EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS AND DISTRICT LEADERS REGARDING THE CO-FRAMING OF SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP AND EQUITY

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Dolores Barnett, who inspired me to always be myself and to strive to be an advocate for others, and to my father and stepmother, Charles and Linda Rang, who have been steadfast and supported me through the many challenges life has given me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation **Description**

ADA- Americans with Disabilities Act
AP- Advanced Placement
AASA- American Association of Social Administrators
CCSSO- Council for Chief State School Officers
DAEP- District Alternative Education Program
GLSEN- Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network
GPA- Grade point average
GSA- Gay Student Alliance
IDEA- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
LD- Learning Disability
LGBTQIA- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual
LRE- Least restrictive environment
NAEP- National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCCP- National Center for Children in Poverty
NCLB – No Child Left Behind Act
NPBEA- National Policy Board for Educational Administration
NSBA- National School Boards Association
NWLC- National Women's Law Center
Pre-AP- Pre- Advanced Placement
PSEL- Professional Standards for Educational Leaders
QOCA- Queer of Color Analysis
SES- Socio-economic status
SLJ – School Library Journal
STAAR- State of Texas Assessments for Academic Readiness
TSRQ- teacher–student relationship quality
UBD- Understanding by Design
UDL- Universal Design

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the capacity building experiences of principals and district leaders identified as social justice leaders. The study sought to develop an understanding of if, how, and when professional development opportunities for social justice leadership are provided to campus and district leaders. Further, the study sought to identify what types of professional development experiences these leaders envision, including opportunities for collaboration with one another.

In order to obtain a deep understanding of the experiences of the participants, the researcher employed the use of grounded theory based on the epistemology of constructionism. The participants in the study included three suburban Texas high school principals and three suburban district administrators. The participants were chosen through a screening process that included recommendations from local social justice leaders. A preliminary survey was used to determine potential participants' foundational understanding of social justice leadership and to identify a group of participants with a similar level of understanding. Data was collected through individual interviews and homogenous focus-group discussions. Participants were also invited to be a part of a collaborative heterogeneous focus-group discussion.

Findings indicated that these social justice leaders had a strong desire to continue their learning about social justice leadership as well as to collaborate with one another. Capacity building was personally driven, as it is not prioritized as a need at the district level. In order to grow and develop their own understanding of social justice leadership these leaders accessed hope, courage, and perseverance and found new ways to integrate social justice leadership in their daily work.

I. INTRODUCTION

Dewey's work established the context for education in the United States by supporting the ideal of citizenship and democratic principles embedded in educational settings (Dewey, 1909). The framework of education has changed greatly since 1909, however Dewey's principles still resound. Nearly one hundred years later, education now is challenged by recent accountability standards based on the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. Standardized test results continue to indicate an achievement gap between minority students and white students, disparities among gender, and concerns about support for students with disabilities (Darling-Hammond, 2010; National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2012). Additional research indicates higher dropout rates for some student groups. This data, along with research on the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities in schools, brings to the forefront concerns about the social experiences students are having in school and the related impact on achievement.

Ironically, the effort to raise students to the expected accountability levels has taken a toll on equity and social supports. Leaders are required to raise scores regardless of cost (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). At times schools are turned into "test factories" where entire days and weeks are spent with students "prepping for the test" rather than learning to be critical thinkers about themselves and society (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003).

Researchers have called for the employment of moral, ethical, and transformational, and within the last few decades, social justice leadership in schools (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis 2007; Theoharis 2010). Leadership preparation programs have only begun to scratch the surface

on engaging with this type of learning for educational administrators. And once in the role of a campus or district leader, administrators are generally working in isolation to build their own capacity as social justice leaders (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Theoharis, 2007).

Developing students as critical and critically conscious thinkers requires leaders that will set the tone for a campus or district (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003); one that provides students with the high level of rigor to become metacognitive citizens of a democracy. Further, developing a campus and a district that embodies social justice understanding for all stakeholders requires purposeful and intentional capacity building and collaborative practices. Bogotch (2000), in an attempt to connect social justice theory to practice in education, explains, "Social justice, just like education, is a deliberate intervention that requires moral use of power" (p. 2).

Statement of the Problem

With the release of the Elementary and Secondary Education Acts in 1965 and No Child Left Behind in 2001, the nation's public schools have moved into an accountability system focused on raising the achievement level for all students. Since this legislation has been enacted, the nation has seen some academic growth in achievement for all students, however the trajectory of growth continues to display higher achievement for white males and females (NAEP, 2012). Moreover, in the current educational climate the focus continues to be heavily on accountability, sometimes at the cost of reducing or removing possibilities for equity (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). This lack of support for social development contributes to higher drop-out rates, higher suicide rates, and limited post-secondary choices (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2013;

National Women's Law Center [NWLC], 2007; Scheurich and Skrla, 2003; Terry, 1996). Ongoing problems with inequity, barriers to capacity building for educational practitioners, accountability expectations, and a general lack of collaboration and support all exacerbate the problem of enacting social justice leadership in schools.

Preservice programs for educational administrators are becoming inclusive of social justice studies. However, these programs are not cohesive across the nation in their focus or expectations (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Post-graduation, social justice leadership capacity building predominately relies upon self-selected learning opportunities such as conferences, books, and professional learning provided by professional organizations (Dantley & Tillman, 2010). Currently there are gaps in the literature related to understanding social justice leadership capacity building at campus and district levels once administrators are in practice. This study sought to understand the context of social justice leadership as a normal part of ongoing educational administration leadership beyond pre-service programs.

Theoharis (2007), in a study of principals enacting social justice leadership, found that principals working as social justice leaders ran into barriers within campuses and their own district when trying to implement social justice leadership. Theoharis notes, "It is irresponsible to prepare leaders to take on enormous challenges and face significant resistance without understandings of how to weather the storms that will result" (2007, p. 250). Marshall and Ward (2004), in an interview with national educational leaders, found that while they agreed upon the importance of social justice leadership, they also noted internal and external barriers that keep social justice leadership from full realization. Currently there is limited research about enacting social justice leadership in schools and

districts (Marshall & Ward, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). The intent of this study was to add to the literature about social justice leadership, specifically looking at the roles of capacity building and collaboration for campus and district administrators.

While Theoharis' (2007, 2008) studies of social justice leadership provide insight to the plight of campus leaders attempting to enact such leadership, there is little research available to support district leaders engaging in social justice leadership. Although there is abundant information about utilization of professional learning communities and collaborative practices in schools and school leadership (Blankstein, 2004; DeFour, 2004; Fullan, 2008; Marzano, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2009), there is limited research about collaborative practices between campus and district administrators as social justice leaders in schools. It has been over a decade since Marshall and Ward (2004) asked national educational leaders to provide insight to enacting social justice leadership, yet schools continue to face challenges in that area. One such example is the recent school action that resulted in police removal of a student for creating a clock that was thought to be a bomb, an action attributed to ethnic profiling (Fantz, Almasy, & Stapleton, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to critically examine how social justice leadership in schools is enacted in practice through capacity building of and collaboration between campus and district administrators. The constructionist paradigm was the basis for building a better understanding of the construct of social justice leadership in schools based on the perceptions of those actively engaged in the experience. In order to deeply understand these experiences, grounded theory was used to collect and analyze data and guide development of theoretical implications.

The groundbreaking research that has worked to define and develop understanding of social justice leadership in schools was the foundation for this study. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) pose the following question for reflection, "*Do I — deep inside where my most firmly held and private beliefs reside — truly believe it is possible in the immediate future to create and sustain schools in which literally all children will be highly successful*" (p. 10). Research for social justice leadership in schools has studied the status of preservice learning for educational administrators (Cambron-McCabe, 2010; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005), the role of principals as social justice leaders in schools (Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis, 2009), the role of moral leadership in schools (Sergiovanni, 1992; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998), the need for social justice leadership in schools (Delpit, 2006; GLSEN, 2013; Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; NWLC, 2007; Nieto, 2010; Noguera, 2008), the coupling of the current academic accountability climate with social justice leadership in schools (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003), and recommendations from national leaders for supporting and engaging in social justice leadership in schools (Marshall & Ward, 2004). Further, research has been carried out on the need for capacity building for campus and district administrators (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2015; Gordon, 2004; Fullan, 2008; Starratt, 2004) as well as for collaboration and cohesive vision for campus administrators and district administrators (Fullan, Hill, & Crévola, 2006). However, there is limited research pertaining to support for social justice leadership in education for and between campus and district administrators.

In my experiences as a district administrator and my work with campus administrators I found that there is often an assumption that these leaders understand and

enact social justice. Additionally, many of the collaborative meetings with principals and district administrators that I have attended have been focused around business and managerial issues rather than social justice concerns. Finally, I find that my own desire to be a social justice leader in schools drives my passion to collaborate and learn with others that are like minded.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study was as follows: How do campus and district leaders perceive the current climate for capacity building for social justice at the central office and campus levels, their own capacities for social justice leadership, the capacities they need to develop to be more effective social justice leaders, and changes needed at district and campus level to better promote social justice? The secondary research question is: In what ways do central office leaders and campus leaders believe they could collaborate to promote social justice?

Significance of the Study

Constructionism and grounded theory seek to understand and provide insight to socially constructed experiences (Charmaz, 2014; Patton, 2002). While it is important to note that the generalizability of any qualitative study cannot always be determined due to the specific context of the study, this study has a number of potentially significant implications. At a foundational level, completing a study for personal inquiry or obtaining knowledge for the sake of knowledge is a part of any qualitative research (Glesne, 2011). In addition, this study sought to add to the academic discourse and further inform research and practice regarding the phenomena of social justice leadership in schools.

The focus of the study was to construct understanding about the phenomena that inform social justice leadership in education. This research explored stories and experiences of those enacting social justice leadership in education. These experiences and stories in turn provided deeper understanding of the patterns and themes of social justice leadership (Patton, 2002). Further potential implications for the significance of the study included the following:

- providing additional data to inform capacity building and professional development for in-service educational leaders;
- deepening research regarding the importance of developing cohesive, collaborative systems;
- informing the general understanding of social justice in education.

Each of these implications, in turn, has the potential for deepening the discourse in areas of study such as professional development, leadership development, and systems design.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study illustrated in Figure 1 was built upon three theoretical concepts that work in conjunction to inform: (a) leadership capacity building, (b) social justice in education, and (c) social justice leadership in schools. The circle in the center represents the focus of this study, social justice leadership in schools. The concentric circles of "social justice in education", and "leadership capacity building" are essential components for understanding social justice leadership in schools. Also indicated in Figure 1 is the understanding that the two input components work together to inform each other as well as social justice leadership in schools. The arrows at the bottom of the diagram indicate the reciprocal impact of the components on one another. For

example, social justice leadership in schools has the potential to inform both social justice in education and leadership capacity building. Finally, on the left side within each of the circles are positive influences, and on the right side, challenges related to each of the components that support or detract from the enactment of social justice leadership in education.

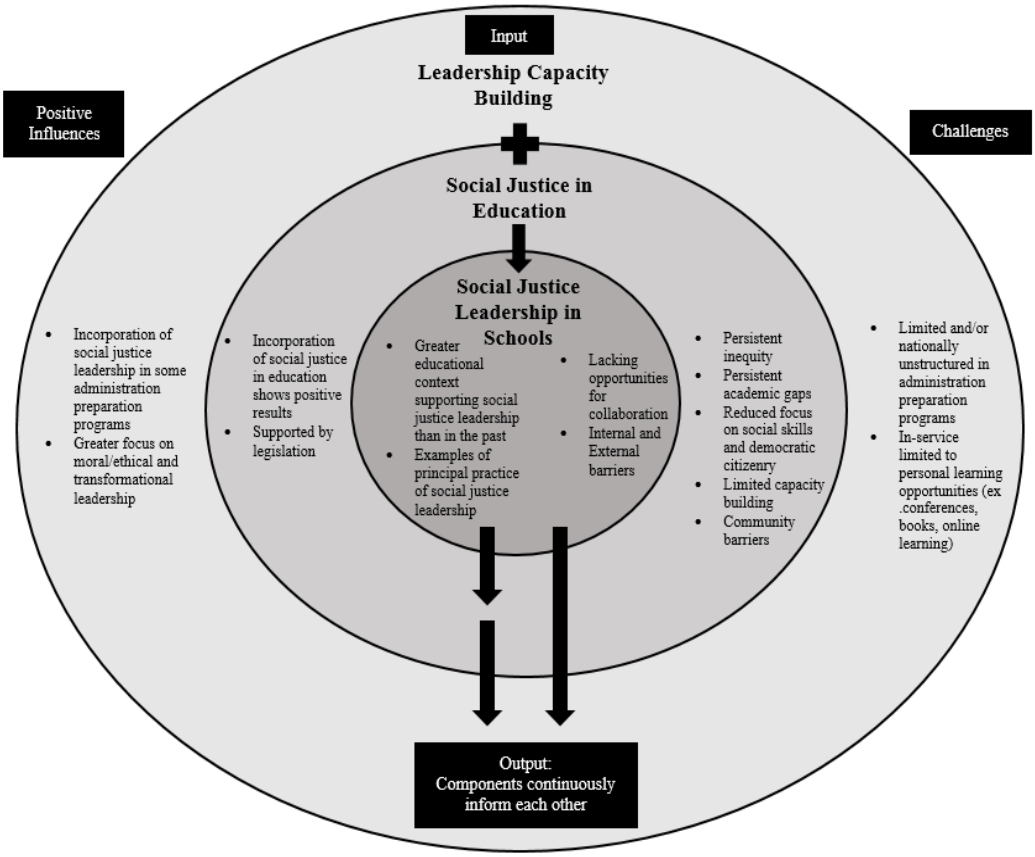

Figure 1 Social Justice Leadership in Education

The initial component of this conceptual framework was leadership capacity building. Building leadership capacity is an essential component to the foundation of social justice leadership in schools. Just as capacity building is integral both as a foundation and as an ongoing tool for teacher professional learning, capacity building for

campus and district administrators is equally essential (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Fullan, 2008; Gordon, 2004; NPBEA, 2015; Starratt, 2004). In establishing constructs of the foundation of leadership, Burns (1978) discusses the role of capacity building through the lens of Maslow's self-actualization, contending that, in addition to self-actualization through personal intent, mutual-actualization in which a leader must also be able to grow by listening to others and the environment is also an essential leadership characteristic. Sergiovanni (1992) and Starratt (2004) argue that moral and ethical leadership are necessary in school leadership, referring to these types of leadership as transformational rather than transactional.

The term social justice has undergone many changes since first introduced by Jesuit philosopher Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio in the 1840's. Used initially in broad context, it was not until World War II that the term found bearings relating to societal concepts of right and wrong. Rawl's in *Theory of Justice* (1971) took the term further by connecting it to the theoretical theory of social fairness (Boyles, Carusi, & Attick, 2009; Burke, 2010). Social justice concepts in American educational settings were introduced by Horace Mann's ideal of common schools for all and edified through the work of John Dewey (Boyles, Carusi, & Attick, 2009).

Social justice in education goes beyond the basic concept of equality into notions of equity, fairness, and action. In this study, social justice in education was defined as a modality for the development of schools that are equitable, but also welcoming and informing. Incorporating the Deweyan philosophical framework of an informed democratic citizenry and the Freirean philosophy of critical consciousness, social justice theory in education focuses on equitable practices, inclusion of diverse student

populations in all aspects of learning, and capacity building for all stakeholders in educational practice (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009; Dewey, 1909; Freire, 1998; Marshall & Ward, 2004; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003).

The combination of the conceptual frameworks of leadership capacity building and social justice in education supported the targeted focus of this study, social justice leadership in education. Theoharis (2007) points out that there is positive work being done by social justice leaders in schools; however, "there is an absence of studies that specifically address the ways in which leaders enact justices, the resistance they face at work, and how leaders maintain themselves to continue the pursuit of equity and justice" (p. 223). Social justice leadership in education is inclusive of ethical and moral leadership principles, and moves beyond these principles to include equity, activism, and social literacy (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

Overview of Research Design

When considering method choices in qualitative studies, Patton (2002) explains, "the implications of thinking about purpose and audience in designing studies is that methods, no less than knowledge, are dependent on context. No rigid rules prescribe what data to gather to investigate a particular interest or problem" (p. 12). In order to understand the phenomena of social justice leadership in education, this study was based on the epistemology of constructionism, conceptualized through the lens of interpretivism, and designed to employ the principles of grounded theory. The use of grounded theory to interpret and construct theoretical understandings of social justice leadership in schools provided opportunities for the data to continuously inform the study as it was carried out.

Data collection methods for the study included individual interviews and focus-group interviews. A preliminary survey was utilized to assess potential participants' level of understanding of and commitment to social justice leadership. The participants who were selected were developing social justice leaders. These participants exhibited foundational understandings of social justice leadership with a history of enactment in their own leadership roles. The participant group was comprised of three principals and three district administrators. Prior to the first individual interview, guiding questions were determined and vetted by social justice leaders from local school districts and universities. Upon completion of the initial interviews, data was analyzed and coded. Subsequent focus-group and individual interview questions were developed after each of the first two sets of interviews, respectively, allowing the data gathered from previous interviews to inform future interviews. Grounded theory calls for the ongoing use of data analysis to develop theoretical understandings of phenomena being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open-coding was utilized throughout the process to code participants' complete thoughts, and axial coding was used to develop theoretical constructs. Memoing took place throughout data analysis as a tool for summarizing and interpreting results.

Patton (2002) notes, "we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe" (p. 340). Researching and discovering perspectives about the phenomena of social justice leadership in education requires understanding the experiences of people engaging in the work. Individual interviews allow the researcher to collect data about distinct experiences while allowing the participants to express their thoughts in a comfortable environment (Merriam, 2009). In order to understand these experiences, I conducted two individual in-depth interviews with each participant, one at

the outset of the study, and one prior to focus-group discussions. Individual interviews for both principals and district administration had similar questions, with variation based upon the participant's role and the conversation in the interview.

Utilization of focus-group sessions allow for collection of data that is distinctly different than individual interview data (Krueger, 1988). Role-based homogenous focus-groups were conducted during the study to provide opportunities for individuals with similar roles to engage in dialogue and to express their understanding of the phenomena of social justice leadership in schools. The research design for the study is described in detail in Chapter 3.

Assumptions

Multiple assumptions influenced this study. I had to be aware of assumptions about the persons in the study as well as the processes of the study. I brought to this study the assumption that educators who participated in this study became educators for the purpose of supporting students with both academic and social growth. I assumed that all participants in the study provided accurate information to the best of their knowledge and experiences. Finally, it was assumed that both the campus and district leaders brought with them a broad spectrum of experiences that provided deep contextual background.

Limitations

Patton (2002) in discussion about research design explains, "…there are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs. Limited resources, limited time, and limits on the human ability to grasp the complex nature of social reality necessitate trade-offs" (p. 223). With awareness of the impact limitations may have on studies, it is important to note that recognition and transparency regarding these limitations supports

not only contextual understanding, but also the study's validity, credibility, and transferability (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Limitations of this study included the following:

1. The study was conducted in school districts in Texas. Therefore, consideration was given to political and social factors influencing this particular geographic location.
2. Involvement of participants from different school districts rather than from the same school district posed limitations in that these participants do not bring with them a similar background. This did, however, alleviate concerns of intimidation by participants' superiors as well as allowed for a more diverse collection of data.
3. This study sought participants who possess an understanding of and commitment to social justice leadership in education. It is possible that to identify the designated number of participants, a desired diversity of school levels (elementary, middle, and high school), school types (urban, suburban, and rural), and gender was sacrificed in order to obtain the required number of participants.
4. In order to provide a diverse representation of voices for the study, multiple attempts were made to include participants with a variety of backgrounds. This included reaching out to several Latina and Latino potential participants that were recommended. Unfortunately, although they were contacted on several occasions (via emails and phone calls), the potential participants were unable

to engage in the study. Due to this circumstance, the lack of the voice of the Latino/a community is a limitation of this study.

5. Data was collected through individual and focus-group interviews, therefore, data was limited to the experiences and information shared during these sessions.
6. The required focus-group sessions were role-based, limiting the opportunity between campus and district leaders to interact with one another. Consideration between combining groups and separating groups was weighed prior to study design. Due to the possibility of recognized hierarchy of the roles of participants, it was decided to utilize separate focus-groups to reduce possible power dynamics. Participants elected to participate in a heterogeneous focus-group.

Definition of Terms

In order to provide clarity, a definition of terms used in the study is provided below.

- **Capacity building** — Developing individual and organizational ability to impact student growth. Capacity building may include individual or group professional learning opportunities.
- **Collaboration** — Collaboration in this study is defined as cooperation, coordination, and planning about a particular topic. This study framed the context of cooperation and coordination between campus and district administrators about the topic of social justice leadership.
- **Equity** — In this study, equity was defined as ensuring and enacting fairness and equal access for all to the highest quality of resources and learning opportunities.

This includes compensation for achievement gaps and prior marginalization so that all students are receiving appropriate educational experiences to meet their learning needs.

- **Social justice** — Social justice in this study included building capacity for acting on behalf of human rights and justice, including a focus on inequity, equality, and fairness that challenges and disrupts the current context in order to reduce marginalization and exclusion.
- **Social justice leadership** —This definition was borrowed from the work of Theoharis (2008), who writes that social justice leadership means, "to advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States" (p. 5). This study added to Theoharis' definition with its assumption that social justice leadership in schools is built upon moral, ethical, and transformational leadership.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Education is the greatest liberator mankind has ever known and the greatest force for social progress"

(Brown, 2007)

This review of literature provides a conceptual understanding of the need to address equity and social justice issues to support students. The review is organized into the following sections: the need for social justice in schools, the current climate of social justice in schools, leadership for social justice in schools, and an understanding of the perspective for capacity building with school leaders. The literature indicates a critical need for social justice in PK-12 public schools (Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Strides are being made in some districts and schools to move forward with equitable practices and the development of school cultures that are welcoming to all students and promote the value of all student contributions (Kafele, 2013; Kumishuro, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). These changes start with the work of transformational leaders (Theoharis, 2007).

The Need for Social Justice

The Hallway

"Out of the way you_____" I hear as they fill in the blank

Today I am a ….

freak	*beaner*	*fatty*	*tramp*
fag	*queer*	*kike*	*loser*
cripple	*terrorist*	*cracker*	*retard*
hoodrat	*gangbanger*	*slut*	*lesbo*

You fill in the blank…or blanks
An intersectionality of me.
The possibilities for me are endless…

dropout	*suicide*	*bullying*	*self-harm*
low grades	*low esteem*	*racism*	*prison*
marginalization	*oppression*	*drug addiction*	*crime*

But maybe, through your influence…. a chance
For ill-defined normalcy
To pretend to be you……
Rang

Why the need for social justice in education? What role does the cultivation of equity and social justice play in the context of everyday campus and district culture? There is a growing realization of the need for establishing equity and social justice in the United States' PK-12 education system (Delpit, 2006; Dewey, 1909; Hytten & Bettez, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis, 2008). Realization of the need for social justice in our schools is accompanied by the understanding that, as they are growing from kindergarten through high school, students are evolving their sense of psychological, emotional, and societal identities in an environment that exposes them to violence, lack of support, and messaging from dominant culture (Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004; Cathcart, 2008; Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Noguera, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999), a realization that only elevates the urgency for social justice in education.

This section focuses on the inequities and injustices that are deeply entrenched and remain pervasive in our educational system (Banks, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Delpit, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999; Sadker & Zittleman, 2010; Zittleman, 2007). This section also reviews the literature exposing the continued context of marginalization and oppression of race/ethnicity, gender, LGBTQIA, special education, and poverty, and the resulting impact. While student groups are addressed separately in the following section, it is important to mention that these groups do not exist in isolation from each other. Rather, the use of a single identifier for each student reveals only small picture of the

multiple group memberships (Banks, 2010) or multiple overlapping identities (Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012) that comprise each individual. Students attending schools in the United States PK-12 education system under these categories (and others not included here in this study) experience multiple layers of impact that compound one another.

Racial and Ethnic Minorities

It has been over sixty years since the landmark ruling of Brown vs. the Board of Education, yet schools in the United States continue to be challenged in supporting the diverse student populations they serve (Banks, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Delpit, 2006; Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Nieto, 2010; Noguera, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999). The composition of school-age students in PK-12 schools continues to become more diverse, as the National Center for Education Statistics report *The Condition of Education 2014* (Kena et al., 2014) indicates:

> from fall 2001 through fall 2011, the number of White students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade in U.S. public schools decreased from 28.7 million to 25.6 million, and their share of public school enrollment decreased from 60 to 52 percent. In contrast, the number of Hispanic students enrolled during this period increased from 8.2 million to 11.8 million students, and their share of public school enrollment increased from 17 to 24 percent. (p.48).

The same source notes nearly stagnant movement in African American enrollment, with shifts from 17-16% over the same time frame. While the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a pivotal change addressing outward racial oppression through school segregation, bringing to the forefront that "separate is not equal," there continues to be deeply rooted

and pervasive institutionalized racism that negatively impacts our students (Noltemeyer, Mujic, & McLoughlin, 2012; Tyack & Hansot, 2002).

Factors Contributing to the Marginalization of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

Institutionalized racism, through societal context and stereotyping, plays a key role in the marginalization and oppression of minority students (Tyack & Hansot, 2002). Racial and ethnic minority students experience both subtle and overt oppression in and out of classrooms (Delpit; 2006). Delpit refers to the sources of this oppression as "issues of power" that include the "culture of power," referring to the "codes or rules that dominate linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self; that is, ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting" (p. 25). In schools, the "culture of power" influences stereotypical stigmatization and curriculum (pp. 24-25).

This dominant culture of power asserts itself when children are young. When discussing the formation of cultural stereotypes Aronson (2004) notes that by the age of six, virtually everyone in our culture is aware of a variety of cultural stereotypes. Freire (1998) contends that in order to interact with and develop understanding of injustices of the dominant culture, there should be cognizant understanding of the dominant syntax.

The white population has comprised the culture of power in the United States since the founding of the country. Although the white population comprised 85% of the populace in 1960 and 63% in 2011 (Taylor & Cohn, 2012), they continue as the culture of power. One of the ways the role of the dominant culture contributes to marginalization and oppression of racial and ethnic minorities is through deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997). Valencia (1997) defines deficit thinking as "positing that the student who fails in

school does so because of internal deficits or deficiencies" (p. 2). Adding, "such deficits manifest, it is alleged in limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn, and immoral behavior" (p. 2). Valenzuela's study of Latino/a students in Texas (1999) offers an example of deficit thinking: "subtractive schooling encompasses subtractive assimilation policies and practices that are designed to divest Mexican students of their culture and language" (p. 20). Further, subtle oppression, termed "racial micro-aggressions" are "brief commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward people of color" (Wing Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). These micro-aggressions can be made in a myriad of ways and contribute to stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) and institutional racism (Tyack & Hansot, 2002).

Institutional racism and stereotype threat are clearly seen in key places in the PK-12 public classroom, as noted by Delpit (2006): in curriculum, in educator bias, and through disproportionality. In curriculum, the lack of inclusion of the culture of student can significantly detract from student achievement (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Curriculum bias is often seen in textbooks and state exams (Tyack & Hansot, 2002). Educator bias is built from and contributes to institutional racism (Delpit, 2006). For example, teacher stereotyping of a particular group of students include the teacher comment noted at the outset of this section about "these students not being able to use calculators," and a recent news article from Smithville, Texas entitled, *Smithville ISD teacher to be terminated for racist remark*, (2015) in which a teacher was being investigated for a recent remark about students' ancestors "hanging from trees." Ladson-

Billings (2009) shares a scenario about a star teacher explaining to her student teacher that in her school there are "white-blacks" and "black-blacks" and that the black-blacks are less capable academically and get into more behavior problems (p. 22).

Impact of Inequity on Racial and Ethnic Minorities

Stereotype threat, the threat imposed by ongoing feelings of being stereotyped and by stereotyping, can lead to lowered performance on challenging tasks such as taking tests (Aronson, 2004; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Students experiencing low self-esteem due to low academic performance react in a number of ways; including suicidal behavior. The Centers for Disease Control (2011) reported that suicide attempts are nearly two times higher among Black and Hispanic youth than White youth.

Disproportionality is the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a specific group of students in the context of special education and discipline. Overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities continues to be an area of concern (Fenning & Sharkey, 2012; Noltemeyer, Mujic, & McLoughlin, 2012; Oswald, Coutinho, Best, & Singh, 1999; Thorius & Stephenson, 2012). Students of racial and ethnic minorities are constantly challenged by the impact of such stereotyping and institutionalized racism on their learning ability. Both African American and Latino/a students are overrepresented in the area of Special Education (Bicard & Heward, 2010). A meta-analysis by Osterholm, Nash, and Kritsonis (2007) of thirty-four studies addressing the impact of the learning disabled label found that students experienced stigmatization, rejection, and social distance related to the LD (learning disability) label.

While fewer African American and Latino/a students are dropping out of schools in the United States (when comparing the years 2002 to 2012), White students' dropout

rates are still considerably lower than students of color. White students' dropout rate decreased by 2.2%, with a 4.3% dropout rate in 2012; African American students' dropout rate decreased by 3.8%, with a 7.5% dropout rate in 2012; and Latino/a students' dropout rate decreased by13%, with a 12.7% dropout rate in 2012 (Kena et al., 2014). Although there are significant decreases in dropout rates for all groups, there are still major concerns among the persistent gaps between the dropout rate of students of color and their White counterparts (Noguera, 2008), which also continue to decline and have stayed well below 10% (2014). Further, in post-secondary education, we see disparity in the number of racial/ethnic minorities attending colleges and completing a bachelors' degree, with an even lower number completing masters' degrees (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

Gender

As long as there have been educational opportunities, gender marginalization has played a role (Trautman & Stewart, 2009). It wasn't until the civil rights movement of the 1960's that gender considerations become an area of focus on the U.S. education stage, resulting in the Title IX Act of 1972 (2009). Traditionally when considering gender bias, the first inclination of educators is to characterize it in the context of girls (2009). However, gender bias continues to play a significant role in the marginalization of both males and females (Raffaele Mendez & Dennie, 2012; Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). Current educational trends are pursuing single-sex schools for males and females (2005), harkening back to Ladson-Billings thoughts about moving back to racially segregated schools (2009). Does segregation of schools by gender mirror segregation by race, a

practice that was removed sixty years ago only to be reintroduced via gender (Ladson-Billings, 2005)?

Factors Contributing to Gender Bias

In a 2009 speech, the President of Harvard University equated biological differences between men and women to the reason that women don't succeed in math and science (Dillon & Rimer, 2009). Students continue to be stereotyped by gender by the greater society, and the stereotyping of males and females in public education continues to be pervasive (Raffaele Mendez, & Dennie, 2012; Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). For example, it is perceived that "boy subjects are math and science" while "girl subjects are art, music and reading" (Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). On a different level, students are subliminally exposed to stereotypes modeled through the leadership structure of schools. As Delpit (2006) notes, curriculum plays a strong role in the formation of stereotype and bias as connected to the culture of power. Curriculum and curricular practices in the current climate continue to promote the culture of power (2006). "Men's and women's societal roles continue to be inadequately addressed or misrepresented in educational materials and activities" (Keating, 1994, p. 97). Considering curriculum through text and reading exposure alone indicates gender bias. Depictions of males in textbooks and popular reading materials continue to outweigh depictions of females; further, the depictions of males show that they are engaged in interesting activities while females are shown in traditional roles (Keating, 1994; Sadker & Zittleman, 2005).

The other message conveyed in schools is that males are good at science and math, and females are good at reading (American Association of University Women, 2002). In middle and high school, a natural division seems to occur that supports this

message; when choosing courses that impact their future, males continue to outnumber females in higher-level math and science courses, and girls outnumber boys in higher level humanities courses (American Association of University Women, 2002; Clewell, 2002). Further, counselor and teacher bias continue to support this gender identification as students move from elementary school to middle and high school (Keating, 1994; Tyack & Hansot, 2002).

In the United States, it was not uncommon practice in the early development of schools to reduce learning opportunities for females. Often early schools that educated females focused on learning to support traditional women's roles such as cooking, sewing, entertaining, and focused on reading and writing only to the degree that they could read the Bible to their children rather than on academics (Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). The majority of PK-12 educators in the United States have grown up in a societal context of gender bias. Current research indicates that educator gender bias is alive and well and is reflective of societal constructs (Bailey, 2002; Sadker & Zittleman, 2005; Smiler, 2009).

Students of different genders are subject to different types of stereotyping in schools and in society (Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). For example, males are more likely to be held back a grade, disciplined for behavior problems, and referred for learning and behavioral support (Tyack & Hansot, 2002). Females are more likely to be overlooked for behavior issues, even in similar circumstances (2005). Societal expectations that "boys are bad" and "girls are good" is ingrained in the greater institutional construct and reflected in our schools (Francis & Skelton, 2005). On the other hand, Banks (2010) reports "Girls are less likely than boys to participate in class discussions and to be

encouraged by teachers to participate. Girls are more likely to be silent in the classroom" (p. 3). Genders are socialized differently both in society and in schools. Males are socialized into masculine, tough, and competitive roles (Noguera, 2008; Sadker & Zittleman, 2005; Sadker & Zittleman, 2010) while girls are funneled into "passive and nurturing behaviors" (Rafaelle, Mendez, & Dennie, 2012, p. 126).

Impact of Gender Bias

Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman (2004) write that as students move from early childhood into early adulthood, they are forming their emotional and societal identities for later life. Keating (1994) concludes, "Studies show how girls' dependent behaviors are reinforced, and hence reproduced, in a reward structure where docility is valued, and females find reinforcement for quite behavior, neat work, and conformity" (p. 100). Further, as students grow older, they may struggle with the binaries. In particular, males that develop characteristics attributed to the feminine binary are stigmatized as homosexual and may have misogynistic experiences similar to females (Francis & Skeleton, 2005).

According to Banks (2010) "Nearly twice as many males as females are classified as special education students" (p. 311). Beaman, Wheldall, and Kemp (2006) in their meta-analysis of differential teacher attention, found that males are disproportionately labeled as students needing special education services not only in the United States, but internationally, advancing the question, "Could it be that referral to special education services is another form of teacher attention typically directed at boys?" (p. 359). Other research hypotheses include the following: biology (males are genetically more vulnerable), behavior (females are teacher pleasers), and bias (teacher subjective

referral). The question continues to be posed about how gender roles impact student learning opportunities and labels (Daddario, 2012).

Tyack and Hansot (2002) report that females show declining levels of achievement while males show increasing levels of achievement in math and science. While there has been a great deal of emphasis on dropout rate for males, females have nearly equal dropout rates (NWLC, 2007). Further, gender bias continues to impact males and females differently in their post-secondary experiences. Although women are graduating from similar colleges and universities, they more likely to focus their studies in lower paying careers that are traditionally allocated to "women's roles" such as education and health care fields (Corbett & Hill, 2012).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer (LGBTQIA)

"That is so gay," a phrase heard in the common vernacular in the United States daily as a taunt or a tease (DeWitt, 2012; GLSEN, 2013; Mayo, 2010), but what impact does this type of statement have on LGBTQIA students? Does it send a message that there is something odd or not normal about being gay? In an educational system where students are being labeled as "gender non-conforming" (van Wormer & McKinney, 2003) as a common "best practice," in a national climate where students are being murdered by other students because of their "openly gay" appearance as in the case of Lawrence King at E.O. Green Junior High School in Oxnard, California (Cathcart, 2008), LGBTQIA students clearly are being oppressed.

In society and in schools, daily, LGBTQIA youth and adults experience ongoing discrimination to the point of being threatened with death and sometimes murdered (Besner & Spungin, 1995; DeWitt, 2012; Lugg, 2008). Koschoreck and Slattery (2010)

proclaim, “this attitude of permission to hurt or even kill not only gay men and lesbians but also Jews, Blacks, immigrants and other minorities, is promoted in several conservative political groups, churches, and websites today (p. 162).” In citing Ashton and Franklin’s “societal sense of permission”, Koschoreck and Slattery (2010) contend that this is one way that “schools (often unintentionally) allow heteronormative oppression to create a climate of fear, hate, and violence” (p. 164, parentheses in original). LGBTQIA students are struggling with the day to day school experiences that regularly include subtle derogatory epithets, bullying, and threats to safety (GLSEN, 2013; van Wormer & McKinney, 2003). These experiences result in life choices that are detrimental to these students such as absenteeism, reduced drive for post-secondary education, homelessness, physical harm, alcohol and drugs, and suicide (van Wormer & McKinney, 2003; GLSEN, 2013). Van Wormer and McKinney (2003) warn that in 1999 the United States received a wake-up call in the form of Columbine High School advancing the need for more attention to support for all students.

Factors Contributing to Bias Against LGBTQIA Students

While facing the challenges of a heteronormative society (Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010), LBGTQIA youth are identifying earlier than reported in the past, at ages ranging from age eleven to thirteen (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2012). In 2010 the “It Gets Better” social media movement aimed at supporting LGBTQIA students as they face the challenges of growing up in a society, attending school, and “coming out” (It Gets Better Project, n.d). Students face messages from non-school entities (such as family, religion, and media) as they navigate the treacherous waters of adolescence (van Wormer & McKinney, 2003; Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010). It was only sixty years ago that students

suspected to be “gender non-conforming” were sent to special schools, camps, and institutions to “help” them recognize and repair what society deemed as abnormal, banned from federal employment, or even imprisoned for their “non-conforming” behavior (Lugg, 2008).

Integrating curriculum to support student understanding of LGBTQIA issues is a particular challenge in schools, as the role of schools in same-sex relationships is still in question (DeWitt, 2012; Mayo, 2010). In *Parker v. Hurley*, parents sued the school district citing religious concerns when a book introducing same sex marriage through a story about two princes falling in love (*Parker v. Hurley*, 2008). This external pressure provides additional challenges for school personnel (Patrick & Sanders, 1994). Whelan (2009) notes, “the first survey of its kind, *School Library Journal (SLJ)*, recently asked 655 media specialists about their collections and found that 70 percent of the librarians say they won’t buy certain controversial titles simply because they’re terrified of how parents will respond” (p.2). These external pressures embedded in schools continue to drive the focus of school curriculum (Cuban, 1990; Mayo, 2010).

Mayo (2010) states, “Schools, like the rest of the world, are structured by heterosexism – the assumption that everyone is and should be heterosexual” (p.51). The recently released GLSEN (2013) National School Climate Survey gathered data from 7,898 students between 13 and 21 and found that 55.5 % of students surveyed reported feeling unsafe in schools due to sexual orientation, and 37.8% were fearful due to gender expression (p. 5). Mayo (2010) points the “heterosexist assumption that either there are no gay people present in school communities, or, if here are, those gay people ought to learn to expect a hostile environment” (p. 216).

Discriminatory practices may be written in school policies, contributing further to hostile school climates (DeWitt, 2012; Lugg, 2008; Mayo, 2010). Some school policies prevent students from wearing clothing or items supporting LGBTQIA students (GLSEN, 2013). Many schools also have policies indicating suggested dress by gender (2013), and that if students engage in dress different from the heterosexist expectation, then they may receive consequences for distracting and disrupting the educational climate (Eckes, DeMitchell, & Fossey, 2015; Mayo 2010). Losen, Hewitt, and Toldson (2014), in their work researching discipline disparities, found that "data from a nationally representative population-based sample of LGBT shows that youth are at greater risk for expulsion than their heterosexual peers" (p. 4).

LGBTQIA students are presented with a hostile school environment on other fronts. Over half (61.6%) of students that reported incidents of bullying and harassment noted non-responsive staff (GLSEN, 2013). Further contributing to their feeling of lack of safety, 17.7% of students reported that they were unable to start school groups that supported their identification, such as Gay Student Alliance (GSA) (2013). This lack of support may "leave sexually diverse students feeling alone" (DeWitt, 2012, p. 31).

In 1996, the first case was won against school administrators for failing to protect the equal rights of a gay student from bullying and harassment (Terry, 1996). Nearly twenty years later, according to the 2013 GLSEN report, "74.1% of LGBTQ students were verbally harassed with 55.2% harassed because of gender expression" (p.5). Students also reported physical abuse and assault ranging from being pushed and shoved to being injured with a weapon (p.5). Bullying and harassment does not stop within the

school walls; students report bullying and harassment continues through electronic media including text messages or postings on social media (GLSEN, 2013).

Impact of Bias Against LGBTQIA Students

Students experiencing hostile climate, bullying, harassment, and oppression by society have additional challenges as they form their identities (Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010; Lugg, 2008). Sexually diverse students report lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression than their heterosexual counterparts (GLSEN, 2013). Additionally, suicide rates continue to be significantly higher in LGBTQIA youth as compared to their heterosexual peers (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011; Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Hatzenbuehler, 2011; Russell & Joyner, 2001). These students experience higher levels of homelessness, with 20 to 40% of homeless youth reporting to be LGBT (Quintana, Rosenthal, & Krehely, 2010). Additionally, LGBTQIA students report higher rates alcoholism during adolescence (2010; GLSEN 2013). These experiences can cause "severe physical and mental health consequences" (Quintana et al., 2010, p. 5) impacting youth long into their future.

Forming your identity while engaging in hostile societal and school climates has an impact on the achievement of sexually diverse students. In addition to lowered self-esteem issues, LGBTQIA students experience high rates of absenteeism, lower grade point averages (GPA), and higher incidence of dropout than their counterparts (GLSEN, 2013). The GLSEN (2013) National School Climate Survey Executive Summary report showed that there were deep connections between students who had experienced victimization and discrimination and lower GPAs; the higher the victimization and discrimination levels reported, the lower the GPA level**.** In addition to lower GPA levels,

sexually diverse students experience higher levels of absenteeism and higher dropout rates. These students reported that they were nearly three times as likely to miss school, resulting in missed learning time. When considering post-secondary education, trends indicate that LGBTQIA students are half as likely to plan to pursue higher education options.

Students with Disabilities

Capper, Rodriguez, and McKinney (2010) note the term "disability" is often framed in the context of something that is special with common understanding that there are connections to something that is not "normal". However, they, along with others in the field of disability studies contextualize "disability" as mere "difference" (Capper et al., 2010). It wasn't until the Education Act for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] of 1990) that schools were required to accept federal funds to support students labeled with disabilities. Through this change public education in the United States saw a greater influence in the structured role of support for students labeled with disabilities in the classroom (Noltemeyer, Mujic, & McLoughlin, 2012). Pazey and Cole (2013) contend that both the literature and administrative preparation programs are lacking in the development of special education leadership, especially as it connects to social justice leadership as defined by Theoharis (2007). This lack of administrative preparation problematizes support for students labeled with disabilities that are subject to threatening school culture and climate, disproportionality in identification, low achievement and completion rates, and limited employment outcomes.

Factors that Contribute to Bias Against Students with Disabilities

Within society, persons with disabilities spend every moment negotiating a societal context established for non-disabled persons (Asch, 2001). Students labeled with disabilities also face the challenges and stigmatization of stereotyping (Osterholm, Nash, & Kritsonis, 2007). While the need to "label" students with disabilities has been debated (Bicard & Heward, 2010), there seems to be little controversy that these labels impact students (Osterholm, et al., 2007). Students with disabilities experience stigmatization and stereotyping from both teachers and students, being called names such as "stupid" and "retard" (p. 5).

School culture plays an essential role in the building up or oppression of any student and a school culture in which a student feels unwelcome can establish long term impacts on student personal identification and achievement (Ostermann, 2000). Students with disabilities are guaranteed a "free and appropriate public education," including the opportunity to learn and engage with others in the "least restrictive environment [LRE]" (Skiba, Arredondo, & Rausch, 2014). However, these LREs can sometimes account for segregation and difference between students receiving special education services and other students. This segregation can result in fragmentation of the student's day, blaming and labeling of students, and the treatment of students as "fringe" members of the classroom (Frattura & Capper, 2007). Included in this hostile school culture and climate is disproportionate discipline, including higher rates of expulsion and removal from class (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Losen, Hewitt, & Toldson, 2014; Skiba, Arredondo, & Rausch, 2014). Skiba, Arredondo, and Rausch (2014) note,

Opportunity to learn is one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement;

> so it is not surprising that removing students from school for disciplinary reasons is associated with negative academic outcomes, such as course failure, academic disengagement, and ultimately dropping out of school. (p. 2).

Considering disproportionality and current practices, "we must acknowledge the undeniable proof that current approaches to special education and disability are not socially just" (Capper, Rodriguez, & McKinney, 2010, p. 177).

Impact of Bias Against Disabled Students

Students with disabilities have challenges with identify formation as they consider themselves in the greater societal context (Asch, 2001). Over-identification of minorities and males as disabled (Skiba et al., 2014) compounds concerns about identity formation for students with disabilities (Bicard & Heward, 2010). Stigmatization creates further complications for identify formation; Osterholm et al. (2007), in their synthesis of 34 studies, found that "the LD label has potentially negative implications for those who bear it…analysis suggests that the learning disabilities label generates reduced or negative expectations, as well as negative stereotypes and attitudes" (p. 5). Bryant (1989) in a study of African American and Hispanic students labeled LD (learning disability), reported an individual student observing LD students covering their faces when "regular ed. kids come by…because we'd be embarrassed" (p. 91).

Capper et al. (2010), conclude, "A glance at student achievement scores on state-mandated assessments, disaggregated by special education status, quickly reveals that students who are identified with disabilities nearly always achieve far below their peers in all content areas and grade levels" (p. 177). One of the challenges in supporting students with disabilities is understanding how to best meet their learning needs. Pazey

and Cole (2013) report that training and development in pre-service preparation of educational leaders in the area of special education is greatly lacking. Pazey and Cole conclude that without deep levels of understanding, educational leaders will not attain equity consciousness and become socially just leaders. There is a lack of training and support in pre-service education, not only for campus leaders, but also for teachers (Bicard & Heward, 2010). Bicard and Heward further note that "Properly implemented, special education is not a slowed-down, watered-down version of general education" (p. 329).

A 2014 report from the U.S. National School for Education Statistics noted that, overall, students in the United States showed a four-year graduation rate average in 2012 of 80%, while students with disabilities lagged behind with only a 61% four-year graduation rate, 19% lower than students not labeled with disabilities (Kena et al., 2014). For students graduating from high school that have been labeled with disabilities, transitioning to post-secondary learning opportunities presents a challenge (Bicard & Heward, 2010). Students attending college and university may no longer have the support of individualized education programs; rather they have generalized support through the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Gartin, Rumrill, and Serebreni (1996) reviewed support for transition to post-secondary education, concluding,

> Students with disabilities graduating from high school move from a protective environment in which school personnel are legally responsible for identifying the appropriate services under the IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act] to an environment in which students are expected to self-identify as a person with a disability and request specific accommodations under Section 504, and the

Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] (p. 33).

While an eight-year longitudinal transitional study of post-secondary students with disabilities found that there was some type of post-secondary enrollment for up to 44% of young adults with disabilities, the enrollment type was limited by category, with 44% enrolling in a two- year or community college, 32% in postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools and only 19% enrolling in four-year colleges or universities (Newman et al., 2011).

Poverty

The 2016 Digest for Education Statistics reported that in 2014 twenty-one percent of school children ages five to eighteen were living in poverty (Snyder, deBrey, & Dillow, 2016). Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) define income poverty as "the condition of not having enough income to meet basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter". Poverty impacts students of all races, although seen in higher percentages in some racial demographics than others. A report produced by the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) found that "21 percent —approximately one in five—lives in a poor family" (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2016 p.1). The report elaborated on the composition of students living in poverty, noting, that "Black, American Indian, and Hispanic children are disproportionately low income and poor" (2016, p. 4). Rodriguez and Fabionar (2010) further define poverty as "both a signifier and a replicating mechanism of oppression" (p. 55) adding, "…in viewing the burden of inequality that exists in our nation, it is important to be aware of the distribution of poverty in terms of the share of poverty borne by families and ethnic minorities" (p. 61). Darling-Hammond (2010) notes that the United States has one of the highest poverty rates, however it does not provide the

support structure for the general well-being of students, nor does it provide necessary resources for students while they are in school.

Factors that Contribute to Bias Against Students Living in Poverty

In the United States, the narrative regarding poverty claims that if an individual works hard enough they are able to pull themselves out of poverty, however some research views poverty as a systemic, continuous cycle perpetuated in school systems as an extension of greater societal economic structures (Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Gorski, 2018; Rodriguez & Fabionar, 2010). A 2017 article *The United States Demographics of Poor Children*, developed by the NCCP, reports that 53% of parents of children in poverty have less than a high school education (Jiang, Granjo, & Koball, 2017). Children of poverty are more likely to become adults in poverty due to higher dropout rates and limited opportunities (Ratcliffe, 2015).

Gorski (2018) identified five stereotypes regarding people in poverty: people in poverty do not value education, poor people are lazy, poor people are substance abusers, poor people have poor reading and communication skills, and poor people have poor parenting skills. Societal biases find their way into schools in a variety of ways, including faculty and staff bias and school programs (Gorski, 2018; Rumberger, 2013). Bias in schools can also be seen through the utilization of language regarding students of poverty, often referred to as "low SES [socioeconomic status]" students; however, the levels of poverty are more varied than a standardized label (Rodriguez & Fabionar, 2010). Research conducted by Diamond, Randolph, and Spillane (2004) found that teacher expectations for their low-income students reflected broader social force, including an emphasis on deficits and a perception of less teacher responsibility for

student learning.

Impact of Childhood Poverty on Education

Childhood poverty impacts students physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. According to the NCCP (2018),

> Poverty can impede children's ability to learn and contribute to social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Poverty also can contribute to poor health and mental health. Risks are greatest for children who experience poverty when they are young and/or experience deep and persistent poverty (para. 2).

Childhood poverty also affects student reading, dropout, and graduation rates. In order to study the impact of poverty and third-grade reading skills on high school graduation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation conducted a study that included data from the families of 3, 975 students collected between 1979 and 1989. After the data was reviewed, researchers noted that "Overall, 22 percent of children who have lived in poverty do not graduate from school, compared to 6 percent of those who have never been poor" (Hernandez, 2011). Additionally, the data revealed that the percentage of poor Black or Hispanic students in the study that did not graduate rose an average of ten additional percentage points, with percentage attributes of 31% for Black students and 33% for Hispanic students.

Children living in poverty face more challenges with their physical health, as well as their social and emotional well-being (Council on Community Pediatrics, 2016; Berliner, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Poor health care, inability to afford necessary medicine, and malnutrition are detrimental factors that impact the health of children in poverty (Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012). Often children experiencing poverty

have multiple risk factors affecting their lives such as homelessness, single parent households and malnutrition (Council on Community Pediatrics, 2016; Berliner, 2009; NCCP, 2018). Wood (2003) describes the health conditions impacting children in poverty:

> Children who are poor have higher rates of hospital admissions, disability days, and death rates. They have inadequate access to preventative, curative, and emergency care, and are affected more frequently by poor nutrition, single-parent families, dysfunctional families, and poor housing. (p. 709)

These factors may impact student achievement later in life (Wood, 2003).

Childhood poverty impacts early reading rates (Hernandez, 2011; Jensen, 2009). In third grade students living in poverty for at least a year were not reading at the same level as other students (Hernandez, 2011). A longitudinal study of 2,296 students conducted by Chatterji (2006) targeting understanding of reaching achievement gaps during early childhood reported that children in the study from high-poverty households exhibited a 0.553 deviation from their well-to do-peers in kindergarten that increased to a 0.608 deviation in first grade. These reading gaps begin in early childhood and continue throughout student's educational experiences, often increasing over time (Hernandez, 2011).

The length of time a child is in poverty also contributes to lower achievement rates later in life, including failure to graduate from high school and/or college (Ratcliffe, 2015). Persistently poor children are less likely to be employed as young adults, often due to low academic achievement and high dropout rates (Council on Community Pediatrics, 2016; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Ratcliffe, 2015). Further, students in poverty have

higher rates of teen pregnancies, creating another barrier for student completion of high school and further post-secondary learning opportunities (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Ratcliffe, 2015).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the foundation of a theory based upon the understanding that each individual is comprised of multiple layers of identity (Adewunmi, 2014; Crenshaw, 2015; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2015). It is inclusive of, but not limited to, race, class, religion, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic status that focuses on the interactions of different types of discrimination (Adewunmi, 2014). "Intersectionality is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power" (Crenshaw, 2015, n.p).

It is important to understand the impact of the multiple layers of intersectionality students are experiencing (McCready, 2015). In the current climate of education and accountability, student data is disaggregated based upon single identifiers: race, socio-economic status, (dis)ability, language acquisition, and gender (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Basic accountability understandings do not incorporate the layered experiences of individuals based upon their intersectionality, nor do they extend beyond the basic identifiers (Marshall, 2004). Additionally there is a limitation in the research. Lugg (2003) notes, "American researchers who study the politics of education have generally concerned themselves with traditional schooling issues" (p. 95).

Teachers and administrators alike are still not prepared to support diverse student populations when considering individual identifiers (Lugg, 2003) .Current data based upon single identifiers indicates achievement gaps, higher dropout rates, and lower later-

in-life achievement for African American students, Hispanic students, students of poverty, students with disabilities, and particular groups identified by gender (Banks, 2010; Beaman, Wheldall, & Kemp, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Delpit, 2006; Delpit, 2012; GLSEN, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Nieto, 2010; Noltemeyer, Mujic, & McLoughlin, 2012; Noguera, 2008; NWLC, 2007; Osterholm, et al., 2007; Tyack & Hansot, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Marshall (2004) explains that educational administrators are not equipped to deal with inequities in general, stating, "traditional policy, leadership training, licensure, and selection processes for school leaders often provide only token, isolated stabs at inequities or see them as management challenges" (p. 4).

Current Context of Social Justice Movements in Schools

The continuation of a focus on basic skill testing leaves little room for the development of understandings of social justice concerns that are imperative in the context of a growing global society (Banks, 2010). Major concerns are ongoing about the continued marginalization and oppression in schools (Marshall & Oliva, 2010). However, social justice praxis is being utilized in some schools (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). District and campus leaders across the country are engaging in implementation of social justice practices, providing strong successful models for others to emulate.

Racial and Ethnic Minorities

The work supporting social justice for racial and ethnic minorities continues to be an ongoing struggle (Banks, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Delpit, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999; Sadker & Zittleman, 2010). However, reviews of practice have resulted in positive,

forward practices that have been enacted in schools (Carrington, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kafele, 2013; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Smiler, 2009; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992; Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Liston, 2005). Additionally, deeper levels of understanding about student learning needs have contributed to a growing context for supporting learning for diverse students (Banks, 2010). Within this context, studies find the following factors as constructive and progressive options for racial and ethnic minorities in PK-12 classrooms: establishing a safe environment, purposeful engagement with community, and development of culturally relevant curriculum (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2002; Kafele, 2013; Ladson-Billings 2009; Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

While schools have changed dramatically from the time when Ruby Bridges and the "Little Rock Nine" bravely took their first steps into desegregated schools, there is still a need for the establishment of a pre-existing environment of safety for all students (Kafele, 2013). In discussing classroom climate and culture, Kafele (2013) equates climate to "mood" and culture to "lifestyle" (p. 18) noting that "you must make it a priority to ensure a welcoming climate and culture for the sake of your students' academic success (p. 20). Moreover, attention should be given to the role of poverty as a key factor to be considered when developing a welcoming climate and culture for racial and ethnic minorities (Kafele, 2013). According to a five-year study completed by the U.S. Census Bureau from 2007 to 2011, African American and Hispanic students face higher levels of poverty by more than double their White counterparts, with 25.8% of African Americans, 23.2% of Hispanics, and 11.6% of Whites living below the poverty level (Macartney, Bishaw, & Fontenot, 2013). Consideration for the implementation of a

welcoming school environment should include both the greater school experience and classroom experiences (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Kafele, 2013).

Establishing a welcoming environment for the campus is an important step to building a campus culture that upholds success and reduces fear (Kafele, 2013). Developing a welcoming school environment includes attention to external structures, internal structures, and personnel. Taking account of the physical condition of a facility is essential. "Children who attend school in dilapidated, antiquated, and poorly kept facilities are likely to feel the psychological effects of inequitable school resources" (Kuykendall, 1992, p. 84). Schools where racial and ethnic minority students show more success are schools that depict welcoming and pride through the physical structure (Lineberg & Gearheart, 2013).

Internally, it is pivotal for campus leadership to establish both a culture that supports social justice understandings and one in which all students have voice and are valued (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kafele, 2013; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Schools that are more successful addressing social justice issues for racial and ethnic minorities provide students with a "safe" learning environment that espouses a message of hope (Kuykendall, 1992; Valverde, 2006). The tone of the school is established through engagement of all members of the school community, from parents and students to school faculty and staff (Kafele, 2013; Henderson et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Ladson-Billings (2009) suggests that members of the school community attend professional development and engage in ongoing learning opportunities such as year-long student teaching experiences. Kafele (2013) contends that teachers should be part of a group co-framing of culture and climate.

Regarding the role of teachers and their relationship to students, Valenzuela (1999) observes, "The view that students do not care about school stems from several sources, including social and cultural distance to student-adult relationships and the culture itself" (p. 63). Classroom teachers are essential to maintaining classroom environments that are culturally supportive. Teachers exhibiting an ethic of authentic caring and deep knowledge of culturally relevant connections contribute to students feeling welcome and connected to schools (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). Boykin and Noguera (2011) add to the discussion framing these relationships in relationship to "teacher–student relationship quality (TSRQ). In their review of several studies reviewing the connection between high TRSQ, Black and Latino students, and success rates, Boykin and Noguera conclude, "across the K-12 continuum students (especially Black and Latino students) are more positively responsive when teachers display genuine caring and support for them yet are still demanding and have high expectations" (p.90). Boykin and Noguera further note that high TSRQ, even when started in kindergarten, results in higher student achievement through 8th grade.

Relationships in the context of the school setting are important to the development of equitable schools. However, important relationships do not stop at the school doors. Schools that support equity for racial and ethnic minority students also place high emphasis on community and parental involvement, deeply embracing the concept of community/partnership schools (Henderson et al., 2002; Kuykendall, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Papalewis & Fortune, 2002; Valverde, 2006). This includes movement beyond traditional parent involvement in parent-teacher organizations and back-to-school nights with the traditional parental roles of mother and father represented (Henderson et

al., 2002; Papalewis & Fortune, 2002). Community members at these schools are engaged beyond traditional partnerships such as mentoring and financing, and acting as subject matter experts during learning experiences (Henderson et al., 2002). Further, community connections expressed in these schools include extension to families (aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents), curriculum development processes that are inclusive of partners beyond the classroom doors, collaborative review of assessments and student tracking, and shared power (Henderson et al., 2002; Kuykendall, 1992; Papalewis & Fortune, 2002; Valverde, 2006). Engagement of communities and families, as partners and co-framers deepens trust between schools and families, providing stronger support bonds for students (Henderson et al., 2002).

Consideration of the environment of student learning also includes curriculum. The materials students are exposed to during learning experiences shape student development and values (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Schools that regularly embrace ideals of social justice engage in the use of culturally relevant curriculum to promote student value "transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture" (2009, p.19). Henderson et al., (2002) discuss accessing parent and community members as active parts of curriculum development. Schools that are engaged in providing culturally relevant curriculum also go beyond the use of standard materials and textbooks. Ladson-Billings (2009) describes a learning experience in which the teacher goes beyond the traditional learning tools for understanding percentages in math by engaging students in a discussion about disproportionality during the Vietnam War (pp. 52-56). Deep considerations are also given to the access points and portrayal of Black and Latino students. Kuykendall (1992) notes that curriculum content that does not provide positive and accurate portrayal

can contribute further to institutional racism (pp. 34-35). Ongoing, purposeful, engagement of faculty, students, and community as critical consumers of curriculum and curriculum materials provides racial and ethnic minority students with opportunities to connect with their own learning and promotes academic and emotional success (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Kafele, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Gender

Although gender issues have been a part of the social justice conversation for over one hundred years, strides being made in this area are slow-going (Banks, 2010; Raffaele Mendez, & Dennie, 2012; Sadker & Zittleman, 2005; Sadker & Zittleman, 2010; Trautman & Stewart, 2009). Gender roles are institutionalized in our society to such a degree that toy aisles in major department stores are labeled as boy or girl; this presents an ongoing challenge (Goldman, 2011). When looking at PK-12 public schools in particular, changes are being made to address and reduce gender stereotypes for both males and females. In many schools, educator professional development and curriculum are moving are from awareness of gender concerns to addressing inequities (Sadker & Zittleman, 2010; Smiler, 2009; Zittleman, 2007).

In a society that is consumed by gender stereotypes, schools are moving forward with creating gender fair classrooms. Historically, schools have moved from not allowing females to attend schools at all (Sadker & Zittleman, 2010) to paying closer attention to the subjects they are studying in an attempt to broaden the role of women in non-traditional fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Sanders & Nelson, 2004). School policies have moved from exclusionary practices to open policies, such the inclusion of females in traditionally male sports. Subtle changes in the

environment, including adult modeling for students of appropriate behavior (Smiler, 2009) and reduction of sexist remarks such as "saying line up boys and girls" (p. 365) will go a long way toward changing behavior (Sadker & Zittleman, 2010; Smiler, 2009). In 2007, the Maine Department of Education conducted a review of gender equity, summarizing key characteristics of gender equitable schools, including students feeling safe and respected in school, discouraging stereotyping through traditional gender roles, and ensuring that "educators and administrators are knowledgeable about gender issues and strategies for creating gender equitable school environments" (p. 44).

Similar to addressing social justice issues in other areas, staff professional development and staff-student relationship building are essential to the addressing issues of gender equity (Maine Department of Education, 2007). Gender inequity is unique in that it is an area that nearly all educators have the ability to reflect upon, as many educators experienced gender stereotyping in their own upbringing (Maine Department of Education, 2007). Tyre (2008) discusses the importance of professional development to "deepen teacher understanding of the gender gap" (p. 283). Clewell (2002) suggests teachers become aware of their own biases and power, for example teachers may have low expectations of boys, often labeling their active behavior as inappropriate. Tyre (2008) notes that principal support may include asking teachers to mentor one another, with those that work well with a particular gender mentoring others. Professional development may also include a review of data to identify disproportionality in discipline and content (Maine Department of Education, 2007; Skiba, Arredondo, & Rausch, 2014).

Finally, considerations should be given to the curriculum and learning experiences in classrooms. Although there has been a move by textbook and resource

companies to present gender equitability (Sadker & Zittleman, 2010), there are additional considerations regarding gender equity in classrooms (Maine Department of Education, 2007; Smiler, 2009; Tyre, 2008; Tetreault, 2010). Tyre (2008) argues that in order to provide gender equitability, schools must focus on supporting both genders. She explains that while there has been a great deal of focus on the need to support girls in advanced science, mathematics, and technology classes, there is just as critical a need to support boys in language arts.

Tetreault (2010) adds to the discussion through the application of feminist phase theory. Tetreault explains that "male defined curriculum rests on the assumption that the male experience is universal and representative of humanity and constitutes a basis for generalizing about all human beings" (p. 160). Male-oriented curriculum leaves the female experience reduced (Smiler, 2009). Suggested strategies to promote gender equity curriculum include the development of lesson plans that are inclusive of both boys and girls, and a review of currently used resources for the purpose of targeting specific incorporation of both genders in the curriculum (Smiler, 2009; Sadker & Zittleman, 2010).

Curriculum and classroom experiences should engage students in critical thinking about gender. Students should engage in making contributions to the curriculum in which they consider their relationship to the context they are learning (Tyre, 2008). Smiler (2009) argues that it is essential for students to think critically about texts and engage in discussions about those texts, going so far as to think about the spatial placement of text and gender bias. For example, in newspapers, students can look at the placement of gender-based stories. Deep discussions during which students engage in open dialogue

about gender bias in the curriculum is a key strategy for creating gender-fair classrooms (Sadker & Zittleman, 2010).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer (LGBTQIA)

Recognition of the importance of LGBTQIA issues in classrooms is nascent and has only become a part of the educational discussion in the last few decades (Banks, 2010). Fostering a learning culture inclusive of LGBTQIA issues introduces unique challenges as these issues are often linked to discussions about sexuality, still a topic for concern in schools (Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010). "Cultural taboos, fear of controversy, and a deeply-rooted, pervasive homophobia have kept the educational system in the United States blind-folded and mute on the subject of childhood and adolescent homosexuality" (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992, p. 11). LGBTQIA students also face the unique challenge of the "invisible nature of one's sexual orientation (1992, p. 13). Unlike race and gender, these students face a constant struggle to fit into a heteronormative environment (1992). Forward movement in the form of PROJECT 10, the formation of GLSEN, the "It Gets Better Project" and national changes such as the 2015 Supreme Court decision to support marriage for same-sex partners contribute positive momentum to the support of LGBTQIA social justice issues (Chappell, 2015; GLSEN, 2013; It Gets Better Project, n.d.; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992).

Establishing a strong, safe school environment supportive of LGBTQIA students and families is multifaceted. Environmental changes toward a more equitable, inclusive, and safe space include establishing a supportive tone throughout the district and school, through the efforts of campus leaders, counselors, teachers, family, and students (DeWitt, 2012; Mayo, 2010). Schools and districts throughout the United States, including

PROJECT 10 in the Los Angeles Unified School District (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992) and school districts in New York City with the Children of the Rainbow (Mayo, 2010) have worked to develop and implement inclusive programs for LBTQIA students and families. Projects such as these and many others have contributed to understanding about what inclusive equitable schools look like (DeWitt 2012; Mayo, 2010; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992).

Equitable schools that promote inclusive learning environments start with a clear and common tone about the importance of inclusive and positive learning. This tone needs to be endorsed by the school-board, superintendent, and campus leadership (DeWitt, 2012). The tone is established through policies of support for LGBTQIA students. DeWitt (2012) provides a vignette about Westside High School, describing its code of conduct with its inclusive language for LGBT students, and notes that this policy promotes a positive school culture that is not afraid of LGBT issues.

Uribe and Harbeck (1992), in their study of PROJECT 10 in Los Angeles, found that the district was instrumental in setting the tone for its campuses supportive of LGBTQIA students. The district initially focused its efforts toward inclusion of LGBTQIA students on counselor training, but eventually branched out to all stakeholders, including parents and students. Counselors often can provide support to families, extended families, and the community through the provision of resources and connections to community support (D'Augelli, 1992; DeWitt, 2012).

Students and teachers also can help us establish the tone for inclusion of LGBTQIA students. Permitting and fostering organizations such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) assists in establishing a tone of inclusivity and understanding

(Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010). Further, GSAs "keep students engaged in school and help to create a more open and accepting school climate" (DeWitt, 2012, p. 75). Schools with GSAs generally have a more supportive environment than those without such organizations. The absence of these types of organizations may indicate intolerance to difference (DeWitt, 2012). All members of the school community should work to display respect for all students to set the tone for anti-bullying and harassment (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). In addition, the use of appropriate language such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered (DeWitt, 2012) should be encouraged, as it reduces the stigma of being LGBTQIA and discourages the use of bullying language.

In order to establish a cohesive tone for school culture, there is often a need for professional development (Gordon, 2004). Uribe & Harbeck (1992), in their study of PROJECT 10, found that it was essential to train a core group of teachers, administrators, and counselors. The work for preparing teachers and leaders to be advocates for all students begins in preservice learning and continues throughout the educator's career (Mayo, 2014). Staff learning should include understanding one's own bias, and working against bias (Kumishuro, 2009; Mayo, 2014). Kumishuro (2009) also notes that teachers should know the limits to their knowledge and understanding, considering the reality that they can never truly know all of the influences acting daily upon each student.

Koschoreck and Slattery (2010) explain that historically educators "bemoan the lack of programmatic guidance on how to address the needs of this particular group of students" (p. 157). However, the authors also note that this type of programmatic guidance has been available since the early 1980's and continues to be updated. Research on professional development best practices supports the following strategies:

recognition of harassment concerns; deep training of counselors for sensitivity and awareness; training faculty and staff to intervene and support victims of harassment (2010); deep examination of biases within the institution and challenging institutional practices (Kumashiro, 2009); and inclusion of speakers from local community groups (DeWitt, 2012).

Murphy (1992) conducted a study on educating medical professionals about gay and lesbian issues, research that parallels educational institutions as social service organizations. Murphy found that an understanding that gay and lesbians are impacted by heterosexist and homophobic attitudes of society was essential. Further, she found that utilization of an "integrated approach to learning" was important. She noted that a "separate approach leads to marginalization" (p. 236).

Professional development also includes development of curriculum (Gordon, 2004). Developing a multicultural curriculum that is reflective of social justice issues, inclusive of minority groups' positive contributions to society, and connected to student lives and real-world application is essential for any curriculum development moving away from marginalization and oppression. Inclusion of social justice issues in curriculum should be reflective of all groups, including LGBTQIA students and families. Formal curriculum such as resources, lessons, and class discussions should uphold diversity inclusive of LGBTQIA issues (DeWitt, 2012). Resources for students such as textbooks, library resources, and media should be inclusive. For example, library books and resources should "promote inclusion of gay men, lesbians, and gay and lesbian families" (Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010, p. 166).

In the 1990's the New York City Board of Education engaged in the development of the *Children of the Rainbow* curriculum guide, designed to support the development of respect for gay men and lesbians. *Children of the Rainbow* was the first effort to bring sexual minorities into the discussion about curriculum (Mayo, 2010). Patrick and Sanders (1994) conducted a study of the inclusion of lesbian and gay issues in London schools. Their findings revealed the deliberate inclusion of lesbian and gay topics beginning at Year 2 and continuing throughout the school years. For example, when discussing sexuality in health classes, homosexuality is addressed in discussions of the social, emotional, and physical dimensions of sexuality; one unit in Year 10 includes lesbian, gay, and heterosexual relationships and literature.

Development of an open culture and tone that is welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQIA students provides opportunities for pedagogical support of curriculum. DeWitt (2012) suggests beginning early with active reading discussions using during early childhood education. He also posits ongoing engagement in teachable moments, and utilization of classroom discussions engage in discussions about typical gender stereotypes when appropriate.

Students with Disabilities

"The goal of creating inclusive schools should not focus just on the needs of students with disabilities, but should be embedded in a broader context of difference and similarity," (Carrington, 1999, p. 259). Strategic support for students with disabilities has been offered in the context of compliance and regulation policies since the inception of IDEA, and has brought to the forefront inclusion of learning for students with disabilities in least restrictive environments (Bicard & Heward, 2010). Research and practice over

the years have provided data for how schools move from low-level compliance inclusion to schools that promote a general atmosphere endorsing cultures of difference, equity, and inclusion (Bicard & Heward, 2010; Carrington, 1999). Key practices of these schools fall under three general umbrellas: culture/tone, professional development, and curriculum (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002).

While IDEA requires schools to address the inclusion of students with disabilities, many educators still engage with the traditional medical paradigm for students with disabilities, meaning they see these students first as having some sort of defect or impairment, and secondary as learners (Carrington, 1999). Schools that show greater success with students with disabilities engage in whole school inclusiveness. In these schools, culture is foremost in determining success for all students, and this implies the need for professional development for all staff, and strong, purposeful communication networks (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002).

Alvarez (2014) writes the story of a Michigan mother of a child with autism looking for a strong school culture that felt like "people were really invested in her kid and weren't willing to write anybody off". The parent noted that at first they could not clearly identify exactly what they were looking for, realizing later that it was a supportive school culture. Part of what the parents noted was the physical setting and space as a cue; "look out for Rifton chairs" noted the father as they toured schools. Further, successful schools do not have physical segregation from non-labeled co-learners (Osterholm, Nash, & Kritsonis, 2007). Another important consideration is how students with disabilities are grouped both in and out of the classroom (McLeskey & Waldorf, 2002).

Establishing a school inclusive of students with disabilities requires paradigm shifts and strong systemic changes (Carrington, 1999; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). McLeskey and Waldron (2002) describe the lessons learned from a thirteen year endeavor to reduce separate special education classes at the elementary level, where formal evaluations indicate both academic and student success. They summarized these key lessons learned:

1. Change must be substantive and inclusive of every aspect of a school.
2. Change is not an add-on. It is all encompassing.
3. Change is inclusive of all classrooms.
4. Change is inclusive of all personnel. It should include administrative support and vision, and teacher ownership and inclusion.

Carrington (1999) posits that in order to achieve educational equity categorical distinctions of regular and special education must be eliminated.

According to Osterholm, Nash, and Kritsonis (2007), labels may generate negative stereotypes and attitudes, and have negative implications for the person being labeled. Schools that strive toward equity and true inclusion of students with disabilities deeply consider the role of communication and trust (Villa et al., 2005). Communication and trust not only establish strong teacher-student relationships, but also foster strong collegial relationships among staff (Bouillion, 2009; Villa et al., 2005). Strong relationships between all levels of staff and use of proper communication provide positive models for students and colleagues (Bouillion, 2009). A unique consideration that must be made when supporting students with disabilities is the relationship between general education and special education teachers. For communication to develop it is

important that teachers that work together understand the reciprocity of their relationships (Villa et al., 2005). Finally, communication with parents and the larger community is essential (Alvarez, 2014). Communication for the larger community includes the school and its leadership understanding the values of the local community as well as the collective values and skills of the school (Carrington, 1999).

A cornerstone for any substantial change to ensure that teachers are prepared for inclusive schools is professional development (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). While there may be learning opportunities for campus leaders, teachers, and other staff, professional development should go beyond compliance which lends itself to a medical mindset (Carrington, 1999) to supporting learners in classrooms. Alvarez (2014) noted recently that, for the first time since the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act passed, the federal government has offered more help to teachers for supporting outcomes rather than just compliance with rules and regulations. Professional development begins with pre-service learning and is constant throughout an educator's career for both leaders and faculty (Bouillion, 2009; Carrington, 1999; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). Foundationally, schools that incorporate inclusive practices for students begin with an understanding, and sometimes changing, of their own beliefs about roles and responsibilities. Teachers need to examine their own beliefs in order to establish a focus on the learner, a focus that is essential for major reform (Carrington, 1999). Further, "teachers must gain new understandings of teaching and learning as well as new skills" (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002, p. 70). These new understandings will allow them to reach new levels of confidence.

Schools that are successful with the inclusion of students with disabilities engage in a variety of professional development opportunities that move away from the one-day consultant delivery (Bouillion, 2009; Carrington, 1999). Focusing on student engagement, communication with students and with co-teachers, and providing personalized professional development are strategies that these schools use to engage faculty (Carrington, 1999; Losen, Hewitt, & Toldson, 2014). Involvement and voice in decision-making processes, modeling, review of disaggregated data, coaching, collaboration, and visitations to successful off-site schools are just a few of the strategies noted in the research (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Villa et al., 2005).

Another professional development opportunity for teachers and faculty is a review of the curriculum (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Specific curriculum processes are included in schools that successfully support students with disabilities, including curriculum that is goal and standard oriented, is differentiated and supports students at all levels, is engaging, and is authentically assessed (Bender, 2008; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006; Villa et al., 2005).

Curriculum development in schools that show more success with learning equity for students with disabilities begins with a goal orientated approach focused on learning standards. Two approaches that schools have been engaging in are the Understanding by Design (UBD) model and the Universal Design Model (UDL) (Bremer et al., 2002; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). These models can also work in conjunction with one another. Bremer et al. (2002) explain Universal Design stating,

> The premise underlying Universal Design is that environments and products should be designed, from the start, for maximum usability. From the standpoint

> of curricular access, Universal Design seeks to offer flexible curriculum and learning environments that allow students with widely varying abilities the opportunity to access the general curriculum and achieve academic content standards for the school, district, or state.

Universal Design is a framework that supports equitable use for learning environments (2002).

UBD is a curriculum design that looks at what we teach and how we assess it (Tomlison & McTighe, 2006). Both UDL and UBD use curricular frameworks that provide inclusive curriculum design rather relying on an additive model. Curriculum design models like UDL and UBD allow for curriculum modifications in the general education classroom (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002), Tomlison and McTighe (2006) *in Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design*, couple UBD with Differentiated Instruction. Differentiated instruction begins in the planning stages of curriculum, providing both general education and special education teachers the opportunity to plan varied processes and procedures to support individual learning.

Classrooms in successful schools that are a part of the inclusion movement develop in-class learning strategies that allow all students to engage in highly rigorous learning opportunities (Grant & Sleeter, 2010). Strategies such as hands-on experiences, collaboration, grouping, use of technology, and peer-mediated instruction support and accommodate all levels of learners (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Villa et al., 2005). Use of authentic assessments provide students with occasion to share their knowledge in a variety of ways best suited to support their learning style (Villa et al., 2005). Grant and Sleeter (2010) explain that these learning environments provide students with the

following critical thinking skills: learning how to be responsible for the direction of their learning, learning how to learn, and learning about wise decision-making. Grant and Sleeter add that these learning environments support student understandings about equity by allowing students opportunities to learn how to analyze institutional inequity within their own circumstances, and providing collaborative work that can build bridges across oppressed groups.

Students Living in Poverty

Current educational practices have moved toward recognition of and construction of support for students living in poverty (Santiago, Ferrera, & Blank, 2008). Support for administrators and teachers through professional development have begun to change the educational environment for children living in poverty. Further, many schools have begun to address the physical and emotional needs of children living in poverty. (Lineburg & Gearhart, 2013; Santiago, Ferrera, & Blank, 2008).

Developing capacity for social justice leadership and helping teachers to understand how to support the varying needs of students living in poverty is essential (Harris, 2002). Schools engaging in this focused professional development create a more welcoming environment and reduce stress for students living in poverty (Harris, 2002; Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale, 2007). Building capacity in school leaders and faculty provides an opportunity for educators to break through societal stereotypes and to better serve students (Gorski, 2018; Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale, 2007).

In order to reduce the impact of poverty on students' education, Rodriguez and Fabionar (2010) suggest that school leaders work through educational settings to address the broader context of childhood poverty. At Thomas Edison Elementary School in Port

Chester New York, the idea of a "full-service" school has been implemented. Approximately 80% of the students at Edison receive free and reduced lunch. The school serves a high population of recent immigrants from Hispanic countries. The school first identified student needs, including support for medical, social, and after-school care. The school formed a partnership with a local health center to have a nurse practitioner at the school, a local guidance center to bring in a case worker, and a non-profit organization to support the after-school care program. After ten years, the school reported higher achievement scores, and 75% family participation in school events (Santiago, Ferrera, & Blank, 2008). The full service school is one example of social justice leaders—including administrators and teachers—addressing the needs of students affected by poverty.

Intersectionality in Schools

McCready (2015), in the conclusion to a special issue of *Curriculum Inquiry* discussing Queer of Color Analysis (QOCA), reviews several articles about disruption of the current climate in order to support the experiences of students amid multiple layers of intersectionality and oppression. QOCA is, "a form of critique designed to unsettle the dominate discourses, key questions, and normative beliefs of educational studies" (McCready, 2013, p. 512). QOCA engages in developing the understanding of the importance of addressing the multiple layers of identity experience. QOCA looks at redressing how educators look at race, gender, and sexual identity, what constitutes advocacy, and how teaching and learning can be altered to better support student learning.

Cruz (2015) provided an example of how disruption of the standard curriculum can alter the teaching and learning to address student intersectionality. Cruz shares the

experiences of students using video poems to help students explore their own identities and share their understandings with others. These videos provided students the opportunity to engage in non-standardized curricular discourse about their internal experiences as LGBTQIA students of color, as well as providing them with the opportunity to explore external influences such as HIV/AIDS and violence. McCready (2015) explains the importance of this work, stating, "Cruz exposes the limitations of the curriculum that corresponds to the mainstream notions of what it means to be intelligent and therefore worthy of citizenship" (p. 514).

In addition to the work being done by Cruz to move toward alternative teaching and learning experiences, Marquez and Brockenbrough (2015) are disrupting the way student legal cases are being viewed. This article sought to analyze the experiences of queers of color in relation to legal cases in California. Marquez and Brockenbrough explored a variety of court cases in California regarding anti-queer bias. They noted that in most cases including intersectionality of color and sexual orientation focused solely on sexual orientation. Of this work McCready (2015) comments,

> Must queer youth of color de-emphasize and devalue the range of ways they are potentially being marginalized in order to be advocated for efficiently under the law, which better recognizes discriminate based o race or sexual orientation rather than race and sexual orientation (p. 515)?

When considering student support, the work of Marquez and Brockenbrough (2015) moves the current climate from the status quo of addressing student supports through only one identifier to re-imagining advocacy for queer youth as well as for all students.

Leadership for Social Justice in Schools

"Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors to contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 5). The definition of leadership in educational settings continues to morph over time. Educational leadership is vague and ambiguous, still lacking definition (Stewart, 2006). To say that leadership in educational settings is similar to the types of leadership in the corporate world would be a misnomer. Educational settings do share some similarities with corporate leadership settings; however applications may look different. Transactional, transformational, moral, and social justice forms of leadership are found in educational settings with varying degrees of implementation (Marks & Printy, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1990).

There are several components that assist in framing the definition of leadership, including the relationship between the leaders and the followers as well as considerations of power, motivations, purpose, moral compass, and action versus inaction. Additionally, these components should be considered in relation to community context including historical, local, and broad contexts (Burns, 1978). Further, layers of leadership style and moral and ethical implications are included, deepening the complexity (Burns, 1978). In order to support understanding about leadership styles that imbue social justice leaders, the following discussion provides a review of the literature about leadership styles found in schools as well as the literature on leadership capacity building.

Transformational Leadership

James MacGregor Burns' *Leadership* (1978) identified conceptual understandings of both transactional and transformational leadership as a part of a broader study of

leadership and its historical context. In the broadest sense, transactional leadership is a type of quid pro quo relationship between leaders and followers (Burns, 1978). Bass (1990) categorizes transactional leaders by their actions ranging from the highly involved contingent reward leadership to a more hands-off laissez-fair approach. According to Bass, leadership is transactional when it involves motivation through promise of reward or fear of penalty and generally results in mediocre levels of accomplishment. Conversely, transformational leadership studies have indicated higher effectiveness and overall satisfaction (Leithwood & Poplin, 1992).

Transformational leadership focuses on collaboration with followers on an established mission. "The concept of intellectual *leadership* brings in the role of *conscious purpose* drawn from values. The intellectual may be a mandarin; the intellectual leader cannot be. Intellectual leadership is *transforming* leadership" (Burns, 1978, p. 142). Unlike transactional leaders, transformational leaders are key contributors to the difference between success and failure and work to change the organizational culture rather than succumbing to the established culture (Bass, 1990). Success or failure is derived from the ability of a transformational leader to instill a sense of mission and vision, a mission and vision that may have prosocial motivation and are connected to concerns beyond the organization (Bass, 1990).

Transformational leaders are risk-taking and self-determined (Bass, 1990). These leaders develop and sustain collaborative school cultures, foster teacher development, and work collectively to solve problems (Leithwood & Poplin, 1992). Avolio and Bass (1998) add to the list of transformational leadership behaviors noting that such leaders do not support the status quo and they attempt to shape and create environmental circumstances

rather than reacting to existing circumstances. Leithwood (1994) includes change agency in his description of transformational leadership, noting that transformational leaders move organizations to second-order changes that create productive work cultures.

Understanding the relationship between leaders and followers provides insight to the type of leadership style in use (Sergiovanni, 1996). Transformational leaders have a different type of relationship with their followers than transactional leaders (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990). Relationships within transformational contexts include motivation, deeper connection to purpose, power, and capacity building. Sergiovanni (1990), in his explanation of stages of leadership, explains that transformational leadership is value-added leadership. Sergiovanni's stages of leadership reach a pinnacle with leadership bonding, a high level of transformational leadership. In this stage, he explains that people move from being subordinates to followers. These relationships foster followers that accept responsibility and obligation and belief in what they are doing. Bass (1990) reports that when working with transformational leaders, employees do a better job and have stronger communication support.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) conducted a survey of 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students exploring the relationship of transformational leadership with organizational conditions and student engagement. Results of this study found strong impact on organizational leadership and moderate, but significant results on student engagement. The study supported the theory that transformational leadership resulted in higher levels of teacher motivation to engage in professional growth, develop strong collaborative relationships, and develop significant relationships with leadership. Belchetz and Leithwood (2007), in a study of the role of school context in successful leadership, found

several key characteristics of transformational leadership, including identifying and articulating vision, fostering group goals, providing individual support, intellectual stimulation, creating collaborative cultures, and building productive relationships with families and communities. Marks and Printy (2003) conducted a study of twenty-four nationally restructured schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools. Results from their study indicated that there was a strong connection between instructional leadership and transformational leadership. Their findings indicated that an integrated model of instructional leadership and transformational leadership was the most effective.

The complexities of educational leadership present challenges to the full realization of transformational leadership (Leithwood, 1994). Friedman (2007) conducted an analysis of a case study of a collective of high school leaders working to enact change completed by Stake in 2000. Friedman states, "current educational reform is grounded in a transactional framework of leadership that is a prescription for mediocrity" (p. 208). In a climate focused on test scores and accountability there are constant pressures to perform with immediate turn around (Friedman, 2007). However, Burns (1978) notes that transformational leadership elevates organizations and that one of the key benefits of transformational leadership is in relationships of mutual stimulation and elevation, moving followers into leaders and leaders into moral agency.

Moral Leadership

Both transformational and transactional leadership have connections to moral leadership. Transactional leadership includes moral choices such as fairness and honesty. The behaviors of transformational leaders are guided by moral choices and actions including setting the tone for greater mission and vision and building relationships within

the organization that establish collaborative communication and capacity building (Starratt, 2004). Not long ago, discussion of moral actions in conjunction with supervision would not have occurred, however, much has changed since the early studies of leadership. Organizations are more complex, and involve "emotional responses, moral ambiguity, political influence peddling and defensive ego investment" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998, p. 74).

Moral leaders take responsibility for the students, families in a school community, and faculty on a campus (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998; Starratt, 2004). Starratt (2004, p. 50-52), in a study of ethical leadership shares four key roles of responsible leadership:

1. Leaders are *educators* and continue their own learning about the human condition.
2. Leaders are *administrators* engaged in the study of leadership who seek out dialogue with other administrators to assist with new perspectives and challenges.
3. Leaders are *educational administrators* seeking to develop unity for the institution.
4. Leaders are *citizen administrators* focusing on responsibility for promoting the mission and supporting the community.

Leaders enacting this type of leadership style work as stewards for the values of the community (Burns, 1978; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998; Starratt, 2004). Beyond this, they consider how "the integrity of their own lives is tied up in relationships with people and circumstances" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998, p. 77). Relationships are a key factor in any organization; in moral leadership relationships, Burns (1978) explains, "leaders and

led have a relationship not only of power but of mutual needs, aspirations, and values" (p. 4), and "moral leadership emerges from and always returns to the fundamental wants, needs, aspirations, and values of the followers" (p. 4).

Schools continue to struggle with the paradox of defining themselves in terms of traditional organizational structures while having different needs than traditional organizations; they act as a transitional factor between families and adulthood and are expected to instill character and virtue in their students (Sergiovanni, 1996). Starratt (1995) poses the question, "Does moral leadership bring about automatic reform in schools" (p.118), noting that there will always be barriers to the realization of moral leadership. Burns (1978) contends that moral leaders will always face adversity and must be willing to accept that reality. Reform efforts take time to realize and current educational settings have unrealistic timelines, prefer quick-fix or structural solutions, and lack follow-through (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991).

Furman and Starratt (2002) overlay moral leadership with democratic education in order to ascertain the role of democracy in education, noting that Dewey (1909) believed that education serves a role in the development of democratic citizens. Furman and Starratt (2002) pose the question of fidelity to the original conception of democracy, positing that schools have moved away from the original intentions for citizenship building and left democracy as a placeholder in Social Studies classes. The authors challenge the status quo stating, "rethinking the concept of democratic community for 21st century schools requires leaving behind the comfortable but naive image of community in which a sense of belonging is achieved through identification of people who are 'like us'" (p. 115).

Social Justice Leadership

Dialogue around social justice leadership has been ongoing for nearly four decades, starting with Edmond's call to educators to support marginalized students in 1979 (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Theoharis, 2009; Theoharis, 2010). There are multiple contributing sources surrounding the definition for social justice leadership (Theoharis, 2009). In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1971) frames social justice, stating, "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions…" (p. 3). Rawls's theory of justice includes fairness, cooperation, and social inequality. Schools provide an opportunity to cultivate citizens who will practice the values instilled in them throughout their lives. Schools also provide an opportunity to instill justice, democratic values, understandings of inequity, and platforms for fairness (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). Foster (1986) extended the theoretical underpinnings of social justice into school administration with *Paradigms and Promises: New Approaches to Educational Administration.* Foster's work connects the concepts of moral leadership with administrative practice, noting that "administrators in educational settings are critical humanists...and engage in an effort to develop, challenge, and liberate human souls" (p. 17).

Freire (1998) in *Pedagogy of Freedom* examines the role of education as a conduit for social justice enactment. Freire sets the tone for both the role of the educator and the educator's professional learning, stating, "The education of teachers ought to insist on …the obvious importance of teachers knowing the ecological, social, and economic context of the place in which they live and teach" (pp. 121-122). Freire notes that as a teacher it is important to open oneself up to knowing and understanding the world in which one's students live. Connecting more deeply to social justice tenets,

Freire explains that it is the role of the teacher to cultivate open dialogues about ideological and ethical issues. Freire asks the question, how do we "convert merely rebellious attitudes into revolutionary ones?" (p. 74), and answers, "transformation of the world implies a dialectic between the two actions: denouncing the process of dehumanization and announcing the dream of a new society" (p. 74) Freire intertwines transformational, moral, and social justice leadership by positing the expectation of moral and transformational education with the greater context of societal change.

Educational research offers many definitions for social justice and social justice leadership (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007). Social justice leadership draws from transformational and moral leadership and moves toward alternate ways of framing leadership including reframing the view of power in leadership. Dantley & Tillman (2010) in their synthesis of the key characteristics and definitions proposed by leading researchers in the field of social justice leadership summarized the following five characteristics:

1. A consciousness of broader social, cultural, and political contexts of schools.
2. A critique of the marginalizing behaviors and predispositions of schools and their leadership.
3. A commitment to the more genuine enactment of democratic principles in schools.
4. A moral obligation to articulate a counterhegemonic vision or narrative of hope regarding education.
5. A determination to move from rhetoric to civil rights activism.

Enacting social justice leadership requires systemic changes. Policy development at the national, state, and local levels including changes of policies in areas like licensure standards and resource allocation, as well as courageous conversations within communities in order to realize the paradigm shift to social justice education. Marshall and Oliva (2010) elucidate that social justice leadership requires, "astute activists, ready with strategies and the sense of responsibility to make schools equitable" (p. 1).

Praxis for social justice leadership is most often seen on a case by case basis enacted by individual campus principals and leadership or on a very small scale (Theoharis, 2007). McKenzie et al. (2008) contend that "the perfect social justice leader or the perfect social justice school does not exist" (p. 114). The following studies provide insight to how campus leaders engage in social justice leadership, supporting understanding of theory into practice.

Theoharis (2007) conducted a study of social justice leadership from the principal's perspective. The study included seven principals that were pre-identified as social justice advocates. The data collected during the study indicated that the principals enacted social justice tenets by reducing marginalization and oppression through support such as the elimination of pull-out programs for special education students and English as a Second Language students, de-tracking the mathematics program, and establishing expectations for broader opportunities and higher rigor. Theoharis notes, "all of the principals felt they had a duty and a 'moral obligation' to raise achievement for marginalized students" (p. 233). Principals at these schools also worked to develop staff capacity by having ongoing open discussions about race and equity and to empower staff through inclusion in leadership discussions and decisions. Further, they developed

physically welcoming schools and connected with the community through home visits and by reaching out specifically to marginalized parents. Working as social justice leaders resulted in "raised student achievement, improved school structures, re-centered and enhanced staff capacity, and strengthening of school culture and community" (p. 232).

While the study by Theoharis looked at broad social justice movements within a campus community through principal leadership, Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) conducted a study of a campus leader enacting multicultural and culturally relevant leadership within the context of daily interactions with teachers and families. This study focused not only on the leader's understanding, but the perceptions of teachers and families. Identified themes included caring for others (moral and ethical), persistence and persuasiveness that resulted in empowering minority students (risk-taking in atmosphere of challenge), building relationships (valuing others), supporting communication and being collaborative, and fostering cultural responsiveness in others. Embedded in these broad categorical findings were descriptions of specific actions and results connected to social justice leadership. The campus leader in this study demonstrated social justice leadership ideals through the creation of vision, elevation of awareness and engagement in culturally relevant practices in curriculum and in daily practice, creating and modeling caring relationships with all students, and developing school-parent collaboration.

Political and Practical Applications of Leadership

When considering leadership, it is important to contextualize the role of leaders in the political landscape and the practical applications of implementing leadership. Burns (1978) places both transactional and transformational leaders in political contexts,

explaining that leadership in education and in government both involve, "reciprocal raising of levels of motivation rather than indoctrination or coercion" (p. 448). Schools are political due to the interplay of different roles, resource needs, and hierarchy. This interaction coupled with differing values and beliefs about the purpose of schools creates a political climate characterized by power relations and conflict (Bolman & Deal, 2010).

In order to negotiate political barriers and move theory into practice leaders must access multiple tools for practical application (Burns, 1978). As a natural construct of their role, leaders seek to influence others, including their followers, other leaders, and community members. To this end, Burns offers,

> Political leadership can be defined only in terms of, and to the extent of realization of, purposeful, substantive change in the conditions of people's lives. *The ultimate test of practical leadership is the realization of intended, real change that meets people's enduring needs* (p. 461).

Negotiating the praxis of theoretical leadership and practical leadership requires ongoing understanding of power dynamics, key players, and agendas (Bolman & Deal, 2010). In this landscape, leaders must employ the use of tools such as negotiation, building relationships, embracing conflict, developing alliances, and creating open dialogue to move goal attainment forward (Bolman & Deal, 2010; Burns, 1978).

The practical application of theory to practice is found in moral, ethical, transactional, and transformational leadership to varying degrees (Burns, 1978). Social justice leadership also includes the need for walking the line of praxis in moving goal attainment efforts forward. For example, Theoharis' report (2007) on principals enacting social justice leadership included the importance of building supportive networks

Leadership Capacity Building

Continuous development and capacity building are an essential part of growth in an organization (Fullan, 2008). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) Professional Standards for Educational Leaders were recently updated (2015). These standards and the previous iterations include the development of capacity and professional learning of staff, however critics have argued that these standards do not clearly or specifically address social justice in schools (Cambron-McCabe, 2010; English, 2005). Gordon (2004) in *Professional Development for School Improvement: Empowering Learning Communities* provides examples of the increasing need for professional development, including transformational leadership. He adds that this need is not yet met, citing several previously noted reasons such as failure to address individual needs, and adding the following: failure of university preparation programs, lack of support and understanding in the general public, and resistant conventional school cultures.

While there is general discussion about ongoing capacity building for all members of an organization (NPBEA, 2015; Gordon, 2004; Fullan, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004), there is little focus on specific professional learning for district leadership outside of organizational support such as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and conferences noted by Dantley and Tillman (2010).

Hafner (2010) notes that over the last decade more professional development opportunities both in leadership preparation and district professional development programs are focusing on equity, diversity, and social justice. Additionally, she notes that there has been a growing body of research supporting social justice for educational

leadership. Despite this growing body of research, implementation of social justice professional learning opportunities still are limited both in pre-service and in-service experiences (Cambron-McCabe, 2010). Although there have been calls for social justice leadership in education, capacity building for social justice leadership in pre-service programs is limited and program-based rather than systemic (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; English, 2005; Theoharis, 2007). As campus and district leaders, educational administrators attend some form of leadership preparation program and are required to obtain licensure. Continuing learning for social justice leadership after becoming a campus or district leader, however, generally relies upon the impetus of the individual to continue their professional growth or on the predilection of district initiatives (Dantley & Tillman, 2010).

In consideration of pre-service programs, English (2005) exclaims, "professional preparation can't just be current and about the times, it must be a product of the times to come" (p. 82). Preparation programs, while engaging in more development for social justice leadership, continue to be criticized for not providing enough support and preparation in this area (English, 2005; Theoharis, 2008). Regional programs such as the work at Auburn University and the work at the University of Texas provide preparation programs with a social justice lens, however there are no nationally normed guidelines for these types of programs and these systems remain the exception to the rule (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). English (2005) challenges preparation programs stating, "much of what we profess to be about not only lacks empirical verification, but it remains rooted in cultural forms and perspectives that are

themselves barriers to the very agendas (such as social justice) we say we support" (p. 82).

In-service professional learning for social justice leadership ranges from completely self-directed to high-level support. High-level supports may take the form of programs such as Harvard's Public Education Leadership Project. This project, however, limits the number of participants per district to eight and the size of the school district must be larger than 30,000 (Executive Education: The Summer Institute, n.d.) . It also does not necessarily focus on the issue of social justice leadership. Dantley and Tillman (2010) note three primary opportunities for the praxis of leadership for social justice: (1) research, scholarship, and teaching, (2) conference presentations, and (3) organizational initiatives (p. 26). These opportunities provide for individual growth. However, in order to result in organizational impact, the onus is on the district or campus leader to apply the learning at the organizational level in a way that transforms the organization's culture. Fullan, Hill, and Crévola (2006) contend that professional learning cannot happen unless the district engages all schools in a "joint journey" including all teachers and principals (p. 99).

Marshall and Ward (2004) asked the question "Where do practicing administrators get support, advice, knowledge, and skills to meet pressure to remedy societal and school-based inequities?" (p. 2) Marshall and Ward's study included as participants educational leaders guiding institutions such as the Council for Chief State School Offices (CCSSO), the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), National School Boards Association (NSBA) and other national groups. The purpose of the study was to determine in-service training opportunities for equity issues. The

overarching result of the study indicated a "Yes…but" (p. 5) mentality. Participants agreed upon the moral need for social justice leadership and "asserted administrators' need for support, advice, knowledge, and skills to address societal and school-based inequities" (p. 5). However, they also raised concerns about barriers for supporting social justice including the vagueness of the NPBEA standards, suggesting that these leadership standards are not specific or explicit. Additionally, they cited barriers related to local political pressures that reduced the desire to focus on social justice leadership. Regarding professional development specifically, participants admitted there was limited attention to these issues in the form of budgeting, staff time, and staff priority. Starratt (2004) notes,

School districts should be much more proactive in providing continuing education opportunities for their administrators, not simply so they can master new budgetary or implementation processes, but so that they can also deepen their understanding of the moral responsibilities that leadership entails. (p.134)

Need for the Study

A review of the literature suggests that there continues to be a very real need for social justice leadership and concern about the lack of such leadership. Academic and social inequities continue to dominate schools resulting in low achievement and high dropout rates (Banks, 2010; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Social justice leadership has been a part of leadership and educational leadership for over a quarter of a century (Freire, 1998; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Rawls, 1971). Marshall and Oliva (2010) note, "recent attempts in policies (e.g. No Child Left Behind) and licensure (ex. NPBEA) for educational administrators set an expectation for equitable outcomes. They do not connect the dots, however, to integrate social-justice oriented methods, strategies, and training" (p. 11). In

conjunction with this discussion, development and implementation of social justice leadership faces barriers. Unclear professional development standards, non-existent guidelines for administrative pre-service programs, and local political concerns (Marshall & Ward, 2004) essentially leave practitioners on their own to decide what social justice leadership is and how to implement it with fidelity in their districts and on their campuses.

This study provided an understanding about the current level of capacity for social justice leadership. This study sought to understand what district and campus leaders know about social justice leadership and how it is implemented in schools. The study also sought to understand the perceptions of principals and district leaders of the need to co-frame social justice leadership, the need for district support for campuses, and the need for the collaboration of district and school leaders in the actualization of social justice. Marshall and Oliva (2010) contend,

> Leaders cannot make social justice happen by their passion and will alone. The huge shifts in cultural understanding and societal and school expectations will happen only with the shared values, coalitions, networking, and mutual support that come with the power of enlarging groups of people in social movements which results in the building of societal capital and eventually political power (p. 14).

Calls for moral and ethical leadership to assist in developing democratic citizens have been made since the inception of the U.S. education system. English (2005) ponders whether the purpose of education is to instill market place values or social justice values. With limited guidance from preparation programs, licensing requirements, and

professional learning opportunities social justice leadership will continue to live in the realm of the theoretical until research and practice come together in the promotion of social justice (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Marshall & Ward, 2004).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The goals of this study were to investigate and produce hypotheses about the perspectives of campus and district administrators on the need for capacity building and collaboration to implement social justice leadership at the district and campus levels. Qualitative research engages in the study of social constructs and natural phenomenon in order to develop understandings of the natural world (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Education is a socially constructed institution developed through the understanding of socially constructed phenomenon (Wortham & Jackson, 2008). School and district leaders, as meaning makers in a socially constructed world, both react to and develop these social phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). In order to learn more about the phenomenon of social justice leadership in education I investigated the following:

- central office administrators' and campus leaders' perceptions of the current climate for capacity building for social justice at the central office and campus levels;
- central office administrators' and campus leaders' perceptions of their own capacities for social justice leadership, and of capacities they need to develop to be more effective social justice leaders;
- central office administrators' and campus leaders' perceptions of changes needed at the district and campus level to promote social justice, and;
- central office administrators' and campus leaders' perceptions of ways that central office administrators and campus leaders can collaborate to promote social justice.

Merriam (2009) notes, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to these experiences" (p. 5). This study sought to understand how educators in administrative positions perceive social justice leadership in education.

Research Perspective

As researchers consider philosophical frameworks and processes for conducting a study, they must understand the purpose of the study, the questions they are seeking to answer, and their own perspectives of the world (Crotty, 1998; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). This study was conducted in the context of applied research. Merriam (2009) notes, "applied research is undertaken to improve the quality of practice of a particular discipline" (p. 3). Designed as a qualitative study applying a constructionist epistemology and accessing the interpretivist theoretical framework, grounded theory methods were employed to discover generalizations about social justice leadership in education.

Epistemology: Constructionism

This study was conducted within the epistemological framework of constructionism. Constructionism in its most generalized form engages in making meaning of the socially constructed world through interaction with multiple perceptions and realities (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). As part of the socially constructed institution of education, educators find themselves in constant engagement with norms, values, beliefs, and expectations not only about the academic purpose of education, but also its social implications (Dewey, 1909; Freire; 1998; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998; Starratt, 2004).

Crotty (1998) explains, "social constructionism emphasizes the hold our culture has on us and shapes the way in which we see things (even the way in which we feel things) and gives us a quite different view of the world" (p. 58). It is the role of the constructionist evaluator to capture the perspectives, perceptions, and experiences of different stakeholders within a shared framework. Constructionist researchers understand the role of power in the context of the research by considering that reality is socially constructed and therefore the dominant culture of the time and place exercise power over socially constructed realities (Patton, 2002).

Wortham and Jackson (2008) explain, "constructionist approaches to education are important because they help educators understand and change the highly enabling and constraining outcomes that educational processes have" and that, "constructionist inquiries illuminate how learners' identities and competence, distinction between valued and devalued subject matter, and the social organization of schooling are constructed, and in so doing they may help education better achieve its transformative potential" (p. 107). Constructionist researchers act as *bricoleurs*, actively connecting experiences, processes, and experienced realities together to develop understanding of complex social phenomena. In this study, as a bricoleur constructing understanding of a complex situation by collecting, interpreting, and framing perceptions shared by campus and central office administrators, I sought to understand more about the role of social justice leadership in education (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism

The constructionist epistemology posits that the world is socially constructed and that this construction requires making meaning of the experiences and perceptions of the

participants in the experience (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). Glesne (2011) explains, "these constructed realities are viewed as existing, however, not only in the mind of the individual, but also as social constructions in that individualistic perspectives interact with the language and thought of a wider society" (p. 6). Social constructionism often employs the theoretical perspective of interpretivism to make-meaning of these socially constructed experiences (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Merriam (2009) notes, "interpretive research, which is where qualitative research is most often located, assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single observable reality. Rather there are multiple realities or interpretations of a single event" (p. 8). As a theoretical framework, interpretivism charges the researcher to move beyond basic understandings of data collected. Rather, the researcher must engage the data more deeply through developing connections, understanding the impact of their own biases, reasoning inferences, meaning making, and conveying understandings (Patton, 2002).

In schools, multivariate constructions exist ranging from teacher roles to processing student outcomes. These social constructions involve all levels of the organization and include not only psychological, but cultural and social elements (Wortham & Jackson, 2008). Patton (2002) notes that interpretive studies are intended to: "(1) Confirm what we know that is supported by the data, (2) disabuse us of misconceptions, and (3) illuminate important things we don't know but should know" (p. 480). The goal of this study was to collect data to deepen understanding of the practice of social justice leadership in education. In doing so, the outcomes for this interpretive study

were intended to both confirm what we know about social justice leadership and to illuminate what we don't know.

Methodology: Grounded Theory

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) discuss interpretive methodology explaining that methodology is, "a strategy of inquiry [that] comprises a bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that the researcher employs as he or she moves from paradigm to empirical world" (p. 34). In this study, grounded theory was used to make sense of the phenomena of social justice leadership in school districts and to further theoretical explanations about this social process. The use of grounded theory as a methodological approach allowed for the study to examine the interpretation and socially constructed meaning about social justice leadership in education.

Grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, provides opportunity for deep research of emergent and changing themes, allowing for flexibility in understanding the complex systems of socially constructed experiences. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define grounded theory as the development of a "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process. In this method of data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another" (p. 12). As noted, grounded theory makes use of systematic and flexible data collection allowing for the development of theories that are grounded in data (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory uses an inductive approach rather than a deductive approach. In deductive research, a hypothesis is established, data is collected, and results are summarized. Inductive research involves discovery-based, ongoing interaction with the data, during which the discovery of patterns drives each step as well

as final generalizations (Gray, 2009). During a grounded theory study, the researcher interacts repeatedly on multiple levels with the data in order to uncover deeper themes (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Utilization of grounded theory processes allows the researcher to develop explanatory models that assist with designing interventions (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Applying the use of inductive data, grounded theory fortifies understanding of the data through repeated engagement for comparison of and ongoing involvement with the information shared by participants (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) explains "grounded theory studies rely on collecting data to advance theoretical analysis. Thus, obtaining data that helps you construct theoretical plausibility, direction, centrality, and adequacy is important in whatever form of data collection you use" (pp. 87-88).

Research Procedures

The grounded theory armamentarium of individual interviews and focus-group interviews were the foundation of this study. In their article reviewing interview methodology in grounded theory, Charmaz and Belgrave (2012) explain "combinations of individual and focus-group interviews have also proven to be fertile ground when developing grounded theories" (p. 355). Individual and focus-group interviews with campus and central office administrators conducted during this study provided personal accounts of their experiences as educational leaders.

Participant Selection

Glesne (2011) states, "the world is always interpreted through accessing others' interpretations of some social phenomenon and interpreting themselves, other's actions and intentions" (p. 6). Social constructionism acts to interpret the experiences of a

particular social phenomenon (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). Lock and Strong (2010) add that social constructionism also includes the following:

1. concern with meaning and understanding of a central feature of human activities;
2. meaning and understanding have beginnings in social interaction, in shared agreements as to what symbolic forms are to be taken to be; and
3. ways of meaning making are inherently embedded in socio-cultural processes and are specific to particular times and places (pp. 6-7).

In efforts to develop theory about a social construct, it is essential to include the characteristics above when deciding upon a participant sample.

In order to examine the context of social justice leadership in education the participant sample included campus and district administrators from large, diverse, Texas districts of 25,000 or more students. Research indicates that both district and campus leaders influence the tone of the campus and positively influence student academic achievement (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009). The purposeful selection of district and campus administrators was to understand if/how these leaders implement social justice leadership in the present and how they might better implement it in the future. For this study, campus leaders included campus administrators — specifically, principals and assistant principals. District leaders chosen for the study included, but were not limited to, the following: superintendents, assistant superintendents, chief officers, curriculum development staff, professional development staff, and leadership development staff. The list of roles for central office administrators was chosen based upon the sphere of influence these roles have on campuses.

Consideration must be given when choosing participants for a study (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). A combination of expert suggestions and snowball sampling was used initially to determine final participants in the study. I asked for recommendations from local social justice leadership experts including the dissertation committee, current education doctoral students, and previous education doctoral graduates of two local universities. This snowball sampling provided an opportunity to locate participants that are information-rich and fit specific criteria (Patton, 2002).

In order to establish a foundational level of participants' current understanding of and enactment of social justice leadership, preliminary participants were provided with a brief survey found in Appendix A to ascertain their experiences with and capacity for social justice leadership. Charmaz (2014) notes the importance of, "selection of research participants who have first-hand experience that fits the research topic" (p. 56). The preliminary survey found in Appendix A was used to identify participants with pre-existing knowledge and similar understandings about social justice leadership in education. The questions were as follows:

1. Describe your understanding of social justice.
2. Describe your understanding of social justice leadership in education.
3. Describe a time that you enacted social justice leadership in an educational setting.

The top three respondents in the district administrator and the campus leader categories that respond positively to participation in the study were selected as final participants in the study.

Data Collection

Patton (2002) provides guidance for consideration of data collection methods, explaining, "the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study" (p. 229). Contemplation about the methods for data collection prior to the study help the researcher determine what information is being sought (Patton, 2002). In this study I used individual interviews and focus-group interviews to seek understanding of the phenomena of social justice leadership as viewed by campus and central office administrators. Utilization of multiple methods of data collection reduces errors by allowing researchers to cross-check data from different methods. Further, accessing the use of multiple data methods affords the researcher different opportunities to interact with the data, opening up potential for deeper analysis and illuminations as well as for identification of inconsistencies (Patton, 2002).

Interviewing participants goes beyond basic observations, providing the researcher with an opportunity to learn more deeply about the perceptions and experiences of the participant; to understand their stories (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1998). Employing the use of open-ended interviews allows the constructionist researcher to examine multiple realties (Patton, 2002). Open-ended questions also allow for the collection of more descriptive data (Merriam, 2009). To collect data reflective of the experiences of campus and central office administrators, each of the final participants was involved in two separate individual interviews. The choice of individual interviews as a mode of data collection creates opportunity for participant stories and experiences to

be shared and examined in a space that allows for the participants to respond comfortably and honestly (Patton, 2002).

There are many variations for qualitative interviews. For this study, the interview guide approach was used (Patton, 2002). "The interview guide lists the questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview. An interview guide is prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued" (p. 343). The interview guide may be developed in as much detail as necessary to allow the interviewer to specify important issues in advance and the focus of the interview. Interview guides allow for topic focus, allowance of sequencing questions with possibility for additional probing (Patton, 2002). Interview guides, "increase the comprehensiveness of data and makes data somewhat systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational" (p. 349). Data analysis of initial individual interviews informed the guiding questions asked during focus-group interviews, allowing the focus-group interviews to follow-up on topics raised in the first individual interviews. In this study, the coupling of grounded theory with multiple interviews provided opportunities to examine emergent themes and to determine guiding questions for subsequent interviews, reinforcing understandings of emergent themes and allowing for adjustments (Charmaz, 2014).

Establishing participant comfort and rapport during an interview session is necessary when conducting qualitative interviews as it may impact information obtained from the interview (Merriam, 2009). Patton (2002) explains, "It is the responsibility of the evaluator to provide a framework within which people can respond comfortably, accurately and honestly to these kinds of questions" (p. 341). For this study, participants

were asked to choose a comfortable location and time for interviewing. Additionally, open-ended questions and probes were developed and peer-reviewed prior to conducting each set of interviews (see Appendices D-I). The interviews were organized to begin with noncontroversial questions to establish comfort and support movement into more challenging/personal questions (Charmaz, 2014; Patton, 2002; Glesne, 2011). Pilot interviews were conducted with colleagues prior to interviews to obtain peer-critique (Merriam, 2009).

In addition to individual interviews, data was also collected via focus-group interviews. When considering the development of focus-groups, it is important to understand the characteristics needed to obtain the appropriate data (Krueger, 1988). Further, it is important for the researcher to avoid mixing groups with different levels of power to ensure that participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences and information (Krueger & Casey, 2015). For this study, two role-based focus-groups were used, campus administrators and district administrators. Glesne (2011) explains, "homogeneous groups in terms of gender, age, race, or sexual orientation, etc., can allow for more free-flowing, relaxed conversation as well as facilitate the development of analytical concepts based upon data gathered in different kinds of groups" (p. 132). This specific categorization provides an opportunity for greater social interaction (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) compares individual interviews to focus-groups, noting, "unlike a series of one-on-on interviews, in a focus-group participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say" (p. 386).

Utilization of focus-group interviews provides a flexible forum for discussion that is limited during standardized individualized interviews (Kreuger, 1988). Although focus-group interviews have more flexibility than standardized group interviews, they are focused on a central topic with a carefully facilitated discussion by the researcher (Glesne, 2011; Krueger, 1988; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Krueger and Casey (2015) explain that focus-groups provide insight to organizational concerns and issues. This study seeks to understand the organizational role of collaboration for social justice leadership between campus and central office administrators. In consideration of the role of focus-groups in organizational understanding, Krueger and Casey (2015) explain that focus-groups "offer valuable insights on an array of organizational issues like morale, engagement, productivity, or employee satisfaction" (p. 12). One of the focus areas of this study included questions about collaboration across the organization.

When used in grounded theory, the combination of focus-group interviews and individual interviews can provide more useful data. However, it is important to remember to use an iterative and interactive approach and intentional planning throughout the study (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). In addition to proactive planning for individual interviews, I used the data as a triangulation tool. The second set of interviews allowed me to ask participants to clarify, expand upon, and confirm perceptions recorded during the first set of interviews as well as to ask new questions that emerged from my analysis of the first set of interviews. Finally, focus-group interviews were conducted utilizing data from the first set and the second set of individual interviews to inform context development for the focus-group interviews.

Data Analysis

Understanding the development of a qualitative study and its outcomes requires attention to rich, deep data collection as well as ongoing interaction with the data (Charmaz, 2014; Patton, 2002, Straus and Corbin, 1998). Merriam (2008) explains, "data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between descriptions and interpretations" (p. 176). Developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, grounded theory methodology provides a process for data analysis moving through description of the event, conceptual ordering, and finally theorizing (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During this study, data analysis was conducted in an ongoing manner using coding and memoing techniques associated with grounded theory as part of the process of conceptual ordering and interpretation of data leading toward conclusions and theoretical development. Theory, the final outcome of grounded theory, is described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as, "a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena" (p. 15).

Conceptual ordering provides a framework for organizing data into categories to make sense out of the data; this organization includes coding, memoing, and theming (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Merriam, 1998). Open-coding, a dynamic fluid process, provides the researcher an opportunity to discover, name, and begin to break down the data into conceptually similar parts, or categories. These categories represent phenomena that emerge from the data. Consideration must be given to the terminology utilized in the development of categories, including the potential to explain the phenomena in terms of

their properties and to connect to the phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Specific attention will be given to the utilization of in-vivo codes to convey participant wording in order to maintain high levels of fidelity to participant experiences. During the study, immediately following each interview or focus-group event, data was closely examined to develop categories. The data from each discrepant event was compared for similarities and differences, with category coding adjustments throughout the process. Line-by-line coding, analysis of a whole sentence or paragraph, perusal of the entire document, and code notes are all variants on open coding (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This study engaged in all of these strategies to provide the deepest levels of analysis possible.

Axial coding was applied to reconnect the data initially broken down during the beginning open coding phase. Axial coding acts as both a structure and a process for connecting the context, building an overarching structure that allows for linking and cross-cutting to occur (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Utilization of axial coding to recombine data in different ways permits the researcher to refine the interrelationships of the data categories, allowing for development of theoretical explanations (Merriam, 2009).

The process of memoing was used in conjunction with open and axial-coding during data analysis. Charmaz (2014) notes, "memo-writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process" (p. 162). Memo-writing creates defined space for the researcher to interact with the data by notating questions and thoughts, developing frameworks and connections, fine-tuning ideas, and constructing concrete manageable notes that act as a record of your data analysis journey. Memo-writing is a vital transitional step that unites

coding and writing. (Charmaz, 2014). Memos written during grounded theory research are analytical in nature, providing directionality for study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In order to safeguard high levels of validity, researchers must take care to be in constant consideration of the goals of the research. Merriam (2002) posits questions for a researcher to consider, "How congruent are the findings with reality? Do the findings capture what is really there? Are investigators observing or measuring what they think they are measuring?" (p. 213). Data produced through the grounded theory process will provide stronger connections to reality than use of research instruments such as surveys, allowing for higher validity (Merriam, 2002).

Practitioners also must trust the reliability of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2002). Reliability in qualitative research looks different than reliability in quantitative research. The purpose of quantitative research is explaining and replication, while qualitative research attempts to report personal experience and develop understandings (Golafshani, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) posits, "the more important question for qualitative research is *whether the results are consistent with the data collected*" (p.221). Reliability in qualitative studies speaks to the relationship of the data to the results. Maintaining reliability throughout this study included the use of cross-checking data and intentional reference to the questions being addressed.

In order to preserve both validity and reliability, it is necessary to triangulate data collected during a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). One type of triangulation allows the researcher to cross-check data through the analysis of multiple types of data (Merriam, 2002). In this study, the current literature, data from interviews with participants, and data from focus-group interviews was triangulated. The grounded theory

framework utilizes triangulation as a principle not only for cross-checking, but for constant review for emergent themes allowing for deep, rich description (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The use of triangulation thus provides the researcher the opportunity to both validate and to secure a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

With any study, ethical considerations must be paramount when designing and carrying out research, both to support the participants and to establish trustworthiness and credibility of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Glesne, 2011, notes, "ethical considerations are inseparable from your everyday interactions with research participants and with your data" (p. 162). Ethical considerations should be made concerning the interactions of the people involved in the study as well as the information discovered in the study. Consideration of ethical concerns around people and relationships include positionality, beneficence, respect, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Qualitative researchers must still be aware of their own biases, history, experiences, and positionality when designing a study and throughout the study (Golafshani, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, explain, "The interpretive *bricoleur* understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting" (p. 8). Further, the researcher must be attentive to the impact of power and politics when engaging in the study. Attention to power dynamics during interviewing is especially vital, as during this time, the interviewer may bias the

interview due to power structures (Charmaz, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Establishing and building rapport, awareness and constant reflection of personal biases, providing informed consent, and conducting respondent validations assist with tempering the influence of the researcher during a study (Glesne, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

Further safeguards for study participants include anonymity, confidentiality, and respect (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It is essential for the researcher to develop systems that provide these safeguards before, during, and after the study (Patton, 2002). On a general level, assuring that the information participants share is confidential and anonymous provides a foundation of respect from which to build. Prior to engaging in this study several steps were taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality. As noted previously, at the outset of the study, a snowball sample was utilized to identify the final six participants for the study. The survey provided for this initial group maintained confidentiality and anonymity by assigning numbers to survey takers and through inclusion of survey questions that included no identifiers. Minimal personal data including leadership role, location, and first name was kept only by the researcher according to assigned number. After the final participants were chosen, they chose a pseudonym to be used throughout the study. All subsequent data and resulting reports utilized the pseudonyms of the participants to protect anonymity and confidentiality.

IV. RESULTS

Participants for the study were chosen based upon recommendations from other social justice leaders and their willingness to participate in the study. An initial email was sent to participants providing them with information about the parameters of the study including purpose of the study, time commitments, and expectations for confidentiality. Once participants were finalized, each participant was interviewed twice. An initial interview was conducted to establish foundational understanding of the participant's interpretations of social justice leadership and experiences as a social justice leader. The second interview was conducted to provide participants with an opportunity to expand on the previous interview and to conduct deeper investigation into the participants' capacity building for social justice leadership. Additionally, participants took part in one of two homogeneous focus-groups for principals or district administrators. The purpose of these focus-groups was to cull out further discussion about the secondary research question: How do campus and district administrators collaborate with one another as social justice leaders? Finally, a heterogeneous focus-group was conducted on a voluntary basis due to the nature of the participant's work relationships (several participants were from the same districts). The purpose of the voluntary heterogeneous focus-group was to initiate and document a cross-group dialogue between campus and district administrators on social justice leadership.

Principals' Perceptions

Individual Principal Perceptions

Results for the principals' perceptions includes background information, their understanding of social justice in education, and how they enact social justice in their roles. These results assisted with establishing foundational knowledge about each of the

participants.

Principal Kathy's perceptions. Kathy has been an educator for 20 years with 15 years as a campus and central office administrator including elementary and high school levels. Prior to being an educator, she was an active military member in the Army. She is a white, middle-aged woman who solely raised her daughter as she continued her own career pursuits. Kathy is also a doctoral student in a program that is focused on developing an understanding of social justice in education. Kathy believes that these experiences have helped her develop a better understanding of social justice leadership

Kathy is the principal of an elementary school with a population of almost 800 students in a rural/suburban community in Central Texas. The school has a diverse population, with 70% economically disadvantaged, and is a Title I campus. Campus demographics show an enrollment of 53% Hispanic, 27% African American, 16% White, and 4% students of two or more races, with the remainder in other demographic categories. Student representation for special education is 8%, and students learning English as a Second Language make up 33% of the student population. The campus is situated in what Kathy referred to as a rural/suburban school district, explaining that, "We are a rural district and there's lots of people who have that kind of thinking. Our demographics are very urban too because we are a suburb of a large city." District demographics include 22% African American, 64% Hispanic, 9% White, 2% students of two or more races, and the remainder identifying as other races/ethnicities. Additionally, 73% of the district's students are economically disadvantaged.

The above demographics contribute to Kathy's framing of the district as rural/urban. She explained, "when most people think of suburban districts, they are

thinking white flight little districts…we don't fit into any of those things." When asked about social justice in general she stated,

> It's heartbreaking because there is a clear lack for social justice, and there is a clear lack of understanding of what it means to value everybody and give everybody a voice, and to allow people to be who they are.

Kathy elaborated that being a social justice leader goes beyond moral leadership in that moral leadership is easier to "get behind". Kathy stated that it is harder to be a social justice leader. "It's not just about rhetoric; it's about action and doing," she explained. She felt that the action is around creating an educational space for all students, and that the work is predominately around race, culture, and difference. Kathy took a moment to reflect on recent legal issues relating to transgendered bathrooms in schools.

> All of these people sitting around judging about how we are taking care of that student, they are lucky they are not in that situation, because I guarantee every student counts for something, or somebody needs something special for their student, and they should hope that when it comes to their student someone is willing to do what it takes. So why do they criticize when people take action to stand up for student needs?

This statement illustrated both Kathy's passion about and frustration with social justice implementation.

As a campus administrator taking action as a social justice leader, Kathy cited two key areas that she has been focusing on to develop social justice supports at her campus: staff awareness meetings, and morning meetings with students. Kathy stated that she actively engaged teachers in discussions about race and diversity in an attempt to assist

them with connecting with themselves and with the students they work with. She called this work moving from a "safe space" to a "brave space." She also instituted a planned "morning meeting" for each class before the school day begins. This twenty-minute meeting was intended to focus on students connecting with the classroom and creating a "safe space" within the school. One of the things Kathy said that she was the proudest of was that she felt that she created a campus of inclusiveness.

Kathy's enactment of social justice leadership included a focus not only on her campus, but on the central office and other campuses as well. Her movement toward social justice leadership not only addressed a desire to fulfill her own learning needs, but also a desire to create a common dialogue with others. She reported that, when trying to build her own capacity for social justice leadership, she found that there was little or no support to develop her own understandings or to have conversations about social justice with others. She reflected that throughout her career her own interest in social justice leadership had been fostered only through her own pursuit of understanding. This included small things like attending a specific session at a conference or reading an article in an educational leadership publication, to larger things such as her pursuit of a doctoral degree in a program that is focused on social justice in education. However, she did not believe that school districts do a good job of supporting and developing social justice capacity for their leaders and for their teachers. Kathy explained that, while school districts provide things like diversity training in the name of equity and social justice, such training is inadequate,

> I think that we all like to believe that we have all done these great diversity trainings, but we're really not fluent in diversity. I mean it's such superficial, non-

> invasive, non-exploratory training. It's just superficial training, like "Yes we've checked the box, we've been diversity trained."

She expanded on this theme, reflecting on an opportunity she had recently pursued to attend a conference focused on social justice. She inquired and received district permission to attend with the caveat that she would return and present to district and campus leaders. Kathy reported that she was quite excited about the opportunity to attend and to extend the learning to others. However, she noted that the opportunity to present to district and campus administrators was minimized into a fifteen-minute overview during a very hectic district meeting.

In addition to her disappointment with the social justice presentation being limited, Kathy shared that the campus and district leaders appeared to be challenged with social justice leadership discussions. She stated that previously she had experienced personal challenges with some campus and district leaders related to discussions about social justice issues. She recalled a time when she was having trouble with high levels of referrals for African American boys on her campus and brought it up during a campus leadership meeting. Shortly after the meeting she was told that she was a racist because she only talked about black kids during the meeting. She explained that it just made her more determined to seek conversations about social justice leadership.

Principal Tim's perceptions. Tim is a third year principal at suburban school district in Central Texas. Prior to his role as a principal, Tim was an assistant principal in the same district and school. Before moving into administration, Tim was an electives teacher, supporting students with life choices. He has a background in management. Tim

is a white, middle-aged man from a small town in Texas. He is also pursuing a doctorate from a university program that is focused on social justice in education.

Tim's middle school has a population of nearly 1400 students. Student demographics reflect a population that is 10% African American, 28% Hispanic, 48% White, 8% Asian, and 5.2% two or more races. Student group demographics include 17% economically disadvantaged, 3% English Language Learners, and 11% special education students. The overall district representation for the following student groups is different than the campus: White 42% (-6), Asian 15% (+7), economically disadvantaged 28% (+11), and English Language Learners 9% (+6). Tim remarked that, although he believed that the composition of the campus appears to fall in line with historically more privileged populations, he felt very strongly about social justice learning and leading for all students.

When initially asked to define social justice leadership in education in the preliminary online survey, Tim stated, "Social justice leadership to me is two part: knowledge and action. Opening eyes and then action through policy and procedures as well as everyday interactions." During his initial interview, Tim echoed the same sentiment, stating that social justice leadership involves awareness, knowledge and movement to action. He added that, as a leader in education, "it's probably the most critical role that we can play, because if we don't confront and open our eyes, and change, then we are going to perpetuate a system that's very flawed."

Tim cited his action with restorative justice practices as an example of his social justice leadership. As he explained, restorative justice practices provide students with the opportunity to learn better socialization opportunities than the more punitive school

suspension or district alternative education placement. Elaborating, Tim shared that he connects restorative justice discipline practices with social justice because it allows students that would be traditionally marginalized through removal to remain in schools. He also noted connections to supporting equity regarding race, socioeconomic status, and gender questioning, "Is it really what they did, or is it lack of understanding and building relationships?"

As a social justice leader, Tim talked about how he worked to engage the assistant principals on his campus. Reflecting on his own ability and skills to support them with the development of their own capacity as social justice leaders, he recalled that he often shared articles of interest with his team as an essential part of his role as a leader. Tim stated that building awareness is a key tool he utilizes as a social justice leader.

Another trait Tim discussed was the importance of modeling social justice leadership. Tim described his experience during a meeting of district principals. During the meeting he was asked to share the impact of the restorative justice program with other campus leaders. He explained that initially he would have been uncomfortable talking to colleagues that had years of experience beyond his own, but he felt strongly about the restorative justice program. While he did not talk directly to other principals about social justice leadership, he felt that he was acting as a strong model for social justice.

During the focus-group with the other principals, Tim reflected on his previous experiences of sharing the restorative justice process with high-level district leaders. The two other principal participants shared that they were disappointed with the lack of support from their superintendents regarding the social justice work they were doing on their campuses and with the district. Tim also felt that there was little support or follow

through. Although he was asked to share his experiences with the implementation of restorative justice in a meeting with the superintendent, the program was not implemented district-wide. He noted that during the meeting the superintendent and other district leaders expressed interest in the program and labeled it a "game changer," however dissemination to the district was limited and did not lead to full implementation. Tim described an initial attempt to move forward when the district brought in a trainer to talk about white privilege and supporting students. However he reflected that halfway through the meeting it was "like someone pulled the trainer aside and said, 'this is too uncomfortable, tone it down.'" After that meeting there were no further attempts to move the program forward.

Principal William's perceptions. William is a principal at a high school in a suburban district in Central Texas. The high school supports nearly 2,000 students, of which 65% are economically disadvantaged. Demographically, the school is comprised of 53% Hispanic students, 23% Black students, 9% White students, and 12% Asian students, with the remainder of the population comprised of students of two or more races and American Indian/Alaskan Native students. Enrollment by student group for economically disadvantaged and special education categories are higher than the district and the state, with English Language Learners being slightly lower in number. William has been an administrator for eight years, with previous experience as an assistant principal and principal within the same district.

William reflected that the experiences he had growing up aided his decisions as a social justice leader. As an African American man, he believes that it is important to ensure that all students are given every opportunity. Further adding to this belief is the

fact that William grew up living in subsidized housing, the son of a single mother trying to make ends meet. He explained that it was his mother that helped him develop his sense of social justice as she worked to make sure that he attended a better school in a different neighborhood in the city. He stated that a combination of experiences throughout his lifetime had informed him as a social justice leader.

When considering framing social justice in the context of education. William provided the example of how resources are allocated to schools. He explained that one of the ways social justice is enacted is through the "government actually providing resources for schools to take care of disadvantaged populations and disadvantaged kids." He extended this macro explanation to schools, "from a campus-level, it's decisions you make as a principal of how you plan to use not only those funds, but even the local funds you get from the district."

William explained that the most important factor in enacting social justice leadership is to be diligent about identifying equity gaps. He also stated that, in conjunction with identifying equity gaps, it was incumbent upon a campus leader to champion the needs of the campus identified by those gaps. During an interview, William reflected that social justice leadership at the campus level requires courage to challenge systems at both the campus-level and at the district-level. He identified resource allocation as an area where campus voice challenges district systems. William described a time when he questioned the district management of campus budget allocations. He explained that each campus was provided an "equal amount of funds per student." He questioned this allocation by asking district leadership if the intent was to have equal support or equitable support for students. William gave an example of an

affluent school having a well-funded theater program versus a school with a high population of students with low socio-economic status (SES) having challenges with even getting a program off the ground, and asked "should these schools be treated equally or equitably?" He elaborated,

> I don't believe you should treat everyone the same. It's not always about race. At my campus it's also about economic status because that's what dictates the need. I have poor white kids in the school, and I'm still going to feel the same way about them. They need the extra help and the extra support.

William believes that in his role as a social justice leader is vital because he is championing the needs of his students while others may not be doing so.

William reported that he enacted social justice leadership in a variety of ways on his campus, including acting as a role model for students and teachers. However, he was most proud of a program he had worked on throughout his years as an administrator; Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) and Advanced Placement (AP) course enrollment equity. After noticing that there was low-enrollment for African American and Hispanic students in these courses, William began to ask hard questions about that enrollment. He noticed that within a Pre-AP or AP class of thirty there seemed to be only one or two black students. He began documenting enrollment and then began conversations with teachers about racial inequity in Pre-AP and AP courses. He explained, "We have to be very purposeful in our words, so shock factor was one thing, because that gets people's attention." He described how he brought together a group of teachers and campus administrators to address the concern. The group developed a program that supported movement of previously marginalized students into Pre-AP and AP classes. William

shared that the program included additional levels of support, including summer camps. He continued, "The program was so successful that they actually adopted it district-wide." William recalled that he was excited with the work he did with both his staff and with other campus administrators during this project. He reflected on the success of the program sharing, "Our overall demographic participation didn't match tit for tat our enrollment, but we came close. It was getting better. I don't know if you ever truly get there, but it did get better."

Considering the role of social justice leadership at the district, William felt that it was essential for district leaders to act as champions on the behalf of the campuses. He explained that it is the role of the district to create an environment that establishes and nourishes social justice, and that equitable resource allocation is just one example of how district leaders model and enact social justice. William reflected on the two most recent districts that he worked for as a campus administrator. In his previous district he felt that there was a stronger understanding at the district-level about what social justice leadership is and how it impacts schools, noting that the driving question was about how to address the needs of each campus individually. Social justice leadership at a district level to William means, "you should be in a position and be prepared to make an exception for the schools and the kids that have the highest need."

Earlier, it was noted that William felt that his personal experiences growing up in poverty as a black male influenced his role as a social justice leader. However, when asked about more formalized support for capacity building for social justice leadership, William reflected that he, "didn't see it in my pursuit of being a teacher, didn't see it in my pursuit of being an administrator." He explained that he sought to build his own

capacity for social justice and social justice leadership because he had not seen any formalized training offered within the district that went beyond basic diversity training. William elaborated that as a campus leader he had continued to work on growing his own capacity through targeted attendance of professional development opportunities related to social justice learning. He also noted that he had an unexpected role model early in his administrative career, when he was a principal at a school that was under required support by the state agency. William shared that he worked closely with the state administrator assigned to his campus. The state administrator taught William to constantly push the district for support needed at the campus level and encouraged him to ask the district what they were going to do for William's campus above and beyond what they do for other schools. He shared this example to express how he accesses opportunities around him to develop himself as a social justice leader.

William also reflected on the current state of capacity building for social justice leadership in the district, explaining that while capacity building was in the background of discussions like those about how to reduce minority enrollment in the District Alternative Education Program (DAEP), it was not the primary focus of the discussion. He added, "I feel that we're fragmented and going multiple directions" and that "we don't have those conversations enough." He further explained that those conversations that are held leave him feeling frustrated because

> We do have a disproportionate amount of students as these schools [DAEP] that are African American, but if you earned it you're going because you are taking the opportunities away from other African American or Black kids who really have the opportunity of doing well.

Reflecting on this example, he explained, “In an attempt to enact social justice, you have to be careful not to get in the way of social justice”.

William considered his ability to develop social justice leadership in others. He shared that as a social justice leader it is essential for him to impact the environment around him. He felt that he does this through modeling and through elevation of the larger conversation. William recalled that during the implementation of the Pre-AP support program he purposefully worked with teachers and campus assistant principals with the intention of modeling social justice leadership. He elaborated that during this project he pushed his staff to think about the composition of the AP and Pre-AP classes and to determine next steps. He noted that the teachers were predominately white, and he felt that, “most of the teachers didn’t have an understanding that as a poor and/or black student you may not know how to navigate the systems to enroll in Pre-AP classes.” He encouraged them to think beyond their experiences and consider the experiences of the black students and the students living in poverty.

William recalled experiences with other campus and district leaders when he acted as a social justice leader. He believed that the campus and district leaders he was working with were similar to teachers in their lack of understanding about the students they serve. He elaborated that he needed to push campus and district leaders with consideration for social justice needs the way he pushed his own staff. He pointed out that many district and campus leaders also have a white, middle class background. He recounted a time during a district data meeting when he waited for others to point out that there was a 25% gap in student achievement between black and white students, but in the end he finally brought it to the attention of the group. He shared that the meeting took a

different turn at that point, and he was able to further the discussion about supporting equity. He shared this as another example of how he works to build understanding of social justice leadership in others.

In the district where William currently works he felt that there was room for growth in the area of social justice leadership. He stated, "There has not been a lot of talk about equity. I think that once our district really starts talking about that, they'll find that we can do a better job than we currently do." William also connected this with funding, explaining that districts need to fund projects that support equity. He shared that he would like to see the district pay more attention to equity needs of students. Although he felt that the district was doing a fair job, it was generally up to students, families, or campus staff to be advocates of their equity needs.

As a social justice leader, William said that he would like to see the district leadership adopt the "right agenda," an agenda that is focused on being inclusive of all students. He shared that would like to see training on what social justice looks like, implementation on campus, and how to develop a lens of equity across a campus. William added that he thinks it is important to, "Have specific training not only for Title I principals, but for every principal in the district." He explained that providing campus leaders with specific training for implementation of social justice leadership would give authenticity to the district's stated intent to build capacity for social justice leadership.

Principals' Common Perceptions

The results discussed above provide insight regarding the principals' educational context, their personal beliefs about social justice, and their implementation of social

justice as leaders. The following themes were identified using data from individual principal interviews and from the principals' focus-group.

Social justice in education. While the principals all had a slightly different slant to their definition of social justice in education, all three connected social justice to equity and fundamental human rights. All of the principals agreed that learning about and understanding social justice in education is essential, not only for educators, but as a key part of student learning. Tim specifically connected social justice to citizenship, positing that the role of education is

> to instill a love of learning and to be a good citizen. I think with those two things you can pretty much do what you want. Whether you go into higher academics or you go into the workforce or you go into the military. I think it's not so much about the ABC's and 123's, obviously I want my kids to be critical thinkers as well, but I think the part that's missing is the whole citizenship piece.

Integral to the principals' work as social justice leaders was allowing all voices to be heard and addressing all inequities in the system. As William stated, "Providing a service to a certain group, or even a certain individual, in an attempt to level the playing field."

Current state of social justice in education. When considering the current state of social justice in education, a strong theme emerged. All three principals contended that the current state of social justice in education is lacking and/or superficial. Each participant shared challenging experiences that occurred when attempting to build capacity on their own campus as well with their district administration colleagues.

William again explained with frustration that "most of my teachers are predominately white, so they lack understanding about what the hardships are." He expanded this lack of

understanding to social justice leadership, explaining, "A campus administrator is someone that used to be a teacher. Just because you are an administrator doesn't mean that all of a sudden you become enlightened with the situation." Kathy also acknowledged that social justice in education was lacking and/or superficial. She explained that in her most recent role as campus administrator she noticed that there was a disparity in discipline assignments, noting that the majority of referrals were given to "black and brown kids." She reflected that this was a concern on multiple levels, including teacher and campus administrator level. When she attempted to work with teachers and other campus leaders she found that they were disconnected from their marginalized students.

Capacity building. Descriptions of capacity building for social justice leadership developed into three distinct strands: capacity building prior to leadership, capacity building during leadership, and future opportunities for capacity building. All three principals conveyed similar experiences when contemplating this topic.

When asked about capacity building prior to being in a leadership role (i.e. during their administration preparation programs), all three principals reported very limited learning opportunities for understanding social justice in general, and social justice leadership in particular. They did report that there was some discussion relating to supporting diverse learners, whether in a specific class or through a specific project. William noted that there was a focus on social justice and diversity in one of his classes. Kathy, the longest serving of the three principals, emphatically stated that she had no training about social justice during her master's classes in administration, and commented that it seems different now. Tim could only recall a specific project he referred to as the

"understanding self" project in which the class worked on understanding themselves as leaders.

Discussions with principals on the current state of capacity building for social justice leadership identified themes connected not only to social justice, but also to campus leadership in general. Participants reported that the types of professional development and learning opportunities they most often experienced were related to managerial tasks or to conveyance of compliance information. Tim expressed this most clearly, stating, "The meetings we have are not meaningful in terms of what we're talking about [social justice leadership]. It's more procedural so that we stay on the right side of compliance."

Building capacity for social justice leadership for the participants was predominately self-directed. They reported that if there was any training related to social justice leadership provided by the district it was geared toward understanding diversity through programs such as No Place for Hate. The participants were all enrolled in doctoral programs focused on social justice in education. Each participant reported that they chose attending a doctoral program as a way to build their own capacity in this area.

Both Kathy and Tim engaged in self-directed learning by seeking out opportunities to attend conferences connected to social justice. Tim searched for conferences that supported campus initiatives *and* social justice. For example, he attended a conference targeting restorative justice. Tim strongly associated restorative justice with social justice, and explained that while attending conferences he sought out sessions that connected these two concepts. Kathy also discussed her experience with conferences. She gave the example of a conference she found at Columbia University that

was centered on social justice. She brought this conference to the attention of her superintendent and asked to attend. Reflecting on her experience at the conference she stated, "I went to the best training I've ever been to in my entire life. I came back hot and heavy and ready to have conversations and ready for us to dig in." William stated that he sought out others of like mind to have conversations with in order to further develop his own understanding of social justice.

Each of the participants expressed a need to continue their own personal growth and capacity building as social justice leaders. Kathy was the most confident in her current ability to be a social justice leader, however, she reflected, "I think I'm probably one of the more versed leaders in social justice because of my PhD work, but I would tell you that I feel very inadequate as a social justice leader." Each of the participants described ongoing efforts to meet their social justice learning needs. Participants also admitted that they never quite felt like they "were there yet" as social justice leaders, that they were always seeking new understandings. William and Tim both stated that while developing their own capacity as social justice leaders they would also like to learn more about how to support the capacity building for others, specifically their campus administration teams.

All of the principals discussed possible opportunities for districts to engage their campus and district administrators for development of social justice leadership. While they mentioned professional development such as diversity training, they felt that this training was limited and did not have the impact they desired. The principals felt that purposeful conversations with other campus and district administrators had been beneficial in building their own capacity as social justice leaders. Included in discussions

of purposeful conversations was the concern about a lack of time for such conversations. Another concern was about the lack of voice in district decision-making and how that lack of voice inhibited purposeful conversation. A third concern centered upon a desire to make purposeful conversations with colleagues on co-framing and implementing social justice leadership as a high priority. Tim spoke clearly to these issues during both his personal interviews and the focus-group interview. Regarding the concern about voice in decision making, Tim reflected about a new position in the district for a Coordinator of Social and Emotional Learning, explaining, "Back when they started the whole social-emotional learning campaign in the district, it was gradual. I know for a fact that there was never a discussion with principals about 'What do you want? How does this look? How do we work together?'" Tim also described an opportunity he had to develop conversations with other principals as a social justice leader during a routine meeting. He was asked to discuss some of the positive changes his campus was making. He felt like that was an opportunity to have deeper conversation, but explained that deep conversation didn't happen because he felt like, "you need to have someone running the meeting that solicits input," and the information he was sharing did not make the impact he hoped it would.

Considering the role of purposeful conversations and the level of importance given by upper administration (central office, superintendent, school boards), William admonished, "Administration should develop the courage to have the conversations that they know they need to have." He further noted, "It just amazes me how purposefully we do not want to talk about the things we know we should talk about." The other principals echoed this sentiment. They all argued that, although there is some understanding about

the importance of social justice and social justice leadership, it remains marginalized by those in traditional roles of power within the district hierarchy, in particular the superintendent and the school board.

During the principal focus-group, Kathy shared an experience she had while attempting to implement social justice with other campus and district leaders. She explained that she was sharing information that she learned at a diversity conference to which the superintendent sent her with the expectation that she would present her learning to campus and district leaders. She noted that initially she thought "from the superintendent's mouth to God's ears" thinking that this discussion was going to be a starting point for the district to move forward. After the presentation began, she shared that she looked around the room and people seemed uncomfortable. She recalled the time that she was called a racist by other campus leaders in another incident, and she reported that she heard comments during the presentation. She remembered someone saying, "I can't believe we are talking about this. I can't believe she's saying these things." After Kathy shared this with the group, William reflected, "I just think we have such a fear of talking about the things we need to really talk about in education."

The participants felt that if a well-developed and meaningful district focus on co-framing and implementing social-justice leadership was in place, social justice would be given due diligence throughout the district. In order to move towards social justice leadership, the principals felt that their previously mentioned concerns must be addressed, and that efforts to achieve social justice would not be fully successful unless they were supported by the "higher ups" at central office.

During individual and all focus group discussions participants were asked questions pertaining to the secondary research question in the study: In what ways do central office leaders and campus leaders believe they can collaborate to promote social justice? Data analysis indicated a few key themes regarding this question, including desire for collaboration and facilitation. The principal's indicated that they thought that a collaborative discussion should be established by the "higher-ups" setting the tone. Principals believed they had limited capacity for change within the district, but worked hard on their campus to support social justice leadership. Although each of the principals also extended their work to collaborate with other campus and district leaders regarding social justice, they reported their efforts were unstructured and unsuccessful. The most common theme was a desire for support and structure from the district-level for these collaborative opportunities.

District Administrators' Perceptions

Individual District Administrator Perceptions

Similar to the principal participants, each district administrator participated in two individual interviews and in a homogenous focus-group interview for district administrators, with data from the individual and group interviews analyzed to determine individual perceptions.

District administrator Felicia's perceptions. Felicia is the Director of Educational Support in a suburban school district. She has been a district administrator for six years and has prior experience as a district level instructional coach and as a principal. Before moving to education, Felicia worked in banking. According to her interviews, she moved into education because she feels strongly that education changes

lives. Felicia is a white, middle-aged woman who grew up in a lower middle class family. She credited her support for social justice education to her ongoing desire to "support the underdog." She explained further,

> by underdog I don't mean 'poor pitiful'. It's not out of pity. It's understanding that there are structures and things in our society that cause people to be at certain places in their lives. You know the cycle of poverty.

As a personal banker she faced internal challenges, explaining that she often had to turn down people for small business loans. She realized that one of the ways she could help break the cycle of poverty was through education, so she became an educator.

The school district Felicia works for has approximately 48,000 students comprised of the following demographics: 41.5% White, 30.4 % Hispanic, 14.5% Asian, and 8.6% African American, with the remaining students American Indian, Pacific Islander, and students of two or more races. Additionally, the district's economically disadvantaged population is 27.5%, with 8.8% of the student population in special education and 10.4% of the students classified as Bilingual/ESL

Felicia expressed the belief that social justice in society focuses on equity in multiple social systems and programs, and while it is politically charged, it is something that is essential to our society. She stated that social justice issues can be most easily seen in connection to economics and allocation of resources, and that resource equity plays a role in how student learning is supported.

Social justice leadership at the campus level, Felicia contended, is fundamental to ensuring student success. She explained that social justice campus leaders establish a vision that includes social justice principles and sets the tone for the campus culture. She

emphasized the importance of having social justice leaders at the campus level in order to propel the district to maintain a focus on social justice principles, noting, "The campus level is where the action happens." Felicia explained that the campus leader is responsible for "having systems and processes that actually result in action for a student," and it is those systems and processes that allow social justice campus leaders to move beyond "just talking about something to action."

Felicia argued that social justice leadership at the district level is essential for developing strong students as part of the "social contract of quality education that society offers to all people." She shared that at the district level social justice supports campuses meeting their individual needs. Felicia added that in addition to working with the individual needs of campuses, it is incumbent upon the district to provide a strong, comprehensive curriculum that develops all students. Finally, Felicia stated that supporting social justice leadership in the district takes the form of providing training for campus leaders as well as opportunities for collaboration and conversation about social justice leadership among campus and district leaders. Felicia added that these conversations should include clarification of and support for action; she felt that this step was important in ensuring that action mirrors expectation. Felicia elaborated, "In meetings we talk about what we all believe, but when we leave there is no defined criteria for what we are going to do. This is where the discrepancy lies."

As a social justice leader at the district level, Felicia worked to make sure district resources were allocated in terms of equity rather than equality. When describing the schools in her district, she noted that there was a great resource disparity between the schools. Felicia's role included helping campus leaders understand the difference

between equal and equitable distribution. Her position involved working closely with ten campus principals and supporting all others. Felicia shared that acting as a social justice leader in this role was different from her previous roles as a campus administrator and curriculum developer. In her current role she felt more connected with her mission to be a social justice leader. She explained that her work at the district-level provided her with opportunities to engage in deeper conversations about enacting social justice principles, and more importantly, to steer resources and support to campuses as needed.

Felicia noted that she did not have any formalized training in capacity building for social justice leadership during her administration courses or after obtaining her Master's degree. She mentioned that there were "one-offs" and "false starts" such as discussions about cultural relevance and cultural competence and the yearly diversity training, but nothing that seemed deep or lasting. Felicia expressed her frustration with the lack of capacity building for social justice leadership for herself and others during one of the interviews, noting,

> When I ask educators in the district what culturally responsive means, they don't even know. They usually respond by saying, "reading books by authors of color." How do we get beyond this? It has been boiled down to the most surface level, simplistic types of things, and it's not working.

She explained that in order to build her own capacity for social justice leadership she seeks out books and articles on the topic, but added that she is always looking for more ways to learn and develop her background.

Felicia discussed some of the skills that she feels she brings to others as a social justice leader. Rather than focusing on broader skills such as awareness and modeling,

Felicia identified skills such as data analysis, data interpretation, and resource development. As a district leader impacting multiple campuses as well as other district leaders, Felicia pointed out these skills are those that she relied on most frequently to move people to understand social justice issues. Felicia spoke about leading deep analysis of student standardized test scores with principals to help them understand shifts that were made in resource allocations for campuses. She stated, "One of the hardest parts of my job has been trying to educate others about the disparities in economics and the disparities in performance. Not because they are bad schools, but because of other driving social forces." She reported that she also relied on her negotiation skills to help campus and district leaders move out of the "cookie cutter mold" they are used to applying for resource allocation. She contended that in her district understanding of the term "social justice" is not well-developed, so she accesses the terms Title I, economically disadvantaged, and non-economically disadvantaged to move forward.

As noted previously, Felicia stated that the current climate regarding capacity building for social justice leadership in the district is very limited. She reiterated that, while there are what she terms "surface level" professional development workshops such as cultural diversity, there is not a big-picture movement toward deep understanding of social justice leadership with campus or district leaders. She pointed out that there are initial efforts within the district to make changes, including a reorganization that led to the development of her department and role. She admitted that although it was the second year of the department's existence, she had not seen formalized capacity building for district or campus leaders supporting social justice leadership. Felicia added that there had not been forums for open discussions or learning about social justice leadership. She

elaborated that she believed that a focus on social justice leadership begins with the development of a shared vision. She offered that without the development of a shared vision that "includes all of the pieces and everyone coming together, you won't get agreement and you won't get integration."

Felicia stated the belief that, if the district provided opportunities for campus and district leadership to engage in purposeful and meaningful conversations about social justice, she would have less of a struggle trying to move people to understanding the need for reallocation of resources to schools with the most need. She explained that she would like to see professional development training for campus and district leadership that goes beyond the surface level cultural diversity workshops they have previously attended.

District administrator Nick's perceptions. Nick is a white middle-aged man who is a district administrator in a suburban district. As the Director of Student Services he provides multiple types of support within the district. He was a campus administrator for six years prior to moving into district administration. Prior to working in education, Nick was a lawyer. Nick attributes his desire to be a social justice leader to his own children; a daughter who is studying education, and a son that has autism-spectrum disorder.

The district Nick works for has approximately 18,500 students, comprised of 63.3% Hispanic, 30.7% White, and 2.8% African American students, with the remaining students including American Indians, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and those of two or more races. Nearly half (49.5%) of the district population is economically disadvantaged. The district includes 10.4% Bilingual/ESL students, 8.8% special education students, and 8.8% gifted and talented students. Nick defined social justice leadership as,

> A habit of mind that routinely assesses who benefits and who would otherwise be marginalized by the decisions I make and the activities and processes that fall within my areas of supervision. That form of position necessarily extends to my interactions with other directors, principals, the superintendent, etc.

Nick expressed the belief that social justice should be innate in society, jokingly stating, "Can anybody be against social justice? Really? You are in favor of social injustice?" Nick's explanation of social justice in education includes the importance of valuing equity and civil rights and having an understanding of who benefits and who is marginalized.

Nick stated that campus leaders, as social justice leaders, have the responsibility of recognizing the needs of their individual campuses and taking action to support specific student needs, whether they are the needs of a group or an individual. He offered the example of support for transgender students regarding bathroom accessibility. He explained that campus leaders that are also social justice leaders support the rights of transgender students in the face of challenges that include parent and community push back. He spoke of the challenge of, "having to navigate doing what's right for children and being respectful of all children on a campus while having to deal with the faceless discriminatory behavior of parents," and noted that meeting that challenge requires courageous leadership.

Nick shared that being a social justice leader is part of the job at the district level, noting that the district is the connection between the campus and the "outside" world. He added that in today's world there are rapid social changes occurring, and it is district level social justice leadership that assists the school in addressing those changes. Nick argued

that social justice leadership often is more for parents than students, and provided the following example connected with the current discussion about transgender bathrooms, "If you polled kids at any given high school about unisex locker rooms or bathrooms, they would probably come back and say 'We don't care. That's what stalls are for.'" Nick also discussed the importance of capacity-building conversations with district and campus personnel. He explained,

> In the environment in which we operate, sometimes we have to be appreciative of the political landscape and find ways to build consensus through consistent conversations with peers, and setting expectations with the principal and assistant principals, trying to develop their thinking until you build a groundswell of understanding. It's also letting people know what you believe and what you will tolerate and not tolerate in terms of…what the expectations are for the way we treat children on our campuses.

Finally, Nick concluded that social justice leadership at the district-level also takes the form of being a protector, providing shelter for campuses from the distractions that could interrupt daily learning. He offered an example from his own experience regarding a change in the high school fight song. The previous fight song was closely associated with Confederate contexts. The district facilitated the change process in order to reduce distractions to the campus. Nick described how there was an onslaught of angry social media associated with the change and explained that the role of the district in managing the situation diverted the conflict from the campus so that students, teachers, and campus leaders remained in a safe learning environment.

Nick also offered the controversy about the school song as an example of the current climate of social justice leadership in education. He explained that one of the challenges is "that we have a group of legislatures in office that we rely on. Legislative representatives that…were not educators." Nick also noted that our current educational climate is one that is highly focused on academic achievement and is constantly in flux, and that at times this climate can create barriers to social justice leadership. Nick explained, "The problem is that in the day-to-day work, there are blind spots as you get pushed and pulled." Nick believed that an environment that requires the expenditure of considerable time and energy to comply with external mandates and deal with budgetary constraints is not conducive to social justice leadership.

As a district leader, Nick felt that one of the ways he had enacted social justice leadership was through his work with attendance and truancy reduction. Nick viewed this work as a practical application of social justice in education. He believed that reduction of absence through focused relationship building is connected to social justice because such relationship building creates a more equitable environment for student populations that typically are more frequently absent. He explained that this involves "taking actions that are more intentional because we see that there is some type of injustice or disparity or marginalization that needs to be addressed." He reported that he constantly pushed himself to do better for students, families and other educators by asking, "who is marginalized, who benefits" in every situation. He shared that he also pushes himself to step back to view the greater picture, stating, "We need to be thinking as a district in terms of opportunities to incorporate meaningful social and emotional learning." In terms

of his particular role this included keeping traditionally marginalized students from extreme consequences such as dropping out of school or even being sent to jail.

Considering formalized training or support for social justice leadership capacity building, Nick expressed that the bulk of his learning prior to becoming an administrator occurred during his legal training. Developing critical thinking skills about who is marginalized and who benefits was the foundation of his work prior to entering education. It was during his learning and work as an attorney that he developed his understanding of critical theory, and it is in this context that he framed social justice leadership. As an educator, Nick recalled only basic diversity or cultural relevance workshops and professional development. He added that the work he has begun in his doctoral program provides the bulk of his learning for social justice leadership. As a doctoral student in a program focused on school improvement and social justice leadership, Nick stated that he had found a place that provided him with the capacity development he had been seeking. Nick felt that the professional development opportunities offered within the frame of his current role were very limited and fleeting. He added, "Remember a few years ago there was a big push about being culturally competent? Where did that all go? It's gone." In order to build his own capacity as a social justice leader prior to beginning his doctoral work he sought opportunities at conferences to make purposeful connections to social justice leadership and to engage in discussions at a higher level.

Nick felt that as his own learning had continued it increased his desire to build capacity in others. He stated that, while he is and will always be learning about being a social justice leader, he also works to develop social justice leadership in others. When

asked to consider some of the skills he brings to developing others as social justice leaders, he discussed the importance of developing awareness. He included both the campus leaders he interacts with and the staff he supervises when reflecting upon his efforts to develop social justice leadership skills in others. Nick maintained that, a part of what he considered "normal operations," it was incumbent upon him to ask probing questions during meetings, and to specifically talk about who is being marginalized by and who is benefitting from the status quo. He also discussed his experiences as an attorney and how those experiences impacted his role in educational settings. He explained that he frequently accessed his skills as an attorney to navigate the political environment. He shared, "Sometimes you find that there's a fine line between knowing when to fight and when it's best to hold all of your cards until you find the right time to push the button."

Regarding what he would like to see within education, and particularly in the context of the district co-framing social justice leadership with campus administrators, Nick believed there was a great need for change. He stated that there are multiple challenges to overcome. He shared concerns regarding political barriers that establish daily hurdles to social justice. One of the hurdles he reported was that "everybody has a lens and that they're thinking politically as much as they're thinking in terms of what's best for kids." Nick argued that facilitating the change needed by a district to build capacity for social justice leadership requires the right group of people to lead the charge, people that are able to navigate the daily barriers of educational policy and political climate. He added that, in conjunction with strong high-level leadership, it's important to have people in place with the capacity to have the deep-level discussions required to be

social justice leaders. He suggested that learning about being a social justice leader may not be something that can take place in a professional development program focused on skills only, because such leadership takes a willingness and an ability to engage in personal and professional change that may not be innate in every educator. Effective professional development in this area may need to initially focus on changing beliefs. Finally, he argued that moving toward a climate where social justice leadership is the norm rather than the exception would require a cultural change in current education systems. He added that dialogue about social justice is the best pathway toward such change.

District administrator Martin's perceptions. Martin is a black middle-aged man who grew up in a small rural community. He has been a campus administrator in a large urban district and in the rural district where he grew up. He is currently the Executive Director of Accountability and School Improvement in the same district. Prior to being an educator, Martin was a social worker. He connects his desire to be a social justice leader to his experiences as a black male growing up in society.

The district Martin works in is suburban/rural district with a student population of approximately 9,000 students. The composition of the student body is 64.1% Hispanic, 21.5% African American, and 8.6% White, with the remainder of the student population comprised of American Indians, Pacific Islanders, Asians, and students of two or more races. The district's student population is 73.2 % economically disadvantaged.

Martin equated social justice with basic human rights and contended that it manifests itself differently depending upon the societal application. In schools, as in other areas, he argued that it can be seen in the way a teacher imparts learning in a classroom or the way

a district leader conducts diversity training. Regarding the role of social justice in schools he also emphasized that,

> maybe in no other place than a school should social justice be a [more important] part of the institution … More than anywhere else because school is where you go in order to learn about yourself in the world, and how those two entities connect.

Martin contended that schools are the "lab for society's progress". He noted that he believes it is the responsibility of education to contribute to student's academic and social growth. He felt that just educating students in academics was "too small" of a goal, and that it was essential to educate students in how they develop in and impact the world

At the district level, Martin felt that it is important to build community understanding through the development of a common language. He argued that in order for a district to engage in social justice leadership, "everybody needs to have an understanding about what social justice is as it relates to our roles in education." Martin stated that social justice leadership at the district level is a result of established expectations and strongly developed capacity building related to each district leader's role. He shared that in order for a district to accurately claim an environment of social justice leadership, systems and processes must be in place to ensure that this focus is reality.

Martin's first response to the question about the state of the current climate for social justice leadership was "dysfunctional." He noted that "everywhere in education shows the unequal performance of students when categorized by race." He attributed part of this dysfunction to the "almost taboo" idea of discussing issues of equity or race within education. Martin shared that one of the challenges social justice leaders face is that "we

need to address our own racial identity and beliefs" before we can move forward with supporting other educators, and ultimately students. He stated,

> The current system is perfectly designed to get the results that we are getting. This includes systems of how we hire, how we train, how we line up in rows, how we test. It is perfectly designed to get the social justice results that we get. In order to get different results we have to disrupt that system and we spend no time or energy attempting to disrupt that system.

Martin believed that helping others develop capacity for personal self-reflection about their own beliefs would move districts forward toward supporting social justice education, social justice leadership, and most importantly, students.

Martin expressed the belief that social justice is the first responsibility of education. As a district leader, he considered hiring practices and onboarding as key areas to communicate the value of social justice in education. He reflected that hiring people of like mind with foundational understandings of the importance of social justice education is essential. In addition to focused hiring practices, Martin stressed the need for continuous support throughout the time the educator is with the district in the form of strong, targeted professional development.

Martin reported that currently the professional development learning opportunities he had attended were academic in nature and that he had not really received any formalized training on social justice leadership. Ironically, he communicated that the professional development he attended for the district did more to point out social injustice than support social justice. He noted that, although there was a social justice component within in the professional development he was sent to attend, it was not openly

referenced or discussed. Martin added that, although he had not received any formalized training about social justice leadership in his previous role as a campus principal or as a district leader, he found that his background as a social worker propelled him to seek learning experiences on his own. He reported that he continued his own learning through his own research, seeking out articles and engaging in conversation with other like-minded individuals.

Martin reflected on his own capacity to build and support other leaders at the campus and district level. While he reported his bailiwick as Response to Intervention, he sought recognition of additional equity concerns by guiding others toward meaningful interpretation of data relevant to social justice. Martin shared that he worked to infuse social justice leadership thinking in professional development that he delivered to campus and district leaders. He explained that it is important to, "infuse it [social justice leadership] in your professional development when you are teaching instructional strategies or whatever you are teaching; you have to have culturally relevant pedagogy." Martin added that he had accessed his own cultural background to help support other leaders in the area of social justice. He discussed an opportunity that he had to attend a week-long institute focused on social justice leadership. He noted that upon his return to the district he delivered professional development to campus and district leaders. Martin expressed the belief that campus and district leaders would listen more intently to his delivery because of his cultural background. He found that, although it did not go as well as he would have liked, there was progress as evidenced by the contact he later received from participants requesting additional support.

When considering how he would envision social justice leadership capacity building in the district, Martin pointedly responded with one word; "stability." Martin spoke frequently about the importance of establishing systems and processes within a district that would ensure capacity building for social justice leadership. He felt that the development of an environment that supported such capacity building requires proper systems, a stable environment, and most importantly, focus at the highest levels of district leadership. Martin also believe that stable leadership was necessary: "Usually stable districts have people who are retained in positions for a number of years, and collectively they've figured out the long-range vision." He continued, "The other side of the coin is that you are constantly learning about someone new, their vision, and their priorities, and you never get to a position where there is a full alignment of vision." To Martin, development of social justice leadership capacity also involves meaningful and purposeful professional learning, including the provision of time for district and campus leaders to be immersed in deep conversations around social justice leadership. Martin shared an experience that he recently provided for campus and district leaders, a workshop about RTI. During the workshop he intentionally included conversations about social justice. He reported,

> We were engaged in it for four days non-stop. I know that even the little bit of time that I provided people scratched the surface at best. But I've had members who've attended that session reach out for more information, and even today someone asked me if I could share some of the information from that session. So that tells me that there was considerable thought around social justice.

Being part of collaborative opportunities to engage in sustained, meaningful conversations in a safe environment would, Martin believed, help him to continue leadership development.

District Administrators' Common Perceptions

Common perceptions of the three district administrators were identified. Many common perceptions expressed by the district administrators were quite similar to those expressed by the principals.

Social justice in education. District administrators, like principals, shared the belief that social justice is an essential part of society and of education in particular. District administrators identified the term "social justice" as an ambiguous term that often made people uncomfortable. Martin expanded on this concept, noting, "I think that social justice is such an ambiguous thing for so many people to capture or define that it is rarely in the forefront of people's minds as they plan or make decisions." Felicia also posed that there is ambiguity around social justice, and in order to understand it, "you have to have a wide-range of experience. You have to understand the highest echelons of society. You have to understand when it's working well for the privileged, what it means and what it looks like."

Current state of social justice in education. The current climate for social justice in education is "cold" according to Martin. He further explained, "We are at a standstill, to either continue to decline or to stay woefully bad." While the district administrators believed there is an awareness of social justice in education (so much so that Nick contended it has become a buzzword), they felt that social justice and equity conversations in education are not happening to the depth and breadth that they should be

happening. The district administrators noted that when conversations about social justice did happen, they were generally in the context of race and academic data. The focus on race as a defining characteristic of social justice in education was also dominant during the interviews, with only a few brief references to other marginalized student populations.

Capacity building. The district administrators conveyed that there was extremely limited support for them as they sought opportunities for capacity building to be social justice leaders. Participants revealed that professional development opportunities provided or sanctioned by the district are more closely associated with their management roles or an academic focus. For example, Nick, who acts as district counsel, discussed attending a conference for school attorneys. Martin described a Response to Intervention (RTI) conference focused on identifying academic needs. Felicia recounted a two-day professional development program about standards-based grading. Felicia elaborated on her professional development experiences, stating, "Most professional development that I go to I learn nothing. It's terrible, and I think if I could find someone that I believed and trusted could teach me I would love it." In line with their own personal drive to be social justice leaders each district administrator noted that, even though the class they are attending may not be focused on social justice leadership, they do their best to make meaningful connections between conference topics and social justice. For example, Martin shared that while the team was disaggregating data at an RTI conference, he kept notes about how the black and Hispanic students that were showing low scores were also most often being sent to DAEP.

The group also described attempts to provide professional development to campus leaders. The central office administrators conveyed that they experienced difficulty in

finding resources to build campus-leader capacity for social justice. One of the district administrators used literature that he was recently exposed to as a tool to guide conversations, but found that attempting to build capacity with principals at different levels of understanding about social justice leadership was challenging.

The district administrators also reported that their learning was predominately self-directed. Felicia shared,

> Any type of learning that I do for myself I do on my own regarding these topics, I may go to a conference or I may get a little nugget from a conference or a book I should read. You know looking at websites, looking at reports that are published. I do a lot of studying on school leadership.

The district administrators extended their own learning by attending conferences and by seeking out literature. Much like the principals, the district administrators conveyed that they were on their own when it came to building their capacity as social justice leaders. Also like the principals, they sought out places and spaces for conversations about social justice leadership, including doctoral programs that focused on social justice.

The district administrators all stated that their current capacity for social justice leadership was not as strong as they would like for it to be. Like the principals, they used the resources they had at hand or could access to assist with their own capacity building. The district administrators described actions that they took to increase their capacity as social justice leaders. These actions included constant reflection on social justice in general and social justice leadership in particular, modeling social justice leadership, and using relational skills to gently move conversations around social justice forward.

Martin, Nick, and Felicia all reported that they were continually honing their capacities for social justice leadership. An example of this is the response Martin shared when asked what skills he brings as a social justice leader, "I guess the main skills I have are one, being aware of it, and then two, getting more and more courageous about acting upon it." Each of the district administrators shared a desire to continuously feed their own learnings and understanding through reading, conversations, and seeking out meaningful learning opportunities.

Changes needed at district and campus level. One of the areas district administrators discussed was educational systems and sub-systems. A common theme in their discussions was that in order to better promote social justice some of these systems needed to be disrupted. One example of how systems could be disrupted described by the district administrators was through attention to hiring practices. For example, Nick spoke of considerations about leadership style and social justice capacity when hiring and inducting new campus administrators in his district. He explained, "As we are hiring new assistant principals there needs to be some understanding that we're beginning that process in the Office of School Leadership, trying to find opportunities to synchronize on these different issues."

District administrators also spoke about reallocating resources as a means of disruption. They shared that in their previous experiences, both as campus administrators and district administrators, resources for schools were often allocated on an equal basis, without consideration for equity. Felicia shared that one of her responsibilities was to ascertain how resources are being distributed to schools. Indeed, she defined social justice as, "systems and resources to promote and assist students who don't have those

resources normally in their lives," and further stated, "We've got a district where we take our resources and distribute equitably." Felicia thus had disrupted previous systems of equal distribution.

Earlier it was noted that when district administrators were asked to define social justice they communicated that it was an ambiguous term that sometimes led to confusion. They suggested that if the language around social justice was changed it might provide more clarity and reduce barriers brought about by use of that term. For example, Martin stated:

> I think because social justice is such an ambiguous thing for so many people to capture or define that it is rarely on the forefront (of their minds) as they plan or make decisions, including establishing systems for social justice. I think those systems can be improved if you are looking through a lens of social equity.

Nick asked to jump in to the conversation adding, "I agree that the phrase social justice is a wired term that is value laden and can set off alarms in people's heads about a lot of things, and I think it is an ambiguous term." He added, "It's about who benefits and who's marginalized. This is my way of dealing with it. I have to be able to sift and sort through the policies and processes that are being presented." Felicia continued the conversation, sharing, "What we've done in our district is, we don't talk about social justice, we don't talk about marginalization. What we do…talk about is the disparities in the educational experience for different children at different schools." All three of the district administrators agreed that the use of different language for describing social justice would assist with capacity building in others.

Another key theme that developed throughout the interviews and focus-group discussions was the need to develop and/or change the district culture. For example, during the focus-group discussion with district administrators, Martin shared,

> I think the culture has to be appropriate. A culture that values courage as opposed to safety, because in order to promote social justice, you also have to challenge social injustice, and if you are in a culture where you challenge something that is the norm you get a hand slap …Then, even if you have several people in the organization who value equity and social justice, you're not going to see change.

Nick discussed the need to change the campus culture as well as the district culture in order to make lasting change throughout the system.

Collaborative social justice leadership. Similar to the principals, the district administrators argued that until there was some level of importance given to social justice leadership by those in power roles—superintendents and school boards in particular—working to collaborate on social justice leadership in districts would be challenging. Also similar to principals, district administrators felt that well-facilitated, purposeful, and targeted discussions would provide the best opportunity for co-framing of and collaborative social justice leadership. District administrators shared concerns about the need for building capacity among other district administrators and campus administrators prior to engaging in collaborative social justice leadership. Finally, administrators felt that changes needed to be make in the larger political system in order for school administrators to reach their full capacity as social justice leaders. Felicia explained, "There are a lot of things we can do, but politically we can't…because politically we

have to do it…one of those things is using STAAR [State of Texas Assessments for Academic Readiness] tests as the primary banner of student achievement."

In regard to collaborative opportunities for principals and district leaders to discuss social justice leadership, both campus and district leaders said they would like the opportunity to collaborate with one another about social justice leadership, although their description of what that might look like was limited. District administrators discussed the importance of establishing an atmosphere of acceptance, a shared vision, and an accepting culture. They also discussed the role of systems in making changes that would support collaborative discussion between principals and district leaders. They, like principals, believed that it was up to the superintendent and the school board to establish a culture and climate that would facilitate these collaborative discussions.

Cross-Group Themes

Limited Professional Development

During the cross-group conversation, the administrators again discussed the lack of professional development on social justice for campus and district leaders. Additionally, the administrators lamented the lack of opportunity for cross-group discussions on social justice leadership. All three of the participants in this discussion were attending doctoral programs with a focus on social justice. They all expressed concern that, unless a campus or district administrator has a personal desire to continue their growth, she or he has little possibility of developing as a social justice leader. Tim expressed concern about buy-in from other campus and district leaders, asking, "Why would a principal that's already been through grad school—they have no desire to go to a PhD program, they're a sitting principal—why would they seek social justice classes

out?" Kathy commented, "they don't really know where they fit in…and how do they know what they would even need to do to develop social justice leadership skills."

Accountability and Social Justice

Participants in the heterogeneous focus-group often discussed the role of accountability in education. Three different aspects of accountability discussion were present during the conversation: accountability for the purpose of education, accountability for school leadership through the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), and the more often discussed student academic accountability systems. Tim initiated a conversation about accountability for establishing citizenship, stating, "We don't even have citizenship anymore, to be honest. And that was kind of one of the pillars of education." The discussion continued around the current accountability system and the lack of support for social justice within this framework. Kathy extended the conversation, noting that during the development of the PSEL standards "at one point it was super heavy on social justice, but they kind of backed off on that. It still has some social justice things in it."

Politics and Power

Participants in the heterogeneous group revisited the issue from the earlier interviews of who sets the tone for social justice. Again there was conversation around the role of power in the educational hierarchy, and again it was determined that importance of social justice had to be established by "higher ups." However, it was also noted that each level of the system has "higher ups"; for example, Tim stated,

> It starts at a systems level. Whether it be from the legislature saying it, or from a superintendent saying this is going to be important in our district. I think you can

start at the campus-level as well. It's just, is it a priority or not a priority?

The "hierarchy" that needs to change was viewed by this participant as extending from the legislative to the campus-level.

The Community and Social Justice

Participants argued that, even with strong leadership in place, there are barriers to community support for social justice. Tim expressed concern that, if priorities are unclear for those working in education, this lack of clarity extends to parents and the greater community. According to Kathy, the lack of clarity brings about fear, causing the community to mistrust the school. Both principals and district administrators discussed examples of community pressure for the school to acquiesce to things that were not in the interest of social justice. For example, one of the participants recalled that a superintendent had books removed from a campus library rather than engaging some community members in conversations about the importance of books as tools for promoting social justice.

Challenge and Hope

A common theme across individual and homogeneous group interviews as well as the cross-group conversation was that of disbelief; although all participants believed that social justice leadership was integral to student success and should be a key goal of public education, they also expressed doubts about whether full enactment of social justice within school systems was attainable. Throughout the conversation, participants referred to the possibility of fully enacting social justice with terms like "pie in the sky" and "kumbaya". At one point during the conversation Kathy jokingly asked if anyone would be interested in moving out of public education and starting a charter school.

District leaders expressed challenges they faced within their educational communities: stories of students holding up Confederate flags in school bathrooms and sending messages of hate to other students, to stories of so much community push back about changing the confederate fight song and rebel mascot that social media feedback had to be censored, to stories of being called a "racist" because of questioning the over referral of black students to DAEP. Possibly the most incredulous story was one shared by Kathy about a professional development session on data disaggregation she attended during which she overheard a superintendent of a district in West Texas say, "What you guys need to do is go out there and get you some Asians."

Among all of the challenges discussed in the conversation, the secondary question remained how central office and campus leaders could work together to promote social justice leadership. It seemed that the answers to this question were for administrators to maintain hope, to keep the conversation in the forefront, and to strive to be models of social justice leadership in their everyday work. Tim's final comment during the wrap up of the heterogeneous focus-group seemed to sum it up best:

> One of the ways you start it is you put it together, and those that want to come will come, and then you have like voices, and those voices will become stronger and stronger and you hope that it branches out from there and it gains more interest. Then you hope that you can do it again with more [participants], or more frequently. Then you do it again. You've just got to start somewhere.

V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of campus and district administrators about concerning building for social justice leadership. Campus principals and district leaders have great impact on student achievement, teacher learning, and the community as a whole (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Social justice leadership is attuned to transformational leadership, and as such the leaders in this study are working to transform educational systems.

Research questions for the study focused on two central themes: current climate for capacity building, and what collaboration to promote social justice might look like. Specifically, the primary research question was: How do campus and district leaders perceive the current climate for capacity building for social justice at the central office and campus leadership levels, their own capacities for social justice leadership, the capacities they need to develop to be more effective social justice leaders, and changes needed at the district and campus level to better promote social justice? This question was designed to establish foundational understanding of the experiences of social justice leaders as they navigate the daily requirements and demands of their roles. The second research question was as follows: In what ways do central office leaders and campus leaders believe they can collaborate to promote social justice? The intent of this question was to ascertain the level of desire and the avenues necessary to develop an educational community that supports and sustains social justice leadership.

This qualitative study was conducted through the constructionist paradigm in order to build understanding of the socially constructed experiences of social justice

leaders in campus and district leadership roles (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). Grounded theory techniques including ongoing review of data, coding, and memoing to develop a comprehensive, deep understanding of participant experiences through inductive analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Two individual interviews and three focus-group interviews were conducted to collect data. Each participant engaged in two individual interviews and one role-based homogenous focus-group. Between each of the interviews, questions were developed and adjusted based upon previously collected data to deliver a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants, providing the flexibility needed to understand the complex system of social justice leadership (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Additionally, three of the participants took part in a supplementary heterogeneous focus-group discussion. This information was then analyzed to build deeper understanding of the social justice leadership experiences of the participants.

The data collection process allowed for the development of meaning-making regarding shared experiences of the participants (Crotty, 1998). The use of grounded theory supported the understanding of patterns seen within the data (Charmaz, 2014). Further, data analysis within the interpretivist paradigm allowed for the research to move beyond basic understandings into more deeply developed connections (Patton, 2002).

Interpretations

> Just what makes that little old ant think he'll move that rubber tree plant, anyone knows an ant can't move a rubber tree plant. But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes. He's got high apple pie in the sky hopes" (Cahn, 1959)

The lyrics of the song "High Hopes" written by Sammy Cahn are an anthem for social justice leaders. The themes of self-reliance, perseverance, courage, and hope are

widespread in the daily experiences of campus and district administrators, particularly administrators enacting social justice. Social justice educators continue their push to improve schools. Whether purposefully seeking out areas to deepen support for social justice or addressing areas previously not addressed, social justice educational administrators have an internal sense of moral obligation and a commitment to support civil rights (Dantley & Tillman, 2010). As expressed by participants in the study, social justice leadership is an inextricable part of *being* for these leaders and they become a frustrated when they are unable to address social injustice. Research indicates that professional development begins with preservice learning and extends throughout an educator's career (Bouillion, 2009; Carrington, 1999; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). Social justice leaders are challenged with engaging in, and providing, professional development for social justice at all stages of the educator career cycle. Social justice leadership is not embraced by school districts or the greater educational community, as evidenced by a continued focus on academic accountability and a lack of cohesive, structured support for social justice leadership in administrator (and teacher) preparation and in-service professional development programs. However, these leaders find ways to continue their work individually with small scale impact while continuing to move forward and challenge larger systems. Much like the ant moving the rubber tree plant.

Self-reliance is a Key Trait for Social Justice Leaders

All participants in the study reported continuation of their own capacity building in spite of the sparse landscape of learning opportunities presented to them in their learning journey; a lack of support that continued from being preservice administrators into their current roles as in-service administrators. Consistent with the writings of

Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy in 2005, there is still a deficit in social justice learning in preservice administration programs. These programs have the foundational opportunity to frame an established set of expectations for school administrators. However, from Dewey's contextualization of the role of social constructs in education in 1909, to Rawls's 1971 framing of social justice as virtue of social institutions, in educational leadership preparation the call for social justice leadership continues to go largely unanswered.

As Cambron-McCabe noted in 2010, preservice administration programs are not cohesive in their emphasis of social justice leadership. However, the redesigned Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Leaders, 2015) may promote some changes in this area, with one of the standards specifically addressing social justice leadership. As Tim, one of the principals in the study noted, he is seeing some changes in the learning of the assistant principals and preservice administrators. He added that they were "reading books that I didn't read until recently in my doctoral program." Further, five of the six participants in the study have begun doctoral programs with social justice leadership as a focus (at the beginning of the study four of the six were in such programs).

Continuous honing of professional capacity is integral to the development of social justice leaders (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Dantley & Tillman, 2010). Findings of the study indicate that there is no formal, targeted training to support social justice capacity development in the districts beyond basic diversity training, leaving participants to seek their own sources for personal capacity building. Aligned with the findings of Gordon (2004), participants in the study lacked support from both their preservice program and

their school districts. Congruent with findings by Dantley and Tillman (2010) participants in the study described seeking their own opportunities to develop their learning of social justice leadership. Leaders in the study reported seeking learning opportunities through attending conferences and seeking outside support to expand their knowledge.

Engaging in collaborative conversations was a way participants in the study sought to grow their own understandings of social justice leadership. When places and spaces for these collaborations were unavailable in the context of their everyday roles in the district, participants in the study worked to create situations for these conversations to occur. Principal Kathy, for example, discussed attempts to engage in meaningful conversations about social justice on her campus with teachers. She further extended these conversations to district level in an effort to engage other principals and district leaders in conversation.

Capacity building includes the ability to connect to others that have similar interests. Further, it includes the ability to learn from role models. Although not mentioned in the literature, role models support ongoing learning. While all of the participants reported an absence of strong leaders within their district to look to role models for social justice learning, they acted as role models for other campus and district staff. During interviews, principals Tim and William both described how they purposefully considered their roles as social justice leaders when they enacted changes on their campuses. As social justice leaders, they considered the capacity of potential new educational programs to provide equity for students. They also shared social justice learning with teachers, assistant principals, principals and district leaders.

Belchetz and Leithwood (2007) found that transformational leaders shared similar characteristics, such as fostering group goals, intellectual stimulation, and creating collaborative cultures. Participants in the study were interested in creating opportunities to co-frame social justice leadership. During an optional final focus-group with a heterogeneous mix of district administrators and campus principals, the three attending participants discussed accepting the challenge of engaging other leaders in discussions about social justice leadership. These self-reliant social justice leaders brought the conversation about social justice to the table when it was not there, creating a space for intellectual stimulation for themselves and others.

Courage is Essential

Social justice leaders are transformational leaders. Transformational leaders such as those in this study are defined by characteristics such as risk-taking and self-determination (Bass, 1990). Similar to the findings of Bass (1990), all participants in the study were found to have varying degrees of courage in moving forward as social justice leaders. This courage took the form of seeking positions that would allow for deeper input in building understandings of social justice leadership. Nick and Felicia, both district administrators, reported conversations about working with campus principals and district administrators to build understanding of equitable practices in the district, actions of courage that went against conventional norms.

Courage can also be seen through the risk-taking actions of the principals in the study; Kathy, Tim, and William. Each of these social justice leaders challenged the districts they worked in to be attentive to the need for social justice in their own ways: William in his fight for student placement in Pre-AP; Kathy in her ongoing battle to reach

out to her staff and district staff to build common awareness; and Tim in his work with his administrators, students, and families with restorative justice discipline practices. Working with little or no formal support, these leaders sought to develop not only themselves, but others with whom they interacted.

Burns (1978) argued that transformational leaders go beyond moral leadership. Moral leadership does not challenge the status quo, rather it maintains the status quo through avoidance of risk-taking behaviors. Although ethically motivated, moral leaders do not go a step beyond maintaining harmony. The social justice leaders in this study went beyond maintaining harmony and acted as change agents, a finding aligned with the research of Avolio and Bass (1998) on characteristics of transformational leaders. Social justice leadership often requires going against the status quo. In systems that are politically charged, systems such as school districts, social justice leaders may find themselves enmeshed in political contexts that involve other campus and district leaders, school board members, the local community, and the educational community at large. These situations act as barriers to change that are difficult to negotiate (Cuban, 1990; Mayo, 2010; Oliva, Anderson, & Byng, 2010; Sergiovanni, 1990; Whelan, 2009).

The political climate of school district leadership can be a challenging landscape for leaders acting as change agents. In the current climate of accountability, standardized assessment scores are dominant. This focus is a Janus coin for social justice leadership's duality. On one side of the coin is the pressure to raise scores and numbers by any means necessary. This includes creating burdens on schools and principals to perform above all else, often limiting social and emotional support programs (DePaoli, Atwell, & Bridgeland, 2017). The other side of the coin is the potential use of quantitative data to

provide insight to the deeper social justice issues within a district (Frattura & Capper, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2008). Martin, a district administrator, provided a relevant example of this situation. He shared that he is often sent to professional development that targets raising test scores, but the bigger picture, one he felt was marginalized during these learning opportunities, was that the data provided glaring displays of the inequities within the learning systems. William, a campus principal, echoed this challenge when he shared his experiences working with other principals reviewing data and his attempt to examine the greater picture. Both administrators reflected that they felt like they were not fully equipped to engage in the deeper conversations about social justice needs. Neither felt that they had access to capacity building opportunities that would have helped them to expand these conversations.

Social justice leaders as transformational leaders also face challenges during interactions with the local community (Oliva, Anderson, & Byng, 2010). During an interview district administrator Nick described how he worked to manage the update of the high school fight song, explaining that at times his position was threatened. Nick could have stopped moving forward, however he continued efforts to make these changes, exemplifying several key characteristics of social justice leaders outlined by Dantley and Tillman (2010) in their synthesis of key characteristics of social justice leaders.

Marshall and Oliva (2010) note that social justice leadership requires "astute activism" (p.1). Within the context of their role as either a school or district leader, social justice leaders in education engage with the community in a very specialized way. They are entrusted by the community with the task of supporting students to be successful

citizens. Making waves within the community, even if the intention is to move schools to be more equitable, requires courage. Addressing inequities that are occurring in the community rather than in a closed educational setting such as meetings of teachers or administrators requires capacity building for engaging in these conversations (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). During his individual interview Principal Tim shared an experience during which his actions to support equitable schools resulted in deep community push back. Tim discussed the request for removal of a book from the library as requested by parents. The book contained LGBTQIA subject matter. Although Tim wanted to work with parents and the community to develop equitable practices, ultimately the superintendent chose to remove the book. The topic of community engagement came up during the principal homogenous focus-group as well, with all three members, Kathy, Tim, and William, discussing the implications of boundary maps. They felt that their districts did not engage the community about the role of equity in the development of attendance zones and movement of students, leaving questions about intentions of re-zoning left unanswered.

As a result of experiences like those noted above, participants reflected that they wished they had more professional development to learn how to address equity topics that arise. The development of social justice leaders' capacity to engage in these types of courageous conversations should be an essential part of their professional development. School and district leaders have only recently begun to engage in the context of courageous conversations within team dynamics. Social justice leaders and other leaders need support beyond inter-educational team dynamics; they require capacity building to

support the courageous conversations they are compelled to be a part of as activist leaders working toward creating more equitable schools (McKenzie et al., 2008).

Social Justice Leaders Persevere

Research indicates that capacity building for social justice leadership is still in its early stages (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy 2005; Theoharis, 2009; Theoharis, 2010) and that there is a growing need to address social justice concerns in an increasingly global society (Banks, 2010). Enacting social justice leadership will require both courage and perseverance as educational leaders work to grow their own and others' understandings of social justice (Frattura & Capper, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2008).

In the face of limited resources, the social justice leaders in the study sought out many resources for their learning. Although there was some limited support for these leaders at times, the surface-level diversity training they received was not enough to feed their desire to grow as social justice leaders. Felicia, a district leader, explained during an interview that she wanted to learn more about social justice support for teachers, but found that she had very limited options provided to her. In order to build her own knowledge base, she reported,

> I started doing more research on this myself. I didn't know where to start, I just went to the internet and googled things like "social justice for teachers". Even then it was limited. It's got to become a part of the culture, of the fabric, of your way of thinking.

Like Felicia and the other participants in this study, when unable to access learning readily, social justice leaders seek out new ways of understanding to build their own capacity. This study's results support the idea that social justice leaders have a

commitment to a more genuine enactment of democratic principles (Dantley and Tillman, 2010) and a sense of responsibility to persevere in that commitment (Marshall and Oliva, 2010). The social justice leaders in the study continued to seek learning on their own and to expand the learning of others even when faced with a variety of challenges, including lack of access and political barriers.

Social Justice Leaders are Hopeful

Self-reliance, perseverance, and courage indicate hope. The perseverance displayed by the leaders in the study coupled with their courage to continue to push for change indicates that they maintained a sense of hope that places and spaces could be created that would enable them to expand their own learning about social justice and capacity as social justice leaders as well as work with others to bring about social justice.

Cambron-McCabe's (2010) finding that professional learning opportunities are limited both in preservice and in-service development of educational leaders align with the experiences of the social justice leaders in the study. Although these opportunities are still limited, these leaders sought out ways to enhance their own learning, to build their own capacity regardless of lack of support or set-backs. In interviews and focus-group meetings, Kathy pointed out that she attended a conference about diversity in schools in order to continue her own learning and to improve learning about social justice leadership in the district. Tim shared that he initially felt very positive about a meeting about a district-led opportunity to engage leadership in social justice discussions with an outside consultant. Both of these experiences however were not as productive as they had hoped for. Kathy and Tim's hopes for a collaborative culture focused on social justice leadership ended up being discarded for other areas of focus. Regardless of these and

similar experiences shared during interviews and focus-groups, the district and campus social justice leaders who participated in this study continued to believe that there is place and space for social justice leadership, and that there continue to be opportunities to engage in learning to enhance social justice leadership. More importantly, they believe that they are part of the change, part of the message of hope for the development of new systems that will provide learning experiences and develop conversations about the role of social justice leadership in schools.

Fullan's findings (2008) established that continuous development and growth are essential to organizations. Findings in this study indicated that when there was not an opportunity for growth available the leaders forged new pathways to address the need for such growth. One of these pathways included efforts to adjust hiring practices, with the hope of eventually developing a workforce with similar ideals and goals related to social justice. Participants in the study spoke specifically about hiring practices to build a cadre of personnel that have social justice understandings. Felicia discussed the importance of hiring school leaders. She felt that the hiring of a leader in districts was done, "way too quickly and flippantly" and argued that the current system reduces the ability to hire good leaders. Martin, another district leader, also discussed the importance of hiring, noting that the first step to altering this system is to seek out candidates that understand social justice and equity. Added to this is the responsibility of the district to provide professional development for social justice leadership in order to hone the values of a campus or district.

One of the interesting results of this study was how the social justice leaders viewed their learning experiences and the learning experiences of others. The participants

looked at daily situations they encountered through the lens of a change agent. Each participant described times when they could personally make connections to social justice leadership during their own professional development and the professional development of others. Dantley and Tillman's (2010) synthesis of key characteristics of social justice leadership described one of its characteristics as a consciousness of the broader social, cultural, and political contexts of schools. The participants of the study displayed this characteristic not only within the context of their leadership roles, but also within themselves. The dynamic interaction of personal development with the development of others expands upon the characteristic of consciousness originally posed by Dantley and Tillman. Social justice leaders seek their own learning while seeking to impact their environment.

As professional development leaders, the participants intertwined social justice leadership as a purposeful part of the professional development they delivered. These leaders were not waiting to act; they were not waiting on the approval of their supervisors or the community to engage in conversation about social justice. Rather, they are moving forward to build capacity in others. All three principals spoke specifically about how they worked with their campus staff. Some worked specifically on the topic of social justice and equity. For example, Kathy, a campus principal, spoke about purposeful focus on equity when working with her campus staff. Developing others extends capacity building beyond oneself into a deeper context of learning; while teaching others about social justice and social justice leadership, these leaders were learning about and expanding their own capacity for social justice leadership.

When participating in professional development not directly related to social justice leadership, the participants in this study experienced an innate awareness of the implications of social justice. For example, Felicia discussed a time when she was sent to a one-day training about leadership conducted by Google. During this training, she continued to make her own personal connections to social justice leadership in schools, although she reported that the training never specifically discussed equity or social justice. Other participants described similar experiences, consistently explaining that they made connections to social justice leadership when such connections were not apparent.

Finally, the participants in this study constantly reflected on their capacity as social justice leaders. This study identified ongoing reflection as an essential part of the practice of the social justice leaders in the study. All of the participants discussed engaging in reflection as part of their learning and their practice. Reflection appears to be an essential ingredient in adult learning, personal development, and capacity building for social justice leadership.

Social Justice Leadership Varies

Reflective of the current climate, and current research paradigm (Marshall, 2004), the study found that participants generally discussed students in the context of singular identifiers. Rather than talking about students based upon intersectionality and multiple identifiers, participants spoke about students solely in the context of one identifier such as race or socio-economic status. Participants also primarily discussed students in context of currently required accountability, collected data (race, socio-economic status, gender). The dominant conversation in all participant interviews and focus groups was around race, with socio-economic status being the second most frequently discussed. There was

limited discussion about LGBTQIA issues, students with (dis)abilities, or gender needs. It should be noted that when LGBTQIA issues were discussed, it was in the context of transgendered bathrooms (an issue that was in the media during the time of the interviews). Discussion of intersectionality is an example of a place where support for capacity building for social justice leadership would be beneficial.

Conclusions

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this study:

- Based on the reports of the participants in the study, social justice capacity building in preservice administration programs continues to be limited and not cohesive. Although there have been calls for social justice in education and multiple layers of research noting the need for social justice leadership in preservice programs, they are still not a strong part of preservice programs. Preservice programs establish the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for in-service performance. If these programs are not deigned to give a level of importance to social justice leadership, then why would school districts prioritize this work? Social justice leaders leave preservice programs with a desire to enact change, but with little foundational support from preservice programs.
- In-service capacity building for social justice leadership is superficial or non-existent. It is given lip-service through surface-level diversity training that is not fully realized. Social justice leaders must rely on themselves for growth and capacity building. The bulk of capacity building for district and campus leaders continues to be managerial rather than developing instructional leaders. In addition to budgeting and compliance management issues, campus and district

leaders are charged with meeting accountability requirements. However, this addition focuses solely on short-term gains on test scores rather than long term systems changes that address inequities. Existing capacity building for administrators is more about these short term gains than long-term systems changes and supports.

- Social justice leadership valuation and by extension capacity building for social justice leadership is framed by the highest levels of district leadership; in particular, the superintendent and school board. The level of capacity building for social justice leadership will reflect the value the superintendent and board members place on that process. The hierarchy of this established power-structure determines the depth and intensity of capacity building within a district. If building and sustaining equity and support of diverse learners is not truly a focus of district leadership, then it will not be prioritized across the district.
- Education systems are fraught with rhetoric about supporting the needs of diverse learners. District mission, vision, and goals statements often include statements about supporting the needs of diverse learners. Although such statements often are not taken seriously by school and district leaders, the participants of this study revealed that there are social justice leaders within the system that are working to realize the full potential of these statements.
- Social justice leadership lacks cohesion because not all educational leaders view social justice leadership as necessary for their schools and districts. While schools are moving more toward the tenets of moral and ethical leadership, there is still a

wide dearth of social justice leadership. The lack of cohesion slows the progress of social justice leadership.

- Within themselves, social justice leaders vary in how they enact social justice leadership. Social justice leaders in this study focused primarily on discussions about race and poverty. There was some limited discussion of LGBTQIA concerns, mostly relating to a current outcry for transgendered bathrooms. When asked about other areas of marginalization, gender and disability, participant discussion was limited or non-existent, indicating a need for more cohesive capacity building for social justice leaders.
- Social justice leaders in the study expressed a desire to collaborate with one another, both in a homogeneous capacity (e.g., working with other campus leaders) and in a heterogeneous capacity (e.g., collaboration between campus and district leaders). Participants in the study shared overarching vision about what these experiences might look like, including establishment of a supportive culture, shared vision, facilitation, and structured systems. Current social justice leaders work in isolation. They do not have structured opportunities to collaborate unless social justice leadership is prioritized within a district. Even in their isolation, they seek out opportunities to build their capacity.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Principals

Each of the three principals in the study worked to build capacity about social justice leadership in themselves, their staff, and other district leaders. These principals all had different backgrounds and experiences being social justice leaders, however, their

stories shared similar basic themes. Each principal believed that it is integral to the growth of students and to the greater good to address social justice issues. Each principal embodied the characteristics of a social justice leader including risk-taking and hope for betterment. And finally, each principal had very limited structured learning about being a social justice leader.

As these leaders move forward with their work in education, they will continue to face challenges in further to developing their own understandings of social justice leadership. Additionally, they will face challenges with others that do not prioritize social justice leadership, whether they are superiors or lateral colleagues. Theoharis' work in 2007 is a decade old. In the findings, it was noted that social justice campus leaders work in isolation. This continues to be the case for countless social justice leaders on campuses.

While these campus leaders seemingly work in isolation from other campus and district leaders, their impact can be resounding if purposed correctly. Campus social justice leaders have influence and impact that casts a broader net than one might initially consider. Campus leaders are role models. They act as role models for their staff, for their students, for other campuses, and for the community at large.

Campus social justice leaders should continue their practices of shifting the paradigm through program development, setting the environmental tone for the campus, and developing relationships with all members of the educational community. Principals who are social justice leaders need to intentionally connect all major campus initiatives to social justice. They need to make others fully aware of the social justice implications of any decision that affects students. Further, they should intentionally work to develop

social justice leaders on their campuses and to include these individuals in decision-making processes.

Principals should also be aware of how their role as social justice leaders influences other campus and even district leaders and should act as role models for other educational leaders. It is vital that they intentionally work to grow others through strategic questioning and critical conversations. Consciously identifying themselves as social justice leaders will provide heightened awareness of the need to frame conversations and learning opportunities around social justice and equity. Principals also need to share successful strategies and programs they implement on their campuses as social justice leaders. Sharing the positive outcomes with other campus and district leaders provides them with models that they can try out in their own settings.

In order to build their own capacity for social justice leadership, principals need to seek out organizations, learning opportunities, and colleagues with a similar mindset to strengthen and replenish themselves. Social justice leadership is not a priority for most districts. If capacity building is not addressed within their professional environment, principals should consciously work to seek outside learning opportunities to help them grow. Principals should continue to seek like-minded principals' groups and organizations that will help them to grow. Finally, pushing for the creation of places and spaces for discussion about and building of capacity for social justice leadership is a natural part of shifting the paradigm. If principals do not continue to request opportunities to enhance their own learning (as well as the learning of others) around social justice leadership, then their growth needs will go unfulfilled. Continuing to question will raise awareness and perhaps lead to future learning opportunities.

Recommendations for Central Office Administrators

Central office administrators have a sphere of influence that extends throughout the district and beyond. This influence should be leveraged to promote capacity building for social justice leadership. The three district administrators that participated in the study reported similar challenges, including limited opportunities to learn and grow as social justice leaders. District administrators who wish to be social justice leaders need to continue to stay the course in their efforts to enact social justice and equity. They are role models for district and campus leaders, and like campus principals, should purposefully integrate social justice leadership with their various leadership roles. Social justice leaders at the district level need to recognize that, among other obligations, they are responsible for prioritizing professional learning for campus administrators.

Each of the participants in the study noted that the superintendent sets the tone for the district. Although each of the participants felt that they had some ability to act as social justice leaders, they did not feel supported by the highest-level administrator in the district, the superintendent. Importance and framing of district initiatives is influenced by the superintendent. The superintendent assists school board members' understanding of the needs of the district. Superintendents are role models for the district, the message they send to the district promotes or diminishes the importance of social justice, equity and social justice leadership.

Recommendations for Educational Leadership Preparation Programs

Educational leadership preparation programs have made small steps toward integration of social justice leadership into programs. These programs still lack cohesive focus and structure to support social justice leadership. Educational leadership

preparation programs are the foundation for shaping the environment of educational systems. Widely varied in nature, these programs still have a set of guidelines that have been developed to support intent and focus. Using the recently developed National Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), especially the standard on equity and cultural competence, will assist the development of a more cohesive system of leadership development. The Standards are a recommended set of guidelines for leadership development both prior to and in service. Leadership development programs focused on social justice will need to go beyond the Standards, however these standards can be a starting point for developing more cohesive programs that incorporate capacity for social justice leadership.

Preparation programs should also include coursework that promotes a deep understanding of praxis. Practical application of learning in leadership development has been reduced to a very basic set of requirements that addresses basic needs. Leadership preparation programs have been moving toward inclusion of moral and ethical leadership. It is time to move beyond the expectation of training principals to simply be "good leaders" that maintain the status quo or support harmony to developing strong leaders that support equity and social justice in classrooms, schools, and communities.

Finally, and in particular, preparation programs for the superintendency and school boards should also begin reflection about their current curriculum. Beyond setting the tone for principal expectations and professional growth, superintendency and school board programs should go well beyond managerial learning and reach toward the expectation of superintendents and school board members as the vision makers of the district. These are the top-level leaders of a community, and it is essential for programs

supporting them to assist these individuals to develop high capacity for social justice leadership.

Superintendent programs continue to be lacking in their attention to social justice leadership (Cooper, Fusarelli, Jackson, & Poster, 2002).. With the current climate and the implementation of No Child Left Behind, stresses on academic performance have altered the role of the superintendent to move all students to a level of proficiency (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). Superintendents report that current preparation programs spend a great deal of time focused on skill-based learning experiences such as legal understandings and management courses (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). At the same time, with No Child Left Behind, superintendents are being called on to support academics and social needs across a broadly diverse population of students and reflective of social justice needs (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005).

Recommendations for superintendency programs include a deeper focus on building community capacity and political expertise (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). Additional recommendations for superintendency preparation programs include the development of clinical experiences, including internships and mentoring. Finally, the use of collaborative experiences such as cohorts is recommended for superintendency preparation programs in order to provide additional experiential support structures (Murphy, 2005).

Universities are the locus of theoretical development. School systems are the practical application of education theory. Upon graduation, there is limited support for capacity building from universities unless educators are enrolled in an additional degree program. Participants in the study expressed isolation in their own capacity building for

social justice leadership, but were interested in collaborative opportunities. University programs could work to bridge this theory and practice by offering meeting places and spaces for social justice leaders to collaborate. In addition to providing these spaces, university programs could further support these leaders by offering professional development experiences such as co-framing social justice leadership, facilitating discussion, and practical strategies for overcoming political barriers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although social justice leadership in education has been around for decades, centuries if you consider Dewey's work in the early nineteen hundreds, it is still far from being recognized as a tenable way of "doing business" in education systems. English (2005) explained that schools are still working in the conventional constructs we expect from them. Challenges and barriers such as accountability standards and political ramifications set the tone for how school districts move forward. Embracing the change agency that comes with social justice leadership is daunting, and those that enact social justice leadership put themselves at risk.

There is a growing body of research focused on understanding the challenges regarding the enactment of social justice leadership (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis, 2008). How is it that district mission statements address diversity and equity, but do not support learning opportunities for social justice leadership? Why is it that years after beginning the accountability systems for academics there are still deep achievement gaps between different student groups? And why is it that we are still addressing fight songs based in hate speak, and district leaders are telling us to "ship in Asians" to raise scores?

While the current climate of accountability has moved to supporting the needs of all students, there are still significant achievement gaps for single identifiers such as race, gender, and socio-economic status (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In order to address each student as a "whole child" it is integral to address students based upon the needs of their intersectionality rather than as stand-alone silos. It is recommended that future research be conducted regarding support for students based upon intersectionality, similar to, and beyond those that are part of the QOCA movement (McCready, 2015). This research should then be integrated with administrator preparation programs as well as ongoing in-service capacity building. We need to address not only how we support students based upon singular identifiers, but beyond also how to support students with all facets of "self."

Research as a catalyst for change seems to be the best ways to build awareness and understanding among educators. The agenda for research in the field of capacity building for social justice leadership is varied and extensive. Research into the current status of preservice preparation programs for developing social justice leaders is already underway (Cambron-McCabe, 2010; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006), however deeper research into how successful programs work cohesively to develop leadership capacity should be conducted. Further, longitudinal research into the implementation of social justice leadership in school districts that hire and value social justice leaders should also be conducted.

Research should also be conducted specifically regarding social justice leadership and superintendents. Understanding the experiences, both current and previous, of social justice leaders that are superintendents would provide additional information about the

framework of social justice leadership in schools. Another area of research to consider is superintendents that do not act as social justice leaders. Those superintendents, who are part of the status quo, include generally moral and ethical superintendents who do not wish to be risk-takers when equity and social justice needs are not being addressed.

Another recommendation is to research how educational leaders define themselves. Given the different types of leadership described in the literature, where would school and district leaders define themselves on a leadership continuum, with social justice leadership at the advanced end of the continuum? What types of professional development do they believe would assist them to move further toward the social justice leader end of the continuum?

Leaders of campuses and school districts shape the climate of learning experiences for students, teachers, and communities. How we characterize ourselves as educational leaders continues to develop as the greater educational community continues to develop. Things what we have seen as normal operations decades ago, such as segregation of schools, have now become obsolete. Through research we develop our understandings of how to move forward toward new, higher expectations and better models for growing education systems.

Concluding Comments

English (2005) pondered the purpose of education. Whether it is to instill social justice values or values of the market place. Tim, a principal in the study, reflected on a similar construct when he pointed out that teaching of citizenship and social skills in schools has greatly diminished. As a constructivist study, the intention of this research was to learn about the experiences of social justice leaders as they navigate their daily

roles, and more deeply, what supports they rely on to increase their capacity as social justice leaders supported. This study has shown that we emphasize what we value, and currently social justice leadership is not valued enough in districts or preservice programs to provide deep, meaningful learning experiences for leaders.

However, progress is happening, albeit slowly. Principal preparation programs are becoming more inclusive of social justice leadership and equity. Within districts the terms “equity” and “social justice” are becoming more commonplace in discussions about learning experiences and students. This creates heightened awareness. While not deeply entrenched in understandings and practice, awareness is the first step toward moving to inclusion of social justice leadership as a norm.

Continued research regarding implementation of social justice leadership in schools will continue to move forward. Because of the leaders in this study and others, inroads are being made toward social justice leadership in schools. These leaders are members of a grass roots movement to move the current educational climate from one maintaining the status quo to one of questioning the status quo and creating a paradigm shift to social justice as intertwined with and an irreplaceable part of learning. The leaders studied in this research are the leaders of the future.

APPENDIX SECTION

Appendix A

Preliminary Survey

The preliminary survey below will be provided to determine final participants in the study. Final participants will be chosen based upon characteristics exhibited in the response to the second question below.

Directions: Please answer the questions in the space provided.

1. Please enter the assigned survey number in the space below.

2. Describe your understanding of social justice leadership in education.

3. Describe a time that you enacted social justice leadership in an educational setting.

Appendix B

Preliminary Survey Assessment

The list below is based on suggested characteristics noted by social justice leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Foster, 1986; Freire; 1998; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). Final participants will be chosen based upon the number of characteristics noted in their response to the survey prompts.

Characteristics of social justice leaders:

Model/Enact

- cultivate open dialogues about ideological and ethical issues
- critique marginalizing behaviors
- engage in risk-taking behavior fostering equity and social justice
- model and enact a culture of caring
- create and model caring relationships

Empower

- cultivate strong rapport with staff
- empower staff through collaborative leadership
- co-creation of vision
- develop parent collaboration opportunities at role level

Build Capacity

- engage in an effort to develop, challenge, and liberate
- develop staff capacity by fostering cultural responsiveness, instill social justice values, and building understandings of inequity
- elevation of awareness and engagement in culturally relevant practices in curriculum
- elevation of awareness and engagement in culturally relevant practices in daily practice

Activist Stance

- embrace consciousness of broader social, cultural, and political context of schools
- commit to engage enactment of democratic principles
- moral obligation to articulate a narrative of hope regarding education
- determination to move from rhetoric to civil rights activism
- express a duty or moral obligation to raise achievement for marginalized students

Appendix C

Participation Request Email

Good morning/afternoon,

I would like to start off by introducing myself. My name is Deborah Rang, I'm a doctoral student at Texas State University, and I am researching social justice leadership. Your name was suggested by an expert panel as a social justice leader. I know you are incredibly busy, so I will just "cut to the chase".

The parameters of the study are as follows:

- Topic: What is the perception of principals and district administrators in co-framing social justice and equity?

- Area: Central Texas area districts

- Participants: 3 campus principals, 3 district administrators

- Requested time for participants: 3-4.5 total hours

    - Preliminary survey: 10 minutes

    - 1 hour- first individual interview

    - 1 hour – second individual interview

    - 1 hour- second focus-group (by category: principals or district administrators)

    - 1 hour – second focus-group (mixed group: principals and district administrators)

- Ideal Timeline: The ideal timeline for completion is before August 1 (with flexibility embedded of course)

    - Week of June 20: Preliminary survey (online)

    - Week of June 27: Individual interview 1 (at your chosen location)

    - Week of July 11: Individual interview 2 (at your chosen location)

    - Week of July 18: Focus-group 1 (TBD)

    - Week of July 25: Focus-group 2 (TBD)

Appendix C

Participation Request Email (continued)

Preliminary Survey:

The preliminary survey is two basic questions, and will be used to determine final participation. Final participants will be chosen based upon an assessment rubric and proximity to other responses.

If you should choose to participate please complete the brief survey and use the number provided below (this will assist in confidentiality).

Number: *(randomized numbers provided for participants)*

As a former administrator, I know how incredibly busy everyone is, so I cannot thank you enough for your time.

Attached you will also find the confidentiality agreement information.

If you have any questions please feel free to call or email me. My cell number is 512.287.1512.

Thank you again,
Deborah

Appendix D

First Interview, Campus Leaders

1. What is the current climate for capacity building for social justice on your campus?

2. What leadership capacities do you possess for assisting the campus to better promote social justice?

3. What new leadership capacities do you need to develop in order to assist the campus to better promote social justice?

4. What changes need to be made on your campus in order for it to better promote social justice?

Appendix E

First Interview, District Leaders

1. What is the current climate for capacity building for social justice in your district?

2. What leadership capacities do you possess for assisting campuses in your district to better promote social justice?

3. What new capacities do you need to develop in order to assist principals' capacities for social justice leadership?

4. What new leadership capacities do campus leaders in your district need to develop in order to assist their campuses to better promote social justice? How can the district assist campus leaders to develop those capacities?

5. Beyond helping campus leaders to develop capacities for social justice leadership, what types of assistance do campuses in your district need to better promote social justice? What are the best ways for the district to provide that assistance?

6. How can the district and campus leaders collaborate to better promote social justice?

Appendix F

Guiding Questions Second Interview, Campus Leaders

1. How would you define social justice leadership at the district level?

2. at the campus level?

3. What do you think makes you a social justice leader?

4. How were your skills developed to be a social justice leader?

5. What supports would be helpful within the district to build your capacity for social justice leadership?

6. Previously we talked about how others are not quite there, how do we get others there?

7. In your district the mission statement and beliefs says "(insert district mission statement here)." How does the district ensure this equal opportunity?

8. What is the current climate for capacity building for social justice in your district? Is there one? Is it structured?

9. Does everyone have a similar foundational understanding of social justice and equity?

10. What changes need to be made in your district in order for it to better promote social justice?

11. What assistance do district leaders need to develop in order to support campuses to better promote social justice?

12. How is the addition of or change in staff accounted for? How does the district work to keep similar structures of capacity building or similar levels of understanding with churning of staff?

Appendix G

Guiding Questions Second Interview, District Leaders

1. How would you define social justice leadership at the district level?

2. at the campus level?

3. What do you think makes you a social justice leader?

4. How were your skills developed to be a social justice leader?

5. What supports would be helpful within the district to build your capacity for social justice leadership?

6. Previously we talked about how others are not quite there, how do we get others there?

7. In your district the mission statement and beliefs says "(insert district mission statement here)." How does the district ensure this equal opportunity?

8. What is the current climate for capacity building for social justice in your district? Is there one? Is it structured?

9. Does everyone have a similar foundational understanding of social justice and equity?

10. What changes need to be made in your district in order for it to better promote social justice?

11. What assistance do district leaders need to develop in order to support campuses to better promote social justice?

12. How is the addition of or change in staff accounted for? How does the district work to keep similar structures of capacity building or similar levels of understanding with churning of staff?

Appendix H

Guiding Questions Focus-group, Campus Leaders and District Leaders
(Homogeneous groups)

I. Reminder of the research questions for the study

- The primary research question for this study is as follows: What is the nature of capacity building for social justice leadership for in-service campus and district administrators?

- The secondary research question is as follows: How do campus and district administrators collaborate with one another as social justice leaders?

II. Additional guiding questions

1. Personal capacity building
    - During individual interviews, many of the participants mentioned that they had limited or no formal prior learning about social justice and social justice leadership during their administrative coursework.
        - What are your experiences now during in-service?
            - as provided by the district
            - sought on your own

2. Structural support
    - Previous discussions about social justice revealed the following:
        - Hiring practices can be accessed to support social justice
        - Specific programs can be identified to support social justice
    - What collaboration/support/guidance was given by the district to encourage the social justice implications for these areas? other areas not identified?

3. Social justice in action
    - How are you enacting social justice as a social justice leader?
    - How do you as a social justice leader support other staff?

4. Collaboration
    - What opportunities for collaboration about social justice leadership with colleagues at your level are available?
    - What opportunities for collaboration about social justice leaders with district leaders at all levels (campus, district) are available?
    - What do (would) these opportunities look like?

Appendix I

Guiding Questions Focus-group, Campus Leaders and District Leaders
(Heterogeneous group)

I. Reminder of the research questions for the study

- The primary research question for this study is as follows: What is the nature of capacity building for social justice leadership for in-service campus and district administrators?

- The secondary research question is as follows: How do campus and district administrators collaborate with one another as social justice leaders?

Appendix J

Email for Participant Review of Transcripts

Dear Participant,

I hope this email finds you doing well.

Attached are your transcribed Interviews and the Focus-group(s) you participated in for the study. The first interview focuses on developing an understanding of social justice leadership and capacity building in schools. The second interview included follow up questions, discussion about your personal connection to social justice leadership, and about desires for capacity building for yourself and at the district level. Finally, focus-groups extended to conversation by revisiting the research questions: What is the role of capacity building for social justice leadership for in-service campus and district administrators? and How do campus and district administrators collaborate with one another as social justice leaders?

Please take a few minutes to read over your interview(s) and provide feedback.

If you see no reason to make any changes, please email me back to let me know that everything is fine.

However, after you read over your transcribed interview and find you would like to make some additional comments, please let me know which areas you would like to address: social justice leadership in education, current climate for capacity building, capacity building

Additionally, if you see a response you would like removed or edited, please let me know the page number and what to strike. I am also happy to edit any comments you feel need more explanation.

My goal is for all participants to be comfortable with the collected data (interviews and focus-groups) as I continue to move through the data.

Thank you again for your participation in this study.

Feel free to call or email if you have any questions – [512.287.1512].

Deborah

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