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Transforming Educational Leadership Preparation: Starting with Ourselves

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Abstract

To lead for social justice, scholars have maintained aspiring leaders should examine their own values and beliefs that dictate, to a great extent, their day-to-day decision-making and responsibilities. To do so requires faculty to examine themselves before they can prepare leaders for social justice. The purpose of this paper is to engage others with similar interests toward creating and/or improving programs designed to prepare leaders for social justice. Serving as a source of data and method of analysis, this duoethnography chronicles the life histories of two faculty members working in different leadership programs to reveal how their understanding of diversity and social justice has been formed over the course of their lives. Sharing stories, they dialogically critiqued and questioned each other, challenging one another to reconceptualize beliefs and meanings about their lived experiences. Duoethnography has the potential to transform faculty's conceptions of diversity and social justice as well as promote empathy, compassion and understanding. When trust is established, faculty can take risks, ask tough questions, reveal vulnerabilities, exchange uncensored comments, and challenge deficit thinking. Duoethnography can be a valuable tool for faculty development. The authors question, however, whether faculty would be willing to employ duoethnography to explore their beliefs about diversity and increase their knowledge of social justice. Due to a perceived lack of trust, power differences, fear of uncovering biases, engaging in conflict, and/or denial of tenure and promotion, they question whether faculty would be willing to engage in this methodology.

Keywords

Educational Leadership, Faculty Development, Social Justice, Transformative Learning, Duoethnography

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Transforming Educational Leadership Preparation: Starting With Ourselves

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To lead for social justice, scholars have maintained aspiring leaders should examine their own values and beliefs that dictate, to a great extent, their day-to-day decision-making and responsibilities. To do so requires faculty to examine themselves before they can prepare leaders for social justice. The purpose of this paper is to engage others with similar interests toward creating and/or improving programs designed to prepare leaders for social justice. Serving as a source of data and method of analysis, this duoethnography chronicles the life histories of two faculty members working in different leadership programs to reveal how their understanding of diversity and social justice has been formed over the course of their lives. Sharing stories, they dialogically critiqued and questioned each other, challenging one another to reconceptualize beliefs and meanings about their lived experiences. Duoethnography has the potential to transform faculty's conceptions of diversity and social justice as well as promote empathy, compassion and understanding. When trust is established, faculty can take risks, ask tough questions, reveal vulnerabilities, exchange uncensored comments, and challenge deficit thinking. Duoethnography can be a valuable tool for faculty development. The authors question, however, whether faculty would be willing to employ duoethnography to explore their beliefs about diversity and increase their knowledge of social justice. Due to a perceived lack of trust, power differences, fear of uncovering biases, engaging in conflict, and/or denial of tenure and promotion, they question whether faculty would be willing to engage in this methodology. Keywords: Educational Leadership, Faculty Development, Social Justice, Transformative Learning, Duoethnography

Over the past 20 years, the demographic makeup of pre-kindergarten to grade twelve (PK-12) schools across the nation has dramatically changed and continues to do so. While we have witnessed these changes over time, the vast majority of principal preparation programs have remained constant (Baker-Martinez, 2012; Hawley & James, 2010; Hoff, Yoder, & Hoff, 2006; Merchant & Shoho, 2006). Lacking diversity and social justice awareness, knowledge, and skills (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Hawley & James, 2010), many have yet to respond to the call for action to transform their leadership preparation.

Leaders working in these increasingly diverse schools encounter a myriad of situations daily that deprive certain groups of students access to educational opportunities due to their racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. A number of scholars (Brown, 2004; Guerra, Nelson, Jacobs, & Yamamura, 2013; Hawley & James, 2010; McKenzie, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2006) have recommended that leadership preparation programs incorporate a social justice perspective into the course curriculum that advances a deeper understanding of how to work with students, families, and communities who are experiencing injustices as a

result of race, ethnicity, poverty, and other areas of difference. Others (Furman, 2012; Hackman, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2010) have maintained that future education professionals should be required to examine their own positions, especially within the context of their own values and beliefs that dictate, to a great extent, their day-to-day decision-making and responsibilities.

In light of the current status of leadership preparation at the university level and the increasing diversity and equity gaps occurring between certain racial and ethnic groups within our PK-12 schools, we maintain that we, as faculty within these preparation programs, must possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to address the challenges inherent in leading socially just educational programs. Like our students, we make decisions that are largely influenced by our personal life history and life attachments that give birth to a combined consideration of one's personal values, beliefs, and conceptions of what should or could have been and what should be, both in the present as well as the future. Moreover, if we have not examined our *own* assumptions, beliefs, and biases about race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, class, dis/ability and other forms of diversity, how can we in turn effectively prepare aspiring leaders to lead for social justice?

The authors of this paper, Barbara, an assistant professor and Patricia, an associate professor, hold positions within educational leadership preparation programs, located at two separate universities in the southwest U.S. Both are committed to infusing an equity-oriented, social justice leadership perspective into their teaching, curriculum and courses. We chronicled our life histories as a process for analyzing how we have become who we are (Guajardo, 2007), a critical journey we believe must first occur before we can attempt to ameliorate the negative effects caused by our inappropriate actions or reactions to racial and ethnic injustices and poverty. This paper provides a narrative to serve as a catalyst for engaging others who have similar interests toward creating and/or improving preparation programs designed to develop leaders who can lead for social justice.

Literature Review

As higher education faculty, Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) assert we must model the type of leadership within our own organizations that we expect our graduates to create. They charge us to reflect on the curriculum content of our leadership programs and the ways in which we teach to ascertain whether our own efforts and actions are representative of the types of social justice behaviors we advance as essential for future practicing administrators to embrace. Kottcamp (2002) warns us that the greatest difficulty faculty face in attempting to change their preparation programs to make them more effective exists in the need to change themselves, a practice that has traditionally been lacking in most educational leadership programs (Glassman, Cibulka, & Ashby, 2002). In short, faculty must be willing to model what they teach regarding the creation and leadership of socially just schools, an action that originates from an honest and cogent exploration of self (Aguilar, 2016; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

Some educational leadership programs have required faculty to examine their own personal and professional assumptions and beliefs about race, ethnicity, poverty, dis/ability and other forms of diversity and social justice. However, not all faculty members within the program have been receptive to such efforts. Many have either resisted or experienced difficulty in modeling social justice within their professional practice (Brown, 2004; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010; Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006). In those programs where diversity and social justice instruction reportedly occurs, instruction is usually limited to a single course (Hawley & James, 2010). The decision to integrate curriculum content and engage in meaningful dialogue about racially and ethnically diverse populations is an

individual faculty choice. Even then, few faculty members possess the expertise, knowledge and skill set necessary to facilitate such a discussion (Hawley & James, 2010; Lopez, 2010). Lopez (2010) underscores the imperative that much remains to be done within ourselves as educational leadership faculty before we can make social justice a critical component of our leadership development programs. Even if willing, however, most faculty members have received little or no professional development that requires them to explore their beliefs about diversity and increase their knowledge and skills of social justice (Bell, Washington, Weinstein, & Love, 2007).

Previous Attempts Made by University Faculty

Defining Social Justice

Over a one-year period, 17 faculty members within a teacher education program at Boston College participated in a series of conversations surrounding their individual definition of social justice and their level of commitment toward teaching for social justice. The faculty embraced a unified sense of responsibility to teach for social justice. When asked to respond to a series of questions related to a definition of social justice, however, their individual responses cut across a continuum (Zollers, Albert, & Cochran-Smith, 2000). Answers related to a definition of fairness ranged from fair meaning equal or the same to fair meaning equal yet different. Attributions of who should be held responsible for justice and/or injustice scoped from the individual to institutional responsibility. Regarding components necessary to create social justice, answers fell along a spectrum of possibilities, from the need for individuals to change what they believed and practiced to a call for a more unified plan of action involving individual participation within a larger, concerted effort (Zollers et al., 2000).

Difficulties in reaching consensus in terms of a common definition of social justice have been noted by a number of scholars (Boyles, Carusi, & Attick, 2009; Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2011; Saltman, 2009; Shepherd & Hasazi, 2008). Miller and Kirkland (2010) acknowledge the various attempts to define social justice are analogous to the distinctly diverse populations social justice activists have pledged to assist, plus the range of issues they seek to resolve. North (2008) characterizes social justice as contested and value laden. While actions behind the term have been advanced as a pursuit for equity and equality of opportunity, the motives for taking certain actions are not necessarily associated with a unified set of beliefs, policies, or practices. Due to the lack of agreement regarding a definition of social justice, faculty may view such attempts as problematic, particularly when they are trying to change themselves by participating in a compelling yet forthright conversation revealing who they are and where they stand as social justice leaders. One can speculate that faculty with varying conceptions of social justice (and corresponding diversity knowledge and skills), as in the Boston College study, are likely to produce leaders with similar dispositions, knowledge and skills. Yet, once in the profession, mirroring faculty, a few will actually lead for social justice. Like faculty, some may try, but when resistance is encountered, they succumb and are normed back into the status quo (Guerra, Nelson, Jacobs, & Yamamura, 2013; Theoharis, 2008, 2009). Others receiving the bulk of their preparation from faculty unwilling or unable to teach social justice (Lopez, 2010) are less likely to advance this agenda in their professional practice.

Improving our Leadership Craft

In a special issue of *Leadership and Policies in Schools*, Kottcamp (2003) issued a call for papers, urging contributors to provide an account of how faculty might commit to taking steps toward changing themselves in order to improve and reform leadership preparation programs. From this call, Kottcamp posed a number of questions to assist faculty in examining ways in which they could hone their leadership craft that highlights the complexity inherent in such a task: (a) What types of questions should professors be asking themselves? (b) How can faculty accomplish this work within the constraints of time? (c) How can we alter our interpersonal relationships? (d) How do we conceptualize adult education and learning? (e) What types of mental models do both faculty and students possess that hinder change or tend to keep us from altering our current structures, processes, and ways of thinking? (f) How can we evaluate ourselves, individually and collectively, as well as our results? (g) How can we, as faculty, be reflective in our practice? It is important to note that Kottcamp recognized that mental models blocking change not only existed in students but *also* in faculty. He further believed individual and collective faculty examination (i.e., mental models) and reflection are critical to faculty efforts to improve themselves and leadership preparation.

Creating a Culture of Trust

Based on two decades of work with educational leadership programs endeavoring to reform their current program and practice, Cambron-McCabe (2003) underscored the need to establish a strong foundation of trust and openness that would promote both a willingness to think and learn collectively and provide sufficient time for deep and in-depth conversations as vital components to the transformative learning process. Through ongoing dialogue, faculty define and clarify those matters they consider to be the most important, address the values underlying their extant practice, and compare and contrast their current practice with what they value and believe. To achieve a balance, faculty must consider the purposes and meanings held by others to be as critically important as their own. The following behaviors characterized successful discourse efforts: (a) listening intently to one another, (b) exploring individuals' mental models to allow beliefs and assumptions to surface, (c) remaining open to the diverse perspectives of others, (d) taking risks by being vulnerable and transparent (e) pledging to hold one another accountable, and (e) committing to spend the time and space necessary to accomplish the task.

Facing Ourselves as Part of the Journey

Mezirow (2012) admits the journey toward transformative learning can be a threatening experience often steeped in emotion, particularly when, through self-reflection, we are made aware of how our earlier life experiences and presuppositions have been indiscriminately assimilated into our current thinking, emotions, perceptions, and actions or reactions. By engaging in critical self-reflection and subjective reframing, we come to terms with our need to change.

As faculty endeavoring to raise issues of social justice and oppression, Bell et al. (2007) affirm Mezirow's (2012) allusion to threat due to the struggles that arise when we are faced with coming to grips with our personal identities and socially constructed biases. They implicate our former and current higher institutions of teaching and learning by acknowledging the likelihood that our professional preparation may not have armed us as faculty to deal with certain issues that are emotionally and socially charged. For those trained

in traditional classrooms, references to our own social and cultural identities have most likely remained behind the scenes rather than brought to the forefront of our conversations. Other faculty may have been taught there is no place for emotions in academe and have been encouraged to merely skim the surface of a sensitive topic.

Therefore, it should not surprise us if everyone is not willing to examine how the ways in which they value, assume or react to oppression and social justice issues through avoidance tactics, particularly if the prospect of doing so becomes fraught with uncertainty, guilt, fear, or embarrassment. In most cases, we are willing to indulge in conversations with which we are the most comfortable discussing. Conversely, we try to dodge or avoid conversations that could uncover certain prejudices we may not have recognized previously out of fear of being labeled as “racist, sexist, classist, anti-Semitic, or ableist” (p. 384). Without question, the potential for conflict remains high throughout this process.

By the same token, Bell et al. (2007) assert we can learn a great deal by listening to colleagues who may be different from us, particularly those who have served as targets of others’ stereotypical thinking and assumptions. When we commit to taking action and following through, we begin to build a community of learners where risk-taking is encouraged and oppressive circumstances are challenged.

In sum, many leadership preparation programs have yet to respond to the call for transformation (Baker-Martinez, 2012; Hawley & James, 2010; Hoff, Yoder, & Hoff, 2006; Lopez, 2010; Merchant & Shoho, 2006). Faculty has been charged to change themselves (Furman, 2012; Hackman, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2010), but few are receptive to change or willing to teach social justice (Brown, 2004; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010; Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006). In addition, no common definition of social justice exists (North, 2008; Zollers, Albert, & Cochran-Smith, 2000). In our experience, faculty often require students to conduct an honest, self-examination with reflection when they have yet to do it themselves. In hesitating to take action towards transformation, we wonder: What are the underlying reasons for such reluctance? Perhaps we may hold some of the same assumptions, beliefs, biases, and fears our students have. If this is the case, we must ask ourselves: How can we effectively prepare aspiring leaders for social justice without making this journey ourselves?

Conceptual Framework

Throughout their life experience, adults accumulate and form a body of assumptions (i.e., values, beliefs, feelings, perspectives, and conditioned responses derived from their mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives, and mental models) that serve as a frame of reference for how they view their world (Mezirow, 2003). Essentially, our frame of reference shapes how we come to understand our experiences. As humans, our understandings or perceptions are embedded within our historically derived networks of knowledge and power (Mezirow, 2012); thus, we tend to dismiss ideas that do not correspond with our assumptions.

According to Mezirow (1991), adult development, autonomy, and independent thinking are core components and outcomes of transformative learning. When transformation occurs, individuals are more likely to adopt an inclusive, more integrated perspective that recognizes and accounts for difference. Before this can occur, however, individuals must be capable of engaging in a higher level of cognitive functioning, critical self-analysis, and reflective dialogue (Merriam, 2004). Further, they must be *willing* to suspend their own biases and personal concerns (Mezirow, 1995) to participate in productive discourse and draw from others’ experiences so they can assess the arguments that are used to justify their assumptions. Only then will they be capable of reaching a conclusion or making a decision to take action based on the insight they have gained through the process (Mezirow, 2012).

Typically, transformative learning requires individuals to participate in a process of self-examination. Such a process may be extremely threatening and emotionally charged (Mezirow, 2012) since individuals will need to be made cognizant of and ultimately, grapple with their past history, networks, and ideologies that bolster their ideas. Throughout that process, they have to deal with the validity of the taken-for-granted assumptions that constrain and/or enable their realization of the need to change their frame of reference and perspective.

Transformative learning follows some variation of a number of phases whereby meaning is clarified (Mezirow, 1991, 2012):

1. Occurrence of a disorienting dilemma;
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame, sometimes turning to religion for support;
3. Critical assessment of assumptions;
4. Recognition of discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. Planning a course of action;
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing plans;
8. Provisionally trying out new roles;
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new ones; and
11. A reintegration into life on the basis of conditions dictated by a new perspective.

Method

Prior to the start of this project, Barbara was asked by her department chair to teach several courses addressing diversity and social justice related issues. Aware that her knowledge of these areas was limited to the field of special education and educational leadership, she sought mentorship from Patricia who currently teaches in a social justice educational leadership program and has delivered professional development in diversity to practitioners across the country. Patricia has over 40 years of experience in working with diversity, equity, and social justice as a teacher, school leader, diversity trainer, and higher education instructor. Originally, the intent was to expand Barbara's knowledge of teaching diversity and social justice and provide her with an array of instructional resources (i.e., readings, class activities, etc.) for doing so. During one of our initial meetings, however, we quickly discovered we would have to do much more than discuss instructional strategies and share materials. We realized we would have to start with an exploration of ourselves due a difference in our values, beliefs, and conceptions that surfaced during one of our initial conversations.

Spurred by this realization, we went on the hunt for a methodology that would allow us to talk openly and challenge one another regarding our personal values, beliefs, and conceptions and potentially, to change ourselves. The following research questions led us to search the literature on narrative inquiry:

1. Why is our depth of understanding of diversity and social justice different?
2. How has our understanding of social justice issues been formed over the course of our lives?

While searching for this research, we discovered an article on duoethnography, triggering an additional search for literature on the method and for sample duoethnographies.

Duoethnography

Norris and Sawyer (2012), the pioneers of duoethnography, define the method as a joint research approach in which two or more individuals share their lived experiences with each other to reveal different realities. Building on Pinar's (1975) concept of the act of self-interrogation, Sawyer and Norris (2013) view an individual's life as a curriculum in which one's experiences, abilities, skills, knowledge, and beliefs are recalled and examined in conversation with another. Working through cycles of interpretation, the researchers share and examine their lived experiences through a critical lens, questioning their constructed knowledge and interpretations of social issues. They challenge each other to reflect deeply and more meaningfully and identify interconnections within their narratives. According to Sawyer and Liggett (2012), questioning creates and transforms meanings rather than simply bringing them to c(Sawyer & Liggett, 2012). As researchers work through this process and examine their life histories by contrasting them with each other, they rethink their conceptions of themselves and their worlds. Learning about one's self through the eyes of another individual, exploring alternate narratives (including those of resistance), and using one's self as the site of study into socialization and learning are the primary purposes of this method (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). According to Norris and Sawyer, duoethnography is a study of social justice as well as an approach to advance it. As researchers dialogue, they critically examine their own and one another's beliefs, values, assumptions, and biases embodied in their stories. Engaging in these critical conversations raises both researchers' consciousness about their relation to injustice and promotes change (Freire, 1970).

At the conclusion of a conversation, both researchers write a transformative narrative or counter narrative illustrating how they experience the same phenomenon in different ways. Although duoethnography is flexible in implementation, Sawyer and Norris (2013) report the method is guided by the following tenets:

Currere as a frame for investigation and transformation; Voices "bracket in;"
Self as research site, not topic; (Re)storying self and other; Fluid, recursive
layered identity; Understandings not found: meanings created, exposed and
transformed; Emergent, not prescriptive; Communal yet critical conversations
as dialogic frame; Trust and recognition of power differentials; and Place as
participant. (pp. 23-24)

When selecting research partners, Latz and Murray (2012) stress researchers should know and trust each other. They recommend pairing colleagues with contrasting experiences and perspectives on a certain topic who are willing to explore and express their dissenting views. Partners should listen, validate, challenge, push, and support each other's growth and transformation. Norris and Sawyer (2012) encourage partners to ask (a) how do we know what we know; (b) how does this knowledge influence our interactions with others and society; and, after exploration, (c) what understanding do we want to retain or change?

Data collection and analysis in duoethnography are inextricably linked (Sawyer & Norris, 2013) occurring concurrently. While one researcher shares stories or data about a specific topic, the other listens, probes, questions, and contributes additional stories to extend or counter thinking. This synergistic data analysis and interpretation deepens reflections and insights on the part of both researchers. As the relationship between analysis and storytelling strengthens, the process becomes more critical and revealing. Within the narratives, themes

are identified and verified through additional dialogue and questioning and findings are summarized at points throughout the duoethnography. The goal of this collaborative storytelling and analytic process is to transform the researchers' beliefs and meanings about their lived experiences. Unlike findings from other types of qualitative studies, lived experiences from duoethnography are not intended to be read for a comparison of fit and application to another setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) but to serve as a catalyst for the reader's own understanding and reflection on the topic (Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

Duoethnography or Narrative Inquiry?

After reading and discussing the literature on both duoethnography and narrative inquiry, we determined the former was a better fit for the purpose of our study. Although both methods involve the gathering and telling of stories (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003; Norris & Sawyer, 2013) and the meanings individuals attribute to their lived experiences, the focus of analysis for each differs. The object of study in narrative inquiry is the story (Clandin & Connelly, 2000). Researchers examine how the story is described, for whom a story is created and why, and the communication structures that are used (Reissman & Speedy, 2007). As previously mentioned, duoethnography examines the synergistic transformation of values, beliefs, and conceptions as two individuals share stories. Juxtaposing their different life histories along with dialogic critique and questioning of each other's conceptions serves as the stimulus for change. Because duoethnography appeared to hold the most promise for affecting change within ourselves, we agreed to use this method for our study.

Additionally, since Patricia requires students to create an auto-ethnography as a course project in the master's program, she thought transitioning to duoethnography would be a relatively easy process. After all, she had eight years of experience with its close relative. Little did she (and Barbara) know how emotionally trying and time consuming this process would actually be.

Procedures

Prior to beginning our study, we checked with our universities' Institutional Review Boards (IRB) to determine whether we should submit an application for review. Although our duoethnography would involve human subject interviews, we were informed that because our oral histories were not part of a systematic investigation designed to produce generalizable knowledge for the purpose of addressing a hypothesis, no IRB review was necessary. Training in the protection of Human Subjects taken at our respective institutions guided our ethical research practice. For example, to protect our safety and privacy, prior to beginning the study we discussed the repercussions of disclosing very private information that could be potentially harmful. We agreed that certain, more sensitive experiences we shared with each other would not be included for publication.

We began the duoethnography by sharing stories about our life histories because we recognized the importance of thinking about our pasts and where we came from. Through reflection, self-discovery, and the creation of our stories (Guajardo et al., 2011), our intent was to begin a journey toward making a difference within ourselves, our practice, and as scholars. Following Norris and Sawyer's (2012) tenets of duoethnography, we dialogued to explore potential answers to our two research questions. During our conversations, when contestable values, beliefs, and conceptions were expressed, we challenged them through critique, asked questions, and shared counter narratives. If these actions did not result in deeper reflection and a change in assumptions, values and beliefs, we strongly encouraged further inquiry into one another's life histories. Resources such as newspapers, U. S. Census

Bureau statistics, city and school demographics, zoning patterns, photographs, literature and other historical artifacts were used to verify recollections and assign meanings. Once inquiries were completed, we reconvened to share our findings and discuss our reflections and new learning. Themes were then verified through additional dialogue and questioning and summarized at points throughout the duoethnography. This concurrent data collection, analysis, and interpretation continued to occur through the entire study.

Once we documented our stories and individually reflected upon them, we emailed them to each other for further comments to extend our thinking and deepen our introspection even more. This round of questions and comments were read and reflected upon one additional time and were incorporated into the duoethnography along with our responses. At a pre-designated point in our histories (i.e., prior to entering the academy), we stopped our conversations and met to discuss themes and individual and shared learning from this research experience. In the sections that follow, we each have provided several excerpts and reflections from our extensive collection of narratives that were shared and written over a two-year period.

Our Journey Begins

Although Barbara is relatively new to exploration of diversity and issues of social justice through frank dialogue and introspection, Patricia has over 40 years of teaching and leading social justice efforts in diverse schools, preparing aspiring leaders for social justice at the university, and delivering professional development in diversity/social justice to educators and other professionals in the field. Patricia's teaching and training are grounded in constructivism, dialogue, critical reflection, and the examination of self and its influence on practice and serve as integral components of her instructional approach and training. She also specializes in facilitating difficult, emotionally laden conversations around topics of racism, diversity, deficit thinking, White privilege, power, culture, and so forth.

To broaden Barbara's knowledge of diversity and issues of social justice, we agreed that it would be beneficial for Barbara to audit *Understanding Self*, a master's course Patricia taught at the university in the spring of 2013. Barbara eagerly started the semester but after only three classes had to discontinue attendance due to high work demands related to tenure. As a replacement, we decided that over the next few years Patricia would mentor Barbara at ongoing meetings where we would participate in activities designed to elicit dialogue, inquiry, and reflection. These activities would require us to examine our histories and their influence in shaping our assumptions, beliefs and practices that centered on diversity and social justice issues in leadership preparation. Our hope was that in mentoring Barbara through this journey, her understanding of diversity and social justice would grow and transformation of her beliefs and practice would result. Little did we realize this anticipated growth was not solely reserved for her but would occur in us both.

In September 2013, we initiated our first mentor-mentee conversation by recalling how we first met and became friends, our course of studies in the doctoral program, and the path our lives have taken over the last ten years. In the mid-1990s, we both received our Ph.D. in Educational Administration with a concentration in Special Education Administration from the same institution. Upon graduation, we pursued different career paths for the next 10 to 15 years. Several years earlier, we reconnected after learning that we have returned to a career in higher education and discovering that our research agendas overlap and complement one another. Through inquiry and dialogue, we acknowledged that we both aspire to play a role, as scholar-practitioners, in the quest to create a leadership preparation program that fully embraces the values of equity, diversity, and social justice.

As we continued to dig into one another's pasts and experiences at the same institution, however, we soon discovered that we each followed a different course of study. Barbara, a White female with a bachelors and master's degree in Music and specialist degree in Special Education, followed a more traditional path of leadership preparation coursework, with elective courses in Women's Studies, Sociology, and Communication. Patricia, on the other hand, a Hispanic female with an undergraduate degree in Deaf Education and a master's in Curriculum and Instruction, took educational administration and multicultural and bilingual special education courses.

Our conversation then turned to our classroom experiences at the university and the courses we were teaching. Although we were classmates in the doctoral program, took many of the same courses, and were highly successful practitioners, it appeared that our university instructional experiences and level of self-efficacy differed. In discussing our teaching experiences, approaches and strategies, and consequent course evaluations, we shared stories of the struggles we encountered with our students. During our conversations, Barbara realized that her approach and experiences were much different than Patricia's. Although Patricia's early years were not without challenges, Barbara noted that Patricia exuded confidence and enthusiasm when chronicling her outcomes over the course of her eight years of teaching. In the middle of her third year, Barbara admitted she was struggling with her ability to address issues of diversity, particularly in terms of race, class, and social justice. Due to a concentration in Special Education and her appointment to teach courses related to this area, she realized her primary concern centered around areas of difference as they intersected with ability and diversity in general.

Our Stories and Reflections

As the conversation continued, I noticed Pat was vibrant, joyful, and animated as she recounted her instructional style, the various activities she exposed her students to in her classes, and the subsequent experiences and reactions these activities elicited from both her students of color and White students. While she expressed some concern about her ability to reach all the students equally in her class, her face glowed and an overall peace and inner confidence exuded from her very being. I thought:

I want to be that excited about teaching—like I was when I worked with youth as a music director and we performed a full-scale performance for holidays and special events at school, church, and in the community. Like when the students in my special education support classes reached an 'aha' moment as they strove to understand a difficult concept, learn a specific skill, or master the intricate details of a particular teacher's instructional style or class curriculum.

This same assurance was evident when I audited her first three classes in spring 2013 prior to realizing I could not continue due to pressures I faced as an assistant professor. Thinking I was going to learn the secret of her instructional style, I waited for a break in her commentary. Little did I know that I would be stepping into a conversation that would confront me with a term with which I had secretly struggled for 20 years since the initial years of my doctoral degree experience.

October 25, 2013

Coming Face to Face with White Privilege

Barb: When you talk about your classes and the students in your class, I can tell you love what you are teaching. When I came to the first few classes, I felt like I was learning from someone who had lived the same experience many of your students had had.

Pat: It's interesting, though, every time I teach EDCL 5339: Understanding Self, I introduce the concept of white privilege and many White students seem to struggle in understanding the concept. They tend to be resistant to the notion that they have privilege because of the color of their skin. And those coming from working class families don't see their lives as "privileged."

Barb: I know what you mean. When I attended the class, there seemed to be a lot more conversation coming from your students of color than your other students.

Pat: While growing up, many students of color have experienced or observed their siblings or friends being denied opportunities to regular and gifted education or been misplaced in special education as a result of racism, prejudice and cultural misunderstanding. That's why I have activities and simulations that I do with them so they can recognize the white privilege they have. Most of them don't realize that they have grown up with certain advantages and privileges that people of color have not had. Like, for example...What's wrong, Barb? [*pause for approximately 4 seconds*]

Barb: Nothing.

Pat: Yes, there is. Something's going on because your whole demeanor and body language just changed. You physically moved back in your chair, you've become emotionally distant and quiet. Talk to me. What's going on?

Barb: It's nothing really. Just when you said, "white privilege"...

Pat: What are you thinking?

Barb: I don't know. It just struck a chord with me. Hit me the wrong way.

When Pat first brought the concept of "white privilege" up when referencing the variable experiences and depth of understanding regarding social justice issues that she observed among students of color and White students in her classroom, I found myself quietly retreating into my own thought-world of previous experiences as a young adult and subsequent encounters in various stages of my career. The first memory that surfaced involved my struggle against the discrepancy between younger doctoral students in their late 20s and early 30s who had obtained assistant professor positions at Tier 1 universities in educational administration, leadership, and policy with little to no practical experience in education while I and others in their late 30s to mid 40s fought against what we perceived to

be age bias—even though we were told we needed to acquire administrator experience at the campus or district level.

I first heard the term “white privilege” presented to us as doctoral students by a newly hired White male professor in our department. He, too, had little to no experience as a school administrator yet he taught a required course in both the principal and superintendent preparation programs. Honestly, I thought his reference to white privilege was pretty hypocritical since this particular person seemed to have capitalized on his stature as a White male to find favor as an “up and coming assistant professor” or so we had been told by other male faculty in our department. To write about a phenomenon as a critique while moving upward in one’s profession as a result of what he seemingly viewed as damning bothered me. At the same time, I was in the same camp as the other doctoral students who were ready to embrace the critical stance and discourse he projected.

While enveloped within my own retrospective bubble, Pat had stopped talking about her experiences and was asking me, “What’s wrong, Barb?” Since I did not want to share what was bothering me, I answered, “Nothing.” While she did not force me to talk, she confirmed that my body language and demeanor had given me away. I wanted to stay quiet as I was struggling with my awareness of the angst that stirred within when the term was mentioned and was afraid to admit to my friend and colleague of color these feelings existed. However, this was not going to be the case as Pat continued to pursue the topic and challenge my assumptions.

Pat: White privilege refers to a system of advantages that Whites share due to the color of their skin. Just as people of color experience racism due to their skin color. The term White privilege is not intended to be a personal attack, to cause guilt or shame, or to diminish an individual’s accomplishments. It describes a systemic reality of a racial group. Most Whites are unconscious of white privilege and do not intentionally use it. It’s something they’re born into and just have.

Barb: But I don’t feel like I have white privilege because there were no people of color when I was growing up.

Pat: Where did you grow up?

Barb: I was born in Pittsburgh, but we moved around a lot.

Pat: Weren’t there African Americans living there?

Barb: No... Well, yes, in Pittsburgh there were and I know there were African Americans living there, but I don’t remember having any interactions with them except when we went downtown and rode the city bus. Like, as far as the other kids in the neighborhood I played with outside, all of them were White.

But I’ve experienced hardships in my life too...

Pat: White privilege is not about individual hardships such as divorce, death of a parent, losing a job, sexual harassment, bullying; people of color experience these hardships too. White privilege focuses on the ways our society is structured to favor some groups over others. So consider public schools. Examples of White privilege include being able to read history and literature

textbooks that reflect European culture, history, and stories, which is not the case for students of color. If you're White and gifted, it's likely you'll be placed in gifted education, advanced placement and college prep classes. This is not necessarily true for students of color. One only has to look at placement data to see the low number of students of color in these classes even in diverse schools. If you're White and fail a class, it's not assumed your failure is because your parents don't value education.

Barb: Actually, I don't remember having any specific classes that were separate such as gifted or AP classes until I got to high school when I took Honors English. All the rest were specific classes I took with everyone else.

Pat: What type of work did your father do?

Barb: He held a lot of different jobs. In Pittsburgh, he worked as a ticket agent for the Pennsylvania Railroad, but I don't really remember much about that since we moved to Ohio when I was three years old. In Ohio, he worked for General Electric and then switched careers to serve as the Clerk Treasurer for several different school districts.

Pat: So when you moved and your father worked in the different school districts, did your family live in the neighborhood where the school district was located?

Barb: Yes, but I seriously do not remember any African Americans or people of color living there.

Pat: When reflecting on my public school years in San Antonio, I did some research on the city's demographics in the 50s and the schools I attended. I wanted to make sure that my memory of attending predominantly White schools was indeed accurate. Given the part of the country you grew up in, you should do the same. Look up the demographics and school districts and neighborhoods for each of the towns in which your family lived.

At this point, Pat and I decided we needed to separate for me to research the towns I had grown up in as a child and for each of us to write down our own stories. I was saddened that our conversation had seemingly come to an abrupt halt due primarily to my own inhibitions and reluctance to admit what I was thinking and the potential "sins" I might be harboring. Yet what I was about to discover helped open my eyes to the realities of what white privilege really is.

November 15, 2013

Coming Face to Face with Racism

Pat: I was born in San Antonio, Texas during the 1950's to parents who were born at the end the depression. Neither of them had much when they were growing up because my dad was an orphan with three brothers and my mom was the youngest of ten children. My mom graduated with a high school degree and as the youngest child, immediately went to work. She was an intelligent, strong

assertive woman who cared deeply about her family. Because she grew up poor, the only charity she believed in was her immediate family. My dad dropped out of school at third grade but got his GED while in the military. He was a smart, kind, humble man, who was dedicated to the welfare of his family and believed in sharing the little he had with those who had less. While my mom spoke English and Spanish, my dad was bilingual and bi-literate.

After an honorable discharge from the military, my father became a policeman and during this time, he met and married my mother who was working as a bookkeeper at a department store. Although from poverty, through hard work they gave their children, my younger brother and myself, a “better life” than what they had. Through sharing of stories, lessons learned, and modeling, they taught us the values of family, interdependence, hard work, honesty, integrity, loyalty, responsibility, and to make something of yourself.

While my parents worked, my grandmother cared for me during the weekdays from infancy until I started school at five years old. Since she only spoke Spanish, I learned Spanish from her and English from my parents. I was bilingual until I transferred schools in the first grade. That year, my family moved from a lower socioeconomic diverse neighborhood located on the west side of San Antonio to the north side where the majority of families were White and middle class. During the first week at the “new” school I was caught speaking Spanish to a friend who had attended my previous elementary. Upon hearing my Spanish, the teacher, a tall grey-headed, austere woman walked down the aisle to my desk and angrily announced in front of the entire class that I was to go to the principal’s office. Only five years old, I was confused and frightened because in my eyes I had not misbehaved. When my parents arrived, the principal warned them that if I continued speaking Spanish at school, he would expel me for the rest of the school year. From that day on my parents never spoke another word of Spanish to my brother and me. Not only did I lose my Spanish that day and was traumatized by the incident but I learned that Spanish was not valued and I was “less than” for speaking it.

My parents never discussed their meeting with the principal with my brother and me. They just stopped speaking Spanish to us. When my relatives visited on weekends, however, Spanish was the language of choice but only when we were out of earshot. I overheard them talking and understood bits and pieces but never enough to comprehend the entire conversation. This ban of Spanish at school and its clandestine use at home left me confused and with the belief that speaking Spanish was wrong.

In recalling my years in elementary school, I don’t remember much, which I find curious. I clearly remember in detail the day I was caught speaking Spanish but seem to have blocked out my other experiences at this school where I felt little connection to teachers. I worked hard and earned A’s but I don’t remember being recognized as a “good” student by any individual teacher or even being liked by one. This lack of memories may be due to the experience in first grade but my younger brother who was four grades behind me clearly remembers much more. He had most of the same teachers and recalls that with the exception of two, they were cold and distant to the few Mexican American students in his classes. He remembers one day asking his third grade teacher to go to the restroom and was told “no” and had to wait for hours until the school day ended. He also remembers this was not the case for the White students in the class. While I tried my best to be a “good student” that was fondly

liked, no matter how hard I tried it didn't seem to happen. When I graduated, I left this school believing I was not smart enough to be liked by my teachers because daily I saw them interact warmly with the White students in my classes.

Living in a White World

Barb: The first eight years of my childhood are filled with memories of me playing happily with my sisters and friends within various neighborhoods situated within Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and a small town in Ohio, which served as the county seat of Crawford County. The ability to ride my bicycle "downtown" to shop at the G. C. Murphy's five and dime on Saturdays and go ice skating every day after school at the makeshift skating rink our landlord created for the whole town was taken for granted. The neighborhood and town were deemed "safe"—void of diversity beyond gender and age.

Despite attempts to recall any personal experiences when growing up with individuals of color within the various communities in which I lived—both in Pennsylvania and Ohio—the outcome of my internal search, save for a few remote events, has completely drawn a blank. Granted, I rode on city transportation with people of color and remember times when we shopped in stores integrated with people of color, yet living near or next to anyone I deemed to be different from me or attending school with individuals of difference other than social class differences did not occur.

It never dawned on me that another world of difference existed. From going to school, to playing with friends in the neighborhood, to watching television, to interacting with the merchants and customers where we regularly did business and interacted—we all looked and acted the same.

Despite occasional memories and positive recollections of my early childhood years in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, specific details are limited. I remember riding on a bus with people of color in Pittsburgh, witnessing individuals running the elevator in the department stores downtown and busboys clearing tables in restaurants, but I seriously cannot remember any interactions with children or families of color in my neighborhood. Looking back, it seems pretty strange since we lived in what would have been considered a "rough part of town." Furthermore, based on my search regarding the communities immediately surrounding Pittsburgh in the 1950s, percentages of African-Americans ranged from 30% to 95%.

At age three, we moved to a small town in Ohio that served as the county seat. The move represented a managerial position opportunity for my father who had finally gotten his bachelor's degree by attending night school, or so I thought. When Pat asked me to look up the population statistics from the census data, I was shocked to discover the difference between the first three years of my life and the formative years of my life, ages three through eight years, which were spent in an all-White community. The total population of the Ohio County was 38,738 with a White population of 38,485. While it never occurred to me while I was growing up, I had to ask myself the question, "Did my parents choose to live where we moved due to a concern about living with people of color as we had in Pittsburgh, or was it simply happenstance?"

January 10, 2014

Discrimination and Inequity Do Exist

Pat: During my school years and at my mother's request, my father gave up his job as a policeman and worked as a diamond salesman in a downtown jewelry store. My mother moved up from her bookkeeping position to work as a clerk at the county courthouse. Each night at the dinner table we shared stories of the day's events at their jobs and from school. While my dad shared stories about happenings in the store, my mom talked about the cases heard in court. Weekly, my brother and I heard stories of inequity and discrimination. For example, one night my dad shared that he and another Mexican American employee at the store were not being provided with the same benefits as their White counterparts. I remember asking my dad why he didn't speak up about this concern and he calmly replied, "It's not possible." I recall thinking that perhaps my father didn't have the courage to speak up. At that moment, I promised myself if I found myself in similar circumstances, I would speak out.

Little did I know that when I made this promise to myself, I would call on this courage in the years to come to advocate for my students and myself. Years later after graduating from the doctoral program and taking courses in diversity, I realized my dad did not have the privilege of speaking up for fear of losing the very job that supported his family and made my dream of going to college a reality.

These stories of inequity and discrimination experienced as children and as young adults and shared with my brother and I at the dinner table were important life lessons that developed our understanding of prejudice and injustice. In reflecting upon these lessons, I realize they—along with my mom's strength and assertiveness and my dad's kindness—were instrumental in instilling courage to advocate and lead for social justice.

Confirming my White Privilege

Barb: Between second and third grade, our move to a suburb outside Columbus, Ohio crystalized my membership in the White community and lifted us to new heights of living the American Dream. It appeared as though our family's status had shifted from middle class to a combination of upper middle class and upper class elites. Nevertheless, my elementary school years were filled with events that epitomized what I viewed on television shows like *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Father Knows Best*, and *The Donna Reed Show*.

Trying to adjust to moving to a more affluent neighborhood was not as difficult as I had expected. For us to make ends meet, both my mom and dad had to work, an uncommon practice among most other families in our neighborhood. We did not have two brand-new cars in our garage, but at the time, I thought having two cars was enough. While elementary school had its challenges, nothing prepared me for the pressure I would experience among a new set of peers in junior high raised in millionaire-income family households.

February 20, 2014

Public Humiliation and Failure

Pat: Since a “foreign: language was a prerequisite for college admission, I started taking Spanish in junior high. Yet, the memories of events branded into my very core occurred in high school. Every day, Mrs. Smith (pseudonym) started class by going down each row and having students introduce themselves in Spanish. Each time I anxiously waited for my turn because I couldn’t trill the double “r’s” in my last name. As they had done many times before, students were waiting to laugh at my mispronunciation and the irony of the situation—Mexican American who couldn’t even correctly pronounce her last name. I was humiliated day after day. Rather than being empathetic, this teacher seemed to relish in my embarrassment. Needless to say, this daily humiliation resulted in deepening an affective barrier to relearning Spanish, which had begun to form after the trauma in first grade and reinforced daily that I was “less than” my peers.

Once in college, I decided that I would finally learn Spanish and enrolled in a beginning level course at the local Catholic university I was attending. After a week I was summoned by the department advisor, a White priest, and he informed me that I would have to withdraw and enroll in an intermediate course because the other students in the class who were predominantly White had complained that I knew Spanish and should not be in there. Although I pleaded not to be moved, I was transferred immediately from beginning to intermediate Spanish—all because I correctly pronounced “pan” (bread) with a Spanish accent instead of “pan” (paen) as in a frying pan. Consisting primarily of White students who spoke more Spanish than me, the intermediate class was held entirely in Spanish. During the times I had to converse I was embarrassed by my lack of Spanish vocabulary and intimidated by my classmates’ fluency. A few tried to help as I struggled through each class, but eventually, they gave up as I sat quietly, too embarrassed to ask for assistance. Consequently, I feigned my way through conversational Spanish and even though I passed the course I again failed to relearn my native language. My affective barrier deepened and once again the opportunity to relearn my language slipped away.

To this day, I still have not learned Spanish even though I worked for a year at a university where 99% of the students and faculty were Hispanic and spoke Spanish. When I was there I attempted to speak the language but it was as if a sign was posted on my forehead that read, “She doesn’t speak Spanish” because as soon as people greeted me in Spanish and I replied, they switched to English. I feel like a failure over this inability to learn my native language. Plus, when I hear White faculty fluently speaking Spanish, I feel even more shame. When asked if I’m bilingual, I respond, “Yes, but my second language is sign language, not Spanish,” feeling the need to defend myself in response to their surprise over my lack of Spanish.

My First Real Encounter

Barb: Transitioning to junior high school and entering into my teen years, my self-confidence and level of acceptance changed. Merging with youth who hailed from elementary schools situated in the wealthier, “historical” district, I was being socialized to define myself according to my outward appearance, the presence or absence of “name brand” attire, and my level of athleticism. One particular experience stands out. Playing outside—we were not invited inside—at a friend’s house in the wealthier section of town, my friend told me I could get some water from the house. When I knocked on the door, a Black woman wearing a black dress, white pinafore, and white shoes answered the door. Shocked, as I never expected to be greeted by anyone other than a family member, I asked for a glass of water. She brought me a glass of water, waited at the door for me to drink the water outside, and took the glass back into the house when I finished. Neither of us exchanged words except the “please” and “thank you” that would accompany such a request. Interesting that I do not remember having any further instances of being invited to this person’s house.

While growing up, I had seen television shows that depicted people of color in subservient roles, providing for those living in privilege. But, I saw these as occurring in what I perceived to be a “fantasy world” as opposed to anything that might exist in my community or peer environment. Yet, until I wrote this reflection and compared it to my previous reflection, it did not occur to me that most of the individuals of color I had seen or interacted with up to this point in my life were relegated to service-oriented roles to benefit White people.

Granted, my friend’s house was located on “another side of town” within this White suburb yet I am sure my surprise was apparent to my friend as I asked her who the woman at the door was. Whatever the case, I don’t remember having many more conversations with her and was rarely invited to any of my friends’ houses in that part of the neighborhood afterward. Was it possible I was “not in their league” financially or socially in their eyes? Fortunately for me, my father obtained a new position and we would be moving to a suburb east of Cleveland that was more on par with our income level.

Another Insulated Community

Barb: In the summer between ninth and 10th grade, we moved to a suburb, approximately 25 miles east of Cleveland, Ohio, a community spawned from its early roots as a settlement of the Western Reserve, quickly transformed into a community of recognition yet absent the existence of any people of color. Situated in a county recognized as a “nurseryman’s paradise,” our town was populated with a number of nurseries, one of which had earned a reputation for growing the highest quality shrubs, plants, and seeds. Due, in part, to Blaze, the first patented rose, being developed there as well as the rich variety of soil types and sandy loam the land offered, our town was nicknamed the “Rose Capital of the Nation.”

That first summer, I remember seeing a number of second-hand school buses exiting the parking lot of the largest nursery in town, carrying young and middle-aged, brown-faced males who appeared to be wearing some sort of uniform. The nursery was located approximately two miles from our house,

yet I had never seen these individuals in any of our stores or neighborhood. Since my next-door neighbor was a buyer for the nursery, I asked him who they were. He referred to them as “Mexicans” and told me they were migrant workers who worked for the nursery during the summer. Since they lived elsewhere and did not own their own cars, the nursery bused them from their homes to the nursery each weekday.

Wanting to further understand the background of the county and town where I lived while attending high school, I conducted several searches to gain insight into the racial composition of this suburban community. According to Denvir (2011), numbers from the 2010 U.S. Census revealed the 10 most segregated metropolitan areas of the U.S. in terms of Black-White population distributions. The Cleveland metropolitan area encompassing our county was ranked as number five. Finding the city-data.com site enabled me to look beyond my high school years and allowed me to investigate the current racial makeup of the three communities in which I had lived in elementary, junior high, and high school. To my amazement, even in 2012, a diverse population was miniscule in all three municipalities as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Racial analysis of communities, grades K-12, 2012*

Community & Grades	White Alone	Black Alone	Hispanic	Asian Alone	American Indian Alone	Two or More Races
Community #1 K-Grade 2	94.8%	1.0%	1.9%	1.0%	0.09%	1.2%
Community #2 Grade 3 - 9	90.4%	0.6%	2.6%	4.5%	0.1%	1.6%
Community #3 Grade 10-12	95.6%	1.4%	1.2%	1.3%	0.04%	0.5%

Perhaps even more damning was my discovery of a greater truth regarding the “homes” in which the migrant workers who worked at the nursery lived in when I searched the history of the nurseries that once existed in the “Rose Capital of the Nation” where I attended high school. According to a headline chronicling the living conditions of the migrant workers, primarily coming from Puerto Rico, the so-called houses where migrant workers lived were actually camps, characterized as “too bad for dogs” (Heuristic, 1970, p. 21). Knowing I lived in a community that housed a thriving business and treated their workers this way upset my apple cart, so to speak. Was my neighbor aware of how these individuals were treated? Was his reference to “Mexicans” a sign of racism? Looking back to that time in my life, I did not even recognize his answer to my question as being racist. Although this reality shifted when I went to college, it still baffles me that I didn’t blink an eye or search further beyond the comforts of where I lived to find out what was really happening.

March 1, 2014

Less Than and Shame

Pat: During the first two years of college, I worked as a grocery checker on the Northwest side of the city where predominantly White upper class families

lived. Several times a year wealthy families from Mexico would stop by to purchase groceries on their return trip home. Being the only Mexican American checker in the store, they would stand in my line, waiting for me to converse with them in Spanish while ringing up their groceries. But once they spoke in Spanish, I had to respond, “Hablo muy poquito español” (I speak a tiny bit of Spanish) and their dismay was clearly evident. Understanding more Spanish than I spoke, their comments that I had turned my back on my own culture cut like knives. Thirteen years earlier I had my native language stripped from me, and now this. I wanted to scream, “It isn’t my fault!” but ironically couldn’t because I didn’t know the words in Spanish. Here it was again, I was being perceived as “less than,” but this time by people who shared my same skin color. To make matters worse, throughout my adolescent years I repeatedly heard these same comments from the five aunts on my mother’s side.

Underlying these constant criticisms from both strangers and family members were the messages that I was not “Mexican enough” or “less than” and was shamed for who I was, which only served to deepen the affective barrier that prevented me from learning Spanish. Thinking back over the years and considering the present, I had become angry over what appeared to be a cruel joke. As a young child, I learned that speaking Spanish was inferior and I was “less than” for doing it. During adolescence, I was constantly shamed for “turning my back on my culture” because I didn’t speak Spanish. Now as an adult, many Whites (and some Hispanics) are shocked to learn that I don’t speak Spanish, even though many of them admit they too don’t speak a second language. To make matters worse, being bilingual in English and Spanish in today’s professional job market is a highly sought after skill by employers willing to pay for it, particularly in the predominantly Hispanic state in which I work and reside.

But You’re Not Like the Rest

Pat: During my junior year, I transferred to the state university and once again found myself in a predominantly White environment. While staying in the dorm during orientation week, I quickly became friends with two young women. After spending the day with them, they invited me to go to that night’s orientation session, called “White on White,” which was one of three separate sessions. The other two sessions were “Black on Black” and “Brown on Brown.” When I pointed out what seemed like the obvious, “I can’t because I’m not White. I have to go to the Brown on Brown session, they exclaimed but “you’re not like the rest of them!” At that point we parted ways and attended our designated sessions.

I had heard this comment repeatedly throughout my adolescent and adult years, which left me hurt and confused. If I wasn’t like the rest of them, then who was I? I didn’t understand this disregard for my ethnic background because I have black hair, brown eyes and brown skin. There is no mistaking it; I am Mexican American. I often wondered if my inability to speak Spanish and lack of a Spanish accent contributed to this colorblind conclusion.

Barb: When I entered college, it never occurred to me I might be placed in a situation where I would have to examine my own position toward people of

color. My freshman year, an African-American female was placed next door to my roommate and me, the only Black female on our floor. When we went next door to greet her, she seemed pleased yet we noticed she did not have a roommate. I never thought about why she occupied a single room except that she might have wanted it that way.

Most of the time, she stayed in her room except when attending classes. We asked if she wanted to walk with us to class, but she declined. About three weeks into the semester, several other Black females went to visit her and after they left, she was crying in her room. We asked if we could help, but she said there was nothing we could do. That weekend, she moved out. We never found out why, but we thought it might have something to do with the visit.

Beyond that incident my freshman year, however, the majority of my friendships and social interactions remained with the other White students in my dorm. I don't even remember if I ever looked into whether there were any other Black females in our dorm. The first semester of my freshman year, we had to eat our dinners "family style" which required us to arrange ourselves in groups of six to eight students and sit together while the cafeteria workers brought the food to our table and we served one another. Now that I look back on it, there *were* Black students who ate in our cafeteria, but they always assembled themselves in their own group so we thought they preferred eating and talking among themselves. Even though we were in the same room, we really didn't talk with one another. The same thing happened when they were in my classes. I just figured they did not want to be bothered. Was it because I was afraid of what they might say or how they might treat me if I attempted to strike up a conversation with them, or perhaps it was due to something else?

My sophomore year, though, I changed my major from "undecided" to music. My parents went through a divorce that year and I found myself going to the practice rooms in the music department as a way to work through my emotions and grief over something I never saw coming. That situation began to change my association in regard to the students with whom I associated.

One of the music majors in my department, a Black male voice major, and I became extremely close during the summer between my junior and senior year. Ironically, we had both elected to take our required Science credits without additional coursework. We networked with other students of color and my friends throughout the summer, going out to eat as a group or car-pooling to the neighboring town to have a beer. Frankly, I enjoyed talking with him because we held each other in high regard as musicians and never hesitated to search for unique ways to approach our coursework—combining creativity with science. Our final science project provoked the professor to use it as an example of "out of the box thinking" for future classes. In this context, I saw him as a special friend. At a different point in time, we may have considered a more involved relationship; yet, it was not that far in the distant past that the 1967 movie, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" was released. I still remember my father's reaction that we—his three daughters—"best not let that happen to us." In retrospect, I wonder if I really recognized the reality of how I had truly been raised to live in a White person's world.

March 15, 2014

Facing White Privilege and Power

Pat: Later in my mid-thirties, I worked as a member of a project team that was preparing to work with schools and communities in the Deep South. The team, comprised of predominantly White members, was excited but apprehensive about the work. Up to this time, they had typically worked with predominantly White educators, students, and communities, but this would not be the case in the Deep South. Realizing their limited knowledge of diversity and cultural competence, they asked me to meet with our supervisor on their behalf to request diversity training for the team. He denied the request, explaining the staff didn't need the training "because they don't have a problem with diversity."

I remember sitting in his office across from his large desk thinking, what's wrong with this situation—a White male in power telling a woman of color there are no problems with diversity in the organization—and thinking it was the epitome of White privilege. Located in a state where half of the population is of color, one only had to scan the main floor of 90% White professionals with a Black receptionist at the front entrance to notice a problem existed.

I lost respect for my supervisor the day he denied the staff's request for diversity training. I don't believe all White males intentionally abuse their privilege and power but I do think many are unaware of its effects because they have never walked in the shoes of a person of color. In my view and based on experience, this society designed by and for White men, leaves them with little understanding about the privilege into which they are born.

It's Your Issue

Pat: While a member of this project team, I was one of three individuals who had a background in diversity while other individuals had expertise in reading, science and math. In one of our team meetings, several individuals asked for my feedback on an instrument to be used as a checklist for identifying potential areas of concern in the schools in which we were about to work. The checklist included items such as student accountability scores, student and teacher demographics, and the number of students identified as "free or reduced lunch." Missing were the number of students referred and placed in special and gifted education and advanced placement classes, discipline referrals, failures, absences, and other disparities disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status. Red flags, individuals with expertise in diversity immediately recognize as concerns. When I offered my feedback, the team coordinator, a White male, stated, "It's *always* about culture with you. This is *your* issue, not ours." I replied, "This is not my issue. This is my field of expertise. When you raise a math concern, I don't tell you that it's *your* issue because I respect the knowledge you bring to our team. Why can't you respect my expertise in diversity?" Similar types of interactions with several other White male staff members occurred over the years while working at this organization.

These types of interactions not only left me feeling angry, hurt, and marginalized but also resulted in me questioning the very core of who I am—the way I think, communicate, and relate to others and the life experiences and family I value—and left me wondering if indeed I was “less than.”

Seeking Understanding and Validation

Pat: Conflicted most of my life between the two cultures I straddled, I decided to go to group therapy. I wanted to understand why my perspective was frequently at odds with others throughout my life who were predominantly White. During the weekly sessions, I discovered the two White women and three White men in the group also viewed me as “less than.” For example, during one session two male group members told me they didn’t understand me because I “rambled.” And when I gave up my turn to share to a female who was obviously distraught and in dire need, other group members and the therapist reprimanded me for not taking my turn.

Although emotionally difficult, this experience was eye opening because for the first time I actually heard what I suspected was often thought but went unsaid—the “less than” beliefs about me and how these perceptions are formed. The very experience that happens to many students of color in schools, I faced in this group therapy session. Lacking cultural knowledge, the group members had judged me as deficient because I communicated and related differently from their own expectations (Guerra & Nelson, 2011). After two years, I left the group feeling good about the person I am, not because of the therapeutic experience but because I now understood how I was often perceived. With this knowledge I could educate myself as well as others in their understanding that difference does not mean “less than” or “better than.” It just means different (Guerra, & Nelson, 2013b). I also realized I was not the problem but was part of a greater solution. Working in diversity and social justice resulted in me learning to value the person I have become and has enabled me to share my experiences, learning, and understanding with students, faculty, educators, and other individuals.

Living in the Deep South

Barb: Twenty years later, in the mid 1980s, after several career moves and nine years of marriage to my current husband, we moved to South Carolina. This move put me face-to-face with my first exposure to working and living in an integrated community consisting primarily of Whites and Blacks.

When I first arrived in South Carolina, I worked for Kelly Services and completed a number of temporary assignments due to my inability to obtain a position as a music teacher. In my first placement, I worked with three African-American females and we were assigned to “put the Legg in the Egg” for Hanes. At noon, we went to the cafeteria to get lunch or beverages to eat with our homemade sandwiches and accouterments and ate lunch together at a table, separate from the full-time employees. I felt at ease with these women: we were all in the same boat, relegated to a separate table for part-timers, trying to land a position within an organization that would pay us more than minimum wage. When the weather was not too hot, we sat together at picnic tables in the back and I listened to their stories about family and growing up.

My life's experiences were not as interesting so most of the time, I listened and we all engaged in lots of laughter. Once we finished our assignment, we were each sent to different companies and lost contact with one another. Finally, on my fifth assignment, I was offered a full-time position where I worked for one year while I attended classes to get my special education certification.

It never occurred to me until now that my whiteness was instrumental in being offered the job. In retrospect, none of the employees who made a decent salary were African-American and those who *were* employed held positions in the warehouse where they were expected to serve at the orders of the White foremen. While I thought it to be unfair, I did not feel there was anything I could say or do as the business was well established and family-owned and operated. Based on my conversations with the owner, his wife, son, and daughter-in law, it was clear they bought into a segregationist culture. They held the commemoration of Labor Day and the commemoration of Martin Luther King (MLK) Day in derision, requiring us to show up for work on both days. When I asked why they were making people work on a national holiday, the owner stated Labor Day was "a day of labor" and MLK Day was a "way for Black people to have a day off." I wanted to search for another position; however, having a stable position and the ability to pursue special education licensure so I could return to the teaching profession precluded me from doing so.

In March of that year, a position as supervisor of the in-school suspension room at the high school where my husband worked became available. Since position requirements mandated the individual possess a teaching license, the salary equaled the pay of a full-time teacher—more than I was making at this company. When I contacted the district personnel director, he told me he had to make sure his numbers aligned with the requirements set forth by the equal employment opportunity commission (EEOC), which precluded me from being considered.

As a person who was fully qualified for the position, it seemed like I was being subjected to a form of reverse discrimination and frankly, it bothered me. Besides, I had already established a strong relationship with the personnel director. After all, when I initially interviewed for a position in the school district before we moved, he was the one who advised me to pursue my certification in special education, claiming such a license would guarantee me "job security." While he admitted my qualifications were solid, he explained he had to follow the "quota system." After Pat brought up the idea of white privilege and I began to reflect on my life experiences, it dawned on me that individuals of color have historically faced these challenges on a regular basis and continue to do so now and in many cases, lack the cultural capital I have.

Barb: The following year, however, I obtained a position as a special education teacher. My students and I became extremely close: we created a community of learners within the classroom—a Cheers type of atmosphere where "everyone knows your name" and ability, race, class, and gender divides were minimized by the need to overcome one's learning difficulties and survive the challenges of high school. The overall demographics of the school contained a

fairly equal mix of White and African-American students. Students assigned to my class had been identified as having a learning [dis]ability or an emotional [dis]ability and the ratio of White to Black students in my classes was fairly equal. Together, we pushed one another to achieve. For example, when they were studying for their content-area tests, I was studying for the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). We grilled each other with vocabulary flash cards, sharing our anxiety and pre-test jitters and recounting the nightmare of feeling “stupid” when we encountered a word or reading passage that seemed to be over our heads. Except for my class, called Content Mastery, all of the classes they took were general education classes. My role was to provide them with study skills, organizational and time management strategies, and content-area support. For them, this class was a place where they could be themselves. The common thread among us all was the honor we showed one another due to the specific areas in which they faltered and the supposed learning or emotional [dis]ability with which they had been labeled.

Two years into the position, my relationship with my students and their friends was solidified through an event that made me even more appreciative of the difference between students who have been marginalized due to issues of ability, race, class, and gender and others in the school who were able to benefit from “white privilege.” In the course of my job responsibilities to enforce the school rules, a White female verbally assaulted me for asking to see her pass when she was wandering the campus. At the end of the day, she returned with her mother and lodged a false complaint against me, stating I had grabbed her by the arm. After the incident in question occurred, several White female students stopped by my classroom to see if I was all right. They each told me they had witnessed the event and confirmed my side of the story. When I asked them to tell the administrators about what had happened, however, they indicated they had received bullying threats from the White female and her friends and were afraid to tell their side of the story. One of the Black female students who was also in my homeroom, let me know she, too, had seen what happened.

I gave their names to the administrators who interviewed each one of them. Most of them said they did not see what happened. The only student who was willing to witness on my behalf to counter the student’s and mother’s untruths was the Black female student. Several students from my class—both White and Black, joined by their [dis]ability status—volunteered to “whoop her ass” as well.

To this day, I have made note of the fact that any time I have faced difficulties with people of privilege and power, those who were willing to stand up for me have been those who have been marginalized and/or oppressed by others in society. Perhaps that is why I wanted to attribute myself to being a social justice advocate.

Pat’s Learning

When I reflect upon my past, I trace the depth of my understanding of diversity and social justice not so much to educational coursework taken while pursuing the doctoral degree as much as to my growing up and living in two culturally different worlds, not fully

accepted by either—living in the “middle place” as some refer to it (Lund & Nabavi, 2008). Don’t get me wrong, the doctoral degree was important in my journey of growth. Through the courses taken in my program of studies, I learned my lived experiences were not isolated events but shared by many racially, culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students along the educational pipeline. This realization, the validation of my experiences, and the tools provided through the acquisition of the doctoral degree (a) equipped me with the language, knowledge, and skills to work with educators to transform inequitable educational systems; (b) resulted in confidence in my ability to lead; and (c) instilled an advocacy orientation for equity and social justice. However, without my lived experiences as the context for this learning, my understanding would have most likely remained superficial. These experiences along with many others provided the lens for my understanding of racism, diversity, inequity, deficit thinking, white privilege, colorblindness, power, and other social justice issues.

A year after we started our conversations, I remember Barb asking me, “Do you think your status as a minority makes you more qualified than Whites to be able to understand these issues?” In reflecting upon her question, I don’t think my status as a person of color makes me more qualified than Whites to be able to understand racism, diversity, inequity, and so forth. However, I do believe my *lived* experiences and being the recipient of institutional racism, discrimination, and other negative actions on a regular basis do. Unless one has walked in these shoes, I think one’s understanding is somewhat limited.

This journey with Barb has deepened my acceptance and my value for the person I am. Without the level of trust she cultivated in our ongoing dialogue this would not have been possible. Since I believe she has my best interest at heart, I freely shared my stories and comments and questions without censoring my messages or words. Her openness, active listening, non-verbal communication, and non-judgmental responses provided an environment in which I felt safe to divulge my inadequacies, fears, and pain. Through this process and her validation of my stories, I realized my experiences made me who I am and are the reason I prepare aspiring leaders for social justice. They are not deficiencies as some perceive but assets that make me the effective instructor of social justice I am. Now aware of these experiences and their impact on my development, I no longer view them as liabilities but as resources which can be used in building stronger relationships with students, faculty, educators, and other individuals.

During our conversations, Barb took significant risks and verbalized what I suspect often goes unsaid in meetings and classes when some faculty and students, particularly White ones, are asked to engage in conversations over race, diversity, equity, and social justice. When questioned as to why she took these risks, she replied that in engaging with people of color over the years, this experience was the first time she felt safe to express her thoughts. Specifically, she did not feel she had to be on guard for fear of condemnation, have to watch her words for fear of offending or setting someone off, or judged for her vulnerability and emotion. Hearing this perspective actually articulated was powerful and will be invaluable in my work with aspiring leaders, faculty and other educators.

Through this journey, I have learned that transformative dialogue (Freire, 1970) around race, diversity, and social justice requires much more than having expertise in this content and experiencing injustices. Just as importantly, it requires (a) a long, hard, and honest look within one’s self (Aguilar, 2016); (b) tough conversations (Guerra & Nelson, 2006) with another person who has your best interest at heart; and (c) deep reflection—all of which should be fostered in an environment of trust, empathy, and understanding through love and compassion for another. “Rooted in recognition and acceptance ... [and] combines acknowledgement, care, responsibility, commitment, and knowledge” (hooks, 2000, p. 104),

this kind of love [and compassion], which demonstrates concern for another, is central to helping others engage in these difficult conversations (Guerra & Nelson, 2009b).

Barb's Learning

To abandon the desire to be politically correct and make myself write these accounts from the perspective of my youth was disturbingly painful for me. Coming to grips with the stark reality that the formative years of my life-world existence evolved in the midst of communities full of white-colored faces took me by surprise. Delving deep within the innermost aspects of how I viewed the world, I doubt if it ever crossed my mind that another world existed. Except for the occasional blips along the way during my childhood and adolescence and the intermittent context of being among people of color when shopping downtown Pittsburgh, Columbus, and Cleveland or through my travels to other parts of the country while on vacation, it's blatantly obvious to me my lived experiences prior to going to college were diametrically opposed to Pat's. Even more amazing to me now is my naiveté in believing I could begin to have a grasp of the challenges and struggles articulated by individuals of color in the context of what I perceived to be my strong stance and adherence to a social justice leadership orientation.

The biggest struggle for me at various points in my conversation with Pat stems from believing my whiteness has somehow been my fault. Although not with her, I often got the clear impression my whiteness is viewed by *some* people of color as a limitation toward being accepted as a social justice leader. At the same time, what makes this revelation even more compelling evolves from my retrospective analysis while engaging in this exercise. Why didn't I search for answers when these events occurred? In most cases, I was never brought face-to-face with these issues long enough to identify my whiteness as an issue to confront (Helms, 1997). I am now beginning to realize this was and is white privilege. Don't get me wrong. I asked questions, initially. Yet, when the answers I sought were unanswered, avoided, or evaded by others of my own race, my need to seek answers were buried until they resurfaced in my conversations with Pat.

This retrospective journey and the ability to talk through my admissions of shock, dismay, and guilt with Pat have empowered me to come to grips with my past and enabled me to accept the fact that the "road not taken" in my life should not result in self-incrimination or guilt. Our previous path can inform us and validate our purpose, particularly if we choose to detour our future journey with those who are willing to expose us to different highways, vast and vivid country-sides, and the possibility of building alternative architectural structures. The prerequisite tough conversations must be designated to alter our future thinking in ways where we, too, can give voice to others who have been silenced and blocked from telling us their stories. Have I been colorblind or benefited from white privilege and institutional racism? While I recognize now the answer has to be "yes," I still find myself straddling the fence. How can someone accuse me of either if I never had the opportunity to live otherwise? Clearly, I am still reckoning with these questions and alternative realities. Yet I hope to move beyond this point as we continue this journey together.

Shared Learning

At the beginning of this project, we realized we had to begin with ourselves and conduct an in-depth examination of the origin of our assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes to understand how they have shaped the persons we have become (Guajardo, 2007). Using duoethnography as both a methodology and tool for critical analysis facilitated a greater awareness of mental barriers that might forestall our efforts toward this end. We wove critical

reflection, rational discourse, and an examination of praxis (Brown, 2004) throughout this process to increase our own and one another's awareness of these barriers. In doing so, we helped each other uncover, identify, and acknowledge the meaning behind specific events and experiences that had previously existed in the recesses of our private thoughts and buried memories.

Due to the layers of complexity and need to give one another enough space for us to take a long, hard look at ourselves and allow sufficient time to engage more deeply through extended conversations (Cambron-McCabe, 2003) and reflection, this process took longer than we expected. Because of the close relationship we had established while jointly pursuing our doctoral degrees in the 1990s, we assumed initially that we could easily delve into this process and bypass the varying stages inherent in establishing the requisite "intense trust, commitment, and openness" (Cambron-McCabe, 2003, p. 286) for transformative learning to occur.

We soon learned, however, the road we were taking together was, as Mezirow (2012) acknowledges, profoundly threatening and painful. Nevertheless, when we hit our first roadblock stemming from Barb's reluctance to accept white privilege as a real and viable construct, we agreed to suspend our conversation and searched for a temporary route so we could each reflect upon our held perceptions of our experiences and ourselves. Originally, we planned to complete this project in time to present our "findings" within one year. Throughout these two years, we have had to take a number of hiatuses to allow ourselves time to discover ourselves and peel away the layers of our subconscious so we could reconvene and discuss our individual learning with one another after the raw emotions that emerged had time to heal. Two years later, we realize we have only begun.

Our unique and different life experiences have strengthened our research partnership because we have agreed to offer dissenting points of view (Latz & Murray, 2012). Together, we have found that questions are key to reflection, particularly those that create cognitive dissonance and push our boundaries of vulnerability and learning. We have each advanced in our appreciation of the differences we possess and appreciate. We can unabashedly share our stories and find comfort in our pledge and willingness to point out one another's weaknesses and celebrate the incremental growth toward transformation we have made along the way.

Through this research experience, we have acquired a deeper appreciation for the power and use of duoethnography as a tool for faculty development in diversity and social justice. If trust is established between the researchers, duoethnography serves as the vehicle of safety where (a) risks can be taken; (b) vulnerabilities can be revealed; (c) tough questions can be asked; (d) uncensored responses can be exchanged, (e) underlying assumptions can be challenged, and (f) deficit thinking can be surfaced, deconstructed, and reframed (Guerra & Nelson, 2009a). Through this cyclical process and an ongoing analysis, duoethnography can help promote individual and group realizations of the existence and formation of multiple realities, recognition of injustices, and the need for change. For both of us, stories of racism, prejudice, bias, injustice, institutional racism, intersecting identities, white privilege, power, colorblind theory, and other social justice-related concepts surfaced and were explored resulting in transformative learning in *both* of us.

It Begins with Us

Returning to our shared commitment to develop, hone, and align our knowledge, skills, and dispositions with an equity-oriented, social justice leadership perspective, we are compelled to revisit the questions we asked ourselves prior to embarking on this journey:

1. Why is our depth of understanding of diversity and social justice different?
2. How has our understanding of social justice issues been formed over the course of our lives?

Over the past few years, we have realized the critical role that sharing our stories and reflections played in our personal and professional growth. Juxtaposing our narratives and establishing trust over time allowed us to ask tough questions of one another and respond in an uncensored fashion. If we had not embarked on this journey, we may not have mustered the courage to do so. More importantly, the juxtaposition of our stories revealed differences in our lived experiences despite both of us being primarily raised in middle-class backgrounds. Barb discovered she indeed had more experiences with people of color than she initially thought. Additionally, when confronted with Pat's stories, she was astonished by the frequent discrimination and prejudice Pat had experienced throughout her life. Conversely, Pat was surprised by the limited number of memories Barb was able to recount in regard to her exposure to and interactions with people of color during her formative years. For the few she did remember, they seemed to be removed from awareness of race and any experience with people of color was minimally acknowledged. Pat was also struck by the degree of insulation Barb experienced in her early years, particularly because her family lived only 25 miles outside of Cleveland, Ohio, a major metropolitan area where many African Americans resided.

Hearing and reading Barb's stories allowed Pat to see Barb's lived experiences through Barb's lens and understand Barb's initial reaction to the term "white privilege" and her belief that she did not have it. Living in segregated white communities and having little authentic contact with people of color greatly explained the formation of Barb's perspective and limited understanding of diversity and social justice. This realization developed empathy in Pat and provided her a place where she could begin Barb's mentoring.

Feeling apprehension and guilt about her beliefs, Barb was relieved that Pat did not aggressively confront, chastise, preach, or attempt to convince her that her belief about not having white privilege was "wrong." This response would have only caused her to further withdraw from the conversation. Instead, Pat encouraged Barb to take a retrospective journey into her past to determine if her recollections and conceptions were accurate. Free of judgment, this exploration promoted open, honest, and constant communication between Pat and Barb. Forgotten memories and revelations were shared, critical dialogue was exchanged, and questions were asked, ultimately facilitating change in Barb's conceptions of white privilege.

Similar to Barb, many students in the courses Pat teaches are well intentioned, White educators interested in learning about social justice to do the good work. But as a result of living insulated lives with few authentic relationships with people of color, they often find it hard to believe that they have white privilege or are biased. Given this experience with Barb, duoethnography appears to have promise in helping students' examine their beliefs and conceptions about social justice and as in Barb's case, begin to transform their views.

This experience with Barb has underscored the importance of implementing certain instructional actions when teaching social justice content. First, it is not enough to just bring students to the table to explore social justice issues. Because teaching this content relies heavily on teacher-student interaction, it is crucial to maintain open communication. Sounds simple, but it is often difficult to do because of the sensitive and controversial nature of the content and students' fears about it. Like Barb, students are often reluctant to discuss social justice issues for fear of being "found out," called a "racist," "feeling guilty," and/or engaging in aggressive and/or uncomfortable confrontation. In my experience, these

interactions, for many students, shut down communication rather than foster it. If we want students to return to the table time and again to continue conversations about social justice, we have to meet them where they are and start from there. We should stay curious, actively listen, suspend judgment, and empathize to encourage open and frank conversation and develop trust. Once trust is developed, tough questions that elicit deeper reflection should be asked. Finally, and most importantly, learning of this kind should not be imparted but facilitated by having students explore their lived experiences to verify the accuracy of their recollections and conceptions and the origins of their beliefs and values. As previously mentioned, pairing students by diverse backgrounds, like in our duoethnography, should result in counter narratives that aid students in beginning to transform their values, beliefs, and conceptions of social justice.

By reflecting on our varying life events, we have gained a greater understanding of how our pasts have contributed to the formation of the persons we have become (Neumann and Peterson, 1997). Additionally, we have each grown in our understanding of social justice-related issues; but more importantly, in our understanding of each other and the critical experiences that have shaped our life histories around race, ethnicity, gender, and class.

Tolstoy (1900) refers to the global call for a change in humanity that was aglow during his lifetime as a “moral revolution” involving “the regeneration of the inner man” (p. 29). As in the critiques of current leadership preparation programs and the need to transform current structures and practices (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Furman, 2012; Hackman, 2006, Hawley & James, 2010; Sharpiro & Stefkovich, 2010), Tolstoy states, “Nobody knows how it will take place in humanity, but every man feels it clearly in himself” (p. 29). To move beyond the discontent and repeated rhetoric calling for change within our own ranks as faculty within leadership preparation programs, we echo Tolstoy’s indictment: “[Y]et in our world everybody thinks of changing humanity, and nobody thinks of changing himself” (p. 29).

More than a century later, Kottcamp (2003) states, “transformation of what we do does not come through grand, logical plans, commission findings and policy initiatives” (p. 239). In short, it occurs through making the commitment to change ourselves. Seemingly, these two scholars have impassioned indicted those who have failed to respond to the call for change.

In response to these two scholars’ charge, we started our journey by reconceptualizing our beliefs, values, and perceptions of social justice leadership preparation. As premised by Sawyer and Norris (2013), we hope our stories serve as a catalyst for other faculty to reflect and commence their own journey through critical reflection, rational discourse, and examination of praxis (Brown, 2004). Together, we have found that questions are key to reflection, particularly those that create cognitive dissonance and push our boundaries of vulnerability and learning. If we expect to make social justice a critical component of our leadership development programs, we must first start with ourselves.

Final Thoughts

At the end of writing this paper we are left with several questions. First, can duoethnography be used to transform faculty’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to diversity and social justice and second, to develop authentic relations with their colleagues? Furthermore, we wonder whether faculty will even be willing to engage in this process as a result of power differences, fear of uncovering biases, threat of conflict, and/or denial of faculty tenure and promotion—all factors that contribute to a lack of trust.

Our journey is far from over; in the coming year, we plan to continue this duoethnography, starting where we ended for this paper—our entrance into the academy as

higher education faculty and sharing our findings with other faculty. Barb recognizes she must continue to grow and progress in her quest to understand the complexities of white privilege and institutional racism and plans to persist in this journey with Pat. While we suspect we will be generating more questions than answers, we look forward to this unexplored investigation, knowing that becoming a social justice leader requires no less.

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