded upon in the next series of pages and tables.

Demographic Data

Demographic details about survey participants provide additional data points for analysis and insight (Connelly, 2013). The survey participants were asked not only the 23 questions on the SJBS (Flood, 2019) but also questions related to the type of school they lead, work experience, gender, race/ethnicity, and educational experience. Descriptive statistical analysis was completed for categories of schools and participants' demographic details.

Categories of Schools. NYS is composed of more than 600 public school districts, which are made up of different types of school building configurations (NYSED, 2022). As such, in one school district, there might be one K-12 school building with a single SLB, whereas a neighboring school district might be comprised of 10 different elementary school buildings, multiple middle schools, and an additional high school building and in total have 15 lead principals in the district. The landscape of school district building configurations is vast and varied. Table 37 displays the number of different types of school buildings in NYS and the percentage this building type contributes to the total make-up of the public school building count.

Table 37

Make-up of Types of Schools in NYS

Type of School	N	Percent
Elementary	2421	55.2
Junior High	80	1.8
Junior-Senior	336	7.7
K-12	91	2.1
Middle	631	14.4
Senior High	826	18.8
Total	4385	100.0

The public school system in NYS includes 4,385 school buildings (NYSED, 2023b). More than half of registered school buildings are labeled elementary school buildings, and the least common types are junior high schools and K-12 school buildings. Table 38 depicts the response rate by the type of school building the principal leads.

Table 38

Response Rate by Type of School

Type of School	N	Percent
Elementary	70	69.3
Junior High	2	2.0
Junior-Senior	7	6.9
K-12	4	4.0
Middle	11	10.9
Senior High	7	6.9
Total	101	100.0

Though the response rate percentages are not identical to the distribution of types of school buildings across NYS at the time of the survey, some similar numbers were found. For example, junior schools make up 1.8% of the types of school buildings in NYS, and 2% of respondents to this survey are principals in junior high school buildings. Similarly, most school buildings in NYS were elementary schools, and in this study, most survey respondents were principals in elementary buildings.

Every public school building in NYS is also assigned one of six N/RC descriptions. N/RC is expressed as the measure of a New York school district's ability to support its students using local resources through a calculation resulting in a ratio of the estimated poverty percentage. There are six N/RC categories: (a) high N/RC: New York City, (b) high N/RC: Large city districts, (c) high N/RC: Urban-suburban districts, (d) high N/RC: Rural districts, (e) average N/RC districts, and (f) low N/RC districts (NYSED, 2011). Table 39 contains a count of school buildings and the percentage of the total distribution of all schools in NYS by N/RC.

Table 39

Make-up of N/RC for All Schools in NYS

N/RC	N	Percent
High NRC NYC	1584	35.9
High NRC Large City Districts	175	4.0
High NRC Urban-Suburban Districts	317	7.2
High NRC Rural Districts	372	8.4
Average NRC Districts	1363	30.9
Low NRC Districts	600	13.6
Total	4411	100.0

School buildings with high needs make up about half of all schools in NYS, and a third of those schools are located in New York City (NYC). The other 50% of public school buildings in NYS are identified as having average or low need. Similar to the comparison between Tables 37 and 38, Table 40 illustrates the response rate of principals by N/RC versus the type of school building in which they lead.

Table 40

Response Rate by N/RC for All Types of Schools

N/RC	N	Percent
High NRC NYC	10	9.9
High NRC Large City Districts	1	1.0
High NRC Urban-Suburban Districts	9	8.9
High NRC Rural Districts	22	21.8
Average NRC Districts	50	49.5
Low NRC Districts	9	8.9
Total	101	100.0

Unlike comparing the survey response rate to the overall make-up of school building types in NYS, the response rate by N/RC does not align with the overall distribution of public school buildings in NYS by N/RC. For example, though a third of schools in NYS are identified as high N/RC NYC, just under 10% of respondents to this survey were SBLs in buildings with this category of need. Moreover, a more significant percentage of high-need rural school building leaders, 21.8%, responded to this survey, whereas the actual makeup of high-need rural public school buildings across NYS is 8.4%. There is a discrepancy between the makeup of the survey respondents by N/RC and the authentic makeup of the N/RC of school buildings across NYS.

Demographic Details. Before completing the SJBS questions (Flood, 2019), survey respondents answered demographic questions to offer insights into their gender, race, education, experience, and work experience. Although participants were not required to respond to each question, all 101 respondents opted to answer all demographic questions. In total, there were seven questions. The detailed results of each survey question are expressed in the following sequence of tables.

Partakers were first asked about the total number of years of higher education completed after high school. The years completed did not have to be sequential, and participants were asked to round up if the period was less than a complete year. Table 41 depicts the response rate for the total number of years of high education after high school of SBLs who completed this survey.

Table 41

Response Rate for Total Number of Years of Higher Education Completed After High School

Years	N	Percent
1–5 years	5	5.0
6–10 years	78	77.2
11–15 years	14	13.9
15 years or more	4	4.0
Total	101	100.0

Although the specifics of the degree obtained were not asked, the majority of respondents, 77.2%, completed 6–10 years of higher education, which is in line with the state requirement of 3 years of teaching experience, a bachelor's degree, and completion of a School Building Leader (SBL) administrative certificate (NYSED, 2023d). Eighteen people reported more than 11 years of higher education and five recorded 1–5 years of higher education completed following high school.

Participants were then asked about their work experience, including the number of years served as lead or executive school principal. Years served did not have to be consecutive. Participants were requested to round up to the whole year. Table 42 displays the response rate for the total years as a lead or executive principal.

Table 42

Response Rate for Total Number of Years as a Lead/Executive Principal

Years	N	Percent
1–5 years	41	40.6
6–10 years	24	23.8
11–15 years	19	18.8
15 years or more	17	16.8
Total	101	100.0

The most frequent response to this question was 1–5 years as a lead or executive principal. Just a fraction over 40% of principals selected this response. The least frequent selection was 15 years or more. Less than 17% of principals have worked as a lead or executive SBL for 15 or more years.

SBLs also responded to a question about their experience as an assistant principal. Similar to other questions, participants were asked to round up to the next

whole number when quantifying the number of years employed as an assistant principal. Years as an assistant principal did not have to occur consecutively. Table 43 depicts the response rate for the total number of years as an assistant principal.

Table 43

Response Rate for Total Number of Years as an Assistant Principal

Years	N	Percent
1–5 years	54	53.5
6–10 years	9	8.9
11–15 years	4	4.0
15 years or more	0	0.0
I have never been an assistant principal	34	33.7
Total	101	100.0

Experience as an assistant principal is optional as a lead or executive SBL (NYSED, 2023d). One-third, 33.7%, of those who responded selected that they have never been an assistant principal. Additionally, just over half, 53.5%, of those SBLs who responded to this survey worked as an assistant principal for 1–5 years. Finally, unlike time employed as a lead or executive principal, no one worked as an assistant principal for 15 years or more.

In NYS, 3 years of teaching experience are required to become certified as a school building leader (NYSED, 2023d); however, that teaching experience does not have to occur in the classroom. In this survey, the total number of years as a classroom teacher was collected from each participant. Table 44 displays the response rate for the total number of years as a classroom teacher.

Table 44

Response Rate for Total Number of Years as a Classroom Teacher

Years	N	Percent
1–5 years	15	14.9
6–10 years	37	36.6
11–15 years	28	27.7
15 years or more	14	13.9
I have never been a classroom teacher	7	6.9
Total	101	100.0

Though 94 participants have some classroom teacher experience, seven contributors have never been teachers. Of those surveyed with experience as a

classroom teacher, the greatest number of respondents, 37, had 6–10 years of experience. Fourteen participants reported 15 years or more as a classroom teacher.

The next question asked was the total number of years of service working in PK-12 education in any role. Analogous to the earlier survey questions, participants were asked to round up to the nearest whole year. Also, years of service did not have to be consecutive to be included. Table 45 exhibits the response rate for the total years of service working in PK-12 education.

Table 45

Response Rate for Total Number of Years of Service Working in PK-12 Education

Years	N	Percent
1–5 years	0	0.0
6–10 years	0	0.0
11–15 years	5	5.0
15 years or more	96	95.0
Total	101	100.0

No one had less than 10 years of service in PK-12 education. Participants with 15 years or more of experience comprised the majority, 95%. Of those surveyed, 5% had 11–15 years of employment in PK-12 education.

Participants were then asked to report their gender. All participants opted to identify their gender and identified as either male or female. Table 46 contains the gender of those surveyed.

Table 46

Response Rate by Gender

Gender	N	Percent
Female	55	54.5
Male	46	45.5
Total	101	100.0

The gender split of participants was almost fifty-fifty. Just over half, 54.5%, of respondents selected female. Just under half, 45.5% of survey respondents selected male.

Finally, race/ethnicity data were collected too. Following the race/ethnicity categories collected by the NYSED (2022), response options included Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native

American/Alaska Native/American Indian, White, and Multiracial. Other was also added as an additional category for participants who did not identify with any listed races/ethnicities. Table 47 depicts the response rate by race/ethnicity subgroup.

Table 47

Response Rate by Race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	N	Percent
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Black/African American	4	4.0
Hispanic/Latino	4	4.0
Native	1	1.0
Other	1	1.0
White	90	89.1
Multiracial	1	1.0
Total	101	100.0

Note. Native includes Native American/Alaska Native/American Indian according to the NYSED (2022).

Almost 90% of participants reported being White. No one reported being Asian or Pacific Islander. The remaining 10% of those surveyed identified as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native, Multiracial, or other.

Reliability Test

According to Pallant (2005), "the reliability of a scale indicates how free it is from random error" (p. 6). Cronbach's coefficient alpha is one of the most common statistics for reliability testing (Dean, 2021; Pallant, 2005). Cronbach alpha values range from 0 to 1; the higher the value, the greater the reliability (Pallant, 2005). Nunnally (1978) suggested a minimum Cronbach's alpha score of .7. Moreover, using Cronbach's coefficient alpha for reliability is based on the assumption of unidimensionality, where every item measures a solitary and distinct dimension (Hair et al., 2018).

The SJBS (Flood, 2019) consists of three categories of questions: community-minded (CM), school-specific (SS), and self-focused (SF). Reliability testing was conducted using SPSS. Table 48 displays the three calculated Cronbach's coefficient alpha scores.

Table 48

SPSS Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

Survey Categories	α
Community-Minded (CM)	.916
School-Specific (SS)	.891
Self-Focused (SF)	.824

Reliability is present for all three surveys. The most significant reliability lies within the CM grouping of questions with a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .916. The lowest Cronbach's coefficient alpha calculated was for the SF survey category. The score was .824, which was above the desired result of .7.

MANOVA Tests

MANOVA tests are a multifaceted statistical method used to lessen the risk of Type I errors (Gignac, 2011). Gignac (2011) suggested a well-recognized process of using MANOVA as a pivotal measure before analyzing several dependent variables with a series of ANOVA tests. A Type I error is where a scholar discards the true null hypotheses in error (Anderson, 2003). Conducting MANOVA before ANOVA prevents the researcher from committing a Type I error (Gignac, 2011). A series of MANOVA tests were conducted first related to research questions 5–7 using the data collected from the SJBS (Flood, 2019).

RQ5: Is There a Variance Between the Community-Minded (CM) Beliefs Related to SJL Of School Building Leaders in Differing Needs/Resource Capacity Groups? Various multivariate tests were conducted using SPSS. Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotellings Trace, and Roy's Largest Root are four studies used to examine differences between two or more groups. Table 49 displays the results of the multivariate tests of the CM concentration by needs resource category.

Table 49

Multivariate Tests of Community-Minded Concertation by Needs Resource Category

Effect	Value	F	df	Error df	Sig
Pillai's Trace	0.283	0.796	35.000	465.000	0.793
Wilks' Lambda	0.743	0.788	35.000	376.819	0.803
Hotellings Trace	0.313	0.781	35.000	437.000	0.813
Roy's Largest Root	0.158	2.094	7.000	93.000	0.052

All four MANOVA tests completed show no statistical significance, as all *p*-values are greater than 0.05. Although Roy's Largest Root is closest to the 0.05 threshold, Gignac (2011) noted that academics have criticized this test and should not be used under any circumstance due to the lack of a perfect normal within the distributions. Additional ANOVA testing is needed to confirm the null hypothesis for research question five.

RQ6: Is There a Variance Between the School-Specific (SS) Beliefs Related to SJL of School Building Leaders in Differing Needs/Resource Capacity Groups? As accomplished for the CM concentration, the same analysis methodology was completed for the school-specific concentration. Using SPSS, four different MANOVA tests were conducted. Table 50 displays the results of the multivariate tests of the SS concentration by needs resource category.

Table 50

Multivariate Tests of School-Specific Concentration by Needs Resource Category

Effect	Value	F	df	Error df	Sig
Pillai's Trace	0.480	1.075	45.000	455.000	0.348
Wilks' Lambda	0.586	1.104	45.000	392.275	0.305
Hotellings Trace	0.598	1.134	45.000	427.000	0.262
Roy's Largest Root	0.365	3.691	9.000	91.000	<.001

Though Roy's Largest Root displays significance, the other three MANOVA tests completed show no statistical significance. According to Gignac

(2011), Pillai's Trace is the least sensitive to inaccuracies and considered the most robust. Due to the lack of scholarly support for Roy's Largest Root and the focus on the accuracy of Pillai's Trace, additional ANOVA testing is needed to confirm the null hypothesis for research question six as the MANOVA results are mixed.

RQ7: Is There a Variance Between the Self-Focused (SF) Beliefs Related to SJL Of School Building Leaders in Differing Needs/Resource Capacity Groups? The next set of multivariate tests conducted were completed using data from the self-focused concentration area of the SJBS (Flood, 2019). Once again, four MANOVA tests were accomplished using SPSS. Table 51 contains the outcomes of the multivariate tests of the SF concentration by needs resource category.

Table 51

Multivariate Tests of Self-Focused Concertation by Needs Resource Category

Effect	Value	*F*	*df*	Error *df*	Sig
Pillai's Trace	0.310	0.878	35.000	465.000	0.671
Wilks' Lambda	0.721	0.872	35.000	376.819	0.680
Hotellings Trace	0.347	0.866	35.000	437.000	0.689
Roy's Largest Root	0.177	2.353	7.000	93.000	0.029

Like the MANOVA findings in research question six, Roy's Largest Root shows significance, whereas the other three MANOVA tests completed show no statistical significance. The *p*-value for Roy's Largest Root was 0.029. Once more, supplementary ANOVA analysis is desired to verify the null hypothesis for RQ7, as the MANOVA results are varied.

One-way ANOVA Tests

Additional ANOVA testing was conducted to confirm the findings of the previous MANOVA tests. One-way ANOVA tests, as written by Pallant (2005), illuminate the "impact of only one independent variable on your dependent variable" (p. 97). The dependent variable of the ANOVA analysis conducted is the N/RC. The independent variables of the ANOVA tests completed are the focus areas of the SJBS (Flood, 2019), which include community-minded (CM)

concentration, school-specific (SS) concentration, and self-focused (SF) concentration. The respondents' demographic details (DM) are an additional independent variable analyzed. ANOVA analysis was conducted to support understanding of research questions 5-7.

RQ5: Is There a Variance Between the Community-Minded (CM) Beliefs Related to SJL of School Building Leaders in Differing Needs/Resource Capacity Groups? The first ANOVA test conducted in SPSS was between the CM concentration as the independent variable and the N/RC as the dependent variable. ANOVA tests were completed for the average of the CM category and each question within the CM concentration. Table 52 displays the results of the ANOVA analysis for the CM concentration by N/RC.

Table 52

Community-Minded Concentration (CM) by Needs Resource Category

ANOVA	SS	df	MS	F	P
Average CM	16.773	5	3.355	2.172	0.064
CM Question 1	21.068	5	4.214	1.866	0.108
CM Question 2	24.171	5	4.834	1.876	0.106
CM Question 3	11.193	5	2.239	0.985	0.431
CM Question 4	30.945	5	6.189	2.439	0.040
CM Question 5	18.361	5	3.672	1.583	0.172
CM Question 6	12.095	5	2.419	1.050	0.393
CM Question 7	14.162	5	2.832	1.164	0.333

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of N/RC on CM concentration, as measured on the SJBS (Flood, 2019). When comparing the differences between NR/C groups, the *p*-value for each dependent variable, except for CM Question 4, is larger than the desired .05, meaning the test is not statistically significant. There is statistical significance for CM Question 4, as the *p*-value equals 0.040, which is less than 0.050.

RQ6: Is There a Variance Between the School-Specific (SS) Beliefs Related to SJL Of School Building Leaders in Differing Needs/Resource Capacity Groups? The next ANOVA test completed was between the SS concentration as the independent variable and the dependent variable of the N/RC. Like the CM concentration, ANOVA analysis was accomplished for the average of

the SS category and each SS question. Table 53 exhibits the results of the ANOVA analysis of the SS concentration by N/RC.

Table 53

School-Specific Concentration (SS) by Needs Resource Category

ANOVA	SS	df	MS	F	P
Average SS	3.683	5	0.737	0.889	0.492
SS Question 1	8.939	5	1.788	1.004	0.420
SS Question 2	10.332	5	2.066	1.508	0.195
SS Question 3	4.875	5	0.975	0.612	0.691
SS Question 4	16.586	5	3.317	2.197	0.061
SS Question 5	1.009	5	0.202	0.191	0.965
SS Question 6	4.587	5	0.917	0.813	0.543
SS Question 7	18.059	5	3.612	1.562	0.178
SS Question 8	6.929	5	1.386	0.766	0.577
SS Question 9	1.650	5	0.330	0.259	0.492

A one-way ANOVA was completed to investigate the influence of N/RC on SS category survey questions, as measured on the SJBS (Flood, 2019). When comparing the differences between NR/C groups, the *p*-value for the average SS concentration is 0.492, which is greater than the desired 0.05 and not statistically significant. Moreover, the *p*-value for each dependent variable associated with the individual questions in the SS concentration is larger than the desired .05, meaning the test is not statistically significant either.

RQ7: Is There a Variance Between the Self-Focused (SF) Beliefs Related to SJL of School Building Leaders in Differing Needs/Resource Capacity Groups? The next ANOVA test conducted was related to the last focus area in the SJBS (Flood, 2019), the SF concentration. Once more, the N/RC was the dependent variable, and the independent variable was the SF concentration. Table 54 contains the results of the ANOVA analysis of the SF concentration by N/RC.

Table 54

Self-Focused Concentration (SF) by Needs Resource Category

ANOVA	SS	df	MS	F	P
Average SF	1.126	5	0.225	0.592	0.706
SF Question 1	1.217	5	0.243	0.474	0.795
SF Question 2	2.802	5	0.560	0.783	0.564
SF Question 3	5.739	5	1.148	0.788	0.561
SF Question 4	0.953	5	0.191	0.366	0.871
SF Question 5	2.990	5	0.598	0.746	0.591
SF Question 6	4.754	5	0.951	1.137	0.346
SF Question 7	2.864	5	0.573	0.991	0.427

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to scrutinize the sway of N/RC on SF category survey questions, as measured on the SJBS (Flood, 2019). When comparing the differences between NR/C groups, the *p*-value for the average SF concentration is 0.706, which is greater than the desired 0.05 and is not statistically significant. Moreover, the *p*-value for each dependent variable associated with the individual questions in the SF focus area is larger than the desired .05, meaning the test is not statistically significant either.

Pairwise Analysis

As identified earlier, ANOVA testing distinguishes the presence or absence of a global effect of the independent variable on a dependent variable (Pallant, 2005; Williams & Abdi, 2010). Additional comparisons, or post-hoc analysis, performed on a univariate test include pairwise analysis, which is the restricted comparison of sets of means, with the purpose "to make sure the (unexpected) patterns seen in the results are reliable" (Williams & Abdi, 2010, p. 2). In alignment with the suggestions of Gignac (2011), a deeper analysis of the initial MANOVA findings is needed. From the ANOVA tests conducted in response to the call of Gignac, pairwise analysis is displayed in Table 52 for CM Question 4 related to research question 5.

RQ5: Is There a Variance Between the Community-Minded (CM) Beliefs Related to SJL of School Building Leaders in Differing Needs/Resource Capacity Groups? After completing the ANOVA analysis on the community-minded (CM) concentration, statistical significance was present for CM Question 4

related to the N/RC. CM Question 4 from the SJBS (Flood, 2019) in the CM focus area was, "I utilize parent networks to strategically recruit teachers, parents, and other community leaders with social justice agendas" (Flood, 2019). Table 55 displays the pairwise comparison (PC) between N/RC groups for question four of the CM concentration on the SJBS (Flood, 2019).

Table 55

Community-Minded Concentration (CM) by Needs Resource Category

Pairwise Comparison	N/RC	N/RC	*P*	*Mean Difference*
CM Question 4	NYC	Large City	1.000	-.800
		Urban-Suburban	1.000	-.356
		Rural	.249	-1.482
		Average	1.000	-.900
		Low	.067	-2.133
	Large City	NYC	1.000	.800
		Urban-Suburban	1.000	.444
		Rural	1.000	-.682
		Average	1.000	-.100
		Low	1.000	-1.333
	Urban-Suburban	NYC	1.000	.356
		Large City	1.000	-.444
		Rural	1.000	-1.126
		Average	1.000	-.544
		Low	.299	-1.778
	Rural	NYC	.249	1.482
		Large City	1.000	.682
		Urban-Suburban	1.000	1.126
		Average	1.000	.582
		Low	1.000	-.652
	Average	NYC	1.000	.900
		Large City	1.000	.100
		Urban-Suburban	1.000	.544
		Rural	1.000	-.582
		Low	.526	-1.233
	Low	NYC	.067	2.133
		Large City	1.000	1.333
		Urban-Suburban	.299	1.778
		Rural	1.000	.652
		Average	.526	1.233

Although ANOVA testing showed significance for CM Question 4 in the community-minded concentration, no significance between NR/C groups is present when reviewing the post-hoc pairwise comparison. A *p*-value of 0.067 is the closest value to significance between respondents from the NYC N/RC and respondents from the low N/RC. Moreover, the mean difference between these two groups was 2.133.

Quantitative Closing

Quantitative results were investigated using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, reliability testing, MANOVA tests, ANOVA tests, and pairwise comparisons were all completed to make evident areas of significance and affirm null hypotheses for RQs 5 through 7. As an exploratory, phenomenological mixed method study, the quantitative analysis is built on the initial qualitative analysis to draw out common themes across interviews and survey data to construct conceptual connections (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). In essence, the N/RC the school building resides in is independent of how a SBL implements, facilitates, or supports SJL in the school building.

Summary

Mixed method studies encourage additional data integration following the individual analysis of qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As explained by Creswell and Creswell (2018), "the intent of this strategy is to determine if the qualitative themes in the first phase can be generalized to a larger sample" (p. 226). Integrating data sets of lived experiences using a weaving approach necessitates the researcher to portray the qualitative and quantitative findings intertwined theme-by-theme (Fetters et al., 2013). In closing, Table 56 highlights overlapping content areas applicable to RQs 1 through 7.

Table 56

Qualitative and Quantitative Data Integration

Qualitative Finding	Example Quote	Quantitative Result
Leaders less frequently utilize the outer three dimensions, communal, systemic, and ecological, of Furman's (2012) SJL as a praxis framework to facilitate SJL in their school buildings.	Principal Remy: "My motto is always every student every day. I'm responsible for every student every day and they should all get the best of what we have every day."	The average response for the CM section of questions was 4.7 aligning between sometimes (50% of the time) and occasionally (30% of the time) in comparison to the SS and SF sections with mean responses of 2.9 and 2.2 respectively.
School principals are split regarding their implementation of practices that encourage or discourage student inclusion and belongingness.	Principal Blake: "Everybody's best intention is to encourage students to feel like part of the group. I think sometimes students may feel different because of it. As students get older, they recognize that a group is doing something different than we are, so I think goes both ways to encourage and discourage belonging."	I dismantle barriers that hinder the practice of social justice in my school. (SS3) Every time: 16.8% Usually: 47.5% Frequently: 31.6% Sometimes: 14.9% Occasionally: 12.9%
Professional development is a tool often used by SBLs to facilitate SJL in high-need rural school buildings.	Principal Parker: "This school district has always been a diverse place and so we've always had some type of diversity training. We've also had inclusion training."	3.3 was the mean response to question SS8, "I contextualize professional development in a way that tries to make sense of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability," which is most closely associated to the answer of frequently (70% of the time).

Qualitative Finding	Example Quote	Quantitative Result
Critical self-awareness is a pillar of Khalifa et al.'s (2016) CRSL framework and self-reflection is an attribute of the innermost dimension of Furman's (2012) SJL as a praxis framework. Acts of personal introspection were addressed by all principals interviewed.	Principal Scout: "We all grow at a different pace until our brains open up a pathway and ah, there it is and then you realize I've been thinking about it wrong my whole life."	I continuously reflect to avoid making unjust decisions (SF1) was the question with the lowest average response value of 2.0, or usually (90% of the time)
Identification of behaviors which might be swayed by implicit bias, personal prejudices, accepted stereotyping by school principals is not always recognized when facilitating SJL practices and for many leaders is an evolving practice.	Principal Drew: "I think diversity is something that as a school building leader and you're constantly having to navigate and work through and also check your own self and your own biases or your own political thoughts and views to make sure that they're not overstepping the work that you're doing."	I consciously account for and resist my personal bias. (SF5) Every time: 12.9% Usually: 39.6% Frequently: 35.6% Sometimes: 10.9% Occasionally: 1.0%

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Inclusion is an evolving practice and should be seen as a "never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity" (Ainscow, 2020a, p. 126). Inclusion is possibly the most perplexing issue educational leaders face in the academic environment universally (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Zollers et al., 2010). The development of school settings that cultivate a sense of belonging and sustain an atmosphere of inclusion can be difficult to establish as schools face conflicting priorities (Pollock & Briscoe, 2020), lack access to sufficient professional development to support inclusion initiatives (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013), and confront opposing opinions across stakeholder groups regarding inclusion and belongingness (Winters, 2013). Inclusion is also an understudied area of research (Bouck, 2006). Over the last century, academics have called for more research in the field of inclusion, especially as inclusion applies to student populations (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012; Anderman & Freeman, 2004).

Policymakers and practitioners worldwide still need guidance on the best course of action to support student belongingness due to differing ideas of what inclusion for all students looks like in the school setting (Brantlinger, 1997; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). According to many scholars, the role of the school building leader (SBL) is to deliver leadership critical to executing practices that support the belongingness of all students (Lambert, 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Riehl, 2000). As the leaders of the school building, school principals are relied upon by the school superintendent, district leaders, staff, parents, students, and the community at large to be the "mythical superhero of the school building" or to be "everything to everyone" (Copeland, 2001, p. 532). As such, confronting ongoing and complex school improvement initiatives, such as belongingness, can be a feat (Peck et al., 2013; Pollock & Briscoe, 2020).

Social justice leadership (SJL) and culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) are two contemporary frameworks SBLs use to support DEI initiatives in the school building. According to Khalifa et al. (2016), CRSL is bound by four pillars: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive and inclusive school

environments, (c) engaging students and parents in community contexts, and €
culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation. Khalifa et al. showed that
using these four pillars, SBLs can support the inclusion of all students. Furman
(2012) identified an SJL framework for the educational environment through a lens
of dimensional praxis. A multi-layered approach to SJL, Furman's five dimensions
of SJL as a praxis framework can be used to examine the interaction between
personal, interpersonal, communal, systematic, and ecological dimensions of SJL in
the educational setting.

Although many studies have been conducted in the last 20 years, SJL and
CRSL are still considered emerging and under-developed areas of study with many
gaps in research needing to be filled (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; C.
Marshall et al., 2010; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). Additionally, various researchers
have highlighted the lack of SJL and CRSL research conducted at the school-
building level (J. G. Allen et al., 2017; DeMatthews, 2015). This research study
fills the knowledge gap related to student belongingness through the principal's
perspective and clarifies how SBLs support inclusion (J. G. Allen et al., 2017;
DeMatthews, 2015). The purpose of this exploratory mixed-methods
phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of SBLs, also called
principals, regarding their facilitation of SJL and CRSL practices to support student
inclusion and belongingness within the K-12 educational setting in New York State
(NYS).

Restatement of Research Question Findings and Results

Conducting an exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study
(Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013) to understand
the lived experiences and collective narratives (Patterson, 2018) of school
principals across central New York was a means of addressing the current call to
action by scholars and the NYS Board of Regents (NYSED, 2021b). Through the
engagement of school principals in NYS, this dissertation will significantly grow
the body of research. The research questions studied and the results or findings
collected are restated in the following paragraphs.

RQ1: How do High-Need Rural School Principals Facilitate SJL?

As defined in Chapter 1, SJL "focuses on … those groups that are most underserved, underrepresented, and undereducated and that face various forms of oppression in schools" (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 23). SJL is also a means of "addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). Practitioners of SJL "investigate and pose solutions for issues that generate and reproduce societal inequities" (Dantley & Tillman, 2010, p. 20). Furman (2012) offered a conceptual framework for SJL as praxis. According to Furman, SJL spans numerous dimensions, which include the personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological.

Based on the interviews with nine high-need rural SBLs, these school principals use the different dimensions of Furman's (2012) conceptual framework for SJL; however, the five dimensions are not employed equally. High-need rural school principals in NYS primarily focus on the personal and interpersonal dimensions of Furman's SJL as a praxis framework to facilitate SJL practices in the school setting. Leaders spoke of using the personal dimension to support SJL practices through actions of critical self-reflection. Topics SBLs explored included where they grew up, experiences in their careers before becoming elementary principals that have shaped their leadership practice, and current experiences that have engaged them in real-time growth and personal development. The school principals interviewed also leveraged the interpersonal dimension of the SJL conceptual framework presented by Furman more frequently than other dimensions. Actions taken by SBLs to facilitate SJL through the interpersonal dimension included modeling behaviors with staff, having intentional conversations with staff members, and supporting thoughtful engagement with families to develop authentic, caring, respectful, and trusting relationships with key stakeholders. Finally, per the lived experiences of the nine leaders interviewed, the communal, systemic, and ecological dimensions were less frequently used to facilitate SJL practices in NYS's high-need rural school buildings. Although not as commonly employed, SBLs spoke of actions related to these three dimensions, which included obtaining and using student and parent voice, providing

professional development opportunities for staff members, evaluating current DEI practices and policies, communicating incremental change, and considering the mission, vision, and purpose for student learning and the setting in which schooling is taking place.

RQ2: How do High-Need Rural School Principals Facilitate CRSL?

Khalifa et al. (2016) published an exhaustive literature review of CRSL and acknowledged four strands or behaviors of CRSL from the body of literature. The CRSL framework emphasizes critical self-reflection, developing culturally responsive teachers, promoting culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and engaging students, parents, and community stakeholders (Khalifa et al., 2016). According to Khalifa et al., the value of CRSL is extensive, and the implications of using the CRSL framework in school buildings by principals "will ultimately help all children reach their fullest potential" (p. 1297).

Unlike the dimensions of the SJL as a praxis framework, where SBLs put greater weight on specific dimensions than others, leaders interviewed expressed facilitating the four pillars of Khalifa et al.'s (2016) CRSL framework with equal tenacity. Semistructured interviews with high-need rural school principals revealed that leaders facilitate CRSL by practicing critical self-reflection, developing culturally responsive teachers, using culturally responsive curricula, promoting culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and engaging students, parents, and community stakeholders with intention.

RQ 3: What Leadership Practices do High-Need Rural School Principals Perceive to Encourage or Discourage Inclusion for All Students in the School Building?

Based on the interviews with many high-need rural school principals, there is no single answer to what leadership practices SBLs perceive to encourage or discourage student inclusion. Leadership best practices that encourage or discourage student inclusion through the viewpoint of high-need rural school principals varied by the principal interviewed, which lends insight into work around student inclusion and belongingness by SBLs as being individualized and personalized to the specific school leader. Some principals stressed the importance

of modeling welcoming, friendly, and warm behaviors for all demographics of the learner population. Other SBLs found only encouraging practices to be part of their daily practices in the school setting and determined practices to discourage inclusion to be lacking in their interactions with students. However, other leaders addressed leadership practices that simultaneously encouraged and discouraged student inclusion.

RQ4: What Leadership Barriers or Challenges do High-Need Rural School Principals Experience to Support Inclusion (if any)?

As identified in Chapter 2, the role of a school principal is multifaceted (Foskett & Lumby, 2003; Fullan, 2003). In rural school buildings, the SBL is not only the instructional leader of the building but also a community leader (Surface & Theobald, 2015; Tieken, 2014). The rural school principal also has to take on various roles to fill organizational infrastructure gaps (O'Shea & Zuckerman, 2022). The rural SBLs must identify and oppose personal biases, implicit or not, more so than other school leadership populations (H. N. Bishop & McClellan, 2016; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Tooms et al., 2010). Barriers and challenges to supporting student inclusion, according to the high-need rural school principals interviewed, exist. The two primary obstacles or challenges acknowledged include hiring and staffing challenges and negative mindsets of stakeholder groups such as educators, families, and community members related to race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender identity.

RQ5: Is There a Variance Between the Community-Minded (CM) Beliefs Related to SJL of School Building Leaders in Differing N/RC Groups?

The SJBS is divided into three sections with subscale themes: a self-focused theme, a school-specific theme, and a community-minded theme (Flood, 2019). The CM concentration is comprised of seven questions. The results of MANOVA testing and ANOVA testing supported the null hypothesis that there is no significant value difference between the elements of the CM beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups. Though initial significance was found for CM Question 4 in the CM category, additional ANOVA testing and pairwise

analysis affirmed the null hypothesis. The NR/C of the school building the SBL serves does not include CM beliefs related to SJL.

RQ6: Is There a Variance Between the School-Specific (SS) Beliefs Related to SJL of School Building Leaders in Differing N/RC Groups?

The SS section of Flood's SJBS (2019) is the longest of the three sections, with nine questions for participants to answer. The results of the MANOVA and ANOVA tests confirmed the null hypothesis that there is no significant value difference between the elements of the SS beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

RQ7: Is There a Variance Between the Self-Focused (SF) Beliefs Related to SJL of School Building Leaders in Differing N/RC Groups?

The SF category of the SJBS (Flood, 2019) comprised seven questions. MANOVA and ANOVA testing was completed for this section. The null hypothesis was found to be true. There is no significant value difference between the elements of the SS beliefs of school building leaders in differing N/RC groups.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Researchers worldwide have obtained a global perspective of SJL (Arar et al., 2016; Bosu et al., 2011; Chiu & Walker, 2007; DeMatthews et al., 2016; Gautam et al., 2015; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Gurr et al., 2014; Jansen, 2006; Kocak, 2021; Shah, 2018; Slater et al., 2014; Stevenson, 2007; Tomul, 2009) and CRSL (Brown et al., 2022; Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2021; Levitan, 2020; A. E. Lopez, 2015; Razali & Hamid, 2022) in the educational setting. Studies have been conducted across the United States from the viewpoint of leaders, teachers, students, and families to gather a comprehensive impression of SJL (de Lourdes Viloria, 2019; DeMatthews, 2015; Ezzani, 2020; I. A. Miller, 2020; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014; Scanlan, 2012; Shields, 2004, 2010; Theoharis, 2010; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Wasonga, 2009) and CRSL (Boske, 2009; L. Johnson, 2007; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Magno & Schiff, 2010; S. L. Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). Yet, there is a call for additional research to be conducted on the SJL and CRSL frameworks (J. G. Allen et al., 2017; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005;

DeMatthews, 2015; C. Marshall et al., 2010; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). Other researchers have expressed a need for studies of these frameworks in methods other than qualitative (Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Torres-Harding et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2018). The current study has theoretical and practical implications for advancing the academic foundation of SJL and CRSL in the school setting, and the methodology used to conduct the associated research is aligned with these leadership concepts.

A Call for Research Answered

The numerous implications of this study align with the call for more research on SJL and CRSL and the use of different methodological approaches to research studies. First, the call by J. G. Allen et al. (2017) and DeMatthews (2015) for additional research on SJL at the school-building level has been accomplished. More broadly, the call by Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) and Skrla and Scheurich (2001) to increase the general body of SJL research in the school setting has been answered. Regarding CRSL, this study also answers the call of researchers such as C. Marshall et al. (2010), who implored researchers in the field to conduct additional research related to CRSL in varied educational settings. The research study completed has responded to the need for more academic exploration of SJL and CRSL frameworks in the school environment and increased the foundational knowledge of SJL and CRSL practices by SBLs available to others in the field.

There was also a plea from the field for studies to be conducted using a methodology other than a qualitative case study (Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Quantitative data are limited in studying SJL (Flood, 2019; Torres-Harding et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2018). To meet the recognized need for expansion in methodology, this study involved high-need rural SBLs in NYS through a phenomenological mixed-methods approach that followed an exploratory mixed-methods model (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), in which interview data were collected first followed by survey data. This research has grown the body of SJL research completed using a method other than a qualitative case study and shown

the ability to gather new learning associated with SJL and CRSL in the educational environment through an exploratory, phenomenological, mixed-methods approach.

Self-Reflection and Self-Awareness

Critical self-awareness is one of the four pillars of the CRSL framework developed by Khalifa et al. (2016). Similarly, the innermost dimension, the personal dimension, of the SJL as a praxis framework from Furman (2012) focuses on the practice of self-reflection. Before this study, researchers highlighted the importance of self-reflection by educators and leaders in the K-12 learning sector. As identified in Chapter 1, Gay and Kirkland (2003) defined the fundamentals of culturally relevant teaching based on the interconnectivity between educational equity and multicultural education, teacher accountability involving self-reflection and critical consciousness, and a more profound development and awareness of what is being taught, to whom, and how. To more clearly understand the process of reviewing reading materials in a DEI audit, Little and Aglinskas (2022) asserted that Stage 1 requires gathering texts, Stage 2 requires reviewers to act on reflection and analysis, and Stage 3 involves implementing change. Researchers have also identified self-reflection as an essential tool for future educational leaders. In an article by Bruner (2008), the movie *Crash* (Haggis, 2004) was used in an educational leaders' preparatory program as a critical reflection instructional tool. In a study of school principals, S. L. Marshall and Khalifa (2018) found that SBLs with a strong CRSL stance were able to develop trust, fend off teacher pushback to curricular change, harness the power of self-reflection to inform their practice, and employ staff and students to embrace the benefits of shared learning spaces with diverse populations (S. L. Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

Theoretical and practical implications regarding self-reflection and self-awareness abound. Theoretically, the prior research was affirmed within the current study. The current study revealed self-reflection a common practice used by high-need rural school principals to facilitate SJL practices and CRSL practices in support of student inclusion and belongingness (S. L. Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). The current study also revealed that SBLs, regardless of N/RC, use reflection to avoid making unjust decisions 90% of the time. Self-awareness and self-reflection

are vital attributes of CRSL and SJL. The importance of reflective and critical awareness practices by SBLs has increased within this body of research. From a practical standpoint, the study suggests that self-reflection and self-awareness are two practices that SBLs embrace to support student inclusion and belongingness through the facilitation of SJL and CRSL. Resources, training, and the time for SBLs to access self-awareness and self-reflection practices are necessary to foster and maintain SJL and CRSL.

Communal, Systemic, and Ecological Change

The three outermost rings of the SJL as a praxis framework created by Furman (2012) are the communal, systemic, and ecological dimensions. Furman's SJL framework includes the systematic dimension that transforms "the system, at the school and district levels, in the interest of social justice and learning for all children" (p. 210). As earlier research shows, school principals struggle or are challenged to effect systemic change (Tomul, 2009). The communal dimension is defined as "social justice leaders work[ing] to build community across cultural groups through inclusive, democratic practices" (Furman, 2012, p. 209). Prior researchers found educational leaders to be only "somewhat" prepared to, comfortable with, and have a sense of responsibility for addressing diversity within their school community (Hoff et al., 2006). Pollock and Briscoe (2020) found a common belief among principals interviewed that all students are the same regardless of demographic differences, hence a lack of acknowledgment that the school community comprises different cultural groups. Finally, the ecological dimension is the most exterior dimension of Furman's SJL praxis. According to Furman, "the ecological dimension involves acting with the knowledge that school-related social-justice issues are situated within broader sociopolitical, economic, and environmental contexts and interdependent with broader issues of oppression and sustainability" (p. 211). Stevenson (2007) captured the sentiments of school principals in England about using SJL in the educational environment, reporting all five SBLs to be challenged by the pressures of external forces created by national policy.

Practical and theoretical implications are present related to communal, systemic, and ecological change imparted by school principals in support of SJL. Theoretical implications include the growth of the body of research addressing challenges faced by SBLs. The current study affirmed the findings in the earlier research studies, noting that high-need rural school principals in NYS do not use the systemic, communal, and ecological dimensions of Furman's (2012) SJL framework to facilitate student belongingness with the same vigor as other dimensions. The average response for the community-minded (CM) section of questions on the SJBS (Flood, 2019) was 4.7, aligning between sometimes (50% of the time) and occasionally (30% of the time) in comparison to the school-specific (SS) and student-focused (SF) sections with mean responses from SBLS of 2.9 and 2.2, respectively. The practical implication of these findings highlights the need to provide leaders with access to opportunities to grow their understanding and recognition of different subgroups, work on their bias, implicit or not, and find ways from a district level to incorporate SBLs in the leadership conversations and decisions related to systemic and ecological change.

Professional Development for Educators

Professional development opportunities can support the creation of inclusive learning environments (Ferdman, 2013). Many research studies have been conducted on professional development, SJL, and CRSL in the educational environment. Many studies focus on learning opportunities offered by or encouraged by SBLs to staff members to support the implementation of SJL or CRSL best practices in the school building. Regarding professional development opportunities provided by school principals to staff members, as noted in previous studies, teachers need sustained learning experiences to reduce educator bias, as well as professional development experiences about relevant history, policy, and research to support the promotion of positive dispositions toward diversity and social identities and reduce prejudice (Gonzales et al., 2021; Kumar & Hamer, 2013; F. Lopez, 2017). Teachers also need professional development opportunities to learn strategies that support student belongingness through authentic learning experiences in the classroom (Pupik & Herrmann, 2022).

Although some studies highlight the challenge of accessing professional development opportunities for teachers and leaders alike (Angelle et al., 2021; Bryan-Gooden & Hester, 2018; Cothern, 2020; C. Stewart & Matthews, 2016; T. Wells et al., 2021), theoretically, the current study grows the field of research associated with offering professional development to educators to support student inclusion and belongingness through SJL and CRSL. High-need rural school principals report using professional development to develop teachers and staff members to support student inclusion and belongingness. The mean response to question SS8, "I contextualize professional development in a way that tries to make sense of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability" was 3.3, which is most closely associated with the answer of frequently (70% of the time). The practical implications of the findings in this current study are that more professional development, continuous professional development, and targeted professional development aligned to diversity topics related to DEI, SJL, and CRSL are needed and should continue to serve as a tool available for SBLs to access for themselves and to support educators in their building.

Limitations and Delimitations

A lack of racial and gender diversity among interview participants was a limitation of this study. In a study by the U.S. Department of Education (2023), 77% of public K-12 principals were reported as non-Hispanic White during the 2020–21 school year. Moreover, 63% of public school K-12 principals were female (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). These same skewed demographics related to race and gender are evident in this study and, thus, a limitation.

A delimitation and consideration of this study was that the data were only as good as the participants' honesty in responding to a sensitive question set. According to Barnett (1998), the "sensitivity" of a question is based on a participant's perceived cost for responding to the question. Strain in collecting data that are viewed as sensitive has occurred before and has been attended to by various researchers (Sloan et al., 2004; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). To create a safe and

secure space for participants to share their insights, anonymity was maintained through pseudonyms.

Finally, NYS is composed of more than 700 public school districts and over 4,000 school buildings (NYSED, 2022). Within the qualitative portion of this study, only one of the six N/RC within NYS was addressed. High-need rural school districts make up one-fifth of the districts in NYS (NYSED, 2022). A second delimitation of this study is that not all public school districts and SBLs within those districts were targeted for their insight and experience with SJL, CRSL, and student inclusion and belongingness.

Recommendations

Due to limitations and delimitations, as well as the continued growth of SJL and CRSL research, additional research is needed following this study. First, researchers should consider replicating this exploratory phenomenological mixed-methods but target one or more of the other NR/C groups versus high-need rural SBLs. Second, this study could be conducted again in a state other than New York. Third, linear regression could be used to determine whether the demographic data collected could provide insight into the SJL practices of SBLs. Another suggestion for future research is to reanalyze the survey data collected through the lens of SBL type versus N/RC. Additionally, research could be conducted from the perspective of the students, staff, or community to corroborate the perceptions of the school principals related to inclusion. Finally, this study could be conducted in an educational setting other than public, such as charter or private schools.

Summary

Belonging is a vital human need (Maslow, 1943). Student belonging accounts for student success (Ainscow, 2020b; Dyson et al., 2004). Research has exposed that when students feel welcome and included in the school setting, attendance is improved (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Croninger & Lee, 2001), test performance is more notable (Faust et al., 2014; B. Sanchez et al., 2005), and discipline referrals are fewer (Catalano et al., 2004). Moreover, student inclusion promotes positive school-to-home relationships and fosters greater parent

engagement (K. A. Allen & Bowles, 2012). Inclusion is an ongoing process and should be viewed as a "never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity" (Ainscow, 2020a, p. 126). As such, inclusion is possibly the most perplexing issue educational leaders face in the school setting globally (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Zollers et al., 2010).

According to many scholars, the role of the SBL is to offer leadership that is crucial to implementing processes of belongingness for all students (Lambert, 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Riehl, 2000). As the leaders of the school building, school principals are depended upon by the school superintendent, district leaders, staff, parents, students, and the community at large to be the "mythical superhero of the school building" or to be "everything to everyone" (Copeland, 2001, p. 532). As such, confronting ongoing and complex school improvement initiatives, such as belongingness, can be a feat (Peck et al., 2013; Pollock & Briscoe, 2020).

SJL and CRSL are two modern frameworks SBLs use to boost DEI initiatives in the educational setting. Since the turn of the century, scholars have researched various aspects of SJL in the academic environment (Bogotch, 2002; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). CRSL, a framework of school leadership that falls under the umbrella of SJL (L. Johnson, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; Shah, 2018), has also been a theme of scholarly pursuit in the learning environment (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Campos-Moreira et al., 2020; de Lourdes Viloria, 2019; Magno & Schiff, 2010) and is peripheral to the culturally responsive and sustaining framework being used in the resources published by NYSED to support the implementation of DEI initiatives in NYS (NYSED, 2021a). According to Khalifa et al. (2016), CRSL is bound by four pillars: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, (c) engaging students and parents in community contexts, and (d) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation. Khalifa et al. showed that using these four pillars by SBLs to support the inclusion of all students lightens many of the stressors leaders face in producing educational settings where students feel like they belong. Furman (2012) identified the SJL framework in the school setting through a lens of dimensional

praxis to provide a fuller picture of this conceptual framework. A multi-layered approach to SJL, Furman's five dimensions of SJL praxis help visualize the relationship between personal, interpersonal, communal, systematic, and ecological dimensions of SJL in the educational setting.

The aim of this exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of SBLs, also referred to as principals, regarding their facilitation of SJL and CRSL practices to support student inclusion and belongingness within the K-12 educational setting in NYS. Conducting an exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study (Davison, 2014; Martiny et al., 2021; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013) to understand the lived experiences and collective narratives (Patterson, 2018) of school principals across central New York was a means of addressing the current call to action by scholars and the NYS Board of Regents (NYSED, 2021b). Through the engagement of school principals in NYS, this dissertation significantly grew the body of research.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent: Social Justice Behavioral Scale

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled *A mixed-method inquiry into elementary principal perspectives regarding the support of student inclusion through social justice leadership*. I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Bethany Peters, PhD., Adjunct Professor, Southeastern University.

What the study is about
The purpose of this exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study is to understand the perceptions of elementary school building leaders, also referred to as elementary principals, regarding their facilitation of SJL and CRSL practices to support student inclusion and belongingness within the K-4 educational setting in NYS.

What we will ask you to do
I will ask you to complete Flood's (2019) Social Justice Behavioral Scale (SJBS), which will take about 20 minutes.

I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits
Conducting an exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences and collective narratives of school principals across central New York is a means of addressing the current call to action by scholars and the NYS Board of Regents. Through the engagement of elementary principals in NYS, this study will significantly grow the body of research, which is of great benefit not only to the academic community, but to the K-12 educational leadership community as well.

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security
In order to protect participant privacy and/or confidentiality, I will
- De-identification of data
- Digital data will be stored on a password-protected device

Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party.

Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. We cannot guarantee against interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

Taking part is voluntary
Your involvement is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any demographic questions that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty.

We anticipate that your participation in this survey presents no greater risk than everyday use of the Internet.

If you have questions
You can contact me with questions or concerns. The main researcher conducting this study is Amy Konz, a doctoral student at Southeastern University. My email address is akonz@seu.edu. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Bethany Peters, PhD at bdpeters@seu.edu.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature_____
Date_____

Your Name (printed)_____
_____

Signature of person obtaining consent_____
Date_____

Printed name of person obtaining consent_____
_____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for five years beyond the end of the study.

Appendix B: Informed Interview Consent: Social Justice Leadership

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled *A mixed-method inquiry into elementary principal perspectives regarding the support of student inclusion through social justice leadership*. I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Bethany Peters, PhD., Adjunct Professor, Southeastern University.

What the study is about
The purpose of this exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study is to understand the perceptions of elementary school building leaders, also referred to as elementary principals, regarding their facilitation of SJL and CRSL practices to support student inclusion and belongingness within the K-4 educational setting in NYS.

What we will ask you to do
I will ask you to complete a 1-hour interview about your lived experiences. I will ask you to review your transcript for accuracy following the interview. I will ask to contact you via email after the interview with any follow-up questions.

I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits
Conducting an exploratory mixed-methods phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences and collective narratives of school principals across central New York is a means of addressing the current call to action by scholars and the NYS Board of Regents. Through the engagement of elementary principals in NYS, this study will significantly grow the body of research, which is of great benefit not only to the academic community, but to the K-12 educational leadership community as well.

Audio/Video Recording
Interviews conducted via the Zoom platform will be recorded for reviewed for accuracy. Videos will be archived digitally after transcription and destroyed after 5 years, per SEU guidance.

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview recorded (audio and video). You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

☐ I do not want to have this interview recorded.
☐ I am willing to have this interview recorded:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security
In order to protect participant privacy and/or confidentiality, I will
- De-identification of data
- Digital data will be stored on a password-protected device

Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party.

Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. We cannot guarantee against interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

Taking part is voluntary
Your involvement is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty.

If you have questions
You can contact me with questions or concerns. The main researcher conducting this study is Amy Konz, a doctoral student at Southeastern University. My email address is akonz@seu.edu. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Bethany Peters, PhD at bdpeters@seu.edu.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature_____

Date_____

Your Name (printed)_____

_____

Signature of person obtaining consent_____

Date_____

Printed name of person obtaining consent_____

_____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for five years beyond the end of the study.

**Appendix C: Data Collection Emails and Phone Script**

Qualitative Email:

I am writing you today to enlist your support and gauge your interest in being a participant in my doctoral study titled: A mixed-method inquiry into elementary principal perspectives regarding the support of inclusion through social justice leadership. I am looking for principals to interview for this study. Your participation would require a time commitment of about 1 hour for an interview (in-person or virtual sometime in June or July) and then your email responses on any follow-up questions I might have as I unpack your responses from the initial interview (late Summer or early Fall).

This research will follow IRB best practices so your name will not be used, nor will your building or district. Could you please let me know if you are interested in being interviewed (or if you are not so I don't send you a follow-up). I know your time is valuable and I appreciate your consideration in supporting me in this work.

Quantitative Email:

I am writing you today to enlist your support and gauge your interest in being a participant in my doctoral study titled: A mixed-method inquiry into elementary principal perspectives regarding the support of inclusion through social justice leadership. I am looking for principals to complete a brief survey for this study. Your participation would require a time commitment of about 20 minutes to complete the survey through Google Forms. This research will follow IRB best practices so your name will not be used, nor will your building or district. Are you interested?

Appendix D: G Power 3 Sample Size
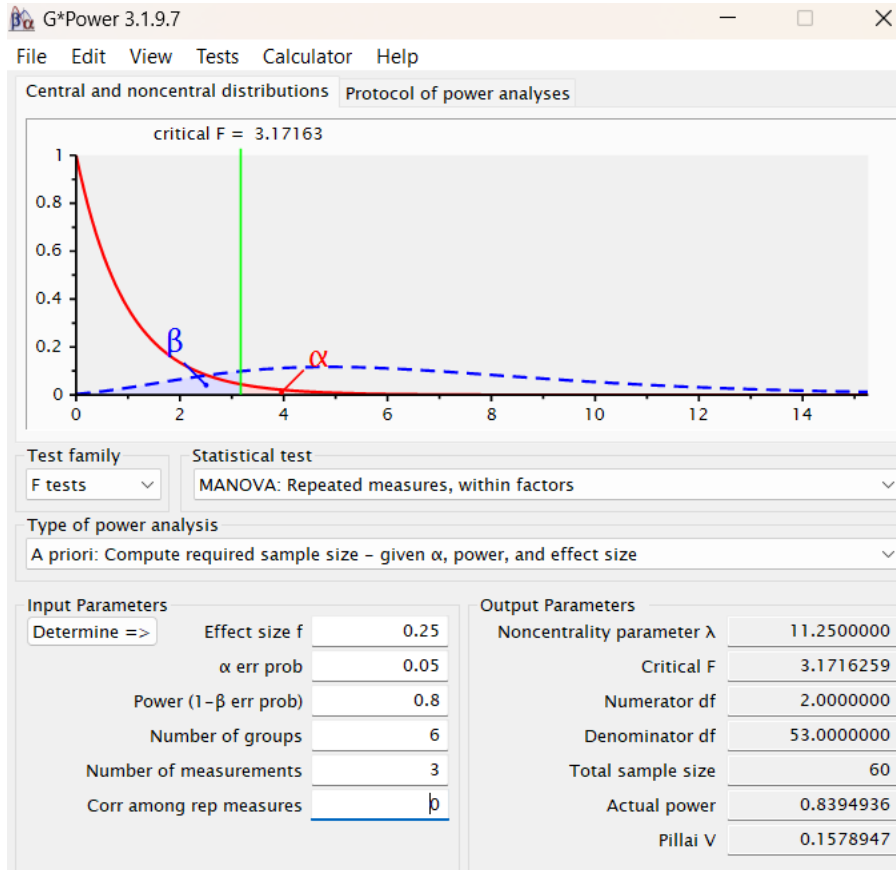
Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

The purpose of this exploratory mixed method phenomenological study will be to discover how social justice leadership and culturally responsive school leadership practices are implemented by the school building leaders in high-need rural school buildings to support inclusion environments for students.

Qualitative Research Questions:

    RQ1: How do elementary principals facilitate SJL?

    RQ2: How do elementary principals facilitate CRSL?

    RQ 3: What leadership practices do elementary principals perceive to encourage or discourage inclusion for all students in the elementary school building?

    RQ4: What leadership barriers or challenges do elementary principals experience to support inclusion (if any)?

Interview Question Alignment:

1. What examples of diversity do you encounter in your school building? (RQ 1-4)

2. What examples of inclusive practices exist in your school building, currently, historically, or planned for the future? (RQ 1 & 2)

3. What practices encourage or discourage student inclusion in the school building? (RQ 3)

4. What barriers or challenges (if any) hinder inclusive student environments in the school building? (RQ 4)

5. In what ways do stakeholder groups outside of the school building (district/community/parents/families/BOE) support/encourage inclusive student practices in the school building? (RQ 3)

6. In what ways does stakeholder groups outside of the school building (district/community/parents/families/BOE) hinder/challenge inclusive student practices in the school building? (RQ 4)

7. How do your leadership practices support student inclusion in the school building? (RQ 1 & 2)

8. What experiences related to student inclusion and diversity have influenced your leadership practices? (RQ 1 & 2)

9. Thank you so much for your time today. Your support has been invaluable to the learning process. What else would you like to add to this important study that has not be captured in today's interview? (RQ 1-4)

Appendix F: Consent from Dr. Flood to Use the SJBS in This Study

Flood, Lee <LFLOOD@augusta.edu>   Sun, Mar 12,
                                                                    7:33 PM

to me

Amy,

You can absolutely use the SJBS. I have attached a copy of the related journal article. I will follow-up with a copy of the instrument the next time that I go to my office.

Also, if it is useful, I have included another paper on the Social Justice – Barriers and Supports Scales that I recently published with Pamela Angelle.

Please let me know if there is anything further that I can help you with. Good luck with your study!

Lee D. Flood, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Advanced Studies & Innovation
College of Education
Augusta University

University Hall, Suite 325
Office: 304

Appendix G: Social Justice Behavior Scale Survey Instrument

Instructions: Indicate the frequency you engage in the following behaviors in your role as a school principal using the scale below:

	Never	Rarely, in less than 10% of the chances when I could have	Occasionally, in about 30% of the chances when I could have	Sometimes, in about 50% of the chances when I could have	Frequently, in about 70% of the chances when I could have	Usually, in about 90% of the chances I could have	Every time
I actively work to understand my own bias so I can better counteract inequity within my school.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I extend cultural respect to individuals from diverse backgrounds.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I engage in self-reflective, critical, and collaborative work relationships.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I work to develop a reflective consciousness.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I continuously reflect to avoid making unjust decisions.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I am transparent about my practice as a school leader.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I consciously account for and resist my personal biases.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Instructions: Indicate the frequency you engage in the following behaviors in your role as a school principal using the scale below:

	Never	Rarely, in less than 10% of the chances when I could have	Occasionally, in about 30% of the chances when I could have	Sometimes, in about 50% of the chances when I could have	Frequently, in about 70% of the chances when I could have	Usually, in about 90% of the chances I could have	Every time
I empower marginalized student groups through collaborative strategies.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I nurture socially conscientious teacher-leaders.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I pose solutions to structural injustices in education.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I enact a vision for my school focused on equity.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I provide students with greater access to their culture.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I dismantle barriers that hinder the practice of social justice in my school.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I embed professional development in collaborative structures.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I contextualize professional development in a way that tries to make sense of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

I prepare students to confront the challenges that face historically marginalized communities.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏

Instructions: Indicate the frequency you engage in the following behaviors in your role as a school principal using the scale below:

	Never	Rarely, in less than 10% of the chances when I could have	Occasionally, in about 30% of the chances when I could have	Sometimes, in about 50% of the chances when I could have	Frequently, in about 70% of the chances when I could have	Usually, in about 90% of the chances I could have	Every time
I participate in political and policy-related advocacy work on behalf of marginalized student groups.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
I engage in community organizing work.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
I engage in community advocacy work.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
I raise awareness to advance the school communities' levels of understanding about social inequities.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
I utilize parent networks to strategically recruit teachers, parents, and other community leaders with social justice agendas.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
I act as a catalyst for advocacy work within the community.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
I access community cultural wealth to benefit my school.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏