THE NEW "EYES ON THE PRIZE": SCHOOL LEADERS' PURSUIT OF EQUITY

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This study uses narrative inquiry to collect the lived experiences of eight school leaders who are guiding their schools under equitable practices. The value of narrative inquiry is that human experience is told and relived through those narrative stories of the past, of the present, and which will influence the future. In the field of education and school leadership, equity is hard to define, understand, and demonstrate. Consequently, there is a need to further study school leaders and their views, practices, and implementation of equity. This study captures school leaders' conceptions of equity and the processes towards its realization and/or attainment. I present several significant findings using analysis of "resonant threads" and critical race theory.

The findings of this study reveal distinct (and overlapping) perspectives and actions that participants took in their driven commitment toward equity. I (re)position the actions of equitable leadership by identifying two qualities that an equity leader IS NOT: one to withdraw from a challenge or stand down and (when challenging inequalities) one to favor adults over students. Also, I identified these school leaders as being *equity leadership-straddlers* who through their own positionalities, experiences, and desire to engage with different cultures have gained skills to successfully navigate the school environment and engage with diverse communities.

In revealing their commitment towards equity the participants shared five standpoints: (1) the blending and/or crossing of boundaries between self and students, (2) *heartwork*, (3) role modeling, (4) as a *life imperative*, and (5) their principles. Moreover, in the processes of capturing how the participants understand their commitment, they reveal six methods in how

they promote equity in their schools: (1) placing race at the forefront of what they deliberate on and what they do, (2) providing access to opportunities for students, (3) bringing in and/or fighting for resources, (4) believing in holistic approaches, (5) having relationships with a network of like-minded colleagues, and (6) modeling equitable practices. Lastly, through the collection of their stories participants reveal one's drive in the direction of equity is supported with ethical and/or moral principles.

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PREFACE

I recognize this accomplishment would not be possible without the support of so many people. I am grateful to have the opportunity to share this journey with those who have both helped and supported me to complete this purpose in life.

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I would like to thank my *Brighton High School* family (my day 1 boys): Juan, Oscar, Cesar, Brandon, Randolph, Will, Mike, Jose, Emilio, and the rest of the crew: You guys are my brothers and I know that this accomplishment is a result of everybody's support. Also, I need to recognize Coach "Phil" for providing me so many years of mentorship.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

At 27-years old I completed Boston's teacher's education program called the Boston Teachers Residency. During that summer, I was hired at a high school in the local urban public school district. I was given the position of bilingual special education history teacher. I remember being excited and nervous about having the opportunity to engage what I recognized as the "perfect job." I had always desired to teach at the high school level. I believed—and I still believe—that working with high school students would facilitate and enrich my abilities to talk with students about life. Though I did not consider it at that time, my experiences during those next four years would take me on a journey that I have continued to navigate even today in my graduate studies.

Ridgeland High School (a pseudonym), the school where I was to begin my teaching, is a diverse urban public school. At the time of my first year of teaching, the school had more than 900 students and was in the midst of being labeled "underperforming" by the state. During that first year at Ridgeland, I worked under the leadership of a tenured school principal. During that first year, my only interactions with him were during his impromptu visits to departmental meetings and to my classroom. At the end of my first year, the school was reorganized, and the school principal transferred to a middle school in the district. At the beginning of that following school year, a black male was brought in to lead the school.

I first met Dr. Adams during the summer institute training before the school year had begun. Dr. Adams came in with a three-year strategic plan to transform Ridgeland High to

better meet the needs of its diverse student population. My initial reaction to this new leadership style was full of intrigue. From my understanding the previous school principal had maintained the same school culture for over a decade. Almost immediately, Adams began to implement initiatives that he believed would transform the school: (a) he created an all male and female 9th grade classrooms, (b) he created a ninth grade academy, (c) he implemented a new system of discipline; (d) he increased the grade point average requirement of student athletes, (e) he moved the high school graduation to a local University, (f) he hired a more diverse staff, and (g) he created various leadership committees.

Interestingly, I began to notice resistance toward what I recognized as noble changes. For example, during a grade level meeting I listened as a senior level teacher made the following comment to other educators: "I have seen this before, I will just wait him out and he will leave." Also, teachers who previously complained about our prior discipline system, now made the following comments during whole school meetings, "We use to have this wonderful discipline system." I recognize that being in the midst of this small school reform and its subsequent turbulence continues to influence my research.

The creation of public schools in the United States, at its core, demonstrated a commitment to look after the needs and interests of our entire young citizenry (Tyack & Hansot, 1986), by making the equality of opportunity a tangible possibility (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Yet, according to Tyack (1974), schools often reinforce our societal injustices toward some while simultaneously providing opportunities to others. Literature about schools has often argued the negative influence our educational school institutions can have on young black children (Kozol, 1985); consequently, such institutions thwart the educational aspirations of black students

(MacLeod, 2008) that more often lead to such students' inability to participate in what Rist (2002) calls the "American feast." Thus, the access to equitable public schools continues to be a topic of contested debate across this country.

The data on the educational outcome of black and Latina/o students reveal a continued existence of inequities in the United States. For example, students of color in this country's secondary schools are hindered in three areas, areas that significantly support future higher educational access: SAT participation, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and high school graduation. A report by the U.S. Department of Education (2010) found that nationally in 2008, only 12% of blacks and 13% of Latinas/os took the SAT's. Also, the report indicated that only 7% of black students and 14% of Latina/o students participated in AP classes. Moreover, Stillwell and Sable (2013) reported that for the 2009-2010 academic year, the percentage of black and Latina/o students who graduate high school in four years was 66% and 71% respectively. This discrepancy demonstrates that at the institutional level, students of color are being denied the greatest vehicle for social mobility—college access—as a result of low SAT participation, low AP enrollment, and low four-year high school graduation. In addition, the 2011-2012 the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) survey found three substantial inequities: (1) black children attending preschool account for 42% of suspensions while constituting only 18% of preschool enrollment; (2) white and Asian students were 25% more likely than black and Latina/o students to have access to courses necessary for college; and (3) 12% of black students in 9th grade were retained, double the overall average (Lhamon, 2014).

In a national assessment that measures student's knowledge in various subject areas, scores in The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate a significant discrepancy between whites and black and Latina/o students in academic achievement. Using

NAEP scores, Bangs and Davis (2015) reported that in 2014, 82% of black and 80% of Latina/o fourth grade students were not proficient in reading and 82% of black and 74% of Latina/o were not proficient in mathematics. In addition, 83% of black and 78% of Latino/a eighth grade students were not proficient in reading and 86% of black and 79% of Latina/o eighth grade students were not proficient in mathematics. In fact, the reading results from NAEP in 2012 show a gap ranging from 23 to 26 points in all three age groups (9,13, and 17) between white and black students and about a 21-point gap between white and Latina/o in all three of the same age groups. These persist discrepancies suggest that without a concerted effort toward supporting and challenging institutional structures that impede the educational outcome of black and Latina/o students this nation will continue to inhibit these groups. Consequently, educational areas and discourses that need to be investigated include leadership practices, curriculum, pedagogical practices, educator dispositions, and institutional structures (i.e., tracking and discipline practices) to name a few.

1.1   WHY FOCUS ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Although much of the research on schools has focused on the influence that teachers have on student achievement, new research has shed light on a vital element of those schools that successfully educate all students: the role of effective school principals. In fact, since investigations on effective schools identified "strong administrative leadership" (Edmonds, 1979) in teaching the urban poor, new research continues to affirm such findings. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012) argues that school leadership is the nexus for improving low-performing disadvantaged schools.

A comprehensive longitudinal study of Chicago's public school reform during the 1990's further strengthens the importance of school leadership to student achievement. This research study desired to identify characteristics that distinguished the schools that reached school improvement from those schools unable to improve. According to Bryk (2010), the data collected from this longitudinal study identified five organizational features of schools that enhanced school improvement in relation to student achievement: (1) coherent instructional guidance system, (2) professional capacity, (3) strong parent-community-school ties, (4) student-centered learning climate, and (5) leadership that spearheads change (pp. 24-25). Overall, the study showed school leadership as having an influence on the other four organizational features. As the formal authority in our schools, then, school leaders, as a whole, have a real and tangible hand in the development of the school's culture.

Studies on the effects of school leadership continue to inform educational research of the significance of school leadership in school improvement. Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), in their review of the literature on how school leadership influences student learning, found that in school-related factors, school leadership comes in second in contributing to student learning. The findings also showed that the effects of school leadership were largest in schools that needed it the most. Furthermore, in a six-year study by Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) on the relationship between school leadership and student achievement researchers were unable to find "a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absences of talented leadership" (p. 9). A report by the Wallace Foundation (2013) argues that this country's national goal of transforming failing schools will not take place without effective principals. This research study desires to further the dialogue on the importance of school leadership by understanding their effort toward equity.

1.2   IN THE PURSUIT OF EQUITY

Engaging the movement towards "equity and excellence" in education can be a challenging endeavor. The movement is underscored by the pursuit of the academic success of all students—regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, culture, neighborhood, or home language (Ferguson, 2007; Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Although the emergence of equity has only been emphasized during the last few decades (Wallace Foundation, 2013) equity has recently become a significant debate (Castelli, Ragazzi, & Crescentini, 2012) among policy analysts, policy-makers, government officials and scholars (Espinoza, 2007). In fact, equity has become something of a new mantra in educational policy (Fullan & Boyle, 2014), with an added emphasis by the Office for Civil Rights (Lhamon, 2014). Reports by The Equity and Excellence Commission (2013) and the OECD (2012) both assert that a country's economic and social growth depends on a country's ability to provide equity in education.

Researchers have recently begun to make known that new leadership—and no doubt more equitable leadership—practices are needed to teach not only our brightest but also our most vulnerable students. In the United States, discussions on school leadership and equity were raised as early as the 1970s during the period of the "effective school movement" (Edmonds, 1979) and gained a stronger footing during the 1990s with the focus on the human dimensions of schooling (Murphy, 1995). Today, the prominence of equity in our contemporary school leadership practices is evident in the new Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC, 2015) leadership policy standards. In the ISLLC's original publication in 1996 and its subsequent revised edition in 2008, the practice of equity appears in one of the six standards. Now, in the most recent published ISLLC's (2015) policy standards, four of the ten standards incorporate

issues of equity. For example, according to the new ISLLC (2015) standards, school leaders must safeguard and promote equity, address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness, and develop and administer systems for fair and equitable management.

Some researchers continue to argue that the goal of "equity and excellence" in educational policy is commonly misunderstood (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton, 2000). A search for "equity and excellence" by school leaders, then, can be an overwhelming objective. Some researchers suggest that school leaders who pursue social change will, no doubt, experience conflict (Foster, 1986; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Riehl, 2000) because often pursuing more equitable practices becomes politicized (Noguera, 2001; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). As Espinoza (2007) argues the problem with "equity" theory is that it is based on the one-dimensional goal of providing a fairness of distribution that favors marginalized groups, a statement of consequence that leads easily to its attack by others. Researchers Blankstein and Noguera (2015) likewise argue that equity in education is both controversial and confusing because of people associating equity with a "zero-sum game." In the influential book, *A Place Called School*, researcher John Goodlad (1984) describes the challenge of achieving equity:

> Schools mirror inequities in the surrounding society and many people want to be sure that they continue to do so. Consequently, it is not easy to adjust inequities inside of schools. There is in the gap between our highly idealistic goals for schooling in our society and the differentiated opportunities condoned and supported in schools a monstrous hypocrisy. (p. 161)

Here, Goodlad gives something of a sense that public schools have manifested themselves toward an unequal balance of democratic principles. Of course, it has never been a simple matter for school leaders to adjust to the inequities inside schools.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Today, the well-intentioned pursuit of equity by school leaders can become an overwhelming objective. Nevertheless, a study by Theoharis (2010) has shown how six school leaders were able to "break the silence" and narratively describe both the resistance they encountered in confronting inequitable practices and the resilience needed for social justice. Also, school principals themselves contribute to equity by establishing a school culture inside of schools that increases the educational opportunities for all students. In another relevant review of the literature on school leadership and equity, Ross and Berger (2009) offer three underlying themes that school leaders do to influence equity in their schools: (1) increase the technical skills of staff, (2) transform beliefs about equity, and (3) strengthen school partnerships with parents and community (p. 14). Because of these findings, then, this study aims to investigate several questions. This research study looks to capture the process and meaning making of leadership for equity to better understand what it will take to reach equitable decisions in this country's public K-12 schools.

For the purpose of this study, I focus and connect two student identities to equity leadership, those grounded in supporting students of color (particularly black and Latina/o students) and of low-socioeconomic status (SES). I recognize other identities (such as language, special education, and other ethnicities to name a few) can result in marginalization. However, from my own experiences as a K-12 student, educator, and graduate student, I have come to recognize that educators have great difficulty engaging in dialogue about race and low-SES. Race and class are two social identities that have significant impact on the educational outcome for students with implication for "gaps" in education (Darling-Hammond, 2007a; 2007b; Kantor & Lowe, 1995; Lopez, Gurin, & Nagda, 1998). Moreover, in educational spaces it is safer to

discuss issues of class rather than race in educational gaps. Yet, I recognize the impact of the intersectionality of race and class has been intrinsically inseparable with more students of color overrepresented in a low-SES. Thus, I center the focus of equity for this study in the relationship and dimensions of intersectionality of race and class as an important topic of discussion in this research study. The following are the three research questions guiding this study:

1. How do school principals describe/understand their commitment towards equity?

2. How do school principals promote equity in their schools? In particular, what strategies, sense-making, skills and practices with regards to equity implementation are used?

3. What can the principals' stories about their leadership experience tell us about the moral and/or ethical imperative inherent in a commitment for equity?

1.4   NARRATIVE INQUIRY

I use narrative inquiry to study the lives of eight school leaders. Specifically, this study's use of narrative inquiry intends to recognize, focus on, and capture the lived experiences of those school leaders who are guiding their schools under equitable practices. This qualitative study uses narrative inquiry to learn about the stories of school leaders working towards ensuring that all students have the opportunities to succeed. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that narrative inquiry helps in understanding experience. Researchers who use narrative as a form of data collection believe that we can learn more deeply about anything, ranging from history to social behavior, by focusing on narrated lives (Chase, 2011). Indeed, Clandinin (2013) argues that narrative inquiry "is an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring

lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (p. 17). Here, then, is situated the value of narrative inquiry: that human experience is told and relived through those narrative stories people experience of in the past, of the present, and which will influence people's lives in the future.

I have situated my inquiry at the borderlands of narrative inquiry and critical theory. This study looks to merge the valuing of the narration of individual life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) with the theoretical lens of critical race theory (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Critical race theory, then, can enhance the understanding of connections between such structural institutions that can support or hinder individual actions in such institutions. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) recognize the existence of tension(s) between these two research methodologies; they nevertheless reaffirm that narrative inquiry "traverses borderlands."

Narrative inquiry and critical race theory (CRT) share a relational use of storytelling. The critical race theory (CRT) movement is concerned with studying and understanding the relationship among racism, race, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As applied to education, CRT positions race as the central focus toward critiquing—both overtly and covertly—race within school practices and policies (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Consequently, the case for the application and usefulness of critical race theory in school leadership has been examined in both the K-12 practices of school leadership (Aleman, 2009; Parker & Villapando, 2007; Stovall, 2004) and principal preparation programs (Agosto, Karanxha, & Bellara 2015; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Lopez, 2003). In short, the use of the CRT lens in school leadership provides, then, an alternative perspective that will better capture those institutional norms and practices that marginalize students of color.

In addition, school leaders who support all students can be characterized by both having and demonstrating a moral and ethical imperative. The office of school principal comes with various challenges. Yet, one of the essential challenges school principals face is attempting to navigate their school towards equity. Indeed, it could be argued that a school principal who attempts to guide his or her school in the direction of equity may experience some turbulence (Gross, 2004). When, however, a school principal does decide to go forth in the direction of equity, I believe he or she does so because of ethical and moral principles (Bell, 2008; Bogotch, Miron, & Murry, 1998; Branson, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Calabrese, 1988; Fullan, 2003, 2010; Gross & Shapiro, 2004; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1996; Starratt, 1991, 2004).

1.5   ANTICIPATED FINDINGS/SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

I anticipate school leaders will reveal their equitable leadership practices through the telling of stories. Stories by school leaders in school context can reveal rich contextual information (Witherell, 1991) on moral decisions (Tappan & Brown, 1991) that lead toward equitable practices. I expect a variation on how leadership for equity works under differing conditions. To provide some context, I ground the following narrative examples from my experiences as both a educator and a researcher. I recognize a school leaders engagement in promoting equity in his or her school may vary depending on their school context (urban, suburban, or rural). A school leader might describe through a story of a time when he or she tried to implement a practice deemed to be equitable. On the one hand, a school leader may through a story describe the time when he or she implemented an equity professional development (PD) only to observe staff on their phones, laptops, and disengaged. On the other hand, a school leader

may narrate a story of the time when after using Singleton and Linton's (2006) book, *Courageous Conversations About Race,* a teacher approached that leader about how the experience of the PD had made her reflect on her teaching practice.

According to sociologist Dan Lortie (2009), the study of school principals "can deepen our understanding of how American schools and school districts function" (p. 3). With this in mind, studying the formal school positions of power, like the principalship, can help educational policy makers and school leader preparation programs to understand how to develop well-informed practices of effective leadership. It has been well over a decade now since Carolyn Riehl (2000) called for more empirical research on school principals' abilities to create more inclusive schools for our growing diverse student population. Consequently, my study in reaching toward that empirical research, will engage both listening to and studying the narrative story's principals tell of how they purposefully direct their leadership towards equitable practices that enhance support learning for all students. Collecting and interpreting such personal narratives can reveal my selected participants not as mere recipients of social forces, but as agents who have actively worked towards holding to the just rights of others (Chase, 2011). Indeed, much like Freire (2000) explains, "to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it" (p. 88). In short, this study seeks to show how it may be possible to lead towards transformational change.

This research study aims to enhance and generate a new understanding of leadership. I aim to disclose a more holistic understanding of school leaders, somewhere beyond practices they engage in their school buildings. Also, this study intends to provide insight on the influences that have given motivation to school leaders who continue to push their practices towards equity. This collection of school leaders' stories intends to reveal both their belief of a

foundation of equity and their challenges as they work in their educational spaces. Recognizing something of our country's school leaders' sense of engaging equity and of uncovering the challenges they encounter can help inform future school leaders and principal preparation programs about the most effective practices needed to better ensure the K-12 education of all students. I believe the stories of these eight school leaders can impart their commitment towards providing a more equitable school culture underscored by supporting the just rights of others.

2.0   REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research has illustrated the salient influence that school principals have on schools (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger, Murphy, Weil, Mesa, & Mitman, 1983; Hallinger, Bickman, Davis, 1996; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Furthering Edmonds's argument of school leadership's influence on school effectiveness by investigating actions school leaders do towards developing effective schools, Hallinger and his colleagues identified three strong areas that school leaders have a direct influence on supporting student achievement: (1) defining the school's mission, (2) managing the curriculum and instruction, and (3) promoting a positive learning culture. Both Hallinger et al.'s and Leithwood et al.'s reviews of the literature on school leadership and its influence on student achievement found no direct correlation; yet, both literature reviews found evidence that principals play an important role in their schools' effectiveness.

By studying principals who purposefully consider leadership practices with equity in mind, I believe we could better understand leadership practices that both engender and support holistic learning for all students. In addition, some researchers argue that the quest for social justice will require a determination to see it through (Tyack, 1974). I believe school leadership focused on equity is the necessary ingredient to improve the lives of those students who have been historically marginalized in the United States. Thus, understanding the degree of difficulty a school principal faces while leading his or her school with equity may prove to be beneficial

for those future leaders who desire to directly take on the challenge of engaging their schools towards fairness and justice.

The following is a brief review of the literature on ethical and moral school leadership and the development of critical race theory to school leadership. The first literature review addresses the discussion of ethical and/or moral principles I believe are key characteristics that guide principals in equitable practices, regardless of any challenge and consequence they might attract. This literature intends to help define the characteristics demonstrated by school leaders who take on the moral imperative (Fullan, 2003, 2010) to support all students. Meanwhile, the second part focuses on the development of critical race theory in education and how CRT can be as a tool to investigate possible challenges principals may face in pursuing equitable practices. If our schools are truly a reflection of the larger society (Rist, 1970) and if any action to reduce or eliminate achievement gaps requires understanding the historical circumstances of students of color (Howard, 2010) then I argue CRT can help to shed light into those racial and socio-economic status issues that may permeate our public schools.

2.1   MORAL AND/OR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

The role and professional position of the school principal began to be shaped during the early 19th century with the development of "head teacher" (Brown, 2011). At the turn of the 20th century, the position of school principal began to gain both stature and authority (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013). Indeed, with the formation of the National Association of Secondary Principals (NASSP) in 1916 and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) in 1921, the proclamation by administrators as professionals became distinct (Brown, 2011). In

short, the establishment of the principalship as a separate entity from teachers was established at the turn of the 20th century. The story of school administration is the desire by holders of the position to be recognized as separate from classroom teachers.

The adoption of scientific management theory by educational institutions further distinguished the position of principalship from classroom teachers. According to Sullivan and Glanz (2013), leading researchers in supervision of instruction, the transition of the school principal as supervisors began with the distinction of social efficiency as a bureaucratic method during the 1900s. A significant influence in the development of social efficiency in school leadership was the adoption of Frederick Taylor's popular scientific management theory to the K-12 school practice. By the 1930s, the adoption of scientific supervision based on classroom observations became popular (Murphy, 1995). Indeed, Brown (2011) argues the specialization and division of labor highlighted by scientific management "reinforced the belief that the role of the principal should be separate from that of teaching" and "be more like business executives using good management and social science research to run schools effectively and efficiently" (p. 87). The practice of adhering to scientific management theory demonstrates how the role of principalship is strongly influenced by prevalent environmental circumstances taking placing during the time period.

The undertaking of scientific management theory led to limited discussions of moral and/or ethics and equity in school leadership. In fact, Foster (1986) asserts that the scientific period of school administration "removed a good deal of human affairs from the realm of truth; values, ethics, and morality would simply become matters of assertion or preferences" (p. 35). All in all, the discussion of moral and ethics in school leadership was absent during the era of social efficiency in school leadership.

Having achieved the status of formal authority of schools, then, only led to a continued push by administrators to formalize the educational responsibilities of the school principal aided by the rise of accountability measures. According to Brown (2011) the role of principal during the 1960s had established it "with clearly defined professional bases of power and responsibility," and with the additional responsibility of using "empirical data in planning and measuring the work of teachers and were held accountable for measurable outcomes in schools" (p. 95). Meanwhile, Sullivan and Glanz (2013) point out that supervision in school leadership essentially emerged in the 1960s. It is evident, then, during the period of the 1960s school principals had established their roles as formal authoritative supervisors in schools—still lacking discussion of ethics and moral decision-making towards equity practices.

The responsibilities of school leadership began to become unsettled when issues taking place in the larger society began to penetrate into U.S. public schools. According to educational historian David Tyack (1974), by the 1960s "schooling had become one of the prime weapons in the war on poverty and central concern not only of policy-makers but also of the dispossessed, especially the people of color struggling for a greater share of power in cities" (p. 270). School leaders during this period were being challenged to create schools that were viable organizations to educate previously marginalized students either because of their low-socioeconomic status (SES) and/or their racial background. Another critical perspective to acknowledge is that the 1970s saw the emergence of external pressures of accountability beginning to permeate into our public schools (Brown, 2011) and with it a renewed interest in ethics (Langlois & LaPointe, 2014) and moral leadership (Greenfield, 2004) in schools began to be explored. In the subsequent decades, the pressures from accountability to effectively educate all students became a major responsibility for our public schools and—to a greater extent—the school principal. In

short, the issues taking place in society during the 60s and 70s highlight a critical step towards equitable leadership.

Facing the continued demand from external pressures challenged school leaders to re-examine their supervisor roles in educational institutions. Indeed, Brown (2011) argues that the new responsibility of principals was to challenge the two dominant themes of racial and class discrimination prominent during the 20th century history of schooling. Groups that had been largely marginalized in schools—people of color and of low-SES—began to seek equity and inclusion of voice in our school systems (Tyack & Hansot, 1986). Indeed, researchers began to examine what types of schools were able to effectively educate all students. One such research project was conducted by Edmonds (1979), who published his seminal article, "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor*."* Edmonds (1979) made the argument that "inequity in American education derives first and foremost from our failure to educate the children of the poor" (p. 15). Edmonds's research was to identify what he called "effective schools"—schools that support the learning of poor and students of color. The sample for Edmond's research came from the elementary schools from *Detroit's Model Cities Neighborhood* study and the reanalysis of the 1966 Equal Educational Opportunity Survey's (EEOS) was used to find 55 effective schools. Accordingly, Edmonds identified six tangible characteristics that these schools hold. These "effective schools" demonstrated: (1) a strong administrative leadership, (2) a strong climate of learning, (3) an order that is conducive to learning, (4) an emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills, (5) an intuition to divert resources to fundamental objectives, and (6) the practice of monitoring student progress. In other words, the effective school movement highlighted that a school leader was necessary to educate all students.

2.1.1 Burn's Leadership Theory

The application of two fundamental characteristics of leadership to the position of school principal can be traced to James MacGregor Burns's landmark book *Leadership* (1978). According to Burns's (1978) theory on leadership, those who practice leadership use either a *transactional* or *transformational* approach. On the one hand, Burns argues that transactional leaders, forming the majority actions of leadership practices, follow the approach of leading "with an eye to exchanging one thing for another" (p. 4). Educational researcher Carolyn Shields (2010) states that a principal who practices transactional leadership uses the functional principles of exchange or cooperation through mutual agreement to achieve desired goals in schools. On the other hand, Burns (1978) asserts a transformational leader goes beyond the exchange formula to look "for potential motives in followers" and "satisfy higher needs" in pursuit "of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (p. 4). Also, Shields (2010) points out, a principal who participates in transformational leadership challenge power and privilege in working towards the goal of equity and justice. In other words, the transactional leader looks to maintain a level of congruity in his or her organization, while the transformational leader looks to go beyond the normal status quo in the organization and shifts the school's mission towards a higher order.

In addition to the introduction of "transactional" and "transformational" leadership, Burns (1978) further elaborates on the importance of the structure of moral leadership in organizations. Burns (1978) argues that at "the highest stage of moral development persons are guided by near universal ethical principles of justice such as equality of human rights and respect for individual dignity" (p. 42). According to Burns (1978), both transactional and transformational leadership carry moral implications. Transactional leaders use *modal values* of

honesty, responsibility, fairness, and the honoring of commitments to guide their practice. In contrast, a transformational leader concerns themselves with *end-values*—for example, liberty, justice, equity, and human rights. Most importantly, then, Burns (1978) differentiates between the two leadership styles by stating that "transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both" (p. 20). Hence, from Burns's definition of moral development, it could be assumed that in the context of school structures, a principal who desires to transform his or her school to support equity for students of color and of low-SES will require them to ground their practice in moral values. The next section will further address what it means to lead from a moral development perspective.

2.1.2   Sergiovanni's and Starratt's Ethical/Moral leadership theory

The closer examination into the relationship between school results and school leadership opened the discussion of new principles of leadership. Thomas Sergiovanni and Robert Starratt (who worked as a graduate assistant for Sergiovanni) are two leading advocates of usage of ethics and/or moral principles in the school administration. Sergiovanni (1986) and Starratt (1991) disseminated their adoption of moral and ethical perspectives to educational school leadership theory in their respective works, *Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement* and "Building an Ethical School: A Theory for Practice in Educational Leadership." The following is further argument of the significance of an ethical lens for school leadership and a more comprehensive understanding of the ethical and/or moral theoretical perspectives proposed by Starratt (1991) and Sergiovanni (1986).

Starratt (1991), a leading expert on ethical school leadership, offers a three-pronged ethical perspective that he believes can better address the problems that arise in the principalship. Starratt (1991) argues for the adoption of three ethical themes—critique, justice, and caring—to school leadership. Starratt's (1991) argument is twofold: first, he believes since school leaders have a moral responsibility to create ethical schools, then, merging the three ethical themes may better serve that intended moral responsibility.

Starratt asserts that the lens of the ethic of critique reveals to school leaders that the school as an organization "is a source of unethical consequences in the educational process" forcing "administrators to confront the moral issues involved when schools disproportionately benefit some groups in society and fail others" (p. 190). Adding to Starratt's ethical theme of critique, educational researchers Shapiro, Stefkovich, and Gutierrez (2014) state that the ethic of critique "asks educators to examine and grapple with those possibilities that could enable all children, whatever their backgrounds, to have opportunities to grow, learn, and achieve" (p. 213). The argument by Shapiro and her colleagues for school leaders to be ethical is based on the belief that it can provide school leaders the impetus to identify issues in schools that may be inequitable and take action. In short, the use of the ethic of critique by school leaders allows school leaders to ensure that all students are being served.

The second ethical lens discussed by Starratt (1991) is the ethic of justice. Starratt argues that school leaders using the ethical theme of justice must serve both the community and individual student needs. The ethic of justice shifts from the identification of injustices in schools' to the action by school leaders in response to the injustice(s). Starratt highlights that a response towards the injustice by a school leader may not be adequate, but it is the undertaking of action towards the recognizable injustice that provides the foundation for the ethic of justice.

According to Starratt the perspective of justice situates school leaders to raise discussions on issues of discipline policies, curriculum, appropriate textbook, multicultural education, and grading and testing. The foundation of this ethic in schools is that the freedom of individual choices is juxtaposed with community choices to create a school culture that values both. Thus, the ethical justice perspective argues for the restructuring of school activities to better serve all students.

The third ethical lens considered by Starratt is the ethic of caring. Starratt believes the use of care by school leaders "postulates a level of caring that honors the dignity of each person and desires to see that person enjoy a fully human life" (p. 195). Starratt calls for the merging of the ethical lenses of justice and caring in order to push school leaders to understand and evaluate how the school as an institution can be a system that disempower some students and move them to transform such issues in his or her school to increase the opportunities for all students. Starratt argues that school leaders who use the perspective of care challenge the "underside" motives— such as racial, sexual, and ethnic stereotypes—disrupting honest interactions between teachers, students, or parents. Hence, Starratt argues that the three ethical themes "complement and enrich each other in a more complete ethic" that enables school leaders to build "a rich and pluriform ethical environment" (p. 198). All in all, the ethical perspectives of critique, justice, and care proposed by Starratt can support school leaders' implementation of equitable practices that serve marginalized groups—students of color and of low-SES.

Sergiovanni presents the argument for the legitimacy of moral authority in school leadership. According to Sergiovanni the foundational base of school leadership lies in the perceived reality of his or her beliefs, values, and commitments. Sergiovanni argues that professional and moral authority should be the foundation of educational leadership practice.

Sergiovanni suggest that morally based leadership is the kind of leadership "that touches people differently. It taps their emotions, appeals to their values, and responds to their connections with other people" (p. 120). An effective leader, according to Sergiovanni is a leader who is able to persuade—motivating and inspiring—educational stakeholders towards working together for the core purpose of creating a learning community for all students.

2.1.3   Underscoring ethical and/or moral leadership towards equity

The pursuit of creating equitable schools resides in the reality that to achieve this important goal, school leaders will confront complex dilemmas that call for the use of ethical and moral decision-making. Shields (2014) argues that engaging "in deep and meaningful ethical, transformative leadership, therefore requires that a leader have the courage to examine, challenge, and as necessary, correct situations and practices that promote inequity" (p. 33). Also, Bell, in his 2008 book, *Ethical Ambition*, maintains the following characteristic of being an ethical person:

> It is essential that the ethical person acknowledge society's injustices and, whether or not called to ease them, recognize the disadvantaged, those who have been squeezed out unfairly despite the nation's boast that all here have an equal chance to gain a share of the nation's riches. (p. 21)

Bell argues that the responsibility of being an ethical person is grounded in always taking on the moral action against inequities. In other words, a school principal who desires to create an equitable school will have to possess an ethical and/or moral mindset because of the possible strong challenges he or she will encounter that can persuade individuals to discontinue the noble act of creating an equitable school.

The climate of school leadership today forces school leaders to become more like risk managers than risk takers; unfortunately, issues of equity and social justice lie in the area of "high risk" (Blackmore, 2002). For the above reason, some researchers suggest that engaging in equitable change in schools will require ethical leaders that hold moral courage (Calabrese, 1988; Shields, 2014). Shields (2014) points out that because of issues of power and privilege school leaders with moral courage will be more inclined to "carefully consider what changes will level the playing field to permit both equitable access and equitable outcomes for all students" (p. 32). Shields argues that leaders have to confront the systemic issues found in schools in order to educate all students effectively. Moreover, Shields continues to make the argument that ethical school leaders must "adopt criteria that promote equity for all members of the community" (p. 32). According to Fullan (2003), even through the backdrop of neglect by the system of supporting educator's who possess a moral commitment of educating all students exist, some educators have shown to demonstrate this commitment.

Moreover, being an ethical school leader allows for a critical examination of this country's public education systems struggle to adequately educate all our students. According to Calabrese (1988) ethical leadership is focused on "fairness, equity, commitment, responsibility, and obligation" (p. 1). Shields (2014) believes the expansion of principles in school leadership should examine how our public schools have underserved certain groups; therefore, requiring a focus towards equity. Meanwhile, Fullan (2002, 2003, 2010) suggests that the moral purpose of schools should take into consideration the improvement of the educational outcomes for all learners with a focus on closing the achievement gap. In the following statement, Fullan (2003) defines the moral purpose of schools:

Moral purpose of the highest order is having a system where all students learn, the gap between high and low performance becomes greatly reduced, and what people learn enables them to be successful citizens and workers in a morally based knowledge society. (p. 29)

With this comment, Fullan argues that schools have a moral obligation to reduce educational disparities. Regarding school principals the moral imperative, "involves leading deep cultural change that mobilizes the passion and commitment of teachers, parents, and others to improve the learning of all students, including closing the achievement gap" (Fullan, 2008, p. 41). Branson and Gross (2014) argue the choice school leaders make about their school—such as leading for equity—lies in the foundation that such an ethical pursuit will benefit our society rather than individual self-interest.

2.1.4   Recognizing challenges to leading ethically and/or morally

In this section, I name four considerations that can stymie a school leaders' ability to apply ethical and/or moral perspectives in their leadership practices: (1) the demands from accountability, (2) the absence of developing one's ethical/moral principles, (3) the possibility of "loss," and (4) the pressure to conform. Theorist and researchers who argue for the centrality of moral and/or ethical leadership face the challenge of today's high-stakes accountability forces that can inhibit such actions. School leaders today are expected to maintain an educational system that meets the needs of all students juxtapose with meeting the demands of external accountability that may not be supportive for the former. For example, a school leader in order to increase state test scores emphasizes a school culture of teaching to the test that neglects supporting the holistic needs of students. Gunzenhauser (2012) suggests that educators in today's

high stakes accountability era have had to sacrifice their philosophies of education and professional ethics.

A second consideration of limitation of developing one's own ethical and/or moral perspective is also influenced by today's high-stakes accountability culture. The undertaking of ethical and/or moral leadership is the idea that school leaders need to continuously demonstrate and develop ethical and/or moral principles because such principles are not found innately. For instance, Branson (2014b) argues that ethical leadership does not result from an innate characteristic that an individual possesses; rather a school principal must learn to become an ethical leader. Furthermore, Branson (2014b) asserts that ethical leadership "is an achievement and not a given. A leader has to strive to become an ethical leader, as it is unlikely to happen automatically" (p. 294). School leaders cannot be identified as being ethical without actually demonstrating it through their practices and actions in their school. The problem here, then, is that accountability limits the development and sustaining of ethical and/or moral practices of school leaders.

A third consideration of leading with ethical and/or moral principles is the possibility that the end result may mean sacrifice—of job, of family time, or of mental well-being. School leaders who desire equity in their schools may encounter the dilemma of sacrificing his or her position as principal. Legal scholar Derrick Bell (2008) suggests that those individuals who pursue actions that are ethical may not lead to either economic or career advancement. According to Holte (2014) schools suffer from what she terms "ethical silence," arising from fear of exclusion, loss of employment, and cultural characteristics. In short, school leaders who decide to make ethical choices face the real possibility of "loss."

A final consideration that may inhibit school leadership from enacting ethical/moral actions arises from the fact that choices school leaders make exist within the political culture of school systems. Research has shown that when school leaders take on the challenge of addressing educational inequities—based on race and low-SES—they usually result in political controversy and a greater expenditure of time and resource (Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). The bureaucratic structures of schools have continually allowed for the acceptance of lower track classes (Tyack, 1969) and the permeation of the negative social identities (Ferguson, 2003) of black students that any challenge to this must confront the transformation of school cultures. The challenge for ethical leadership becomes working within school structures that have historically been associated with the marginalization and oppression of students of color and of low-SES. Thus, working within such a system is difficult. The reality is those school leaders who desire to inculcate their schools with a culture towards equitable practice will confront the real possibility of resistance.

Nevertheless, some scholars believe that high-stakes accountability can cultivate school leaders to adopt and hold ethical principles. For example, Greenfield (2004) argues that the school leader who leads with a framework of moral leadership is best situated to develop and empower teachers during the context of accountability

2.1.5 Empirical research discussing Ethical/Moral leadership

Much of the literature discussed has presented the theoretical arguments for why school leaders who desire equity need ethical and/or moral leadership. Some researchers have found empirical research that supports the argument for ethical/moral leadership for equitable school practices. A research study by social justice scholar George Theoharis (2010) looked at

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understanding the actions of six principals who identified themselves as committed towards promoting equity in their schools. The finding from this study demonstrate that the pressure of providing equitable education to groups who have been marginalized demands a strong conviction—influenced by having a ethical/moral positioning—that improving the academic achievement is possible. The reason for this moral positioning, according to Theoharis, is that all six principals recognized the development of resistance based on challenging the historical and present-day marginalization of students of color and of low-SES. The six principals acknowledged the development of resistance from two locations—within the school/community and district. Nevertheless, the six principals continued to challenge the injustices in their school even in the face of resistance.

Another empirical study focused on school leadership that supports students from low-SES also highlighted the discussion of ethical/moral principles. Reister, Pursch, and Skrla (2002) discovered six school principals who were able to cultivate a school culture that improved the literacy skills and reduce the placement into special education of their predominantly low-SES students. According to Reister and her colleagues (2002) the overall academic success for low-SES students "became part of a moral, democratic commitment to more socially just and equitable school" (p. 302). The six principals in the study were able to position themselves and their staff into accepting the conviction that all students could succeed academically. In fact, Fullan (2010) suggests those, based on his research, school leaders who were able to transform their schools from underperforming to good used a moral imperative and created the school culture to achieve academic success. The importance of Reister's et al. study is twofold: it demonstrates that the successful undertaking of equity by school principals is possible and it highlights that the pursuit of equity is guided by ethical and moral decision-making.

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On the other hand, in an ethnographic study of an urban high school, Brooks and Jean-Marie (2007) found that various direct and indirect school leaders were able to recognize the social challenges their students faced. Yet leadership groups lacked the ethical commitment to challenge those societal inequalities. In fact, according to Brooks and Jean-Marie the high school as a whole "lacked an overarching moral/ethical leadership to guide the school's policies and practices to meet the needs of 'all' students" (p. 765). This study demonstrates the lack of an ethical commitment by groups in the leadership team readily led to their lack of action in regards to tackling the difficult issues of equity. A challenge school leaders have encountered has been how to create both an equitable and excellent school. In their studies of successful schools and districts, Scheurich and Skrla (2003) found that school leadership guided for equity and excellence usually possess three important principles: (1) a moral, ethical, and democratic core; (2) a deep belief or faith that we can create equitable and excellent schools; and (3) a deep commitment to never quit.

Based on his extensive research, Cuban (1989) argues that there are school principals who desire to improve our schools even in the face of massive obstacles, and it is these educational stakeholders, Cuban believes, that require courage, intelligence, and energy. The pursuit of equity by school leaders involves both a moral and political commitment. In fact, Sergiovanni (2009) argues that school leaders today should not only possess management know-how but should also incorporate values and ethics. In her article, Blackmore (2002) offers that because school leadership is a social practice, it must be led by moral responsibilities. And in his 2009 book entitled, *Advocacy Leadership*, Anderson offers that school leaders who practice "advocacy leadership"—a more politicized leadership practice focused on improving marginalized communities of race and social class—draw an ethical line in not using their formal

authority powers against the powerless. Today, it has become highly visible that school leaders make a concerted effort to use their powers of authority to break the chain of the disempowerment of marginalized groups.

Overall, not only does the evidence support but I also recognize to support equitable practices to take place in public schools principals would be better served by ethical and/or moral decision-making. The continued external pressures of high-stakes accountability and the internal historical practices of public schools have made the education of all students complicated. The argument, then, is that school leaders with ethical and/or moral decision-making are better situated to lead school systems that can fulfill the democratic principles this country was founded on. The theoretical call by scholars and findings from the emerging empirical studies presents viable arguments for school leaders to begin to grow and develop ethical and moral principles. Especially, because the research shows that a school principal sets the direction, mission, and culture of the school. Without a school principal driving equitable practices, a school may never persevere or attain improving the educational opportunities for all students.

2.2   CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Racism has been a defining and key characteristic of the United States and it underlies many of the inequities in schools. Indeed, from its early beginnings race and race matters (Bell, 1989, 1993; West, 1994) have been and continue to be a powerful element in this country. One venue where race issues have been addressed and fought over has been this country's judicial system. In fact, for close to 200 years, it could be argued that the courts facilitated and sustained the marginalization of non-whites in this country. Moreover, we might well recognize that the

same racial issues that plague our society also permeate into our public school system. In short, this country's long-held struggle with the racial dilemma demanded for a movement that could highlight the racial struggle to begin the process of moving this country to its desired democratic principles.

Critical race theory (CRT), a perspective that places race issues at the center, first emerged in the field of law. Legal scholars like Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, to name a few, are recognized as having influenced the development of CRT as centrally focusing issues of race to U.S. law and policy (Hartmann & Bell, 2010; Tate, 1997); because as CRT scholars see it racism is normal and not an aberration (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). In fact, three prominent events are recognize by CRT scholars as having set the foundation: (1) the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v Board of Education* (the *Brown* decision signified progress for legal scholars who for decades had fought educational inequities), (2) the formation of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) during the late 1970s (formed by leftist law teachers, students, and practitioners), and (3) the lack of prominence of race and inclusion of "voices" from people of color in CLS (black legal scholars began to become weary of CLS's lack of emphasis on race (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Yosso, 2005).

The use of critical race theory as a movement is concerned with studying and understanding the relationship between racism, race, and power. CRT desired to place issues of race as central to legal scholarship. Critical legal scholars identified several central themes that helped define the CRT movement: (1) understanding racism as a critical component of American society, (2) challenging the dominant ideology of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy, (3) valuing historical context, (4) recognizing the value of knowledge of people of color and their communities, (5) using an interdisciplinary approach, and (6) working towards

eliminating racial oppression (Crenshaw, 1988; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Taylor, 2009). These underlying themes came to shape the direction of CRT in legal studies.

Critical race theory pushes to confront racial ideologies like colorblindness, neutrality, meritocracy, and white privilege (Bell, 1992, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Gotanda, 1996; Crenshaw 1988). A close examination on colorblindness demonstrates why it is a major focus in CRT. In their critique of colorblindness, sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994), identified how the color-blind racial policies have enabled and empowered members from the white society, "to rationalize racial injustice as a supposedly natural outcomes of group attributes in competition" (p. 70). Also, Bonilla-Silva (2013), a sociologist, maintains that the relationship between colorblindness and racism helps protect and hide racist principles. Critical theorists Giroux and Giroux (2004) add that the context of color-blindness is based on conservatives' commitment to the historical denial of repression of the black population. At its core, then, CRT desires to identify and transform both historical and present-day racial discrimination (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

2.2.1 Educational scholars apply CRT to educational research

Legal scholars historically have been at the forefront of challenging racial issues in American jurisprudence. So, the transition of critical race theory from legal studies into education was a matter of time. Tate (1997) proposes the existence of a correlation between the use of CRT in both law and education that is based on emphasizing race in order to create a new theory against racial inferiority. Indeed, Bell (2008), in his landmark legal textbook, *Race, Racism, and American Law*, dedicates a chapter entitled "The Quest for Effective Schools,"

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specifically on educational issues. Bell discusses several major school litigations—for example, the *Roberts v. City of Boston* (1850), the *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* (1897), the *Brown* (1954), and the *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974)—that he believed had a lingering influence on students of color. Consequently, Bell (2008) summarizes his sentiments about racism and education with this statement:

> Achievement lags of black students have caused many to realize that simply integrating the schools will not be enough to eliminate the vestiges of a discriminatory system. Having denied black children access to effective schools for centuries, we cannot expect that these children can now be thrown into the schools to compete with white students on an equal basis. (p. 188)

Here, Bell offers the idea that the contest for academic achievement being racially equal today ignores the historical—and one can argue present—racist practices that disadvantage students of color confront. In fact, it can be recognized that Bell's argument continues to ring true today— which further extends the demand for equitable school leadership.

The emergence of CRT in education began during the mid 1990s (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006), with the publication of Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate's 1995 article, "Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education." In this piece, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that the possession of property represents both an explicit and implicit role in education. Speaking about this, critical educational researchers, DeCuir and Dixson (2004) argue,

> through the myriad policies and practices that restrict the access of students of color to high-quality curricula, and to safe and well-equipped schools, school districts have served to reify this notion of Whiteness as property whereby the rights to possession, use and enjoyment, and disposition, have been enjoyed almost exclusively by Whites. (p. 28)

In this comment, DeCuir and Dixson (2004) argue that the significance of property to education is underscored with the correlation that property ownership encompasses the educational

learning opportunities for students of color and students of low-socioeconomic status (SES). Furthermore, CRT's framework in education is informed by race and ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities and Freirean pedagogy (Solórzano, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Thus, the foundation of CRT in education and progress towards more equitable practices began with the critique on school funding.

In response to the tenth anniversary of Ladson-Billings and Tate's 1995 article on CRT in education, Dixson and Rousseau (2006) found that during the decade following the introduction of CRT into education, it remained closely aligned with the four legal tenets of CRT. Dixson and Rousseau make the following assertion on the stated alignment:

> The body of literature that has developed in education over the past ten years has drawn upon a variety of constructs from legal studies, including the property value of whiteness, voice, restrictive vs. expansive visions of antidiscrimination law, and the problem with colour-blindness. (p. 22)

In the above statement, Dixson and Rousseau support the idea that CRT's transition into education has been consistently connected to legal CRT. CRT in education, similarly to legal studies, positions race as the central focus towards critiquing—both overtly and covertly—race within social structures, school practices and policies (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Yosso, 2005). At a certain point, some educational researchers began to adapt and align CRT tenets toward educational structures and dilemmas.

Some critical educational researchers began to transform tenets from legal CRT to those more closely situated to education. For example, Solórzano (1997, 1998) created five themes of critical race theory in relation to education that inform perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy: (1) The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (2) The challenge to the dominant ideology, (3) The commitment to Social Justice, (4) The centrality of experiential

knowledge, and (5) The interdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005). The above five tenets in CRT in education will be used to in my data analysis because it can help identify, analyze, and transform structural and cultural ideology that disadvantages students of color in classrooms (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), as well as assess issues of re-segregation, the school-to-prison pipeline, and special education policies (Lynn & Dixson, 2013). According to Leonardo (2013), to examine education through a CRT lens infers that in education "race and racism permeate the entire educational enterprise, from aspirations, to spatial configurations, to teacher education itself" (p. 26-27). Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1998) proposes that the use of CRT in education can be used as a tool to deconstruct oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruct human agency, and construct equitable and socially just relations of power.

A favored method of highlighting issues of race by CRT scholars is through storytelling and/or counterstories, narratives, autobiographies, allegory and parables (Bell, 2009; Taylor, 2009, Yosso, 2005). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue for the use of CRT because, "The 'voice' component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice" (p. 58). For example, one goal of voices through narratives and storytelling is to provide insight to racial discrimination (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Since the inequitable issues that occur inside this country's public educational spaces are a reflection of the inequalities found in the greater society, we can assume that dialogues on race and racism are continually muted and marginalized (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) across this country's K-12 and higher education institutions (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Leonardo, 2013). Thus, storytelling is a powerful tool in CRT because it relates to actual perspectives and stories lived by those individuals who experience inequitable schools.

CRT in education is committed to transforming the prevailing negative racial dialogue either consciously or unconsciously (Taylor, 2009), written about people of color (Leonardo, 2013; Parker & Lynn, 2002), situated in challenging white supremacy (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006) and the belief of culture and poverty as reasons for educational disparities (Lynn & Dixson, 2013) by the predominately white teaching staff. Furthermore, the usefulness of CRT in education is the ability to identify the instructional practices that presume black students as deficient (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and critiquing the influence of power that educators situate on students (Leonardo, 2013) that leads to deficit thinking theory (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Yosso, 2005). In fact, Chapman (2013) makes the assertion that CRT is intertwined with social justice:

> CRT in education, redress abounds in calls to help teachers teach students of color through professional development, to reform teacher education programs and PK-16 curricula, and to reform policies and practices at all levels of education-school, district, state, and federal. Redress as a criterion of social justice is indivisible from CRT. (p. 104)

In this comment, Chapman suggests the application of CRT in education can be used as a tool for equity and social justice (Stovall, 2006). In short, the use of a CRT lens by school leaders can support the purposeful goal of equity and social justice.

Altogether, then, critical race theory can be a useful alternative lens to a more equitable direction. The benefits of using CRT in education is twofold: one CRT in education allows us to highlight dilemmas in school litigation, school funding, and harmful teacher practice; and secondly, CRT challenges us to search for the voices and counterstories of those shut out from society. As the proliferation of CRT into education has taken place, research using the CRT perspective has provided a greater awareness to educational issues that can cultivate transformational change for students of color and low-SES.

2.2.2 Critical theory in school leadership

A shift towards the adoption of alternative, and more critical, theoretical lenses in school leadership began with William Foster's (1986), *Paradigms and Promises: New Approaches to Educational Administration.* According to Foster (1986), the strong belief of school administration to scientific methods demonstrated the insensitivity to culture and politics. Hence, Foster presented the argument for the use of critical theory to school administration practices. Foster argued that critical theory can help challenge school leaders to not ignore the historical roles that schools play in maintaining the advantages for some and disadvantages for others. Foster, also, believed that school administrators could use critical theory to wisely resolve the important dilemma of power and privilege found in schools. Foster, explaining the use of critical theory in school administration, asserts:

> A critical theory of administration is necessary because a critical theory requires us to reflect on what we do and how what we do affects all who encounters us. It asks how our organization impedes the learning and progress of students. It asks how we, as individuals, can make a difference. (p. 70)

Here, Foster believed that critical theory challenges school leaders to accept the historical role that education has had in maintaining the dominate discourse to better understand how to transform it—like CRT's position towards centering race to transform. Barbour (2011) adds:

> The focus of an education leader, situated in critical theory, ought to be inclusive of social critique, creative and reflective decision-making, and change, where the restrictive and marginalizing conditions of the status quo in schools are brought to light. (p. 162)

Above, Barbour (2011) argues for the inclusion of critical theory in school leadership because of critical theory's ability to transform the lives of marginalized students by focusing on the

practices that produce unequal educational opportunities. Foster (1986) maintains "a critically informed theory is not only moral decision making but also an analysis of the entire context of complex organization" (p. 67). Yet, Foster's critical theory focused specifically on issues of power and class—similar to the issue between CLS and CRT—lacking the critique of race.

Some researchers in school administration, then, argued that the theoretical and methodological framework being used in school leadership preparation has limited the knowledge (Young & Lopez, 2011) being produced in higher education institutions in charge of preparing the future leaders of our public schools. Consequently, Young and Lopez (2011) argue for the use of an alternative theoretical perspective—such as critical race theory—to expand that knowledge base in school leadership.

Moreover, school leadership lacks the important contribution of the voices of women and people of color. For example, Ikpa (1995) argues for the inclusion of the voices of women and people of color—a central tenet in CRT—to enhance the value of education, by stating the following:

> This status quo model [leadership led by white males] has failed to include women and minorities in positions of leadership and in discussions about the knowledge base in educational administration. Until these perspectives are included, any proposed knowledge base in educational administration is of little value. (p. 180)

According to Ikpa (1995), the addition of a more diverse perspective in school administration would result in a transformational knowledge base. Moreover, Young and Lopez (2011) conclude, "the use of alternative perspectives helps us realize that knowledge is not closed or finite but open to a wide range of possibilities" (p. 246). Educational researchers as early as the mid-1980s and more strongly during 1990s and 2000s began to call attention to the inclusion of critical theory in school leadership scholarship.

2.2.3   A call for Critical Race Theory in school administration

Critical race theory in school leadership has been used to examine principal preparation programs. The argument proposed by researchers is that an alternative theoretical perspective centered on racial analysis could better inform leadership practices that improve the educational outcome for students of color (Brown, 2005; Gooden, 2012; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Gooden & O'Doherty; Lopez, 2003; Young & Laible, 2000; Young & Lopez, 2011). Applying a critical race theory epistemology framework in principal preparation programs can better equip school leaders to not only examine but also challenge the deficit narrative of students of color (Gooden, 2012). Young and Lopez (2011), in support of the inclusion of issues of race in school leadership, assert "when issues of race and racism are placed at the center of analysis, it opens up new possibilities for understanding leadership and organizational life, while disrupting our taken-for-granted assumptions of the apparent apolitically of the field" (p. 243). Critical race theory can broaden and strengthen traditional principal preparation programs to meet the reality of this country's complex racial reality.

Moreover, Gooden and Dantley (2012) argue for centering race in school leadership preparation as a social justice strategy. Gooden and Dantley suggest that many school leaders today are ill-equipped in challenging the status quo that marginalize students based on race and culture. In fact, Khalifa, Dunbar, and Douglas (2013) contend that much of the conversation in school leadership ignores the language that could better help serve students of color. By incorporating race into the school leadership curriculum can give school leaders the opportunity to participate in self-reflective inquiry that may better serve as motivation to search for viable solutions rather than just acknowledge a problem without doing something about it. Thus, Gooden and Dantley indicate that centering race into the school leadership framework is

important towards providing equity for students of color and of low-SES. Moreover, Lopez's (2003) contends "important discussions surrounding the permanence of racism remain largely absent in these particular fields" (p. 86). Consequently, Lopez makes the cogent argument that the inclusion of CRT is necessary for school leadership education; due to CRT's ability to highlight and thus confront racism in this country's school institution (Stovall, 2004). Lopez, then, supports the use of CRT in school leadership preparation programs because it provides a theoretical lens, more inclusive and less abstract, to meet the needs of our young citizenry whom our schools have historically alienated.

Some researchers propose that CRT can position school leaders to move beyond the culture of politeness and political rhetoric embedded in schools, resulting in the marginalization of students, towards a more proactive position in dismantling those inequitable structures found in schools (Aleman, 2009; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). Parker and Villalpando believe the adoption of CRT by school leaders can help develop the trust necessary, yet has been mainly absent, between the school and the community. In his research of Latina/o school leaders in Utah, Aleman found the insulation of conflict avoidance and peaceful collaboration made these school leaders invisible and powerless to change school policies that supported institutional racism. Aleman concludes, then, the use of a CRT strategy by school leaders can help to both uncover the implicit practice—such as "niceness"—hindering Latina/o students academic success and take actions towards those practices.

In addition, other researchers suggest the use of CRT in school administration can further the discourse by instilling counternarratives to negative societal assumptions of people of color as school leaders (Gooden 2012). Gooden argues that films continue to portray a specific kind of black school leadership, like Joe Clark and Ronald Stone (disciplinarians), needed to fix urban

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school problems. Yet, Gooden holds that until black leaders are able to narratively interpret their stories, the fixing of urban schools remains incomplete. Khalifa and his colleagues (2013) assert that CRT can provide a voice to the property and community spaces of color that have previously been ignored and made invisible. By recognizing this marginalization of important educational stakeholders, then, a school leader would be encouraged to respond and connect with the cultural capital found in urban communities. Indeed, Parker and Villapando (2007) argue that the future of CRT in educational leadership will depend on how researchers and practitioners are able to establish a connection between CRT to both schools and communities of color. What is more, Gooden and Dantley (2012) suggest that the use of CRT by school leaders can provide a prophetic voice that self-reflects to create agenda's to change racist practices and policies. A prophetic voice is underscored by identification of injustices based on race and culture and the engendering of creating an agenda to change recognized injustices.

Moreover, other scholars believe CRT can help identify and challenge majoritarian educational politics (Lopez, 2003; Aleman, 2009); help school leaders develop a praxis to confront issues of race and racism (Stovall, 2004); challenge the prevalent race neutral (Brown, 2005) issue of colorblindness that influences discrimination, bias, and inequity (Beachum, Dentith, McCray, and Boyle, 2008). In a spiritual narrative study of black female principals, Witherspoon and Mitchell (2009) found that the biggest issues faced by those school leaders were challenging those inequities rooted in race. In short, discussions and use of CRT in school leadership needs to become a viable alternative perspective in K-12 practice.

A study by Pollack and Zirkel (2013) illustrates how a well-intention equity initiative, focused on improving the educational outcomes of students of color and of low-SES, can face resistance that ultimately undermines the intended purpose. Pollack and Zirkel examined a high

school's attempt to reduce its student's racial achievement gap disparities through a CRT lens. The school implemented the before- and after-school science labs in order to better serve the school's struggling students. Yet, the outcome of this equity focus initiative only resulted in creating greater racial achievement gaps. Interestingly, after school leaders recognized the failure of the reform and tried to return to the previous science lab structure they were confronted with resistance from affluent parents and science teachers who desired to maintain the benefits. Ultimately, the superintendent was forced to compromise, resulting in the continued before- and after-school programming and the shifting of informal barriers to formal barriers towards access to more advance coursework.

Through their analysis of these events, Pollock and Zirkel suggest the use of a critical race theory lens can provide school leaders with the understanding of underlying issues of power, privilege, and property interests that tend to emerge when implementing well-intention equity reform initiatives. For example, the school's science teachers and affluent families used the intermediary of local news outlets to dictate the narrative based "academic standard" hindering the district's ability to reorganize the well-intention equity initiative. Pollock and Zirkel's study demonstrates that any well-intention equity initiative that looks to target marginalized students of color and of low-SES need to be aware of the dominant narrative and property rights that can undermine its intention. Pollock and Zirkel propose CRT "can be helpful to educational leaders as a framework for understanding and, most importantly, *anticipating* resistance to change in order to be more effective in their efforts at implementing equity-focused change in their schools" (p. 291). This study positions a link for school leaders use of a CRT framework and turbulence theory to inform their leadership practice towards the possibility of more successful equity strategies. Consequently, Parker and Villapando (2007) argue that school

leaders who desire the democratic principles of education for all students should be conscious of critical race theory as a useful perspective in both recognizing inequities and to effectively institute action plans.

The development of critical race theory from legal studies and its eventual transition into educational research discourse implies its practicality for supporting transformative change. CRT can become a useful theoretical tool in discussions of school leadership theory, preparation, and practice. My experiences as a student, practitioner, and scholar have made me aware that issues of race and racism can be a delicate topic in our educational institutions. My experience, though, demonstrates that issues of race and class are the most important issue that educators must confront in order to create the citizenship we need. Indeed, the development of CRT in law and its eventual transition into education has provided an important alternative theoretical paradigm in education. In using CRT in education, educators can shift towards creating a more equitable and socially just school reform. On the one hand, it is important to recognize that both the use of CRT in creating more equitable schools may be daunting for school leaders due to the adaptive challenge of improving education for students of color and of low-SES. On the other hand, the reason(s) why it is challenging proves why it is important.

3.0   METHODS

In this chapter, I reintroduce the qualitative method of narrative inquiry used to study the eight school leaders in this research. As mentioned in my introduction, the foundation of my research has always led me to pursue an understanding of what happens when public school leaders decide to work towards more equitable goals. I recognize the use of the collection of stories in narrative inquiry to study the human experience in relation to the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) as a prominent motivation in choosing this qualitative method. Indeed, I began to recognize that I relived my experiences as a teacher through the retelling of my stories of teaching my students. Even though it has been close to four years since I left the classroom, I am able to relive my own experiences as a teacher through the stories I tell. The outline of this chapter, then, details the following: (1) the research design, (2) the theoretical framework, (3) the data collection, (4) the analysis, (5) the considerations about the sample and my positionality, and (6) the two paradigms that guide the study.

First, I provide an overview of narrative inquiry by providing a background into its history. I provide a detailed description of important characteristics and terms that make up narrative inquiry. For example, the importance of temporality is discussed in the section on three-dimensional inquiry space. Next, I provide my positioning of focusing this study in the borderland in narrative inquiry and critical race theory. In support of these positions, then, I report on empirical studies that have narrative inquiry and critical theory. Under the following

three categories I provide particular information on my data collection, the three data analysis that I will use to interpret my data, and the three significant considerations. Finally, I conclude this chapter by providing the two paradigms—critical and constructivist—strongly influencing this work.

3.1   BACKGROUND OF NARRATIVE INQUIRY

The rise of research interest(s) in qualitative methods has helped to encourage the use of narrative inquiry as a methodology. Through the use of a variety of data collection methods— such as case study, personal experience, life story, interviews—qualitative researchers have arrived at a place where they are able "to discover and to describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them" (Erickson, 2011, p. 43). Some researchers have come to argue that it is the action of communication through language that is at the "heart" of what it means to be human (Seidman, 2013). A narrative approach has been used in education (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), law (Delgado, 1989), psychology (Bruner, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1995), Public Administration (Dodge, Ospina, & Erica, 2005), and sociology (Chase, 2011; Riessman, 2008). With this in mind, in 1990 Clandinin and Connelly initially developed what they finally called *narrative inquiry* (Clandinin, 2013). Clandinin and Connelly (2000), define their narrative inquiry as,

> A way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit,

concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

This collaborative placement of the researcher, then, helps to better understand narrative inquiry as the experiences of people's lives. To engage in narrative inquiry allows the researcher to be involved in the (re)construction of participants complete story within context of the larger educational culture.

Researchers who use narrative as a form of data collection believe that one can learn about anything, ranging from history to society, by focusing on narrated lives (Chase, 2011). Polkinghorne (1995) argues that the interests in narrative inquiry in qualitative research arise because "narrative is the linguistic form uniquely suited for displaying human existence as situated action. Narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world" (p. 5). So, narrative inquiry as a qualitative research method holds to the idea that the discovery of knowledge can be gained through the collection and interpreting of life stories.

Due to the recent popularity of the narrative form in research studies, the differences among narrative theorists have surfaced based on epistemological, ideological, and ontological beliefs (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Though narrative researchers vary in their interpretations of narrative inquiry, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) argue that narrative researchers hold the common assumption "that the story is one if not the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience" (p. 4). Moreover, Clandinin (2013) argues that narrative inquiry "is an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (p. 17). Here, then, it can be recognized the real value of narrative inquiry: that our human experience is told and relived through those narrative stories experienced of the past, of the present, and which will influence our lives in the future. Indeed,

this study's use of narrative inquiry intends to recognize, focus on, and capture the lived experiences of those school leaders who are guiding their schools under equitable practices.

Although narrative inquiry is bounded to many qualities of qualitative research, it nevertheless, holds specific characteristics specific to narrative inquiry. For example, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue against the search for commonality of themes across participants that is used primarily in qualitative research and rather suggest the search for "common threads" or elements—in order to respect the uniqueness of individual's lives. Indeed, Polkinghorne (cited in Clandinin & Murphy, 2007) a leading narrative theorist, believes analyzing narrative data using normal qualitative analysis "misses the significance of what narrative is about . . . this kind of temporal development of lives, of the unique histories of people" (p. 633). Given these points, one goal of narrative researchers is a desire to protect the specialization of individual lives.

The structure of *narrative inquiry* in educational settings proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) is strongly supported by the ideas of John Dewey—specifically those ideas on experience. According to Clandinin and Connelly, the focus of experience in educational research provides "a term that permits better understanding of educational life" (p. 2). Consequently, they use the term experience to inform narrative inquiry as a research of individual's whole life span and affected by others. Although this pragmatic approach is important in this study, I discuss later the need for a more critical theory approach to narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert the use of a Deweyan theoretical lens in narrative inquiry provides an "imaginative touchstone" for the study of our narrative experiences. Thus, narrative inquiry tries to examine people, places, and events along temporal spaces.

Clandinin (2013) argues that narrative inquiry "comprises a view of experience as composed and lived over time, as studied and understood as a narrative phenomenon and as

represented through narrative forms of representations" (p. 15). Thinking narratively means people both think and write about their lives in narrative stories. Consequently, the narrative is both the phenomenon and the method (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Thus, the interaction of educational stakeholders—students, teachers, and administrators—experiences in educational spaces are shaped by both the lived experiences in the classroom and in the community.

The focus on individual narratives provides insight into our study of the world. Since narrative inquiry looks to understand participant's experiences, the prominent data collected is the stories told by participants. Some researchers propose that educators represent their experiences through storytelling (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). In addition, Atkinson (1998, 2002) argues the personal narratives of educators, told through stories, can reveal how educators come to find their core principle(s). According to Polkinghorne (1995) the stories we hold in our memory continue to hold the essence of our state of mind behind our previous complex actions. Altogether, then, the stories told by educators can contribute to the field of research by helping to understand how educators make decisions in our complex educational institutions.

Personal narratives can reveal how research participants in morally complex settings—like schools—are social beings who are actively engaged in reshaping unethical "norms." In this study, then, the collection of stories by school leaders will be an important form of data collected that can help reveal their foundation for equity. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) add, "The focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorizing of individuals' experience but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (p. 42). Indeed, storytelling can reveal how individuals both come to be shaped by cultural institutions and how he or she can transform

those institutions. Finally, Smith (1994) maintains that stories can help us understand how individuals solve problems in their professional lives.

3.1.1   Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space

Once again, relying on Dewey's theory of experience terms of situation, continuity, and interaction as a premise, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) transform them into their own intellectual narrative inquiry research property. The Deweyan term of situation is revised as *place;* continuity becomes *past*, *present*, and *future*; and interaction is seen as the *personal* and *social* in narrative inquiry. Consequently, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) used the introduction of their terms of experience to create the theoretical concept of a *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000) narrative inquiry along a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is defined by studying temporal (time) dimensions and addressing temporal matters; focusing on personal and social balance in relation to inquiry; and occurring in specific places or sequences.

First, researchers who use narrative inquiry look to capture how situations occurring along an individual's life have been shaped and how those situations continue to shape their lives. Secondly, narrative thinking along the lines of the social and personal interactions is studied to learn about experiences and events as they occur. Thirdly, location is studied because it is recognized as influencing the stories told. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) argue that using a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space "allows researchers to both present and interrogate findings and allows the narrative inquirer to represent the contingent, nuanced, and symbolic aspects of the findings" (p. 20). Consequently, Clandinin (2013) argues that only when researchers focus on all three dimensions of an individual's narrative can there be gained insight

into their various issues—such as *disruptions*, *interruptions*, *silences*, *gaps*, and *incoherence*—and mutual experiences.

In addition, thinking in a three dimensional narrative inquiry space allows researchers to move within four directions—*inward* and *outward*, and *backward* and *forward*—in their study. On the one hand, the use of inward direction allows the examination of an individual's both intimate motivations and dispositions. On the other hand, the outward direction helps understand the influence the environment has on an individual. At the same time, the use of backward and forward directions allows for the examination of time—past, present, and future. For example, in their narrative inquiry study of how four teachers engage with diversity, Clandinin and Huber (2005) explain how working in the four directional space allowed them,

> To travel back to early childhood and school experiences, slip forward to teacher education experiences and slide forward to present day experiences. We traveled inward to feelings and responses and outward to remembered event. We moved from home places to school places throughout our lives. (p. 47)

Here, the four directions found in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, allowed for a more holistic understanding of participants lives through the themes of temporal, cultural, and location.

3.1.2 Boundaries

This study will be situated in the borderlands of narrative inquiry and critical theory. Thus, this study looks to merge the valuing of the individual life with the theoretical lens of critical race theory. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) recognize the existence of tension(s) between these two research methodologies, but also reaffirm that narrative inquiry "traverse borderlands."

They add "ultimately, however, we see these multiple influences that overlap and shade into one another as contributing to the richness and complexity of narrative inquiry" (p. 68). In short, my research study looks to enrich the field of both narrative inquiry with the use of critical theory.

In holding to the pragmatic principles of Deweyan theory, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognized the existence, then, of intellectual *boundaries* that shape the thinking of narrative researchers. Boundaries are seen as ways or approaches of thinking that researchers take on while doing narrative inquiry. They recognize some examples of borders can be found based on subject matter (language education and science education), departmental areas (educational administration and educational psychology), and issues (school reform and inclusive education). With regards to this, Clandinin (2013) states,

> Understanding of experience also shapes ways in which the inquiry is both lived through, and subsequently shared with, a broader audience. Differences in views of reality, knowledge developed from an inquiry, the relationship between experience and context . . . and the relationship between researchers and participants can each shape borders. (p. 52)

From this above statement, then, boundaries are the intellectual context that narrative theorist enter into collecting and analyzing narrative inquiry and that goes on to shape his or her transition of field text to research text. Moreover, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) assert the use of Deweyan theory allowed them "to see borders and borderlands between narrative inquiry and other forms of inquiry" (p. 42). This highlights an important distinction being made in this study—my use of critical race theory as theoretical lens to examine the issue of equity.

The discussion of borders and borderlands is important for my narrative inquiry because my research is engaged in the border between the interpretive work of narrative and the critical work of critical race theory. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) suggest that narrative inquiry and

critical theory share the research commitment to transform the condition of living; but vary in the commitments of intervention between macro-level change found in critical theory compared to the focus on the individual in narrative inquiry. In addition, Chase (2011) identifies four approaches that are used by narrative inquiry researchers: (1) *The Story and the Life*, (2) *Storytelling as Lived Experience*, (3) *Narrative Practices and Narrative Environments*, and (4) *The Researcher and the Story*. My narrative inquiry research study is situated in the first two approaches.

According to Chase (2011), the goal in "the story and the life" approach is "to work collaboratively with research participants to improve the quality of their everyday experience" (pp. 421-422). This pragmatic approach is situated alongside the approach taken by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) in their narrative inquiry theory. At the same time, Chase indicates the second approach, "storytelling as lived experience," uses narratives "as a window to the contradictory and shifting nature of hegemonic discourses, which we tend to take for granted as stable monolithic forces" (p. 422). Thus, Chase argues that those researchers using the second approach:

> [v]iew identifying oppressive discourses—and the ways in which narrators disrupt them—as a worthy goal of narrative inquiry. These researchers show that people create a range of narrative strategies in relation to cultural discourses, and that individuals' stories are constrained but not determined by those discourses. (p. 422)

Here, the discourse of narrative inquiry is to demonstrate that individuals are able to challenge social influences. Altogether, then, this study desires to value the pragmatic life of school leaders, while simultaneously studying how they challenge and navigate their educational landscapes for equity.

Moreover, Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) suggest that using narrative inquiry in education can help to reveal how we are both shaped and are shaping school landscapes, and perhaps " we can even change school landscapes" (p. 34). The aspiration of this study is to capture through stories school leaders engagement as agents of educational change. It is the hope, also, of Clandinin (2006) that narrative inquiry can lead towards making "educative places" more inclusive to children, families and educators. This research study desires to extend on this purpose.

3.1.3 Empirical research on the borderland of narrative inquiry and critical theory

Recent research by narrative theorists has demonstrated a commitment towards working in the borders of narrative inquiry and critical theory. Research using both narrative inquiry and critical theory has examined teacher education (Milner, 2007), teacher knowledge (Sconiers & Rosiek, 2000), higher education (Laubscher & Powell, 2003), counterhegemonic teaching practice (Chang & Rosiek, 2003), and whiteness (Johnson Lachuk & Mosley, 2012). For example, Chang and Rosiek analyzed the curriculum conflict found by an English as a Second Language science teacher working with predominantly Hmong immigrant students. The research looked at the narrative representation of a science teacher named Chang struggle to promote equity in his classroom. The conclusion that emerged from this self-reflective critical narrative is the demand to transform the current teacher preparation programs to better meet the needs of immigrant students. Chang and Rosiek (2003) argue that teacher preparation programs,

> Require teachers [to learn] about the history that lies behind [the] immigrant student experience. And it will also require teachers who can revise their understanding of themselves and their subject matter so there is room in that understanding for the sometimes harsh reality of immigrant students' experience. (p. 286)

The above response presents a shift toward an alternative method of teacher preparation programs to meet the needs of immigrant students. Indeed, Chang and Rosiek (2003) claim the additional curriculum material in teacher preparation programs may be demanding, but anything less "should be unacceptable to all of us; the alternative is to be complicit with cultural genocide" (p. 286).

In another study, Milner (2007) used a personal story of being racialized by his academic peers with his preservice teacher class. Milner illustrated how by sharing critical stories based on race helped educators self-analyze and reassess their thinking about race, teaching, learning, and the curriculum. Furthermore, Milner argues that "race-related narratives can prove meaningful and productive in helping students and teachers understand, think about, and change their thinking about such issues [such as race]. Once students (and teacher educators) know better, they are more likely to do better" (p. 603). In Milner's study, then, the use of narrative was used to center issues of race and racism as important discussions in teacher education.

Similarly, Johnson Lachuk and Mosley (2012) argue the use of narrative with preservice teachers can help provide important spaces to challenge pedagogical beliefs. The use of stories and storytelling helped them better understand their experience and identities as white teacher educators committed to social justice and critical race teaching. Johnson Lachuk and Mosley suggest, "At the heart of this [narrative] approach is a belief that our students do indeed *have* the stories and experiences that can lead them to become socially just educators of diverse students" (p. 328). Overall, Milner and Johnson Lachuk and Mosley's studies demonstrate the usefulness that narrative inquiry—interwoven with critical theory—can have towards shifting educator mindsets towards equity.

3.2   DATA COLLECTION

For this research study, I used a purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) to both recruit and select eight participants who are currently working in a school administrative capacity. Patton (2002) describes purposeful sampling as a strategy used to learn and understand important issues to the research. And more specifically, I applied Patton's (2002) "intensity sampling" strategy to this study. According to Patton, intensity sampling involves cases that are "information-rich" and requires both prior information and considerable personal judgment. To select the eight participants, I consulted university professors, peers and practitioners, and community members to identify those school leaders who openly support students of color and of low-SES. Each of my selected participants, I should say, hold leadership characteristics that underscore his and/or her own equitable practices.

For this narrative study, I began with the identification and recruitment of four school leaders from a previous phenomenological research study I participated on focused on the notion of school leaders understanding of "achievement gap" and/or opportunity gap (see Flores & Gunzenhauser, 2016). Overall, 22 school leaders were interviewed in the study. I identified and invited four participants from the "gap" study that I recognized as guiding their schools with equitable practices to participate for this study. I contacted the four participants through email using the introductory script I created. One identified participant, a black female middle school principal in an urban school district, was contacted via email on two separate occasions. I did not receive a response to both emails from this selected participant. I decided the participant had no interest in participating in this study and continued my recruitment without this participant.

A second identified participant, a black female elementary principal in a suburban school district, replied via email that she was "unable to participate with the study" because she was

beginning to collect data in her own dissertation study. The two remaining participants, Lisa Grant and John Richardson, from the achievement gap study, were contacted via email and they both willingly agreed to participate for this study. In short, I was able to recruit two participants from my previous interaction with school leaders I recognized as holding to equitable practices.

I identified James Chambers from previous interactions I had had with him and was further supported by a recommendation from a peer member. In my conversations with the peer member who recommended Mr. Chambers, I asked the following questions: "Why do you consider James Chambers as a school leader committed to equity?" and "What educational leadership practices has Mr. Chambers made towards improving the educational outcomes for students of color and of low-SES?" The peer member, a black male, indicated that Mr. Chambers has specifically recruited him to provide mentoring intervention for ten black students at his school. With both my own knowledge and responses provided by a peer member I recruited Mr. Chambers to participate for this study.

I engaged university professors to identify school leaders who they recognized as working toward my stated goal. Two university professors identified and served as intermediates in the recruitment of school leaders Mia Stanfield and Sophia Thompson. An administrator who had previously worked with both participants and was familiar with my research focus identified school leaders Bill O'Neal and Lesley Kirkpatrick. Again, I engaged the administrator in informal conversations around school leaders he recognizes as working to support students of color and of low-SES. Similar to the university professor, the administrator also served as an intermediate. Lastly, I engaged a community member with the purpose of my study. Through this informal conversation, the community member recognized school leader Robert Green as a

participant that met my criteria. The community member informed me that at the time of the study his family was actively supporting Mr. Green's equity-minded initiatives.

Table 1 Background demographic of participants and experience in education

Table 1. Background demographic of participants and experience in education information.

Participants	Age	Race/Ethnicity/ Identification	Gender	Years in Education	Years in Leadership Roles
J. Richardson	47	Greek/white	Male	22	17
L. Grant	48	black/African-American	Female	26	10
J. Chambers	33	white/Italian & Eastern Europe descent	Male	12	2
R. Green	40	Africa-American	Male	15	7
L. Kirkpatrick	43	African-American/Native American	Female	21	16
B. O'Neal	37	African-American	Male	14	3
M. Stanfield	38	black	Female	16	9
S. Thompson	44	African-American	Female	22	17

Again, through my application of intensity sampling, I was able to recruit a total of eight school leaders who I could recognize as being equity-minded school leaders. After such consultations and recruitment strategies, I was able to obtain, I believe, a diverse group of participants based on gender, race and/or ethnicity, age, years in education, and years in leadership roles (see table 1). In the following, I provide self-identified background data offered by my eight participants. Four participants are females (Grant, Kirkpatrick, Stanfield, and Thompson) and four participants are males (O'Neal, Richardson, Green, and Chambers). I group participants into four categories based on age: two participants are in their late 40's (Grant and

Richardson); three are in their early 40's (Green, Kirkpatrick, and Thompson); two are in their late 30's (Stanfield and O'Neal); and Chambers is the only participant in his early 30's.

In my participants' racial and/or ethnic identifications, I provide how they self-identified. Six of my participants identified themselves as African American or black or both and one (Kirkpatrick) recognized herself as African American and part Native American. Two participants identified themselves as white and/or their ethnicity and/or descent. I group participants into three categories based on years in education: two participants have been in education less than 15 years; two participants have been in education less than 20 years; and lastly, four participants have 20 or more years in education. In addition, based on years of experience in leadership roles (such as assistant principal and/or principal), four participants have less than 10 years of experience in leadership roles and four participants have over 20 years of experience in leadership roles.

Furthermore, to provide some background information on the type of schools in which the eight participants lead, I use data provided by state profiles (see table 2). Based on school type, six participants lead elementary schools, one leads a K-8 school, and one leads a high school. The participants (7) in this study primarily worked in urban school districts, but one participant works in a suburban school district. To provide context of the number of students in the schools, I group the schools into three categories: five schools had less than 350 students, two had less than 550 students, and one school had over 800 students. Lastly, seven schools have a large student population of students of color and of low-SES and one school has less than 50% of students of color and of low-SES. And finally, due to the sensitive, delicate, and personal issues and beliefs expressed and shared by the eight participants, I use pseudonyms for individuals, locations, and institutions to protect their identity.

Table 2 School information

Table 2. School Information.

Participants	School Level	School district ID	Total # students	% of students of color*	% of low-SES students*.
J. Richardson	K-8	Urban	310-330	95-100	80-85
L. Grant	PreK-5	Urban	265-275	90-95	70-75
J. Chambers	K-5	Suburban	335-345	20-25	35-40
R. Green	6-12	Urban	525-535	90-95	85-90
L. Kirkpatrick	PreK-5	Urban	475-485	60-65	70-75
B. O'Neal	PreK-5	Urban	890-900	90-95	65-70
M. Stanfield	K-5	Urban	300-310	80-85	55-60
S. Thompson	K-5	Urban	280-290	95-100	65-70

Note: Pseudonyms are used and percentage of students of color and of students on free and reduce lunch have been given in ranges to protect the identities of participants.
* The state's 2015-2016 school performance profile data is used.

As suggested earlier in chapter one, researchers using narrative inquiry can valuably immerse themselves *in* the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this way, I included "my voice" as a participant in the study to begin this study. The inclusion of my personal narrative, I believe, helps to provide a foundation behind the purpose of my study.

In collecting data, researchers are able to use the following methods: observational field notes, journal writing, story telling, oral history, research interviews, *annals* and *chronicles*, documents, photographs, autobiographical writing, letter conversations, and family stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). For this study, I used a combination of research interviews, timeline, story telling, and documents. The use of the aforementioned empirical data in narrative inquiry is to create a narrative "whole." Connelly and Clandinin (1990) believe the incorporating various data sources that highlight particular details of life lead

to the formulation of more enriching narrative retelling. Indeed, my use of various empirical data sources helped me provide rich stories of school leaders who purposefully direct their leadership practices toward equity.

In this study, I used three semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. In total, I collected 25 hours of interviews. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed (for accuracy) to transition into research text. Educational research has a long history of using interviews as a central tool to collect data on issues such as policy, social contexts of learning, and education reform (Tierney & Dilley, 2002). Seidman (2013) asserts that through hearing people's stories during interviews researchers have access to the "privilege" of people's experiences. Moreover, Atkinson (1998) argues,

> Storytelling is a fundamental form if human communication. It can serve an essential function in our lives. We often think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story. Storytelling, in its most common everyday form, is giving a narrative account of an event, an experience, or any other happening. (p. 1)

Here, the collection of stories is important because it can be an essential function of human experiences. In other words, the stories we tell about our lives influence both the actions we take in the present and the actions we will do in the future. This study looks to collect the stories of school leaders to understand their experiences in leading for equity.

The second form of data collection method I used was my adaptations of annals and chronicles that allow for the more "manageable task" of participants to narrate their stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that annals and chronicles is a useful framework for participants to tell their oral history. The use of annals and chronicles, then, both allows for the participants to recollect their experiences and construct an outline for their narrative. Consequently, Clandinin and Connelly come to define annals as a list of various dates of

memories, events, or stories that participants put into a time line format. For this study, I adapted the use of annals and chronicles to a historical timeline of the lived experience of each participant (see Appendix B). The emphasis of the use of a historical timelines helped me to reconstruct the participants' historical lives to gain an understanding of influences that may lead to their leadership practices. Also, the historical timeline included sequence of important topics or threads of interest of the research. The timeline helped this research study by capturing issues of equity, leadership, school structures, and other issues. Overall, the collection of each participant's historical timeline was mapped through the data collected from the first and second interviews.

The third data collection method used was documents and artifacts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the researcher needs to decide which documents would be more prevalent to the narrative inquiry. In this study, I collected documents that helped to reveal a school leaders disposition and actions towards equity. The documents that I requested are only those written by or collaborated with the school leaders' in this study. For example, school plans; newsletters with parents, teachers, and students; school policies; professional development with staff presentations, and personal philosophies were collected. The use of these documents added empirical data that helped me gain insight to the school leaders practices. Also, documents across temporal spaces can help the researcher gain an understanding of the school leaders development and provide a rich tapestry of their narrative account.

3.3   ANALYSIS

In my first analysis of the data, I used Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space* of the temporal (time), situation, and of personal/social. Thinking in a three dimensional narrative inquiry space allows researchers to move within four directions—*inward* and *outward*, and *backward* and *forward*—in their study. On the one hand, my use of inward direction allowed for the examination of an individual's intimate motivations and dispositions. On the other hand, my use of outward direction helped me to understand the influence the environment has on an individual. Accordingly, my use of backward and forward allowed for the examination of time—past, present, and future. I recognize this framework was useful to discover the details of each principal's experiences. Next, I used open coding, memo writing, and focused coding (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to reveal themes.

My second analysis was the search for "resonant threads" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013) across all participants. Placing the participants' narrative accounts/stories metaphorically alongside each other allows researchers to observe resonances that stand out across accounts (Clandinin, 2013). Thus, the process for this analysis requires continued reading and rereading of the transcriptions while keeping in mind the theoretical lens being used. In fact, Atkinson (2007) suggests that it "is only when the researcher comes to the life story later, as a text to be interpreted, with a theoretical framework in hand to read it with, that the life story takes on a specific theoretical perspective" (p. 235). This analysis helped me to capture critical perspectives that connect each of the stories of participants to engage dialogue of leadership and equity. Indeed, the stories revealed threads that became evident through this data analysis process.

My third analysis was the use of CRT—the centralization of race—to deepen the understanding of educational barriers towards equity at the intersectionality of race and class. This analysis was supported by the structure of my interview with my participants. For example, questions sought for participants to reveal institutional barriers that can hinder equitable practices in social structures like schools. My initially analysis of the data was guided by the five CRT themes described by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) to help me analyze the data. In addition, the call for researchers to integrate such issues of race, class, and gender in educational researchers has been previously argued (Grant & Sleeter, 1986). Since the focus of this study is on how to support students of color and of low-SES, I used CRT's ability to incorporate an intersectionality lens to also interpret my findings. The application of intersectionality allows for the study of other forms of subordinations such as gender and class (Crenshaw, 1988, 1991). Solórzano and Yosso (2001) argue that the intersection of race, gender, and class can provide answers to theoretical, conceptual, methodological and pedagogical educational research question. Researchers argue that using a racial analysis can reveal the educational barriers of students of color (Taylor, 2009). Such an analysis, I believe, can help school leaders who desire to incorporate well-intention equity initiatives to become aware of possible resistance(s) because of race or class (Pollack & Zirkel, 2013).

3.4   CONSIDERATION

I recognize three considerations to my study: (1) sample size, (2) subjectivity, and (3) trustworthiness of my research that need to be acknowledged. The first consideration of my study is based on a small sample size of eight school leaders. The findings in this narrative study

can only be generalized by the lived experiences and told stories given by each of the selected principals in the study. An important perspective in narrative studies is that a small sample size allows only for researchers to provide the context and content of those participants in the study. By capturing the entire story as told by my selected participants, I will be in the right position to present a more holistic grounding of their work as school leaders in pursuit of equity. Indeed, additional studies that desire to engage this kind of research is sorely needed in order to broaden and/or augment the findings of such a study. I believe the current value of this study is its ability to capture the nuances of leadership practices, dispositions, and challenges that can better inform school leadership for the just rights of others.

A second consideration significant to this study is my positionality. I recognize this research study is vulnerable to my own positionality and my experiences in educational spaces. Alcoff (1988) argues positionality results from the influences of our experiences in our changing historical context and how we choose to act/contribute upon those external factors based on our various positionalities. According to Quantz (1992), positionality is the "bracketing" of one's knowledge and values; which he formulates into his argument that the question for researchers is not *should* they impose their values but *how should* they deal with the values they bring to the research. By informing on my positionality, then, I hope to convey the critical role it has in the research process, in the field, and in the final text (England, 1994). As I conduct this research, I intend to consider closely the "lens" through which I do such examining, the lens such as being a Latino and being from a low-SES background, and the effects that my lens may have about this research study. Consequently, this recognition of my positionalities will inform my *subjectivity*, to put it another way, or my subjective judgments. Qualitative researchers use the term subjectivity to include the personal beliefs, perspectives, and/or feelings (Glesne, 2011) that

researchers often bring with them while conducting research. Yet, Hatch (2002), on the other hand, suggests that the qualitative researcher must make subjective judgments because the characteristic of qualitative research is based on acquiring the internal knowledge of participants through external human actions.

In addition, from my professional experience as an educator, I have become more aware of the challenge, the courage, hope, and the commitment needed where the leadership for equity is evident. As an educational researcher, I have become more attuned to incidences of leadership for equity. Because of this reason, I intend to engage with my research participants and data via the process of "reflexivity" or self-awareness. According to Glesne (2011), reflexivity usually "involves critical reflection on how researcher, research participants, settings, and research procedures interact and influence each other" (p. 151). To engage in such reflexivity, I continued to be self-aware through journal reflection during both my interaction with the participants and my data analysis. Much like Hatch (2002) has argued my reflexivity is critical to the "integrity" of my qualitative research.

I reveal three significant reflexive considerations that I believe influenced the responses and analysis of this study. One, I found that schools are a microcosm of the larger sociopolitical issues occurring in society. For example, at the time of the collection of data for this study, the U.S. was in the midst of a tense presidential campaign and election. There are two important findings that need to be discussed. First, although I desired to not engage the participants in politics, their responses to my questions directly and/or indirectly highlighted how the highly politicize events occurring in this country were influencing their positionality and their leadership practices. The sense of reflexivity allowed me to avoid offering my biases in the discussions about politics when the participants voiced how political issues influenced their

positionality and leadership. This, in turn, enabled me to delve deeper into how what was occurring in the larger society was affecting their leadership from the perspective of my participants.

Second, during and after the conclusion of the second interviews with my participants, the ability to recognize and separate my own experiences as an equity minded school teacher fostered a critical reflection on both the sensitive and the perilous situation of my participants in sharing their experiences with me. This reflection enabled me to understand the necessity to protect the identity of my participants in their efforts to confront and challenge the system of marginalization within which they seek to empower their students. Indeed, one participant in the course of discussing a challenge they confront took a short pause and commented that they needed to see how I would write my findings because they could get in trouble with what they were sharing (the particular story shared was on a topic beyond the scope of the dissertation). I found navigating the terrain between revealing significant findings and protecting the identity of my participants being very critical. As a result of my reflexivity, I was able to be more aware and cautious of this issue.

Lastly, my use of reflexivity allowed me to hold my own biases in check, enabling me to delve deeper into the data and writing journal reflections. There were some instances during the third interviews with the eight participants I shared practices, ideas, and/or beliefs of some participants with other participants in this study. Through the process of reflexivity I recognize that the data and not my own thinking influenced this practice. I recognize this action led me to my implications for professional development. Participants upon hearing what some other participants in this study are doing related work became very encouraged and further motivated. However, given the importance of confidentiality, I could not disclose any identity. Upon further

reflection, professional development activity emerged as an avenue for these equity minded leaders to network, receive and offer support, and expand this important work with implication for the empowerment of the marginalized students in many public school systems. For example, participants voiced that they desired to engage in professional conversations with other members in this study and the need for professional equity support networks.

In qualitative research, the continuous practice of reflexivity helps a researcher capture something of the nuances that can influence the findings in a study. Such processes constantly challenged me to reflect on my positionality and biases throughout the process of data collection, analysis, and write up of this dissertation study. Maxwell (2005) offers, "the goal in a qualitative study is not to eliminate this influence, but to understand it and to use it productively" (p. 109). Thus, in revealing my reflexive practice, I desire to share how I navigated being immersed in the study.

A third consideration to this study is the revising of the concept of validity towards trustworthiness. Narrative researchers have argued that traditional notions of validation do not apply to narrative studies and therefore suggest other methods reveal trustworthiness (Burner, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1997; Riessman, 2002). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) offer the terms of *verisimilitude*, *authenticity*, *transferability, adequacy,* and *plausibility* as more adequate terms to be used in assessing the value of narrative studies. For example, Glesne refers to verisimilitude as "crafting an account with rich detail so that it has the appearance of realities and helps readers experience the perspectives or experiences" (p. 285) of the research participants. The value of the stories I collect, then, result from my ability to craft the stories where they resonate with my readers as being believable. In his differentiating between two forms of cognitive functions—a good story and a well-formed argument—Bruner

(1986) suggests a good story convinces readers by not only its "lifelikeness" or "goodness as a story" but also its establishment of verisimilitude. Also, Webster and Mertova (2007) assert that narrative research be evaluated based on its authenticity, which they argue is intertwined with verisimilitude. Thus, researchers achieve authenticity when they provide enough information to make readers see the story as "serious" and "honest" (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Through the collection of the eight narratives, then, I hope to convey how school leaders come to understand their leadership for equity in a representation that will resonant with readers. According to Polkinghorne (1997) the purpose of narrative studies is to understand how people express meaning of their experience through stories because he argues storied "texts serve as evidence for personal meaning, not for the factual occurrence of the events reported in the stories" (p. 479). Amsterdam and Bruner (2000) argue that stories help us learn about how people strive to attain some goals and in those stories we can capture the obstacles that impede people from realizing their goals (referred by them as "trouble"). Thus, Amsterdam and Bruner believe stories can help researchers capture human agency, purposiveness, Trouble, and coping (p. 30). As discussed throughout the previous chapters, the purpose of this study is to capture and reveal how school leaders interpret their leadership equitable practices through their telling of stories. The value of this study is how the eight school leaders in this study reveal their human agency in relation to their work in the socially constructed reality of schools.

Lastly, to support the trustworthiness of this study I engage in two forms of member checking. Researchers suggest member checking as a procedure in qualitative research where the researcher shares with the participant's transcripts and initial findings from the study to increase trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2010). Creswell (2007) describes member checking as "taking data, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can

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judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (p. 208). Mertens (2010) adds that member checking can occur during the data collection, data analysis, and writing of the study. In this study, I used member checking during the data collection and data analysis. Below, I provide the process I took for member checking during the data collection stage:

1. I transcribed the first and second interviews prior to the third interview.

2. I coded and mapped significant events/points on each participant's historical timeline.

3. During the third interview, I gave each participant the transcripts of the first and second interviews and asked them to read them at their convenience and contact me at anytime for any discrepancies (none of my participants contacted me about this issue).

4. I provided each participant their historical timeline and asked them to go over them and verify that the information was accurate. In addition, I asked participants to share with me anything they consider important that was missing on the timeline.

Memo reflections from the member checking during the data collection reveal several significant findings. First, many participants were pleased with their timeline's and asked if they could keep them. At the conclusion of our third interview, Dr. Kirkpatrick recommended I interview a fellow school leader. Dr. Kirkpatrick proceeded to call the principal in front of me and in her recruitment efforts remarked about the timeline (I did not recruit the principal for this study). A second memo further highlights the significance of my use of member checking. A day after our final interview, I received the following email correspondence from participant Lisa Grant,

(personal communication, January 19, 2017).

Osly,

I first want to thank God for you. You have help me to be reflective and to think forward about what it is that I need to do. You have also been therapy to me as I am processing my experience as a woman of color in the school system. You have added so much value to what I am doing professionally and personally. I will never forget your kindness to me. . . .

Best Wishes,

Lisa

I recognize my use of member checking provided my participants the opportunity to reflect on the significance in their commitment toward equity.

A second form of member checking strategy I used was during the data analysis and the writing stage of this study. On March 30th, 2017, I presented a PowerPoint of my findings from this study at a conference. I emailed my participants the PowerPoint presentation as a form of member checking. This was the first time they had the opportunity to examine the findings of the study. My analysis and interpretation of the findings was well received by my participants. Mr. Chambers expressed in a personal communication (April 5th) "This looks great, man! I can't wait to see the finished written product. Thank YOU for bringing these meaningful topics to light." Another participant, Dr. O'Neal shared in his personal communication (March 30th), "Thanks for sharing. This is good stuff." I recognized in memo reflections that my use of member checking during data analysis and writing stage not only provides trustworthiness in this study but also provides value to the work my eight participants do on a daily basis.

To generate meaning through the collection of these eight stories, this narrative research study relies on the paradigm boundaries of constructivist and critical. In other words, this study juxtaposes the constructivist "understanding" of historical and social conditions of schools with the critical pursuit of "emancipation." The purpose of this study is to capture the complex

intricacies of leadership equity from those eight school leaders who are in the context (Glesne, 2011). In his discussion of critical research, Quantz (1992) argues that "social structures are always historical: created by humans and potentially alterable by humans" (p. 493). This research study, then, hopes to empower the eight school leaders to recognize the importance of their work and for them to continue the struggle towards equity and also allow those who read this study to see leadership equity as a viable endeavor. That is to say, I will not only co-construct the stories being told to me by the eight school leaders but also create awareness and promote resistance (Hatch, 2002) through the telling of their stories. And although I have pointed to three important considerations about the study—my sample size, my subjectivity, and the trustworthiness of my research—I believe such a narrative inquiry can adequately help me capture the complexity of leadership for equity.

4.0   LIVED STORIES OF TWO SCHOOL LEADERS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In my efforts to map the lived experiences of my participants, I recognize two "resonant threads" that capture both the nuances and the subtleties of eight significant equity-minded school leaders. Two resonant threads that I recognize my participants describe through their lived stories are those school encounters of adversity or those encounters without much stress. Five principals (Lisa Grant, Mia Stanfield, Bill O'Neal, John Richardson, and Lesley Kirkpatrick) have experienced some kind of adversity during their K-16 school years, adversities that have somehow influenced not only the persons they have come to be but also the way each has come to lead their schools. The remaining three participants—those who did not experience much stress—reveal that to develop values of fairness and justice, individuals do not have to experience challenges and trials in their schooling. The lived experiences of the three principals (James Chambers, Sophia Thompson, and Robert Green), I've come to perceive, also reveal noteworthy nuances. I recognize that the eight participants have their own unique lived context dependent experiences that make it difficult to identify with the stories of each other. But, I believe, the two "resonant threads" of those experiences with adversity and those without much stress are significant in that each experience can bring to light something of the participants' common experiences in schools.

For this chapter, I show the narrative story of Dr. Grant to reveal something of an equity school leader whose experiences with adversities in educational institutions has had a lasting effect on her approach to leadership. I have chosen the narrative of Dr. Grant for two reasons. First, I interviewed Dr. Grant in an earlier study and found her to be a sincere and fair. Second, three participants in this study have recognized and endorsed Dr. Grant as being an equity leader. Also, I reveal the lived story of principal James Chambers to show something of the three participants that discuss their journey within their K-16 schooling as being "without much stress." The significance of Mr. Chambers is twofold: (1) he is one of two school leaders in this study who is white, and (2) he is the sole participant who both attended a suburban school and now leads in a suburban school district. I believe that Mr. Chambers presents a significantly valuable narrative that expands both the boundaries and notions of an equity school leader.

In this chapter, I present the restories of both Dr. Grant and James Chambers's lived experiences, mapped along critical milestones during their lives. My eight participants also share the critical milestones. I present the critical milestones around the themes of my participants' experiences and attitudes during their K-16 schooling, their own teaching and leadership, along with their character and values, their passion toward their students, and the future of their own careers. My purpose in using these two stories is twofold: one, I hope to engage readers in my personal journey in getting close to my eight participants through their willingness to share with me their hopes and desires, as well as their trials and heartaches. Two, I intend for this chapter to set the foundation for my analysis of the eight participants in the chapters five and six.

4.2 THE LIVE STORY OF DR. LISA GRANT

4.2.1 Elementary school and the discovery of her *academic bent*

I wasn't taken to preschool. My first exposure to school was kindergarten and I hated [it], I didn't do well because I wanted to play. Coming from a low-income family there were the centers, the toys, I wanted to iron and play with the refrigerator and I didn't have that stuff at home. And the teacher was always trying to bring us over to play with the blocks and . . . do patterns and write stuff and I wasn't into her. So I'd ignored her. [The teacher] thought I was deaf. So, I had a hearing test and everything. They come to find out ain't nothing wrong with me, I just really ain't feeling you.

First grade, I remember when *I* was in school they were still "popping" [using corporal punishment] and so I remember whispering to this girl and the teacher just coming, not even giving me a warning [and] pulling my hand and giving me a crack . . . I didn't like the phonics lessons, how [the teacher] wanted us to sound out words and having my dialect being what it was as an African-American, they wanted me [to say] bed, we said *bed*, you sleep in the bed. And she is like no, this is a *bed,* like you know bed. I am like what the heck and it's called *bed*! . . . So I was turned off. I didn't start liking school until the fourth grade.

I didn't start liking school until the fourth grade. We had an amazing teacher. She could play the piano. We actually had a piano in our classroom, we had a hamster, we had plants. It was so lively . . . she didn't hug us or anything like that. But she just made school so, *we did* things, we grew things. She would show us pictures, this is Switzerland—and I wanted to go to Switzerland. You know she [was] just, was *so* engaging to us. And that was the first year that I made honor roll. I never paid attention to grades. I really didn't understand what they meant and from that point on I realized that I had a, you know, an *academic bent.* I was good at school. I could do school. So I learned to navigate it. I think she was my best teacher for a while.

4.2.2 Secondary school experience

I didn't pick up again until seventh grade . . . I had some really bad fifth grade and sixth grade experiences. And some of my worst teachers were black teachers. It was really difficult . . . It was hard as a young female then to interact with them. And so middle school I had a great experience. High school I had a great experience because now we're in this notion of ranking and where are you in your class and I did well. And that changed going into college, so I don't (laughs) know if you're going to ask [me] about that. But, I always did school well—from fourth grade on, I knew how to navigate it.

You know what, I think . . . I wasn't actually told that I was good, but I noticed that [teachers] would push me a lot. I had teachers that pushed me . . . I was sent every year of middle school to take gifted test and I never passed it. But they felt that I was gifted. So, I never was in the classes with my friends. I was always taking different classes, different math classes. I was into science, it was my thing, it attracted me. And so I was always in different classes than my friends for a lot of stuff. My church family always recognized me because of my report card—my honor roll on my report card. So I was always getting recognition at church—oh she is smart, she does well, they knew that.

I went to Hyde Park High School which was an all-black school and I honestly felt like I didn't fit in. But I hadn't, prior to first through fourth grade I went to integrated schools with white children. [I] went to middle school that had integration around 1980 something. . . . But I went to an all black [high] school . . . I found it very hard to fit in because I didn't connect with a lot of folks in how they did things . . . I think the saving at Hyde Park was that I wasn't in class with a lot of the nonsense . . . I was in classes with gifted students and so [I was] able to focus on learning and that is how I was able to achieve *there.*

I had a great African American history [teacher] Mr. Adams. He was *awesome.* And he really engaged us [in] Socratic [seminar] and we didn't have that before, where we wanted to read the books and be able to talk about slavery but it was something we were interested in. And so school made me compliant. I can't say that it made me a good person. I was compliant and I knew to get ahead in the school cycle you had to be a compliant person.

4.2.3 The 35 cent lesson

My family I think was the biggest contributors. My grandmother *stressed* it and my grandmother was more of an influence than my parents. . . . My parents raised us in church with church principles to be good to others. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, I was raised with that. . . . My grandmother *was good.* My grandmother, she was kind, she extended herself, she gave of herself 100 %. Physically my grandmother worked till she was 74. And she saved her money, so that we could go to college and she wanted us to know that she wanted us to have the opportunities she didn't have. And that was important to her. My grandma spent time with me . . . I could go to her house after school and she would have dinner ready . . . what she taught me . . . was I am going to cook your dinner but you [are] going to wash the dishes and you'll mop my floor and you will dust around. And she would give me, this is the 80s, she would give me like 35 cents (laughs) . . . She would do *huge things* like if I needed clothes to go to school . . . you know most people are going to K-Mart and stuff like that. Man, my grandma didn't play. She is going to take you down to Gimbels. *You going to Gimbels.* You going to go to Kaufmann's, which is now Macy's. You going to go somewhere big and I am going to make sure you look good. That was important to her. My whole college education, everything that the *grants* did not pick-up, my grandma paid that. She bought

every book that I needed for college. And she was so proud when I graduated and I became a teacher. So, I wouldn't be sitting here today if it wasn't for her.

The church I was raised in. That, I would say, equally [contributed to me becoming a good person]. My church was so kind . . . my freshman year of college they sat me in front of the church and put an offering basket . . . they taught me what it was to be a good person . . . We would volunteer in the community. We would make sure people have food. If somebody had an issue we would get clothes for them. You know I was given opportunities to show goodness to other people and was valued for being able to be good for other people. Service was the *key* . . . one of the sayings that my pastor . . . would say is, "The servants serve and the master rewards." And that was our goal, our goal was to serve. It wasn't to *get,* we were just taught to be servants.

4.2.4   College and overcoming challenges

I went to Hill College. If you know anything about Hill, it is in Deerfield, it is an all white school. And it was like oh, my god, I can't . . . that was culture shock. That was horrible, a horrible transition. When I first went to Hill, one of the things that I've learned was, and I kind of think I always knew, that the education that I got wasn't the same as maybe some of my white friends. . . . I took the placement test and found out that I needed remedial reading. . . . I had English, the lowest English that there was, plus remedial reading . . . my freshman year of college. And it was devastating. And I am thankful because the professor, [the] woman that ran the program, she was very skillful at [teaching]. [She would say to me] you are bright, you don't read at level, but I am going to show you how. I am going to help you get organized and you're going to be successful. My first semester I had a 1.6 [GPA] and the second [semester] I had a 1.5 and I was crushed. I had *never* [had] grades like that in my life, crushed, crushed, my whole family was like "Whaaattttt!!!"

I tell folks a story that first semester, and I took this man twice. I never forget his name, his name was Dr. Peters. I will never forget him because I didn't know anything. But I had pre-calculus and I didn't know the highest math that I had had in high school was Algebra 2. So I hadn't even had calculus . . . So I am sitting there like, "This is Greek, Hebrew, and Japanese." I don't know what this mess is . . . [and] I am looking [at] the [other students and] they are just taking notes and they [are] *getting it.* And I am sitting there like lost. Mind you, I value education. I used to be a smart kid. I want to be there. I couldn't connect. I came everyday Osly and it was an 8 o'clock class. I come [in and] I [would] fall asleep. I had a notebook like this (grabs a notebook) and I [would] fall asleep, bammm. I'd wake up at 8:55 [am], notebooks rings were on my face . . . my friends be cracking up, "Come here, look at her face, she got them again. Why do you even go to that class if you are going to go sleep?" Because I knew, I should be there. I didn't know how to be successful and when I asked the dude, for help, when I asked Dr.

Peters, could you help me? He don't give that kind of help, "You need to get in a study group with [your] friends." It was like, when I talked to him, it was like how dare you even invade my space. He made me feel like chewing gum on the bottom of his shoe. And I knew I wouldn't, I wouldn't make it, I would never make it in his class . . . So, I think [I] took his class again and I got, I took his class the first time and I got a D, I took it the second time and got an F. So it was like, there was no way.

So my major at the time was chemistry. My major at the time was chemistry I was trying to do it, but you need all this math to be able to be good at chemistry. And I was good. But nobody told me in high school . . . nobody said, "Hey baby ease your way in and take some classes to give you the idea." No I got organic, pre-calculus and I am in remedial reading and English 100. "Really! I am going to be on top, right—no." I sank. I'd never had experienced organic chemistry and I would be in a lab and our lab was supposed to be from . . . like 3-6 [pm]. And I am leaving the lab at 9-10 o'clock at night. I finally figured it out (laughs), everybody been gone. My fingers brown, blue, and yellow. You know it was a *struggle*, it was really a struggle and the racial tension. I remember telling a white woman who befriended me, we were friends. But I don't know why she befriended me and why she liked me. But, I was telling her how my advisor made me feel . . . as [if] I was the dumb black girl. And I noticed her face and she actually was *very* offended and she went to the department chair. And the department chair made my advisor meet with me and this man is crying and he is apologizing. He never meant to make me feel that way. But that's how I felt. I just felt unsupported, like when I was struggling, he would just like [do] what was he going to do.

(During her sophomore year Dr. Grant changed her major from chemistry to general science.)

So I got into education because the lady who did my remedial reading class needed me to cover. I was walking a friend who wasn't an education major to class and she said, "You know what? They are doing some tutoring." . . . She asked me to be this little boy's tutor for the day. And I said, "Just one day?" She said, "One day." [I said] "Ok, I can commit to a night." I tutored this boy and . . . I didn't think anything remarkable came of it. It was maybe two weeks after that, [Ms. Smith] is yelling and running across the campus towards me and I am like, "Oh my God," I loved Ms. Smith because she was my away from home mom. And she told me, "You got to come back." And I am like, "Come back to where?" She said, "You got to come back to tutor that little boy, [he] is not coming back if you don't come back. He *loves* you." I end up being his baby sitter and everything. But she said, "Did you ever think of teaching, I really think you have the gift for it."

And that's how I went into education. I changed to general science education so I could be a general science teacher. And at the time they were certifying you from 6-12 . . . So . . . that became my major. And I really did well. Now I didn't do well in education courses. I didn't do well until student-teaching . . . they were sending white girls for student teaching out in the sticks with the little white kids and they'd come back crying. And I was *killing it, killing* student teaching. They were getting . . . A's in all the course work,

but I got the A in the actual student teaching because . . . that was my gift. But I would say my undergraduate career; I didn't have a good one. I didn't have good relationships with professors. Maybe a couple. I could count them on one hand and maybe have a few fingers. But I didn't have great relationships. And I hate, we even had a black professor who would not have anything to do with us. And she was a female. I haven't had great relationships with . . . educators of color. There was one that took me under their wing and wow we had a fantastic relationship.

4.2.5   Becoming an educator with love

So, out of undergrad, (laughs) that's funny. I went to a white Christian school in the suburbs . . . Lord School and it was the horriblest experience that I had because they wanted to control my whole life and I made $10,000, like a $1,000 a month, what is that, $500 a check, that when taxes came I made like $333 (laughing) it was a joke. You know, but that wasn't what made it bad. I was this creative teacher and wanted to [do] these great things with the kids and it was a Christian school . . . I had an astronomy class and so I had the kids put some constellations together and we hung them across the ceiling in the hallway in a little band and they were like, "Is this the horoscope?" I am like, "Oh my God! The horoscope!" For real y'all. You know and so they had a book, the book was old as Jesus and it was falling apart and it was talking about "there is no evolution" and you know it was just real crazy. Y'all setting up these kids to fail—right away.

I was raised . . . don't be talking about God stuff. If you ain't got anything good to say get to moving and so I was there one school year. And I told them I would not be back. I had gotten married and had two babies . . . So I had come to Riverdale School District in 1993 and that's when my world *blossomed* because they accepted my creativity and the way that I could interact with kids was respected. . . . At the Christian school, they didn't like that the kids were attached to me . . . it was like a deficit for them. And I was one of three black teachers on a staff of about 65. It was real interesting.

I grew up in [the Riverdale] district. K-12, I never knew nothing else different [but] Riverdale. So, I wanted to work in Riverdale—I did. And they paid nice too. And having been as poor as I was, I wanted to [teach in Riverdale]. . . . I started as a general science teacher for sixth and seventh grade and it was phenomenal. Our whole team was new. But it was the best team in the school. We were some dynamite teachers, we rocked. [The] middle school team, with a literacy, math, social studies, and science teacher, we killed it.

I remember growing as a teacher. I've always had good experiences with kids. I could sit here and tell you a gazillion of them, because I love children. I didn't leave the classroom because I didn't love children . . . when you do well with kids, they give you more responsibilities and I started doing other peoples' jobs so I said, "Why don't I just become a principal!" Should have just stayed in the classroom. I *loved* the kids . . . I always remember being reflective. Every year I felt like I got to be a better teacher . . . I thought

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about what can I do differently to make something go better. I was always reflective . . . I remember leaving the middle school, I got bumped because I was so new. And a teacher who ended up staying in my position, never taught science in her *life*. [She told me], "I am going to bump you because I don't want to leave this school." And I am like, "Well thanks a lot!" And I kicked and screamed and I cried because I didn't want to leave the middle school.

I got sent to high school. And on . . . my period right after lunch there were 48 kids on the list and you know, if you ever worked in [public] schools that don't mean you will get 48 kids. They just put that on there. I [was] like that's not going to happen. So the first day of school I had like 12 kids show up 'cause it was only freshman. I am like, "Oh, that's so nice. I think I am going to like high school. It's going to be great." The next day 48 kids showed up. I didn't have enough seats. I wasn't prepared. They were sitting on the heaters; they were sitting on top of the tables. This was the worst class I ever had in my life. Now . . . I [had] been teaching for five years at this point. This young girl said to me, "Bitch didn't you know we was coming! Why don't you got no damn chairs up in this room!" I [was] like "Whaaatttt!" I [had] never been through anything like that in my life. They left that room, I went into the back room closet and cried. I [was] like, "I don't want to be in this high school." [But], I said ain't nobody kicking my behind cause I needs my money. I came out that next day and the next day and the next day. With the class of 48 kids. We did labs. I had [48 students] until January. Oh I had them. And we was working. I had a chart on the board I am going to make sure they work . . . I learned how to win them over and they worked.

My principal at the time [a black female], I told you I was a general science major. My principal somebody had said, "The district has to check your certification . . . she is not certified to teach biology." I was in a biology class. And [I] said well, "Why did they put me here." I said, "Well I am just going to go to whatever middle school they had." My principal looked me in my eyes [and] she said, "You try to leave this school I will block it. You're a great teacher, you're going to stay right here. I am not letting you go nowhere." And I end up staying there. She made me go back to school and by then I had my fourth baby I didn't want to go back to school *ever again.* You know, once you get a bachelor's degree you think you'd did something. [The principal told me] "You going back to school." It was her investment in me . . . I knew that I was a good teacher. But none of the middle school people . . . said you're a good teacher. But I had never had an administrator cultivate that: "You're a good teacher, I am not going to lose you." So she motivated me and I would have done anything for her because of how she motivated me and I modeled a lot of how I motivate people after her . . . She was one of them people that said, "Come on y'all, we jumping off this cliff." You'd be like "Okayyyy!" She got us jumping off the cliff; there must be something down there that is going to catch us. You know she was just one of them kind of people, you would follow her. And so, I went back to school and got my biology degree and I was able to stay in the position that [I] was in.

But I stayed there for 12 years and I was able to build a reputation with the students . . . the kids wanted to take me. And, I would get assigned the harder kids because I could get them through. I even taught *night school,* and night school kids said that, "If I had you the first [time] I would've never failed!" You know it's . . . being able to engage and I engaged the kids. [I remember how] I felt when I was in that pre-calculus class. I never wanted anybody to feel like I felt with that man. And so I tried my darnest to break down concepts to kids in a way that they would be able to understand it. That was so important to me. That they have an understanding and access and I would tell them things, like, "Honey this biology is not difficult . . . these words are like another foreign language to you. When you learn the foreign language you already know what it is linked to. You going to be able to talk the language, you can do this, it is real simple." And [I would] take [away] the stigma, "You can be a scientist, why not?"

And I talked to them about real life. . . . We were so family-oriented and [students] would ask me for advice about their boyfriends and . . . if they were pregnant they would tell me. If they had [a] baby they were bringing me the baby, so that I could see them. I'd watch the kids for them so that they could go to class, because I brought my own kids to school. I had four of them. If they were sick my principal said, "I'd rather have you here than a sub. So, you could put the baby under the desk, put the little Grant under the desk and come on in here." And I would. So, if [I] had somebody else's baby they didn't care 'cause they knew I would still be teaching.

I remember one girl came in to start out our classroom. Now, I had the kids at the time do a warm up on the board and I was doing attendance. And she came in just a little after the bell. She said, "I am taking this for the gonorrhea and I am taking this for the chlamydia. We need to talk!" And I am saying, "Jesus, oh Lord! We do." And so I would have conversations with them, like that. I even had put up a bulletin board with the STD's on them—with actual pictures of the genitalia. The one Christian lady on my job got so offended she told the administrator. The second year I had to take them down. But the kids would look at it in between the bells and they'd be out there taking notes. [I] started catching them taking notes. But you got to meet the kids where they are. And that's where they were [at]. . . . I think [that's] what [taught] me . . . how to be a good person. And how to get ahead and why do what I do, why I want you to pay attention. It's because I want you to be the best you can be. [Students] felt that and take to that—that somebody cares enough. The same way my principal developed me, [students] felt that same development.

4.2.6   They call me the "cleaner": Becoming an administrator

I had one administrator who—she was horrible and very condescending. [She would] talk to you like a dog, but I was doing a lot of her work. When she needed her work done, she would come to me. And there was actually two of them. They were two black *females*. . . . One day I was complaining to . . . a white woman, one of my colleagues, she was driving me home from work and I was telling her how I *hated* the way that [the two

female principals] treated [me], I couldn't believe [it] and I said "I am doing all their work" and I just said flippantly, "I should go to school and become a principal for myself. And do what they do, I should be getting paid, if I am going to do their work." She said, "You know what Lisa you should. You really should, you have a talent for this." And so I went to school based on that. But I didn't apply for a job right away. Got the certification and still didn't feel like I could take that leap.

Two years after . . . I jumped in. I was afraid, I didn't think I would be successful at it. The first year I was an assistant principal [under a former principal], she pulled me because she knew what . . . kind of teacher that I was. She had done an observation of me. I had one of the worst kids in the school. One of the ones that walked the halls, cusses everybody out, [it] was a girl—she never came to class. I am being observed by [the vice-principal], she is coming to observe me. Guess who wanted to come to class that day, God-Ly! I said, "Dag-gone-it." Here she comes. And so I am explaining to the kids what they're going to do today. And we are getting ready to have a lab. [I am] explaining the work, "Ok I want you to break into your labs." So I walk over to the baby whispering, being nice and sweet. "Patricia can you move over there with those girls and work with them in their group?" [Patricia replies] "No! I ain't doing shit today!" Oh god, I stopped, for real, just like that, I said "Patricia come on baby, my boss is in here and I am being observed don't embarrass me baby, please just move with the group." [She replies] "I said no! I don't even know why you even trying to talk to me." And it was like ok. I turned to a group of girls and I said "Babies can y'all do me a favor, Patricia needs some help today, can y'all move over there with her and work with her." [The group of girls replied] "Absolutely! Ms. Grant we'll do it." They got up and they moved [next to Patricia]. She was blown away that I didn't say, "Get Out!" You know and snap out. How I was able to keep my composure. So [when] she saw my name on the list [for assistant principals] . . . she took me right away. Because she knew not just that incident, but she totally knew how I dealt with kids.

(Grant was assistant principal for one year and now she retells how she became a school principal)

Riverdale needed somebody, they had done this horrible school closing and made a K-8 school. And [the district] had one [school] up here that was off the chain . . . [Students] were pulling the fire alarm every 15 minutes, they were setting garbage cans on fire. The kids [previously] were in this big rise style building. They had an Olympic size swimming pool and a huge gym, a salad bar, and chicken wings. And [then the district] brings them back to a little middle school [with] no swimming pool, [a] gym the size of a cricket, a hot pack [lunch], and they didn't have ranch dressing. These kids [began] tearing the school down—[the school had] the worst teachers, I've never seen jokers like this in my life. It was like, "Lord!" [The district] said, "We need you to go clean that up." I went over there [and] that's how I got into the principalship.

4.2.7 A talent scout who puts it on the line

(She reflects on qualities of leadership)

You know what, this is so funny. Check this out (searches for and finds printed character survey) we took this character survey, right. So I am the principal of the school right? The last trait for me is [leadership]. It was funny. But what was high for me is I am about team. I feel like as a leader, I feel like a talent scout. I am looking for who does what and I—how to make them shine in that. I am going to make you do that more. I am going to push you in that thing. I am going to grow your strengths . . . why keep you doing something that you don't do well? And so *I love* to support my staff in that way, what you do well. You do this well, I want you to do this . . . I want to showcase you, I want to put you in front of people so that they can [see] this. And push them in that way. I feel like as a leader it's my responsibility to bring that out, to challenge my staff, to take them to the next level. Call out like my principal called out to me. My goodness is to call it out to them. And it is also my responsibility to address stuff that's "junky," because people don't respect you if you don't address the junky. So I have to address the junky and let them know you can't be junky here, you going to be junky here you going to get in trouble.

As a principal, my vision for this school that, "wow," and this isn't in a vision statement cause I have one of those. My vision for this [school] is I have babies that are so engaged in learning that they are, co-planning lessons with teachers and really digging in and thinking about themselves as learners and what helps them learn better. That it's such an academic environment that we are learning and talking with each other over cell phones in the evening and we are doing work on our computers, you know its 24-hour learning. Kids that are so engrossed and engaged that they are connected to kids in other school districts; they're connected to universities and professors, as elementary children. And we seen a little bit of that with the peace march that we've had here.

(Before taking over the principalship at her current school, Dr. Grant had took a leave of absence after a conflict with a supervisor)

The most successful opportunity for my growth as a leader was having those three months out of work. That conflict with my supervisor and really having to take a stand about my own morals and my ethics cause I could have allowed anything to go on, I could have complied with what [my supervisor] wanted just to keep my job and my position. But I didn't. And I am so glad that I was true to myself, in spite of fear, I didn't want to come back to Riverdale, I didn't want to come back here, but it is some of the best work that I [have] ever done has been right here. *After* and through the fear of what they were going to do—the fear of repercussion. . . . It has [grown] me tremendously, having had that terrible experience. And then coming to the space I am in. I had to stand on my own and not care what anybody does. And that is kind of where I am—I don't care. I could get fired tomorrow; I could get fired at the end of this year; I can be fired, for real . . . But I know I put it on the line everyday for these kids and I *swear* I am. I

could live with that. I go to sleep at night and I am not, I am not feeling that I've hurt somebody. I sleep peacefully.

4.2.8   Children feel loved

I desire for children at Lewis to first of all know that they are loved and valued . . . They are just as important as any other child on this planet. And they have a right to be here. They have a right to be here and anywhere that they feel that they can put their little bodies and selves into. That their lives matter and are important. And [that] they can make a difference. We are here to call out their greatness and give them the support to become who they should become. But . . . inside of them are all these character traits. We just got to call them out of them. I think that sometimes our kids don't think they are good, they think that they are bad, they don't see themselves anywhere, and I want them to know, you are good, you're amazing, you're a miracle.

4.2.9   I don't do dumb

(Dr. Grant reflects on the next five years of her career)

So in the next five years, I would love to . . . I don't see myself as the superintendent of this district . . . I don't think I wanna do anything like that. I don't know that I navigate the political crap real well; I don't do dumb. I'm too direct with people, and you have to be real indirect and sneaky, you know, political . . . you gotta play chess, and I don't play chess; I wouldn't be a good poker player. I would like to do something with education—I would like to consult; I would love to teach teachers or administrators.

4.2.10 A philosophy of opportunity

(In the following, Dr. Grant reveals quintessential mental and moral qualities distinctive to her)

(Dr. Grant reflects on her philosophy of education)

"Wow!" I had that written down somewhere. That's a heavy one cause Dr. Hamilton [a professor during her doctoral program] makes us do that, our philosophy of education . . . I had it all tied into James [Comer], [John] Dewey, and . . . So, how can I make it as simplistic . . . I believe that all children should have the opportunity and learn—that's everybody . . . Everybody should have an opportunity to learn in a way that engages

them, [an opportunity] that's authentic to them, that's meaningful, that helps build them, not just intellectually but their character and their gifts and talents.

(On whether her philosophy of education has changed)

I feel . . . I emphasized that engagement that kids have to be co-learners with their teachers. Not that the teacher is this, oh mighty god—person. It is extending all this great knowledge. I have learned how to be a good educator from the kids. Kids have taught me. I listen to them. They tell me what I need to do better. They show me different ways of doing things that I may not have thought of before. So, it *has* changed because as the years have gone on up, I've been a lot more reflective. I think there was a point in my life where I got cynical, because work was so hard. And I am thankful that I went back to school, 'cause you really got to, when it starts to get to that place, you have to renew your own thinking. And I needed to change my thinking. And I really got into that equity piece. I had to get to [an] understanding, [to] challenge my own white privilege and my own racisms against people of my color and I started to address my own self-hatred and deal with my own traumas. And I understood myself better and I was able bring that back to the kids in a better way. And help adults *see* in a different way.

4.3   THE LIVED STORY OF JAMES CHAMBERS

4.3.1   Conflict in his own disposition compared to the culture of his Catholic school and a seminal moment

My K-12 experience was [pause] interesting! Especially now through the lens of what I've experienced as a teacher. So, I am sure we would connect the two later. But focusing just on [my] K-12 experience, it was Catholic school! All the way. I did 13 years of Catholic school at my parents' request! (both laughing). I am a public school believer in my adult life. But [my K-12 experience] was Catholic school, it was very rehearsed, everything happened seemingly because of tradition. There wasn't a lot of innovation, it wasn't very dynamic, it was a lot of teacher-led instruction, students sitting in rows, working out math problems, [and] doing grammar exercises. It seemed very much like the old mentality of what a school looks like and very different from things now. It was very white—very, very white. I would have years of school where I would have no students of color in my class; more so in K-8, there was a little more diversity when I went [to my] 9-12 high school—but not much.

I went to one school K-8 and then a different school [for] 9-12 . . . [It was] very conservative. I can recall one time when we had a substitute teacher who was loved by the students. A really engaging science instructor, he was let go because he stated he

voted for Al Gore over George W. Bush. And then a kid in my class went home and told her parents and (changes tone) the parents said, "We will not have a teacher espousing Democratic, liberal views in my child's classroom." And then the science substitute teacher . . . we never saw him again, because he said he voted for Gore, a consenting adult said he voted for Al Gore, and [we] never saw him again. That has a lot to do, I think, with where I have gone since then. I've *sought out* very different places to live, places to work, people to be around, and so I've used that to kind of expand myself and offer myself more of a view of what the world is actually like: not a bubble, not sheltered. And I should say, that while I was school age, my parents weren't like that (laughs). So my parents were taking me to the city, my mom had black friends! My dad grew up in a diverse community. So they supplemented *my* understanding of the world and diversity and seeing people other than the white kids in my classroom—they supplemented that in other ways. But my *school* life was very much in a bubble: Caucasian, conservative, [and] Catholic.

[In] third [or] fourth grade . . . I saw certain families *expect* certain things from the school—preferential treatment. And we were all privileged, we were all receiving preferential treatment, our parents were paying a couple of thousand dollars a year for us to go to school. It was very safe, it was very nurturing, and I saw some people expecting more than others. They thought maybe because of [their] status in the community [they] should get more. That kind of rubbed me the wrong [way]. Also, this was very powerful . . . a boy, his name was Miles . . . moved into the school, [he was] a black boy and lived in section 8 housing, and because of that he was shunned by a lot of classmates.

And I remember this was kind of like my seminal moment [because] *I loved* Miles. Miles and I went over and played over each other's houses, we hung out after school, we sat by each other at lunch, we played basketball together, we were really tight, and we kind of gravitated to one another. I think he gravitated to me because he saw someone who saw him for a boy, a nice kid [and someone] who didn't see him for the color of [his] skin or where he lived. I saw him as an opportunity for some change in the system. I was dealing with the same kids, and everything was like kind of an assembly line, status quo. I liked that him and I had an instant connection. So then [one day], a couple of my friends said (changes tone), "Why you hanging out with [Miles]?" And I am thinking, (changes tone) "*Why not*?" And so, more than any one event of my childhood . . . that really kind of made up my mind as to like, ok, I can't roll with this environment forever . . . where as for some people its comfortable for them and that is what they seek out. [But], I decided that wasn't me.

4.3.2 Relationship with teachers and without a lot of stress

I definitely think that [experience about Miles kind of shaped who I am]. I also think that developing relationships with certain teachers . . . inspired me to stay in education and ultimately become a teacher and then an administrator—a school leader. I know that a lot of teachers saw an outgoing, intelligent young man who they thought should have lofty

goals . . . So I think that despite some of the negativity, some of the positivity was definitely me seeing . . . [that] I can make a difference—in my *entire* life. Maybe I can go on to [do] something. So, I did receive that kind of motivation from K-12. And I also think the other piece I talked about, unlike all of the schools I've [taught] in, [about] 98-99 % [of the student] population [in my K-12 schools] had a good amount of money. I didn't grow up rich by any means, but I didn't grow up wondering where my next meal was. My parents both worked. My dad was a steel worker . . . my mom was a nurse. And that probably put me on the low-end of the kids I went to school with; which means everyone kind of had financial comfort, safety [and] a lot of nuclear families . . . So, I can say that we kind of went to school *without a lot of stress* . . . that meant a lot, I think for our achievement and our ability to connect with the school itself.

4.3.3   College and heeding to his calling

I went to Hillview State, a four-year undergraduate program. I, specifically, worked hard to get into Hillview State because I graduated with 88 students, the Catholic high school that I went to was very small. I think [there were] 340-350 [students] in the whole school—88 in my class. And I wanted to [go] somewhere *big* . . . where I would still be close to home, but I would see other people. And this kind of goes back to the first thing I started talking about. Hillview State is fairly white itself, but it also has people from all over the world, it also has black people, it also has many different mindsets. I felt that I wanted to expand my friend groups [and] I wanted to be challenged in terms of thinking *beyond* the Catholic doctrine.

I was done [with the Catholic doctrine]—totally done . . . I wanted to give the other side a chance to speak. We were kind of told that Catholicism is the way and [that] most other things are—if not wrong, it always related back to Catholicism. When we learned about Islam or Judaism, or other types of Christianity, it was kind of like well this is how it is like Catholicism. I wanted to see how it stood alone. I wanted to see how science and reason came into the equation. And that was a big thing for me [to attend Hillview State], [it was to] change [my] environment and if I wanted to drive home in three and half hours I could still be that close . . . it end up working out.

[During my freshman year], I moonlighted with pre-law, for a semester. And then I went all-in on education after that and never looked back . . . I realized that I wouldn't have as much of a forum to work with students and that was always something I wanted to do. . . . . I have a brother [who] is 10 years younger than me . . . it was almost like, yeah I was his brother, but I was also kind of like a third parent . . . I started to teach him and I started to work with him and help with his school [material] and kind of show him the way. And I am thinking, wow man maybe I want to be a teacher 'cause I liked it. So that kind of inspired me . . . The final straw was [Hillview] was asking for volunteers to be "conversation partners" for people from other countries. So, [the school] was like, "Hey, our fellow brothers and sisters, our fellow Hillview State students who are from Asia or Africa [who] don't speak the language well, will you be their friend? Will you kind of

show them around campus, talk to them, meet up with them at lunch for a meal?" [The school] had a little volunteer program . . . Let's go back to what I have already said, "It is seeking out diversity, seeking out change, having a personally liberal value system." That was speaking right to me. So, I called [and] I got involved. It just so happened [the volunteer program was] like an arm of the College of Education, but they would take anybody—even [a] pre-law kid . . . after that I was like: "Man this is why I am here." So, then I switched, never looked back.

4.3.4   Life lessons and let's ball hard

I can tell you a couple of stories. I [became a] conversation partner and we would meet at the Union building, [students] called it the Hub at Hillview State . . . we would meet at the Hub and we would talk . . . Sometimes I met with students my age and sometimes I met with graduate students. I did it all four years. It ended up being one of my favorite things to do. People would expect this very formal experience . . . I can give you formal, I can give vocabulary lessons, grammar; but I found the real value was in the informality of it. So, the second time I met [with my conversation partner], this is my second semester freshman year, I am eighteen years old. [In my] second [meeting], I met my conversation partner, Binh Lee from China, he was crying when I met him. I am like, "Hey man what is wrong? Let's talk about this." He got into a car accident on the way there. [I asked him], "Are you hurt? Are you ok? Do we need to go to the hospital?" And it was hard for us to come to a common English understanding, but what turned out was he was fine but he was getting screamed at by the English speaking [man], someone from [the community] . . . [the man] was screaming at him because Binh Lee didn't understanding the car insurance procedures, he didn't understand that he had to show his car insurance, they had to trade information and he had to call and file a claim.

So, he got back in his car and sped away to our session 'cause he was so scared . . . That night I [had] planned on talking about some grammar features of English, some idioms, some obvious things. [Yet], I realized, man I am going to have to help my boy with the insurance claim. So, that moment still affects me to this day because I realized that if we don't take time to get to know the people; what they are going through; and create learning around authentic situations, real things, real life, real people, real audiences; then we are going to have a disconnect . . . Binh Lee appreciated that our English speaking [partner conversations] wasn't just going to be learn English and I was going to tell him, "Sorry man it sucks about your car, hope it gets better."

And it was like a life lesson—for both of us. And then it also taught me about literacy. Literacy is more than school subjects and more than reading. Literacy is also about those moments where you have life experiences. [Also], one last thing it taught me was about linguistic capital. Binh Lee was bright, he was at Hillview State because he was an engineer major; like homeboy is smarter than me. But, he didn't possess the English, so he didn't have the linguistic capital. He couldn't function at a level of his own expectations when he was in those settings and that was very eye opening to me that I

needed to provide him with English . . . so, he can stand at the side of the road; understand what was going on and contribute; and figure out how to get his car fix. . . . Binh Lee wasn't at a deficit, intellectually, where a lot of people unfortunately make that assumption, he was only in need of language support to help him . . . that's probably why, more than any one event, I became an ESL teacher. And it is probably why I have this passion to this day for individualizing what we do for students: socially, emotionally, academically, whatever. I feel that . . . if we don't get to know them, how do we unpack true learning for them?

I volunteered and then session two, *boom!* extremely powerful, life changing moment for both of us. And then I just continued to pursue [being a conversation partner]. I said, "I'll do this conversation partner thing as long as you'll have me." And they had me the whole time. They actually brought me in on a banquet. It was [like] an Intermediate Units framework. It was the . . . intermediate unit in collaboration with the . . . College of Education at Hillview State . . . they gave me an award my senior year for my service to [conversation partners]. I thought that was really kind. [One], it was validating, as a 22 year-old, I am like, "Hey, they are throwing me a banquet." One free meal, you know you're in college. Two, it meant that enough people communicated that what I did was helping . . . I got good feedback [and] I felt that I was making a difference. I think we all, well at least, the majority of us get into education because we want to help and make a difference . . . my personal make-up is, "Let's roll, let's ball hard, let's make more of a difference."

I didn't need validation outside of knowing my students were happy and growing, but when I got it, it kind of made me think like, "Ok there is something cooking here, let's go with it" . . . I continued with the ESL and then friendships were born . . . when the conversation partner [program] stopped, [Binh Lee and I] kept going out to dinner and we kept meeting up, and we would meet back in Riverdale and all of that. That's when I really got the true passion for it [because] it became who I am and not a job, or a major, or a career: it became part of me.

4.3.5   The Dinner Conversation

(Chambers discusses a story about an invitation he and his girlfriend at the time got from another conversation partner)

[A] different family had us over for dinner and they were from Korea. . . . We are both excited we were going to go eat some authentic Korean food . . . well, they made a bad version of American food because they thought that's what we wanted. [It was] like undercooked burgers, salad with ketchup and mayo as the dressing . . . They had Romaine lettuce with ketchup and mayonnaise [and] burgers that were [so] raw you heard the cow mooing. And I did what any polite guest would do; I ate it, and hoped that I didn't get food poisoning—I didn't. But, after we debriefed and talked about they were being so gracious thinking "we have American guests let's give them what they want"—

not knowing that myself and my girlfriend at the time sought out culture and real experiences.

I am not someone who reflects on my experiences and is impressed with them. I don't always take compliments well. But, looking back this is something I'll allow myself to be proud of [because] I was able to confront the situation and actually have a conversation about it after the meal. I expressed how grateful I was . . . but I said, "I am curious, why did you think to make this meal?" 'Cause they always ate Korean cuisine every time I saw them eating. I said, "I expected we would eat Korean cuisine." They said, "Oh, well we thought maybe that was disrespectful. And maybe we should make your type of cuisine." So then when they found out more about me, I ended up eating all the real Korean food with them for many years to come, which was great. But that was powerful to me too.

We have this culture, I mean Donald Trump is running for President Osly. We have this culture [where] differences are [seen as] bad and there is a fear around what isn't you. And that was an important moment, I felt it was my responsibility to show them that not all Americans are that way [and] not all white people are that way. And that we can connect on a level where you show me things that are important to you in your culture and this is just food, but food does make people tick. And I will show you things that are important to mine. Then I started making some Italian recipes that my grandma from Italy taught me. . . . It was a powerful moment for all of us 'cause they saw wow, he [wants] to eat what we eat, he [wants] to see elements of our culture and I'd say "Well, then I will show you elements of mine." . . . I think we both realized stereotypes aren't true. Here are these people that are as warm and welcoming as anyone I have ever met and here is an American guy who wants to learn about the way other people do things and not just the way it's done here. So it was cool for both sides—we both learned.

(The reason to have that conversation with the Korean family)

Probably for two reasons. One is I wanted there to be that understanding [for] both of us. I wanted to make sure that my idea was true, that they were trying to please us. They thought "This was what we have to do in this country" and that I wanted them to understand . . . I wanted to seek out some opportunities to [learn], and I wanted [them] to feel that [they] could be who [they were] and all of [their] customs, which includes food [because] that's why we are here. And then I think two is I really wanted some Korean food (both laughing).

4.3.6   Getting into education with his swimming trunks on

I didn't want to sub, so [when] I graduated in December I had a contract in January [in the] city of Shoreside. Most of my colleagues were holding out for suburban jobs and they went on to sub for couple of years or more. *I* was willing to go an urban [school district] . . . [I was] 22 from suburban Riverdale and I am like throw me in [to the] city of

Shoreside schools, throw me in, I got [my] swimming trunks, like let's go.

[Teaching at Shoreside] was great . . . I [was] working with middle school kids—seven and eighth grade boys, well [not] everyone, but the boys were the most memorable. [I was working with] seventh and eighth graders in Shoreside [in the] eastern part of the city: *high* crime, low-SES, notorious for violence, drugs, the loud noise from the [train] as it rattles by. It was a life experience man . . . *but* a good one because I was able to make connections with the kids [and] I wondered if [I was] cooking with something here because if these kids now [wanted] to come to school and they feel like it is a little more purposeful for them because at least one of their teachers is going to get to know them on a personal level and try his damnedest to make this curriculum and these activities relevant to their lives and not what the curriculum resource *said* they were supposed to be like, then maybe that is not so bad. I bonded [with the students].

[I was teaching] seventh and eighth grade English classes . . . I only taught there half a year (the grant ended). And then I went to another Shoreside school . . . which is just out of the city, extremely diverse district in Shoreside that borders . . . into the suburbs. So [I worked in Shoreside] three years total. [This teaching experience] shaped me in a lot of ways. It shaped me in that [it gave me perspective on] the human element [of] connecting with people and making them feel like they are a part of [the school] and [that] all kids can learn. It made me feel like that's real, 'cause before (the way I desired to build relationships) was confined to the University . . . but when it worked in a hard core neighborhood . . . then that made me think, ok it could work [anywhere]. You know, when it is working with Chinese students who were there for engineering, and it is also working with a14 year-old Puerto Rican [student], who is rumored to have gang activity, that was meaningful to me.

It validated the process (building relationships) and made me want to continue to do it. Also . . . I had [things] going on in *my life* [that] helped because I am no longer in a college dorm getting a little financial help from my mom and dad. I am making a paycheck. . . . I'd say it shaped me as a person first, an educator second. But, then I see them [as] one . . . at the same time.

There are a lot of [stories] . . . One that really made a difference to me [is about a] young man had been held back twice, this is in my second year in Shoreside when I moved to teach fifth grade, and [the young man] had just lost his father, his father died, was drug related, and his mom and the young man were in shambles. I mean very tough, [the] boy [was] probably thirteen in [the] fifth grade, which is already a tough day at school. Everybody knows you're older, everybody knows you got held back, and every school day was tough [and] then you lose dad . . . then it is just you and mom. And I worked with them a lot. You know, you always say no one is your favorite [and] you treat [students] the same, but I gravitated to this kid, 'cause he needed help. And it was [the] first time I started to think about [the] coordination of [social] services. What is my relationship with the counselor so we could get him some help with the counselor? What is my relationship with outside agencies? So I could tell mom and help her, and [to] inform her as to what she has at her disposal—so that was big.

Also, just making sure that personally . . . when he was going to be in class, he knew he was going to be supported [and] he could maybe laugh a little bit. The way I used to teach . . . we were having fun while we were doing it, so he could crack a few smiles [and he could] get away from life for a while. And that was probably in the fall of like October or November 2007 and then January comes around [and] we had a parent-teacher conference. Mom breaks down telling me, "We don't know what we would do without you, you're such a positive influence on my son, he needed you at this time . . . I believe this may be a blessing." Overwhelming stuff, I am like "No ma'am, I am just doing what I need to be doing . . . it's all good. This is what I should do, this is what my job says I'm supposed to do." But she insisted and that meant a lot. So, that story [was] further validation . . . knowing that who knows where that kid would have been *emotionally*. He was still going to be in school [because] mom was going to bring him and he was going to go to school. But, she thought that accelerated his process, his ability to grieve, his ability to have another purpose other than, "Oh my life is horrible." So that was cool. That's one I could think of right off the top of my head. I think about him a lot, and [his mother].

4.3.7   Being selfless and open to others

I think being a good person is living your life through others. I think getting to know who they are, what matters to them, and their perspectives helps you understand that the wall is not as big or the world is not centered on you. That there are six plus billion of us and we all come with our different set of experiences even within the same communities and cultures. In my life that's what I've tried to do is always account for that. Whether it is a school setting, the friends I choose to spend my time around, the things I decide to do with the extra clothes we don't need anymore . . . I don't let it be a 9-5 thing . . . I try [to make] this my goal. And I try to let it be just really a part of who I am. I think it is why I do what I do. I think it is why I married who I married. I think it influences so much of what I do. So I think that being a good person means you're selfless and you're open to others.

I think I immediately established connections with and gravitated to like-minded people. You hear a lot about teachers who—maybe they aren't as really as good with special education students . . . [or] maybe they aren't as good [with] students who speak other languages. And [they are] not as warm and accepting and welcoming. I always seemed to find the ones who were—which is great. And those are, the people I sought out for friendship, collaboration, professional talk [and] their own life experiences [to] grow my knowledge base. [I] always kind of connected with [likeminded people] and then teaching ESL and even in the years where I didn't teach ESL, I started to observe my principals give me . . . every kid in special education . . . my classes [were] extremely diverse, which was fine, that's what I wanted, but I realized that I had team members who didn't want them. [Other teachers] were like "Give this kid to Lewis. Oh kid is special ed, give [them] to Lewis. Oh it is a hard to deal with black kid, give [them] to Lewis, oh, the kid's from Honduras give him to Lewis. So . . . I started to relish that and even though

it's something that I would have been totally cool with before . . . I was just, "ight let's go . . . let's do it."

So I started to wear it like a cause . . . where as before it was just something that mattered to me, something that moved me. [Now] it became my cause and when I would have conversations with other teachers as to why aren't you as accepting and welcoming and if you are here for the right reasons you shouldn't have this mindset, that's when I thought maybe I will become a school leader, because colleague to colleague . . . I was having these conversation and I thought, well ok, I must have the skin for it . . . the thick enough skin to be able to take someone on who is old enough to be my mom and I don't respect the fact that this particular teacher [didn't] want all kids with I.E.P's . . . all students of color who didn't perform at a high level, and white students who didn't perform at a high level—to be fair, I don't think that there was racism. But there was definitely prejudice against disabilities. And she saw like language learning as a disability, "I am glad these kids are with me, but you need to check yourself."

4.3.8 Finding that role model principal and transition into the principalship

Let me think . . . of one [principal] who influenced me. I've had a lot that didn't, which has made me want to do this Osly, I am going to be honest with you (takes a deep breath) . . . one who did was when I got back to Riverdale for the first time and I saw this man, Mr. C also a fellow Mr. C. He fought the uphill battles on the daily basis and he didn't care that he was at the bottom of the hill and that [the] hill was 3,000 feet high—he fought them. He was so student-centered and always connected with families, knew everyone by name, first name which I thought was impressive. . . . He thought that my work with ESL students and families was admirable, so he became someone that I could, on a prep period, go in grab a seat in his office and we could talk shop. Then it was [like] we could talk about ways to make education more accessible, ways to make it more inclusive: What types of supplementary things we should be doing, should we have family nights? How do we connect with parents as to what the school was all about? How do we have a community atmosphere here? Those were the kind of things that showed me that if I'd ever get into educational leadership—hashtag crystal ball—if I ever do that . . . I could still be me and fight for people . . . 'cause so many leaders always seemed stressed and they are always, "achievement, achievement, achievement," or, "we have to cut this and we have to cut [that], but we are still going to do this." And [Mr. C] was more about building relationships and that was powerful to me—it showed me it could be done.

I am the principal of this building but I am the K-12 ESL supervisor also. Can't stop, won't stop. [I did] five years of ESL in K-12 plus all of the Hillview State experience . . . [Also, since] the spring of 2012, I just had my 11th semester, so this fall is going to be my 12th semester (teaching ESL at two local universities).

I don't think any training program could prepare you for all that you are going to experience. It is a shift in daily activities, a lot more responsibility, but I've noticed that my leadership style is directly related to my teaching style. And the same way that I used to foster connection and ultimately growth in achievement with students is the way I approach fostering connections and ultimately growth in achievement within teachers. So the transition is difficult in terms of all the responsibility and learning, [and] how to prioritize within the system . . . [those kinds of] questions [that] you never asked yourself as a teacher. Well, this is the superintendent's vision. Well, that doesn't fit within my vision and my system. So, how are we going to attack that? . . . So, that's just a priority shift. Then the time too, you work longer, you work during the summer, and that is something that you have to balance with your personal life.

The eye-opening experience for me, was when the first year I taught ESL at West Roxbury when I moved back (Riverdale side of the state), *they* broke away from the Intermediate Unit and installed me as the ESL teacher and they also gave me the administration tasks. Even though they weren't compensating me, even though they weren't giving me a title, they gave me all of the tasks of program construction, [and] Federal programming with the funding. We had an audit from the state [and] I was a one-man island, getting everything ready for the audit. And that showed me . . . when we passed the audit with flying colors . . . I realized all of my shit was in compliance, I thought, "Oh I could do this." So that built some confidence and then when the ESL population was lower, they asked me to build some teacher capacity throughout my day as well. So they actually gave me young teachers, which I'm young still, but they gave me brand new teachers and said, "We want you to work with them, we know you're strong in the areas of literacy, we want you to maybe observe some lessons, do some walkthroughs." Informal authority . . . but still another leadership role and through that mentorship . . . it changed from confidence to now *passion.* So now I am like, well if I am influencing systems enough then maybe we can make a greater difference, maybe we can connect with more kids and so now I am going to do it . . . [That is] where I started to get that fire and then I went for it.

4.3.9 Sustaining a vision of leadership

My definition of leadership is the ability to inspire people, to move themselves and their students forward (pause) and that sentence that I gave you has to be supported *daily* in [the] activities that you do each day. It can't be broad, it can't be, again I said this earlier but "We are going to talk about this in October" and, "Hey good luck, I am going to do some discipline and some scheduling now, I'll see you later." It has to be pervasive throughout the day and dynamic as things change. So, how do you respond to change in students needs?

[So] communication [and the] ability to connect, I think [are] big. [Also], I think a willingness to expand your own knowledge base. By no means [do] I think I know it all

Osly. So, I grow myself. I attend professional developments, [and] I am well-read. I am always trying to see what might be out there as a resource that we haven't considered. And I also think an understanding of components of things like literacy of the teaching and learning process, because we are here to work with students and to help them grow. So, then I should know what a student needs. So, I don't expect just my reading specialist to be aware of literacy and all of its subcategories. I need to be aware of those as well. So, that instructional leadership, that educational leadership is something you could model not just something you talk about.

4.3.10 Children should be loved

I desire for them to want to come to school, *to love* coming to school, because school is a place where they are safe and where they are supported in every way. They are supported when they don't know the answer to a math problem, they are supported when they are in the lunch line and they have a personal first name connection with the lunch lady, the food service manager. They are supported when they are at recess. And they, because of that support, they are growing whether they realize it or not, and they loved every minute of it because it was attuned to their needs.

4.3.11 Continuing to grind toward equitable environments

(Response to where does he see himself in the next 5 years?)

I was hoping to ask you that [question]. Where you see my career in the next five years? Honestly, Osly I'm not sure. I think I would like to work with this topic [of equity], if my passion is evident enough to you. I'd be interested in your take. But I think this topic of equitable environments for students. Especially academically because I think there are a lot of good ideas for the social and emotional learning pieces and I think there are a lot of compassionate individuals at the counselor level, at the principal level if I could help to forward that. But then when it translates to the classroom, are we teaching all kids the same way? So, I see myself doing some sort of coordination, presenting, supervision in that area. . . . Maybe . . . a think tank, maybe more of an intermediate unit or . . . maybe an agency like that [to do] some Act 45 type [of] things. I think I could really drum up a passion for that.

4.3.12 Being self-reflective

[My] philosophy of education is that we need to meet student needs at an individual level. I do have a general vision . . . a general philosophy of education, but the longer I am in it the more I realize that we need to go deeper and unpack. Because you're telling, when new principals stand up in front of their faculty and staff for the very first time to communicate a vision, you are communicating a vision that has been heard before and that is not a bad thing necessarily, *but* some people take it as, "Oh, here we go again." And it's a human nature thing. But when you acknowledge that we are all different unique individuals, whether we are adults or children . . . then vision starts to dive down to meeting individuals needs. That's going to change no matter who the hell you are, right? So if I talk about a vision as student achievement and 21st century skills . . . that sounds . . . that is general. But, within all of those things that are important within a vision [such as]: safe and supportive schools and fostering student growth—socially, emotionally, and academically. Some of the broad things that are part of my purpose and mission [are]: where is the individual? Where is the individual academically? When [did] we give these benchmark assessments? Where do their strengths and needs lie? Where is that individual emotionally? What don't we know about them? What (starts pounding table) do we need to seek to find out? And, how do we take it? How do we log it? How do we use it to inform what we do? So, where is the data component to that? That's my vision.

5.0   RESONANT THREADS IN LEADERSHIP

We're definitely advocates and we should be. You cannot operate in a space of fear and think you're going to make great change for children. You're not going to. That's why I refuse to be afraid. They're going to fire you, they're going to fire you regardless whether you said something or didn't say something. So I'm going to say something. I'm going to speak my *truth* and I'm going to support it with evidence or research . . . why I believe the way that I believe but I have to be an advocate for what's *right* and what's *just*. It's what I'm called to do. It's what education is about.

⸺ Lesley Kirkpatrick

5.1   INTRODUCTION

An emerging theme revealed from the data has been a picture of what an equity school leader is. The participants in this research study demonstrate a commitment to the students they serve. In helping frame my findings, I recognize the stories of my participants drive toward equity conceptually could be interpreted as actions and/or behaviors that they would not be engaged in. I recognize by (re)framing the dialogue of what school leaders are not willing to do can bring a new perspective to the field of leadership. Consequently, I have also recognized two qualities that an equity leader IS NOT: an equity school leader IS NOT one to withdraw from a challenge or stand down and (when challenging inequities) one to favor adults over students. Moreover, the school leaders revealed two salient themes of what an equity leader IS NOT going to do, but participants also revealed distinctive actions within the two equity position standings (see figure

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1). First, I show the various themes in which the eight participants demonstrate the activity of not withdrawing from a challenge. Secondly, I reveal how participants purposefully guided their leadership decisions by choosing what is in the best interest for students rather than the interest of adults.

Figure 1 Equity Leadership themes
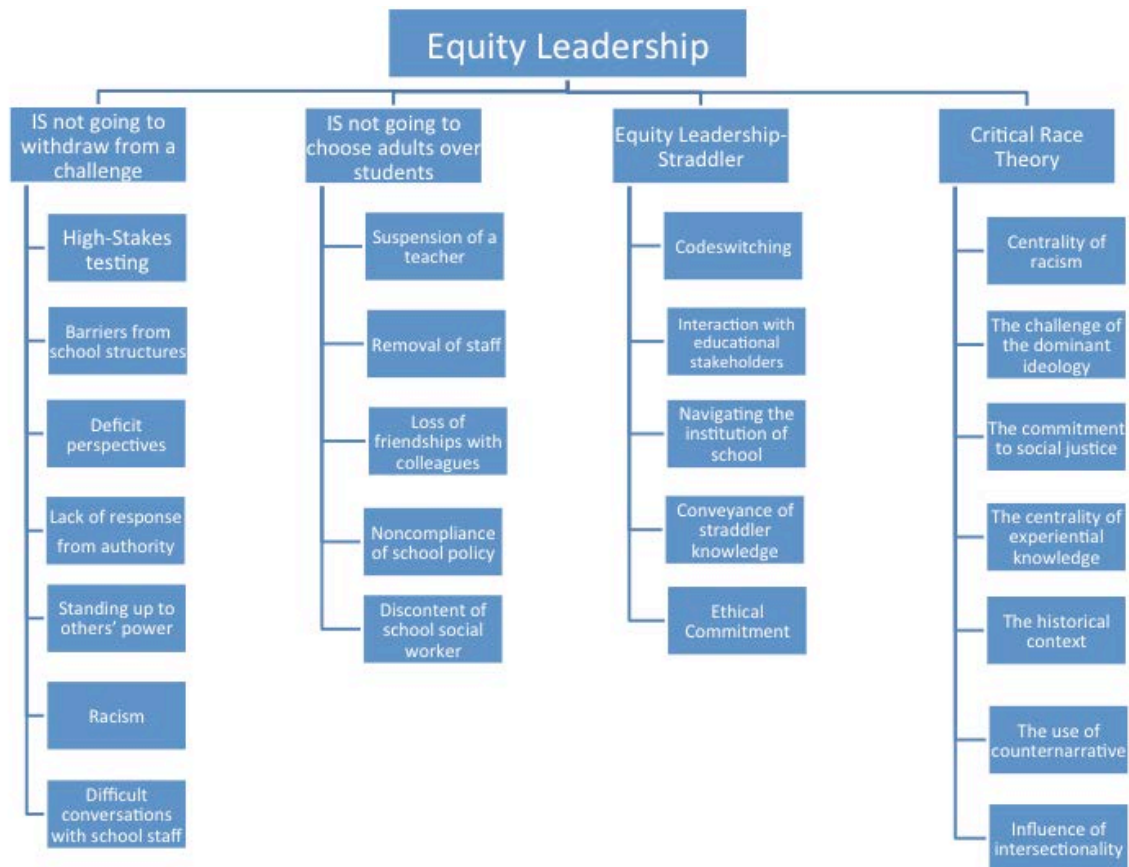
5.1.1 Barriers from school structures

In order to educate all students, it is clear that equitable leaders readily confront institutional and human practices that impede the learning of marginalized students. Equity leaders are not willing to ignore or allow inequities to continue to marginalize students. But, are both willing and ready to interrupt against such marginalization for the benefit of their students.

The following narrative by Dr. Grant strongly implies the action those impartial minded leaders have to commit too:

> If you desire to work towards equity, you are going to have to fight for your own kids . . . you can't fight for equity and be status quo and just go along with what they are asking you to do. If you're going to fight for equity, you got to do whatever it takes to help your kids achieve. And I guarantee you most districts aren't going to give you what you need. They are not standing up saying, "Sure we are going to give . . . all the money to your school because your kids need it." No! You got to go find or fight for it or whatever it takes, [to] get what you need to support your school. 'Cause nobody is helping you . . . They're [sic] not going to. . . . So I advocate for my kids all the time and for this community.

According to Dr. Grant, an equity leader means not waiting for supports that may never come. In the following statement, she speaks to those future leaders who are thinking about becoming equity-minded leaders, telling them,

> We are our children's (pounding her hands together) advocate . . .They. Don't. Have. The. Voice. At. The. Table. They. Don't. Have. A. Voice. In. The. Central. Office. They don't have somebody fighting for them. We got to be that voice.

Dr. Grant's narrative above emphasizes what it means to be an equity leader. An equity driven school leader takes a firm action to be a "voice" for advocacy for students. A committed effort to interrupt the marginalization of students of color and of low-SES can only occur through a deep core belief to engage in the necessary work called equity.

5.1.2 High-Stakes testing

In today's accountability era of high-stakes testing, school leader are faced with the difficult position of operating the school structures and budget that aligns with state testing. John Richardson is a school leader who does not withdraw from the challenge around changing his

school's curriculum and enrichment programming because of pressure from High-Stakes accountability. Mr. Richardson's school strongly favors the use of project-based learning in its curriculum and providing students with various enrichment programs. He expresses his schools standpoint on project-based learning as "we think the learning is greater and deeper and more meaningful . . . it's a little like the karate kid . . . you're teaching different parts all along the way" and a kid is "not going to know he knows it all until one day when he tries to use it then he has it all figured out." Yet, recent changes in state assessments have placed a burden on his preferred instructional practice and other programming. He already recognizes that his school is "going to have some dips in test scores for a little awhile" in response to the new state assessments.

Mr. Richardson adds that he has started to get some pressure to change the curriculum of his school and people starting to say, "Don't worry about the water polo team or don't worry about this or don't worry about that. Kids need to just do math, like all day every day and take out the music program." Below, he describes the challenge he encounters in his efforts toward providing *equitable* practices for his students:

> You want to put these other programs to kind of make their lives richer and kind of more fulfilling that sort of thing. And give them the opportunities that . . . again and I know I am picking on . . . but [what] the rich suburban [schools] have. . . . But when your test scores start to dip or things like that. Then people are like, "No you can't do any of that stuff, let's just go back to straight just doing math every moment of every day" . . . that sort of things.

Mr. Richardson reveals the complexity high-stakes accountability has on public schools where exam scores strongly influence the curriculum and enrichment programs to be offered. Mr. Richardson recognizes this challenge has forced him to fight against eliminating enrichment programs. Mr. Richardson presents a major challenge being faced by school leaders today, how

do we continue to provide our students access to opportunities in times of high-stakes testing. Also, he reveals his unwillingness to withdraw from the challenge of revising his schools curriculum and enrichment programming.

5.1.3   Deficit perspectives

Equity leaders are willing to fight for their students. In fact, the fighting for the students reveals part of their courageous commitment. The courageous commitment is revealed when school leaders confront challenges recognized as unethical. Indeed, when Dr. Kirkpatrick was asked the question about what constrains her ability to encourage ethical behavior, immediately she says,

> Nothing . . . I think when you're younger you don't know the words to say and challenge when things are unethical. But when you become of a certain age and it is [unethical], you cannot sit quietly anymore . . . you don't accept it. So when unethical things happen—call it out. You don't sit and say, "Oh well, you know, it's ok that them poor little bad kids don't get it." *Are you kidding me*! Who made you the savior? You ain't nobody's savior. So yeah, so they get that *real deal* from me—the teachers.

By her own statement, Dr. Kirkpatrick's work towards equity leadership is accentuated by those ethical principles that fortify her willingness to engage in difficult, and often revealing communications with adults. The pursuit of developing equitable schools resides in the reality that to achieve such equity, school leaders will engage complex dilemmas that often call for the use of ethical and/or moral decision-making. Shields (2014) argues that engaging "in deep and meaningful ethical, transformative leadership, therefore requires that a leader have the courage to examine, challenge, and as necessary, correct situations and practices that promote inequity" (p.

33). Here, I believe Shields's suggestion that courage is necessary to correct situations and practices are parallel with Dr. Kirkpatrick's *real deal* leadership style.

5.1.4 Lack of response from authority

Two school leaders (Bill O'Neal and Mia Stanfield) reveal their unwillingness to withdraw from the challenge of receiving a lack of response from authority. Dr. O'Neal and Ms. Stanfield demonstrate the quality of *persistence* against challenges they encounter with central administration. As Dr. Grant has shown, in order to work towards equity, school leaders cannot just sit and wait for the support to come. In fact, Dr. O'Neal offers an example of the action/role required by equity leaders. He tells the following story:

> So the school principal has a huge role in improving equity. That comes with my advocacy for the students. . . . [L]ike when I want something, and this is not in my nature . . . I have to be *annoying* about it. Like I'm not: I'm not that person. Like I'll send you an email . . . like all right, I want this and I want this done. But now, like when I want something and I know it's something [the students themselves need], I have to make sure, oh you didn't respond to me this time. Let me make sure that I send you one [email] two days later . . . Now, I am sending it to you every two days and now I am cc'ing your *boss*. . . . So that's been something that I have [had] to step out of my comfort zone because I'm like, yo . . . other people should be just as passionate. But that's not the case.

From Dr. O'Neal's above narrative, he reveals how rather than accepting his colleague's non-responses, O'Neal reveals something of his insistence on getting a reply to his earlier emails. He sends a third email to his colleague but also he sends a copy to the department head. O'Neal shows his readiness to confront a challenge for the good of his students. O'Neal is not standing down, in short, has meant a continuous appeal in the face of disregard for the requested response by his colleague. O'Neal would not be denied.

Principal Mia Stanfield reveals another story where a school leader who does not withdraw from a challenge demonstrates the quality of persistence. Ms. Stanfield describes a challenge she had during the summer regarding a proposal she submitted requesting an additional math teacher. She states that she had submitted the proposal "because we have a large ELL population. And I knew that we were getting a lot of new comers and I feel like they weren't getting . . . a lot of support in math." Also, she had noticed the school's "math scores declining" and "teachers struggling with trying to meet students needs. I see *students* frustrated because they're not understanding." Ms. Stanfield reveals that her proposal had been elevated to a point where she met with several administrators in central office. She tells the following events that took place in the meeting with the various central office administrators,

> And so in this meeting, he's like well what is she going to do all day? *What do you think she is going to do*? *She is going to teach*! You know well how many periods? Just like everybody else. She is going to teach 6 or 7 periods. Like I'm not asking for another teacher to have somebody to be like my assistant. She is going to be right in front of kids, like the proposal outlined everything. Rationale, why, research, all of that . . . it was probably like 4 pages. It took me and the ESL coordinator, we worked back and forth on it. I would say over like a 2-day period we worked on it.

Above, Ms. Stanfield demonstrates not only her unwillingness to withdraw from a challenge but also her preparedness to engage in a difficult dialogue. Also, Ms. Stanfield presents her work towards providing impartial leadership extends beyond her black students.

Moreover, Ms. Stanfield states that she offered her supervisor the following query on teaching her ELL students math, "You come do that? And that's what I told him. You come do it, everyday and we'll see how successful you're going to be." Ms. Stanfield reveals that she was successfully able to advocate and get some support for an additional teacher; however, she had to use some discretionary funds. And finally, she was told by central administrators that she will

have to demonstrate the value of the additional teacher and she responded, "Ok we will, we'll have data. We have a clear criteria for entering, [and a] clear criteria for how they would exit the program . . . yeah we'll do that."

5.1.5   Standing up to others' power

Robert Green presents his narrative of not withdrawing from a challenge has meant standing up to others' power. At the time of our first interview, Mr. Green was beginning his second year as principal. His first year at Fenway High School was tumultuous. He comments that many people were surprised that he had decided to come back for his second year. Mr. Green has confronted a challenging responsibility in taking over a school that has already been much underserved. As principal, he confronted being a first year principal of a school that has historically been marginalized. He has worked to transform the school culture, to improve the productiveness of students, to increase teacher efficacy, and to fight against the negative characterization of his school by both the community and the media. His balance as an equity leader has been his willingness to be challenge others' desired control of the school and communicate confidently that he is the leader for his school. During his first interview, Mr. Green states that he had to take a stand against adults in the community and central office who desired to influence and make decisions for his school. Mr. Green revealed to me that during the last school building meeting with adults he made the following statement, "So I definitely took a stand and said, I need to be the leader in this space moving forward." As this story clearly illustrates, Mr. Green had already decided to reaffirm control of his school.

Another principal, Dr. O'Neal, demonstrates a second story about having to stand up to others' power. Dr. O'Neal revealed the indirect challenge data scores (such as on state exams) have in his efforts toward providing equitable practices in his school. He states,

> So because we are so low, the powers that be sometimes . . . I got to kind of . . . like push back on it . . . *but* . . . it's hard, 'cause when your scores are so low . . . they want to come in and *dictate* to you, you need to do this, you need to do that, you need to do that, you need to do that (tapping fingers for each one). . . . Sometimes the data . . . and rightfully so, the district has to put certain things in place to say these are things that we are doing (clapping hands together) and we need to take control, da da. So, I have to do a lot of making sure, I keep them at bay, so that we can kind of . . . figure this work on our own.

Here, Dr. O'Neal asserts his ongoing efforts to remain both strategic and firm in keeping others' powers from prescribing school actions to improve his school. He is determined to affirm both his responsibility and identification as leader of the school.

5.1.6   Race and racism

Mr. Chambers's unwillingness to withdraw from a challenge took place two weeks prior to our third interview. During our previous two interviews, Mr. Chambers had seemed proud to reveal that at his school he had not yet confronted any serious societal or social issues. However, the turbulent political climate taking place in 2017 has revealed this country's continued struggle with societal issues of racial and ethnic matters. Mr. Chambers states, "I hadn't dealt with any racial slurs until the last few weeks, and [now] I've dealt with two." In the following story, he explains what happened next:

> I called an emergency staff meeting. I informed [teachers] that these [slurs] are happening. I informed them of my vision for our ethical responsibility, and it was heartening to see that I didn't have to establish [a teacher] buy-in. I didn't have to convince anybody. They were [as] dismayed as I was. And so we re-emphasized our

diversity training, from the school counselor standpoint, from each individual kindergarten through fourth grade teacher standpoint. And we've made sure that that training was . . . specifically targeted to the students who committed the racial slurs—the act of saying the racial slurs—but also [those] just [as] pervasive throughout the environment.

In this above statement, Mr. Chambers reveals a pivotal moment that he has had to confront head on. Here, his equity leadership practice—underscored by an ethical responsibility—was to immediately identify and confront those social incidents in order to directly prevent their spread throughout his school's culture.

Another direct step Mr. Chambers has taken in response to the racial slurs at his school further demonstrates how he is one to not shrink from a challenge. Mr. Chambers had a meeting with the parents of the students who were involved in using the racial slurs. He reveals that he had some "stark direct talk to the parents of the students who used the slurs" and he didn't shy away "from that 'courageous conversation' to say, I am aware of where [students' use of racial slurs] is from. Can we talk about your feelings?" He continues,

> I was willing to say, I know where this is from. Perhaps we need to check ourselves at the door here. And maybe have a conversation . . . I won't control the ethics in what you *espouse* in your home. But, I will let you know what's appropriate here [at the school] and what my point of view is. So we had some productive conversation on both sides as far as that was. And I know the response was very much appreciated by the black family and the Muslim family . . . whose child had to deal with this. And I also had more productive conversations than I expected out of [those] families with the students who used the term.

In such a response, Mr. Chambers reveals something of his personal principles that guide his praxis to have those courageous conversation with both families and students. His lasting thoughts about his professional experiences reveals what I argue is the difference between an

equity minded school leader and those leaders who fall short of meeting the standards of the public school policy—not willing to withdraw from a challenge.

James Chambers reflects on his above incident, telling me, "When I looked [the parent] in the eye and said, I know what you're saying at home. And that can't fly here. I know for a *fact* other principals aren't willing to do that." Mr. Chambers has been assured by his fellow administrators in his district that they would never do that. In fact, colleagues have told him, "Man, I wouldn't touch that one." But, Mr. Chambers believes, "You know, but I feel that as long as I am doing a job like this, these are the things I have to do." This statement shows something of the resolve of Mr. Chambers. It is telling us that Mr. Chambers sees that part of his responsibility as a school leader is to have the courage not only to not withdraw from a difficult challenge but also to confront and deal with one.

Dr. Thompson is another school leader who demonstrates the unwillingness to not withdraw from a challenge of the demanding undertaking of engaging in courageous conversations about race with her staff. The last six years of Dr. Thompson's school journey toward inculcating equitable practices has been centered on engaging in professional development with teachers around developing their racial consciousness. Indeed, she states, "we don't shy away from conversations about race. We don't shy away from conversations about these four agreements (see appendix 1) and speaking our truth about our students, and being able to experience discomfort when we talk about issues of race." Here, Dr. Thompson reveals not only her commitment to not withdraw from the challenge of engaging in discussions about race but also admitting that it is not easy.

Moreover, Dr. Thompson shares a lasting story around the professional development of race. She states,

One story that stands out most for me is a professional development done with my staff in the library, and we were sharing our racial profiles. So, each teacher was asked to write a summary of your racial profile—when did you first encounter race? And just realizing how intimate this moment was for teachers to really reflect and to share their truths and their stories. And we had one teacher who had gone through a series of these workshops and never shared. He was always present, he was always on time, and typically he's not a very quiet person, so I understood that he was experiencing some discomfort. When I think of these four agreements and that I had to expect and accept some non-closure, and realize that he was probably wrestling with this new information and where it sat and resonated with him.

And finally, after . . . it was probably a year or two of the equity professional developments . . . that this teacher *spoke his truth* and talk about how this new work resonated with him, and how he lived his life not really realizing that he could *choose* to deal with race or not. But just hearing him talk . . . it showed me that he now felt safe enough to share his truth, and that even when others are experiencing discomfort, or present but not verbalizing where they are sitting, to stay confident in moving forward with the work, because we all have multiple, varied entry points into this work. We all come from varied backgrounds, varied experiences, but we must be consistent in implementation and moving forward to bring others on board.

And he has evolved as a teacher here at this school, and I truly see his effort to implement some of these best practices and to show up as a racially equitable leader now, because of some of this new learning, even in his *engagement* with students, even in his *tone* with children. And we did a lot of background work on the power of that and how language is so important, and how it's not just what you say but even how you say it to our children. And that many times these kids hear yelling and screaming—but if you truly want to maximize your experience with them, you speak to them in a way that you want, just that reciprocal engagement. And so, you see some of these best practices manifested now, and so it just lets you know that this work is not being done in *vain*.

Above, Dr. Thompson highlights that she recognize one teacher in particular who she was concerned with in engaging her staff with courageous conversations about race. Yet, she continued to persevere and after a few years of continually engaging with PDs on race the teacher she was concerned with finally opened up and revealed the significant influence such PDs had on him. Indeed, Dr. Thompson's story about her efforts to not withdraw from the

challenge of engaging her staff with the subject of race was validated by the transformation of the teacher in her story.

5.1.7 Difficult conversations with school staff

I use the narratives of three school leaders (Stanfield, Kirkpatrick, and Thompson) to come demonstrate the uncompromising commitment from not withdrawing from the challenge of engaging teaching staff in difficult conversations. The three school leaders describe how they specifically elevate and target a component in the district's teacher evaluation rubric that requires educators to "implement lessons equitably" with their teachers. Overall, the district's teaching evaluation rubric has 24 components spread across four domains. Impartial school leaders in this study reveal something of their *heart* and *emphasis* by choosing to hold teachers accountable for the one teacher evaluation component that targets implementing equitable practices. Dr. Thompson believes that addressing *equity* cannot "be an option" because "teachers, educators, adults can't choose whether or not to address issues of race. They could no longer choose, because if given a choice, they can always choose not to address it. It's comfortable not to have to address it." School leaders who ground their work in supporting students of color and of low-SES knowingly and willingly engage in the uncomfortable work of fairness and justice. Moreover, the school leaders reveal two particular forms of procedures for accomplishing their engagement with teaching staff: frank and warmhearted.

Ms. Stanfield reveals how she engages in frank conversation with her teaching staff about the equitable implementation of lesson plans. Ms. Stanfield expresses how she uses the component centered on equitable practices in the teacher evaluation to support her work toward impartiality. Ms. Stanfield recognizes that the equitable component in the teacher evaluation

rubric does not "encompasses everything, but it's a start" to be able to engage in conversation with teachers around equity. She tells of a tool provided within her district's teacher evaluation assessment that school leaders can *choose* to use in their leadership practices:

> But, I think it goes back to if we value it and if we do engage our staff in that way, and elevate it as a priority. And we also have a responsibility through our teacher evaluation system . . . So, as part of [the teacher] evaluation each year . . . when [I am] going in, observing their instruction and interaction with students there are three elements that [I] look for: specifically acknowledging and affirming multiple perspectives in the classroom, how they enrich the curriculum to meet the needs of students, and how they foster efficacy and advocacy in their space. And so, there is an expectation that principals are evaluating that. Giving teachers feedback around it . . . And I think it goes back to if the principal [is] comfortable being in that space, do they value it, and do they support teachers in growing their practice.

Ms. Stanfield reveals the recognition of using something in the district's mandate in teacher evaluations to support her work towards impartiality. She further explains how she uses the teacher evaluation:

> *I have individual conversation with teachers after every formal observation that I do—we have conversations specifically about elements of strengths in growth in their practice.* And then specifically I try to elevate . . . equity. [I] try to help them . . . through our conversation uncover . . . *in this particular lesson what did you do that was equitable. . . .* And let's look at, "Well how did you honor and elevate multiple perspectives?" "What did you do specifically?" "What did you do to allow students to socialize their intelligence?" "What moves did you make?" "How did you structure that?"

Here, Ms. Stanfield describes her engagement with the difficult conversations of equity during conferences with individual teachers. Ms. Stanfield does not withdraw from the challenge of participating in difficult conversations with staff.

Dr. Kirkpatrick is another school leader to reveal her engagement in frank or what she calls "real deal" conversations with her teachers who she perceives to not making the appropriate professional progress to educate all students at her school. As an elementary principal, Dr.

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Kirkpatrick describes both her motivation and justification for not withdrawing from the challenge of engaging in difficult conversations with her staff based on the future outcomes of young children who are not properly educated. She tells of the frank conversations she has with teachers,

> So you [are] either going to get with the program or you're going to leave the program. It's really simple. You pick. I'm giving you the opportunity . . . I'm going to tell you. This is not working anymore. This does not work. You are not educating kids. You're doing [a] disservice to kids. I've supported you. I've done this, this, this, this, this, this and let's look at this last year. This, this, this, this . . . and yet you're still not bringing it to me. Here's the data that tells you that—so now you make the decision. Learn how to do it or get out the field . . . But stop hurting kids. And that's a heart thing. . . . [Students] are not going to be all right. The pipeline for prison starts with kids not mastering at third grade. We all know that that research is so old. Yet, we perpetuate it.

Above, Dr. Kirkpatrick does not shy away from communicating with her teaching staff that are not making improvements. Also, Dr. Kirkpatrick demonstrates how those impartial school leaders not only have frank conversations but also support teachers in order for teachers to improve their practices.

Dr. Thompson, on the other hand, demonstrates how she uses a warmhearted approach in her efforts to not withdraw from the challenge of engaging in difficult conversations with her teaching staff. And again, Dr. Thompson uses the district's teacher evaluation assessment to engage in what she believes are courageous conversations. She tells the following story about a difficult conversation she had with a teacher:

> Just recently, I had to have a conversation—I had to have a courageous conversation— with a teacher here at this school, who had been teaching for about three years here. She's new to our district, new to the city, so she's just been with me. And what I've learned about this young lady is that she really wrestles with feedback, so when I give her feedback about her practice, she often becomes defensive in her stance—her body language—and kinda retreats. And I believe that because of relationship, because of

being an equitable leader, where I am building individual relationships with each of my staff members, I was able to have that difficult conversation with her.

Had I not modeled for her what it looked like to practice equity with students and other staff, I don't feel that she would've been receptive to the feedback that I had to give her. But I think she could literally see—it burdens me when you are disgruntled or displeased, because that energy translates to kids. And so, I need you to be okay. So, I'm gonna stop what I'm doing, I'm gonna take the time to bring you in, and have that difficult conversation and recognize that these are our norms for engagement. And it may not always be comfortable. We may not walk away on one accord, but because students must be at the center of all that we do, we have to have that conversation about these brown lives in front of you. And you've gotta receive my feedback, and your practice has got to change, because this is a best practice for kids, it's a non-negotiable, and I still love you—right?

But if I weren't walking the walk, she'd have walked out of here and blew that off. But we were able to hug, embrace, and she apologized for some things and some misunderstandings. This work is . . . this is important work. So, I don't know that that's equity or just a best practice or just leadership, but I can frame it with equity because I'm talking about the lives of the brown children in the classroom. And that it's important for me to build relationships with my teachers beyond the class, to ensure that they are centered and grounded, and at a place where they can offer their best selves to children. And if they can't, if there is any barrier, anything in the way of that, then it's my professional obligation to interrupt it.

Dr. Thompson has cultivated a school culture through her direct modeling of the equitable expectations that allow how to engage her staff with difficult conversations about pedagogical practices. Dr. Thompson sees her responsibility is to interrupt instances where she observes inequitable practices being committed by her teaching staff. She supports her focus on balance in teacher practices through the evaluation process. Finally, Dr. Thompson raises the following sentiment about school leaders and other educational stakeholders:

And I talked about this before, but my work here isn't done until I know that I've done all that I can for every single child that walks through those doors, to provide them with an equal opportunity to be successful in this life. And so, I often feel that for some leaders, if they are not mandated to make some changes, they won't . . . folks still have the option of choosing whether or not they want to deal with racial equity. Some don't believe in it, and some of these folks are educators, right before our children every day.

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Ignoring inequities is not an option impartial school leaders in this study consider. Here, Ms. Stanfield, Dr. Kirkpatrick, and Dr. Thompson purposely use a resource by the district to support their work towards fairness and justice; in spite of the intensifying of turbulence such action precipitates.

5.2   IS NOT ONE TO FAVOR ADULTS OVER STUDENTS

5.2.1   Introduction

In working to reduce and/or challenge inequities in their schools, school leaders in this study reveal a second quality: not favoring adults over students. In this study, school leaders highlight the idea that relationships with all educational stakeholders are a vital element in their work. Nevertheless, for these impartial leaders recognizing what is best for their students comes first—such recognition entails what Dr. Grant calls addressing the "ugly" actions of adults. In addressing such actions, then, school leaders offered decisions that address the best interest of students at the forefront: (1) the suspension of a teacher, (2) the removal of staff, (3) the loss of friendships with colleagues, (4) the noncompliance of a school policy, and (5) the discontent of a school social worker. Indeed, for such school leaders their decision-making desires for fairness and justice must place first what is best for their students.

5.2.2   Suspension of a teacher

School leader John Richardson, for example, tells a story about a decision he made for the benefit of students at the inconvenience of a teacher at his school, even though that *decision* led Mr. Richardson to experience an emotional strain. The incident occurred during Mr. Richardson's first months as the head of his charter school. He tells me,

> And it was about six-months into my role as [head of his charter school] and there was a [teacher] who just straight out refused to do something. And it was for kids . . . watching kids before they got on the bus. And he just felt like that wasn't his role, he didn't need to do it. So he stopped showing up for this duty.

Mr. Richardson went on to explain the interaction with the teacher:

> "And you know you have to go to this duty." No. "You have to go." No. And he was pretty popular, he had been here 10-15 years. . . . I remember coming in [to the school] and the PTO asked me to come to a meeting. And I came in. And I was a little ambushed; there was about 30-40 angry parents. And you know, I was like "Wow!" And they were like . . . "why did you suspend him" . . . I had to sit down and I had to explain. And after I explained everything, the parents were like . . . "why didn't he just go down and watch the buses?" . . . You know it was that kind of thing. That was a pretty rough time.

In this story, Mr. Richardson reveals that making leadership decisions in the best interest of students can conflict with adults. Mr. Richardson was able to communicate his argument and to gain support from parents for his decision to suspend the teacher.

5.2.3   Removal of staff

There are three school leaders (Drs. Kirkpatrick, Thompson, and Grant) in this study who reveal that sometimes making decisions in the best interest of their students has meant not only

confronting but also intentionally removing staff from their schools. Firstly, Dr. Kirkpatrick describes an experience about being taught some of "those hard parts of the job" from a senior principal in the district. Dr. Kirkpatrick expresses that "rating a teacher out is a hard part of the job. It is not easy . . . because you're going to sit in Federal Court, 'cause [the] teacher is going to challenge your evaluation." Dr. Kirkpatrick continues,

> I've been able to get people out of the field without having to go that route [rating a teacher out]. Because I've been able to talk to them and council them and say, "You're hurting children." And I've done it with at least 12 different people. From substitutes to secretaries . . . [and confronting them that way is] a part of who I am.

Here, we can readily see that Dr. Kirkpatrick's reasoning to engage in taking such a step to remove staff from her school is in the best interest of her students. She recognizes that some staff members were underserving her students and she would not accept this.

Secondly, Sophia Thompson, like Lesley Kirkpatrick, was able to engage with a teacher who was not committed to the culture Dr. Thompson is establishing for her students at her school. Dr. Thompson describes the *balance* necessary to educate her students,

> What equity work is forcing me to do is to really be honest and courageous in the conversations that I have with teachers about their practice, their engagement with children both in and outside of the classroom, [and] about their need to show up from a place of groundedness and centeredness. . . . Those are courageous conversations that have to be had with folks about this being their life's work or not. And me being totally o.k. with them if it's not and willing to write them a letter of recommendation to a place that they think they are a better fit . . . the children matter that much to me. And if this work that I am presenting, if this vision that I am presenting, doesn't feel right, if it doesn't make sense, if you don't believe in it, then I give you my blessing to find that which is true for you. So just having the courage to have those kinds of conversations because these children of color, they can't afford for folks to be before them who aren't sold out to this work.

Dr. Thompson's goal to be fair and impartial for her students has meant making sure that her

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teaching staff hold the same cultural values she is working to establish in her school. Dr. Thompson ends her narrative by commenting, "This is a unique place, I only need people here who want to be here . . . and that teacher [that I pointed to earlier] did transfer out." Dr. Thompson believes her responsibility as a school leader is what is best for her students and not the adults.

And thirdly, Dr. Grant is a principal whose commitment to her students has meant readily engaging in the courageous conversations of removing those staff members from the school that do not meet her standards. Dr. Grant readily confronts staff members that according to her "talk crazy" meaning make disparaging comments to students. Such a commitment to her students becomes apparent through her guiding purpose "love." Dr. Grant tells me, "I desire for children at Lewis to first of all know that they are loved and valued . . . And I want [each one of] them to know, 'You are good, you're amazing, you're a miracle.'" Dr. Grant reminds me that "Everybody up in here . . . got to talk like me." Indeed, Dr. Grant's stance with those staff members who don't meet her standards is rigid and abrupt:

> Don't talk to my kids crazy, I don't tolerate that. It's not tolerated under me. I pull folks aside 'cause I try not to embarrass you in front of children. But [if] you continue to do it, you're going to get embarrassed in front of the kids 'cause I've asked you nicely on several occasions, don't talk to my babies like that. And I had my music teacher quit. I mean straight walked out. Put the keys on my desk and left because I don't allow [talking crazy]. I don't allow it.

Dr. Grant's leadership commitment to her students sometimes places her in the difficult circumstance of confronting the staff members in her school. Dr. Grant has frank conversations with her staff:

> We have to give these kids the chance. And so, some of it is just frank conversations where I have to walk up to [school staff] and tell them. . . . I have a couple that I've had

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to really hit [with] frank conversations, "When are you going to quit playing with my babies." I fired my lunch lady today. Because she talks bad to my children, that is an equity issue for me. "Why do you feel you have to talk to my babies like animals?" . . . I called the central office, I told them "I don't want her in here and I don't know where you going to put her, but she got to get out of here." 'Cause you can't continue to talk to my kids that way . . . I don't allow it and so my whole persona of, "I love you" and [her students] knowing that, that's my way of making sure that equity gets addressed. You better . . . fake it [till] you make it. But you better be telling these kids you love them and hugging them and treating them like you love them. When they walk into your classroom, they better *feel* the love.

5.2.4   Loss of friendships with colleagues

Dr. O'Neal demonstrated his commitment toward what he believed to be the best for his students—who he calls "scholars"—required him to embrace the loss of friendships he had with colleagues. His leadership practice at his school has meant thinking about and working to develop what is best for his students and not what is most convenient for the staff he leads. Dr. O'Neal proceeds to tell the following story touching on his growth as a leader in making decisions in the best interest of his students. He tells me,

> I think . . . and I am going to be honest . . . maybe my first year on the job I was like . . . alright how is this going to impact the teachers and also being a teacher myself, I am . . . cognizant of teachers, what they need and what they have, making sure that they could do their job effectively. And . . . I am still cognizant of that. But then, as I started to progress in the job and . . . when I started putting stuff in black and white terms . . . just like look, "Is it best for the kids? What do the kids need? Is this in the best *interest* of the students?"

Here, Dr. O'Neal reveals something of his awareness about what he has experienced in the past, concerning his professional shift from what is in the best interest for teachers to what is in the best interest for students. He provides an example of an incident where a teacher in the face of

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disrupting the school culture, had been asking to change her teacher assignment duty for personal

reasons, He recalls this experience:

> [The teacher asks] "Dr. O'Neal is there something else that I could do beside X, Y, and Z?" So, I ask "Why *can't* you do X, Y, and Z?" "Oh . . . I got to pick up my kids at such and such time, and I got to do this, and that's like a lot of preparation." . . . So no [to me] that's about the adult.

Such a conclusion by Dr. O'Neal reveals something of the dilemma of having to make choices

that conflict with the best interest of students in the face of disrupting the school culture.

Dr. O'Neal's professional shift, I've come to believe, comes with a level of ethical

conflict. O'Neal addresses the question regarding what might impede his decision-making with

what he offers here:

> I think . . . sometimes, especially when you see something inappropriate happen, and I am not even talking about work . . . Because sometimes . . . you don't respond. And you ask yourself, "Why didn't I respond?" . . . And I think, I've become better at that, of course, as I [have] gotten older. But I think part of that is your own insecurity. Like you stop and say, "Well, who am I, am I doing . . . everything I am supposed to do to tell somebody else." And so . . . I hold myself back sometimes . . . and I am getting much better and this job has pushed me out of my comfort zone . . . But I have found myself in the position, because of the community that I serve, having to be like a *serious* advocate and I am not caring if you ain't my friend, like I've lost friends, like I don't care if you're not my friend afterwards, but if it is something that these kids deserve, if it something I know they should have, yeah I do what I need to do . . . I've kind of amped that up . . . like 200%, since I have been in [this principal] role.

O'Neal recognizes that his ethical position to serve both his students and the community has

meant being comfortable with being disliked by adults. In the following statement, he

summarizes what he has learned as a school leader working towards fairness for his students:

> So if you're a person that doesn't like confrontation and . . . I'm not a person that likes a whole lot of confrontation. But . . . probably my first couple of months in this job I got it popping like early on—like for real. But, you have to, to do this work for the kids, you

have to step out of your comfort zone. So, that may mean be[ing] confrontational with adults; that may mean severing friendships that you may have had with people in order to get the work done; that may mean being perceived as curt or rude. And that's just, you know, that's just it. But it's not comfortable work. Sometimes it's not fun work. It can be fun at times, but it's not fun work. . . . I've lost friends, professional people who I was friends with before, and I'm not friends with now because . . . it's about the kids and . . . that's what it's about.

Dr. O'Neal's words and experiences, here, have helped me to recognize that at times putting students first places school leaders in the difficult reality of losing collegial camaraderie's.

5.2.5 Noncompliance of school policy

School leaders in this study have revealed the complexity in their role as school principals working within an institution that has established policies in place. Although school policies are created intended to support students, sometimes policies can have some unintended consequences. Thus, school leaders in this study demonstrate their unwillingness to withdraw from a challenge pushes them to be noncompliant of school policies. Ms. Stanfield describes a narrative where she disagreed with some of her teaching staff that were in compliance with a "policy." At the time of our second interview, the school had had a two-hour school delay because of inclement weather. Unfortunately, during two-hour delays, schools in the district do not serve breakfast. Ms. Stanfield reminds me that every student at the school eats, so she tells the following story:

> I had a little boy . . . at lunchtime today. A teacher [was] supervising him. He [the boy] had 3, . . . like, little cheese steaks for lunch. And the buns are separate [from] the meat . . . all of [it is] separate. And he had three hot dog buns. And one person [a teacher] said to him, "Why do you have that many buns?" And he [the boy] was like, "Well I like bread. I really want one. I really want them." I know that he is [a] child that's not eating. He is one of the [students] that came in wanting a breakfast. So he is kind of trying to stuff himself, I guess, because maybe . . . this is where he gets his meal . . . But I know that his family

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has been doubling up, I know the family is homeless . . . So, there is a lot of need and so I said to the teachers, "just let it be. Whatever. What does that hurt anybody? It doesn't. Don't beat him up about it . . . Just let it be."

Here, clearly, Ms. Stanfield sided with the student and requested that teachers set aside the "rules" for that student. Such a decision is, I believe, grounded in Ms. Stanfield's knowledge of the student and her background of open-mindedness for her students. Also, impartial school leaders do not let policies dictate actions that in the best interest of students.

5.2.6 Discontent of school social worker

Lastly, I offer a look at principal James Chambers whose use of an alternative approach to provide support services for a group of black students was confronted with pushback by some members of his school. Yet, Mr. Chambers did not withdraw from the challenge of unfavorable responses in order to provide the services he felt students needed to *bond* with the school. The alternative approach promoted by Mr. Chambers was to recruit and promote a black volunteer mentorship program. The program was designed to help 10 black students who were struggling, but some staff members met the program with strong resistance. Here, Mr. Chambers reveals something of his struggle with implementing the program:

> It's interesting . . . [There are] people who are thankful that an alternative approach is being tried [and those people] realize that traditional means . . . hasn't elicited change. So, there is a willingness to say, "Hey, thanks for trying." And even the skeptics are in that camp. Because they [were] not sure how [the program] was going to work. Now, I will say, that the more the stakeholders were directly involved with the students, the more . . . passionate take they had on it. [Yet,] there was a caseworker who kind of felt she was being usurped a little bit. And she spoke negatively about the process. Not even knowing how it was going. Saying, "Oh, so he has a friend now." So that's [the black mentorship program] going to make a big difference. Very negative talk. That was the only real push back we received. So I welcomed her to come in, observe, and take a look. She declined.

Mr. Chambers discusses how some teachers and a school social worker were skeptical of Mr. Chambers's unconventional strategy of starting the external black volunteer mentorship program. As principal Mr. Chambers tells me, he was not going to stop the mentorship program because some staff members did not like it. By inviting the presence of a discontented social worker, Mr. Chambers makes known his commitment that in his continuing to develop a plan that puts students first is a central agenda for him, even at the inconvenience of his staff members.

To summarize, I found through my analysis of the data that it would be more appropriate to frame the commitment of my eight chosen school leaders as two IS NOT actions. The shared narratives of my participants revealed that an equity leader IS NOT one to withdraw from a challenge or stand down and (when challenging inequities) one to favor adults over students. Each participant revealed a strong salience within the two main themes, but the participants revealed distinct subthemes. Also, my participants reveal a firm belief and responsibility that a drive towards equity is *not an option* but *a priority* for them. Such a commitment becomes necessary in confronting external (high stakes accountability, decrease funding, negative media attention) and internal (teacher practices and central office administration) pressures. The school leaders in this study share the belief that their responsibility as a school leader is what is best for their students.

6.0   EQUITY LEADERSHIP-STRADDLERS

6.1.1   Introduction

I have identified the participants in this study as what I am calling "Equity Leadership-Straddlers." I both expand and adapt taking inspiration from Carter's (2006) work with youth and her identification of cultural straddlers to talk about leadership. I identify school principals in my study as equity leadership-straddlers. All eight of my participants revealed through their actions and verbal communications holding tangible characteristics of being "straddlers." I refer to a *leadership-straddler* as someone who is able to both achieve academic and professional success—demonstrated by his or her ascension to the principalship—and still be responsive to black and low-SES communities. I found several factors—both intrinsic and acquired—that helped to develop the perspective of equity leadership-straddlers in this study. For example, my black participants each mentioned how their impartial school leadership position has been influenced by their own racial and socioeconomic background experiences. The two white open-minded principals in my study, were able to "acquire" a responsive understanding of people of both color and low-SES by seeking to learn from the individuals and their communities and value differences.

The background information on the six black principals reveals how they were able to successfully navigate the institution of schooling. Four African American principals in this study

(Lesley Kirkpatrick, Lisa Grant, Bill O'Neal, and Sophia Thompson) obtained a doctoral degree in education; one principal (Mia Stanfield) at the time of participating in this study was enrolled in a doctoral program; and one principal (Robert Green) had received a master's degree and principal certification. I believe for these six equity leadership-straddlers, their ability to successfully navigate the K-20 educational systems was underscored by their various positionalities based on race, gender, and class.

Alternatively, the two white participants in this study (John Richardson and James Chambers) reveal the acquired characteristics through lived experiences help manifested their equity leadership-straddler position. John Richardson has led his predominantly black charter school for the last 15 years. Mr. Richardson discusses how being Greek-Orthodox influenced his experiences growing up. Indeed, it was his positionalities based on ethnicity and religion that made him feel like an "outsider" in the white community. Mr. Richardson's discusses his feeling about interaction with both the white and the black communities. He states, "I was always a little different than everybody else. You know, I always said . . . you're accepted but weren't quite accepted by the white community." He adds, "And then working in a black community for so long . . . you're still looked at [as] you're different. I mean there is no doubt about it." Mr. Richardson's personal experiences have always been at straddling in both white and black communities. His progression as a straddler eventually was promoted by his desire to work and live in urban settings. While he was a teacher, he describes his reasoning behind leaving a suburban school district to work in an urban school:

> A little bit was culture . . . I didn't want to teach in a *tight,* tight place. I wanted to teach in a place where . . . I was going to be allowed to kind of be myself and be my own person . . . .I think too, it was also I felt like, I just liked the city more. I just liked a city environment more. I still do today. I don't want to live in the suburbs, I want to go live in the city.

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In short, Mr. Richardson values the experiences found by living in heterogeneous communities.

Meanwhile, school leader Mr. Chambers discusses how throughout his whole life he has sought to engage with all communities and a seminal moment in his life being his friendship with Miles in third grade [See 4.2.1]. Indeed, Mr. Chambers stories exhibit his lengthy developing recognition in desiring to engage with members outside his white group. True to his word, after graduating college, he began his first teaching job in an urban school district while most of his friends held out for suburban teaching positions. Moreover, a small gesture made by Mr. Chambers during our second interview adds to his leadership-straddler position; the gesture occurred as I extended my hand to greet Mr. Chambers in the formal manner, with fingers tight and thumb out. However, Mr. Chambers extended his hand and we "dapped," a gesture where people clasp their hands and pull each other shoulder-to-shoulder, as a demonstration of a strong bond.

Finally, I define Equity-Leadership Straddlers as those school leaders who through their own positionalities, experiences, and desire to engage with different cultures have successfully applied these skills to how they lead their school. As their principalship position entails, they are successful in both the school environment and working with the various communities they serve. In this section, I offer more closely the distinctive elements of what I am characterizing as equity leadership-straddlers. The eight school leaders in this study reveal various elements that characterize their *leadership-straddler* position: (a) code-switching, (b) social interaction with adults (i.e., parents and teachers), (c) successful navigation of schooling, (d) conveyance of straddler skills to students, and (e) ethical wisdom. These elements come together to identify

equity leadership-straddlers. Below, I present the five elements of an equity leadership-straddler through the context of the lived experiences of my participants.

6.1.2   Code Switching

One element that school equity leadership-straddlers reveal in their role as school principals was the (known and unknown) use of "codeswitching." The study of codeswitching has grown extensively after the 1960s and 1970s, yet general agreement about defining code switching remains problematic (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Researchers argue that code switching helps those who use it in social interactions (Gal, 1988; Heller, 1988). Indeed, Gal (1988) argues, "codeswitching is a conversational strategy used to establish, cross or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their accompanying rights and obligations." (p. 247). With this understanding in mind, I argue my participants use code switching as a formal tool to connect with various educational stakeholders. For this study, various black participants recognize their own use of code switching and describe how they use it in relation to their position of school leaders to support their impartiality. Also, a white principal (Mr. Richardson) readily shared with me his use of codeswitching without recognizing his engagement with it. Overall, equity leadership-straddlers use *codeswitching* to support their efforts to meet the needs of all their students.

Dr. Kirkpatrick is one leader who distinctively recognizes her exercise of codeswitching in her engagement with various families. Dr. Kirkpatrick shares with me how she engages her practice of impartiality with families, "I think you have to work with all of them—the same but different. Sometimes what my . . . Caucasian parents' needs [are] different than what my African

American parents need." Here, Dr. Kirkpatrick recognizes the needs of both black and white

parents may be different sets the groundwork of herself as a leadership-straddler. She tells two

stories showing how she navigates her position of principal when dealing with both a white and a

black parent. Her first story is an incident she had with a white parent,

> So, I'll never forget, early on here in this school, I had a parent who wanted to talk to me about how my token economy system was impacting his child adversely. And is there any other behavior modification classes that we can offer. So, he came in, I had a behavior mode book on my shelf . . . He came in and I said, 'So there is one token economy system that all of us subscribe to. It's called our paycheck. So are you recommending that we don't encourage children, cause they are not going to get a paycheck?' He was like, 'I hadn't thought about it that way.'

Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals when confronted by a member of the dominant culture, she is able to

defend a programming. In fact, Dr. Kirkpatrick recognized that the white parent "was going to

try to intimidate [me] . . . with his knowledge." Yet, she makes the following remark, "But I have

my own knowledge set, I bring my own authors that I am going to talk about . . . he is like, 'oh

she really does know,' So I can't intimidate her on that."

Dr. Kirkpatrick narrates another story, this time with a black parent. She starts,

> So my other parent [black] will come in, 'Why can't I give my kid . . . get this type of treat?' I'd say let's talk about it. Come on in. This is the reason why, 'do you know the most addictive substance in the world is sugar.' Ohhh. It is. I said and we are trying to curb the amount of sugar your child eats because that's important. I said, 'I am not trying to hurt your child . . . you entrust me to educate and to keep them safe.' So, *because of that* [emphasis added by her] I am left with having to limit them on the amount of sugary snacks and to not do that. 'Oh, and I liked that outfit.' 'You like this outfit?' 'I do it's sharp!'

Dr. Kirkpatrick tells me the above story of how she is able to diffuse a situation with a black

parent who also has a problem with one of her initiatives. Thus, Dr. Kirkpatrick tells me,

"[Be]cause we all have different entry points of what we need to have—to know." Moreover, I

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continued to engage Dr. Kirkpatrick about the usefulness for school leaders to have the ability to codeswitch. Dr. Kirkpatrick makes the following assertion, "I code switch all the time. You have to code switch." Indeed, Dr. Kirkpatrick sees the ability to codeswitch helps because it provides her with the ability to take different "entry points to meet and connect with people." Heller (1988) argues that codeswitching can be used as "a strategy which can signal shared culture or be used to create it." (p. 270). Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals something of a leadership-straddler who has learn to aptly use the element of codeswitching in her equity efforts.

Mr. Green is another principal that recognizes his own use of codeswtiching in his leadership role. Mr. Green, also, helps extends the boundaries for the use of codeswitching across intergroup use. Mr. Green, pausing to reflect on his own engagement with codeswitching, proceeds to readily point out to me that it is not simply a black person characteristics because "my assistant principal is a white guy, but he relates well to African American students. Where as the first time he met my son, he complemented my son on the number of Jordan's he had." Consequently, Mr. Green argues that his white assistant principal "can relate in his own way, you know with students" from different backgrounds.

James Richardson is a white school leader who uses codeswitching but does not identify using it. Mr. Richardson reveals to me something of his codeswitching when he shares a story when he was teaching at an alternative high school in the urban Riverdale Public School District (RPSD). He looks at me with a smile on his face and tells me,

> It's funny, I remember talking about external and internal fertilization. And these kids were looking at me like I've got no idea what you're talking about. And then I actually started using some verbiage . . . some verbiage that probably most school's would say you can't talk like that. But they *got it*!

Mr. Richardson reveals how he transverse his own white privilege to responsively communicate with his black students. The element of codeswitching by the fair and just school leaders in this study demonstrates the use of differentiation of language (codeswitching) as a leadership skill and/or characteristic to transverse ethnic and/or racial boundaries to connect with both families and students.

6.1.3 Interaction with various educational stakeholders

A second element relevant to equity leadership-straddlers is the capability to differentiate social interaction with various educational stakeholders (i.e, teachers and students) to achieve the coveted goal of fairness and justice. Ms. Stanfield reveals something of how she takes different approaches to engage her black and white teachers. Ms. Stanfield tells me the story of the *context* of the divergent approaches she takes both with her black and white teachers who struggle implementing equitable practices. Ms. Stanfield offers, "what I might do with one teacher could be very different than what I do with another." First, Ms. Stanfield tells the story about a conversation she had with a black teacher who was struggling to provide equitable practices in her classroom, she states,

> So with a black colleague that struggles . . . I talk to her about being a black woman and like you have a black son. . . . I make the connection just with being black? And we have a connection because we're black. So my approach with that teacher could be very different. Then, [I asked her] "Would you want your black child to be talked to with that sarcasm that you give these kids? Or with these, you know, micro-aggressions that you're showing and sharing." These children don't know that that's micro-aggression. I do, but they're uncomfortable. So the conversations are different.

Ms. Stanfield recognizes both the approach and orientation of the interactions she exercises to engage the teachers' practice of a black teacher is different from what she would use with a

white teacher. In fact, the context of the dialogue Ms. Stanfield uses with a black teacher was their common positionalities based on race and motherhood.

Next, Ms. Stanfield proceeded to openly share with me something of her engagement with a white teacher who was struggling to exercise equitable practices. Ms. Stanfield tells me,

> With the white teacher, I think that I used . . . it definitely wasn't positionality. But what did I say it could be? I think I used like more of the connection to her desire and care for kids. So her . . . it's not her mindset—it's like her personality. Outside of teaching with other teachers she's very caring. That's more of maybe like her personality and the behaviors . . . [and] her emotions. . . . And that you have this, I see this in you.

Ms. Stanfield reveals how she purposely distinguishes her method of entry points to both capture and stimulate her teachers to modify their instructional practices. Also, Ms. Stanfield reveals leadership-straddlers also make distinctive divergent interactions with their teaching staff. Equity leadership-straddlers successfully diverge their engagement with adult educational stakeholders (teaching staff and parents) in their equity efforts.

Furthermore, Ms. Stanfield elaborates on the relationship the element of differentiating social interactions has with impartial leadership. Ms. Stanfield connects what is expected for teachers to do with students to the expectations for school leaders. She waits patiently for me to finish writing my notes and then begins,

> I think what we expect of teachers is what is expected of leaders. So if we're expecting teachers to meet children where they are and find that entry point to [student] learning and build a bridge so that [students] can learn more information, [then] it's what we have to do as leaders. And then everybody isn't the same. And so my approach with Teacher A is very different from my approach with Teacher B and C. And so we have to differentiate and have a broad toolbox of strategies to deal with people—adult learners and practitioners. That's the same thing we expect of teachers. . . . If we are expecting teachers to be able to see the gifts in children . . . then for teachers you would have to do the same thing. And as an equity leader—that's equity. It's not the same for everybody.

Ms. Stanfield connects her leadership practice with the expectations of teachers to differentiate their instruction to the specific needs of students. Clearly, my equity-minded school leaders use the action of differentiating the methods they use to gain entry to different teachers' *hearts* and *passions* as a purposeful tactic.

6.1.4   Navigating the institution of school

A third element found in leadership-straddlers is their own recognition of being able to successfully navigate the system of schooling. Indeed, this element is highlighted not only by the fact of the ability of the eight participants to attain the professional position of school principal but also six of the participants have obtained or are working on receiving a doctoral degree**.** Some school leaders recognize they were able to learn to *comply* with the expectations from teachers to achieve success in school. At times such compliance is revealed by participants as having to customize who they are to the expectation of the school culture. I use the stories of Drs. Grant and Thompson to reveal how participants demonstrate their recognition of navigating the institution of schooling. First, Dr. Thompson presents her interpretation of how she was able to successfully navigate schooling. Second, Dr. Grant presents something of how she came to an understanding of her own way of navigating the system during her undergraduate studies and how such understanding has become a building block towards her advocacy for students.

During our second interview, Dr. Thompson readily shared with me her standpoint on her developing a colorblind perspective due to her ability to successfully breakdown barriers (see 7.1.8). In our third interview, then, I asked Dr. Thompson to further reveal how she was able to breakdown barriers and succeed in school. Dr. Thompson offered me that she recognized the infrastructure she received at home provided her the "belief that I could do anything" and "that if

I really wanted to touch a star I could." After a short pause, she looks at me and began sharing with me something of herself as a student, "I was compliant, I was focused, I was driven, [and] intrinsically motivated." As a result of these attributes, Dr. Thompson believes "I learned the *system*. I learned to navigate the system that's what teachers wanted. All those things I just described." I continued to engage Dr. Thompson in this discussion and she expresses her final thoughts,

> Because of my focus, because of my ability to pick up quickly, I studied education, I studied the teacher, I studied the culture and I picked up early [on] . . . the culture of learning, the culture of teaching and learning, the culture of schooling, [and] the *game* of schooling. I studied and I was a fast-learner and I didn't buck the system—in any way, shape, or form. I wasn't a *threat*.

Dr. Thompson acknowledges something of the characteristics needed to successfully navigate the institution of schooling. This element is essential, for it is the vehicle in which leadership-straddlers are able to reach the role of principalship.

Dr. Grant articulates her ability to successfully navigate the educational institution of schooling. Dr. Grant further expands on what it means to successfully navigate school and how such success extends to skills in her professional career. She shares with me something of the skills a straddler position substantiates,

> You know how to work the *system* in whatever way you've found your in, [you] know how to scratch white privilege enough to move forward. You've learned it, you've learned how to go to school, you know how to take the classes, you know how [to] sit in the interview, you know how to talk to folks. There's a certain way you have to show up, in order to get into these positions—you've figured that out.

Dr. Grant reveals the significance of having the element of knowing how to succeed in school has helped provide her with the skills to become school principals. School leaders need to be

able to possess the skills and attributes that help them successfully navigate the school environment. Moreover, Dr. Grant shares with me it was in response to the negative experiences in college, "I was always able to see, oh is that what I have to do to play? Oh, okay, I can do that. Do I have to talk a certain way? Okay. I'll play—I'll play." Indeed, Dr. Grant recognizes college provided her "the proving ground where I got it—I got it. By the time I left . . . I thoroughly got it." Dr. Grant reveals, then, the skills needed to navigate the institution of schooling are acquired through the experiences in schooling.

The stories shared by Drs. Thompson and Grant reveal the knowledge of how to navigate the system of schooling as both valuable and essential. Indeed, without the possession of this skill, I believe, the eight participants would not be able to achieve academic success and to advance career opportunities.

6.1.5   Conveyance of *straddler* knowledge

A fourth element of the position of leadership-straddler continues and further extends on the third element—successfully navigating the system of schooling. Here, participants discuss the desire to *conveyance* their ownership of knowing how to navigate the system of schooling to educational stakeholders in their school (students and families). Drs. Grant and O'Neal reveal their determination to transfer the skills to navigate the system to their students and families. Indeed, the framework for the advocacy for equity leadership-straddlers is to help others gain the skills leadership-straddlers have achieved.

Dr. Grant reveals how her own unfavorable experiences have inculcated her with a sense of advocacy for students of color and of low-SES. Dr. Grant reflects on such source of her advocacy, "My source of . . . where the source, where [does it] come from, *where* did I *get that*

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from, right? Where did that passion come from? 'Cause it happened to me." Dr. Grant shows the

deep-rooted emotional connection between her own lived experiences and with those students

she works with. She continues,

> I went to [an] inner-city school and I was a very good student—I told you that. And I told you that when I went to college about the professor that . . . [made me feel] as the minority, I felt as the black girl, that I was stereotyped, that my intelligence, I wasn't dumb, but I was treated that way (see 4.2.4). And I felt that *pain* and I said, "I don't ever want a child to feel what I felt."

Dr. Grant demonstrates how my participants continually pull from their past lived experiences to

inform their balanced leadership. The determination of school leaders who experienced painful

events is to both indoctrinate and prepare their students in order for students to not have harmful

experiences. Dr. Grant looks to me and readily shares,

> And so, even being an educator, being a principal, why pull all of this opportunity, why I try to put rigor in front of my kids, why I try to give them exposure to things that they've never done before, [is because] I don't want them to ever show up in a space not having exposure and wondering, "Like I didn't even know that math" . . . [and] looking around at these white kids like they are better than me. I don't want my kids to ever feel that way— in a space. And that's where it comes from, I think that's where it started for me . . . was that I had to . . . in order to be accepted at that university, I had [to] change the way I talked just to fit in and be a whole 'nother person. I had to be acculturated into this white culture in order to be successful—*in life!* And our kids have to be able to know how to navigate that and *it's sad, it's sad.* But it's the truth.
>
> You have to know . . . what happens with some of us [when] we don't . . . [if] we don't navigate all the way through . . . we get stuck and we end up hating ourselves and our own color and then we deny it. . . . Some of my worst teachers have been black teachers that they hate black children and the way that they act and it's [our job] if you got it, reach back and help somebody else—*get it*!

Dr. Grant provides the central aspect of adults is to transplant the skills to others of how to

successfully navigate the institution of schooling. Dr. Grant's conveyance to help her students

"get it," I believe, demonstrates her equity efforts.

And another principal, Dr. O'Neal, demonstrates the element of conveyance of knowing how to navigate the system be applied to parents. Dr. O'Neal recognizes something about how his experiences with parents have strengthened his advocacy for fairness and justice. He shares with me the source of his advocacy,

> So, I think, also another source is interacting with my parents. . . . So we have [students for elementary] and [then] we got to let them go, we got to let them go into the world, you know, with their parents. *But* knowing what our parents don't know—*how to navigate the system*? How to make sure that their child is successful? . . . Number one, it's to teach our parents how to advocate. And you hear me talk about advocacy all the time. Teaching our parents how to advocate, what programs they should put students in? *Matching* their kid, we try to do that here on this end in making sure we are helping the parents make a good decision for middle school (tapping finger on the table). Sometimes it's not the neighborhood school; sometimes it is the neighborhood school. But just making sure we are helping the parents make good decisions (tapping finger on the table) for their *scholars* moving on. So, just knowing, like I'm not going to be there, you know what I am saying.

Dr. O'Neal reveals to me, I believe, something of his awareness as someone who has attained the skills and knowledge of how to navigate the system is to make the idea known and/or understandable to parents. After a short pause, Dr. O'Neal adds,

> Just making sure that they know . . . all right, you know you need to be working, making sure the child has homework every night. If they ain't having that homework every night call me up. Making sure that they are reading regularly. . . . And now they even make the magnet registration, it's due literally in *November*. Our parents, by the time March comes, they be like, "I don't know what school, can I fill out a magnet [registration]." [Dr. O'Neal would reply to parents] "Yo, that registration closed in November." Like you know what I am saying, like that's how they do it, earlier and earlier. So just, I think, knowing what our parents don't know and *helping* them to *navigate the system*, because I haven't come across a parent yet that does not want the *best* for their child. They just have to know . . . how to . . . get that.

Dr. O'Neal story illustrates something of his desire to convey the skills and knowledges to navigate the institution of schooling to his students' parents. Dr. O'Neal's reveals something of

his balance leadership, I believe, when sharing with me his commitment to help his students families "get that" knowledge to navigate the school system.

The two school leaders above, demonstrate how impartial school leaders desire to support students and families gained the appropriate skills to succeed in school. Indeed, Drs. Grant and O'Neal's reveal the attribute of conveyance in leadership-straddlers.

6.1.6   Ethical wisdom attributes

The fifth element of equity leadership-straddler is an ethical component. Leadership-straddlers, I believe, reveal something of equating their open-mindedness efforts with an ethical wisdom. Indeed, Mr. Green readily shared with me the importance of knowing how to engage appropriately with various educational stakeholders. After a short pause, Mr. Green shares with me his thoughts about engaging with various educational stakeholders, "So it's important to be able to . . . communicate appropriately in all environments. Like the word says, "Paul was everything to everyone. Right?" The significance of this statement by Mr. Green is threefold: (1) his priority to respect all audiences, (2) his personal mantra of good character, and (3) his standpoint of being a leader and a servant.

Mr. Green's efforts to "communicate appropriately" reveal a level of human dignity both to not speak down to people and to value connecting with individuals wherever they are stationed in life. Also, Mr. Green reveals something of his personal mantra and/or motto in his phrasing of the scripture of Paul. Mr. Green, I believe, desires to model his communication with educational stakeholders after Paul. Lastly, Mr. Green recognizes the dual role of principalship is to be both a leader and a servant similar to what Paul was. Mr. Green's open-mindedness efforts reminds me of a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in his Letter From Birmingham (1963),

where he defends his nonviolent resistance to the freedom movement. Dr. King states, "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. . . . Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the . . . call for aid (2015, p. 128). Mr. Green readily communicated to me throughout our interviews his belief of a greater purpose for him leading his underserve school. Both King and Mr. Green, I argue, share an ethical responsibility to take a leadership role wherever they believe they are needed.

Overall, in this chapter I develop the elements of my identification of what I am calling equity leadership-straddlers. Again, I both build and extend on Carter's (2006) work on cultural straddlers to my study of school leaders. Carter's (2006) identified cultural straddlers as students of color and of low-SES who are able to both successfully navigate the school institution while with maintaining their own cultural identity. In this chapter, I identify and describe the five emerging elements that characterize a leadership-straddler position: (a) code-switching, (b) social interaction with adults (i.e., parents and teachers), (c) successful navigation of schooling, (d) conveyance of straddler skills to students, and (e) ethical wisdom. In particular, I recognize leadership-straddlers as school leaders who through their own positionalities, experiences, and desire to engage with different cultures have gained the skills to successfully navigate the school environment and engage with diverse communities. The particular various identities of my eight participants help to reveal that the position of leadership-straddler extends across such identities of race, gender, ethnicities, and socioeconomic-class. Indeed, my participants' use the elements of leadership-straddler to underscore their responsibility to provide equitable leadership in their schools.

7.0   CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Equity for me is providing children of color [with] what they need. [That is to say], we're not talking about treating children equally, giving each child the same thing. [But] we are talking about [not only] learning that these children of color have come to us being notoriously underserved, underrepresented [but also] providing them what they need as individual learners, as individual human beings. And that differs from one child to another, in many cases. . . . And when I think of this word *equity*, I can't help but think about color and race . . . Because for me, that's what the word was birthed from—a need to provide children of color with an additional layer of support in attaining their goals.

— Sophia Thompson

7.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I show something of how I thematically mapped the lived experiences of this study's eight participants by way of the theoretical lens of critical race theory. I engaged the participants about their background, inviting them to share with me the lasting stories of their lives, and through such a lens I was able to see something of their lived encounters with issues of race and racism. Within the lived experiences of my participants, I recognize various tenets of CRT that both informs their character and reveals how they continually lead their schools toward equitable practices. Here, I also offer seven tenets of CRT revealed by my eight participants: (1) the centrality of race and racism, (2) the challenge of the dominant ideology, (3) the commitment

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to social justice, (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, (5) the historical context, (6) the use of counternarrative, and (7) the influence of intersectionality. For this chapter, I use the lived stories of the participants to enlighten on CRT's seven featured tenets. To begin, I present two school leaders—Drs. Grant and Kirkpatrick—who have powerfully communicated in our interviews both the recognitions and the applications of critical race theory in their respective schools. And such a communication by Drs. Grant and Kirkpatrick serves to both extend and support the argument of a strong constructive connection between theory and practice and between critical race theory and practicing school leaders. Also, unwrapping their recognitions and applications of CRT provides context for those emerging tenets of CRT revealed by all of my participants. And finally, I go on to integrate the stories of my eight participants to reveal how as school leaders they encounter the CRT tenets both in their everyday lives and in their role as school leaders.

7.1.1   Finding the vocabulary

Two principals in this study not only revealed something of their own knowledge of critical race theory but also discussed how they each apply the elements of CRT to their leadership practices. Drs. Grant and Kirkpatrick are two leaders who, during their doctoral program, came to discover CRT. Here, in this section, I offer how Drs. Grant and Kirkpatrick reveal to this researcher their knowledge of CRT, how they came to find their way into CRT, and finally how they recognize and have come to use CRT in their own leadership practices. When Dr. Grant responds to the question about the background training she has had in diversity or equity, she readily reveals something of her awareness's of CRT. She graciously begins to tell me something of her expertise:

Our [school] district has used Glenn Singleton's *Courageous Conversations about Race.* So I've been trained as an equity affiliate for our district. I've done some training . . . to be able to be a trainer. And I have also done my dissertation. That's what my seven years of study has been in . . . resiliency theory . . . a lot of critical race theory and culturally responsive pedagogy and instructional practices. So that's what I've studied. And so, I advocate for this stuff so much that . . . I've been able to work in seven school districts outside of Riverdale to bring diversity training to those districts and [to] sit on a few dissertations to support people. Because of those professional developments, people have pulled me in. . . . it's something that I'll advocate for, whether I am sitting here in this school, or wherever, I am going to stick up for our kids 'cause I'm just tired of hearing about what our kids can and cannot do.

In the above story, Dr. Grant's commitment both to equity and to her beliefs reveals a great deal about her training, and her advocacy for students of color has been informed and supported by her acquired knowledge of CRT.

Moreover, Dr. Grant was one of the two participants that formally revealed in her leadership practices both her knowledge of CRT and her applications of CRT. I continued to engage Dr. Grant about her awareness of CRT, and asked her about how she came to discover CRT. She tells of the experience that occurred during her doctoral program:

Honestly, it started as I started researching at [the University of] River. . . . Dr. Hamilton . . . I would blame it on him . . . he gave me some stuff to read. You know, when people hear you talk . . . I didn't always have the vocabulary to put what I felt and what I wanted to do [into words]. And he started giving us things to *read.* And I'm like, "*Ohh!*" And [he would] say how about this, look at this, I'm like, "*Ohh!*" So, I was guided in that direction because I didn't know.

Here, Dr. Grant recalls something of both her first academic encounters with the literature of CRT taking place during her doctoral studies and one professor in particular who helped to guide her spirit of inquiry. Also, it is important to point out that because of Dr. Grant's positionality as a black woman and through her own lived experiences, she had already something of an acquired

understanding of the principles of CRT.

In the third interview, I asked Dr. Grant which of her training experiences has inculcated her with that *equitable* perspective to engage her standpoint of impartiality. She responds,

> The *Courageous Conversations* [training] has given me a lens, but [the training is] based on critical race theory. So it would be the critical race theory tenets [that] helped me to look at challenging the majority—that majority voice [and] that majority critique of life—and knowing that minority voices should be at the table [too]. Racial micro aggressions—somebody *naming* that . . . blew me away, like that was like one of my favorite articles, it was like a *love letter*. Because . . . it gives you the vocabulary to put to something that we experience all the time. And so I think that critical race theory has been the piece that [has] really informed my thinking; the whole notion of meritocracy floats in there . . . I was just talking about this today.

Here, Dr. Grant recognizes that she did not always have the language to deeply deliberate on issues of the inequities she confronts in her daily living. Such guiding by her professor has come to directly inform how she combines both her certain knowledge's and her intents with what she has learned through her engagement with CRT. Dr. Grant tells me how critical race theory has not only guided her in using her natural, virtuous character but also grounded her in trusting her leadership qualities. She offers the following story,

> So, my high school was all black and race is so prevalent it's like the air you breathe. So you don't give much thought to it. And I guess you're unaware of how much your voice is not at the table—you're aware of it, but . . . what are you gonna do about it? . . . Critical race theory kind of gave me some *legs*; it resonated with me, because it brought up the tenets that sit in there, where you get to this notion of having a minority voice at the table; your voice *does* matter. . . . A lot of the decisions and policies that I make, I try to make from the voice of my students. I want their voices to elevate and shape what we do, so that we're not perpetuating the same systemic racism that occurs. . . . The permanence of racism, we constantly fight that. I fight that as an administrator . . . I have to address how I deal with parents; it gets frustrating, 'cause there are some social structures that are in place that have our parents do some really funky stuff, and I have to check that at the door and see how I still can be a support to that parent and that child . . . I care about (tapping the table) kids, and making sure that we clear a path, move all the junk out the way, we clear a path for them to have the success academically and just in life in general.

And there's just so many things that are in the way for our children of color . . . if you're walking down a road, there's so much crap in the way that we've gotta clear out. And there's other kids that their road is clear—they're gonna make it . . . That notion of meritocracy, "If you work hard, you'll be successful," and we've got a lot of kids that are working hard, right now, that are still academically struggling, and they're not meeting the target. And so, that's a big conversation that we're having as teachers: How do we support those babies who are working hard? And not trying to lower the standard for them, but how do we really support that child, so that we're not defeating them? And even with our teachers: my teachers work hard . . . And until we really begin to address the communities, with the social structures that need to take place to support our children, us as a school, we can't educate the babies alone. Our affluent neighborhoods have a lot of social capital—our kids don't have that social capital, and so, how do we support them? What kind of efforts will come into an entire community, to help kids be successful in this school?

In the above narrative, Dr. Grant reveals several CRT tenets that substantiates her work as a

school leader: (a) race and racism, (b) experiential knowledge, (c) commitment to social justice,

(d) historical context, and (e) challenge to the dominant ideology. Her knowledge of CRT tenets

informs how Dr. Grant both processes and uses that knowledge to guide her leadership practices.

In fact, she believes that every principal would benefit from having something of a knowledge of

critical race theory. She states,

Everybody, white and black, they do need to understand what life looks like for minority populations. . . . Who runs this [education] system? Who built this [education] system? And who does it benefit? That's what principals need to understand—it gives you a better perspective. And our district has done a lot of work with that, with courageous conversations, and trying to get that into the principals' mind. [Principals] get that construct, they understand a little bit about critical race theory. I think what we lack in a lot of our schools is the practical implication—what does it look like when it is actually filtering out in my actual practice as a principal. And that's where I think we need to take the next step—we haven't done that one.

In this, through her engaged retelling of her lived history, through her knowledge of and

participation with CRT in her leadership career, Dr. Grant reveals something of her insight and

recognition. Moreover, she recognizes that any school leader would benefit in reading about

literature of critical race theory. According to Dr. Grant, then, such exposure can help to uncover and bring to light educational systems that are designed to support social inequities. Yet, progress is needed to understand what practical implications look like within the educational system that used by our K-12 school leaders.

Dr. Kirkpatrick also reveals something of her encounter with and use of critical race theory during the retelling of an experience during her doctoral program. Like Dr. Grant when asked about her training with diversity and/or equity, Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals something of her knowledge of CRT. She tells me,

> [The district] did the "Beyond the Diversity" trainings with Glenn Singleton, the lead author of that work. And so that was very helpful with just trying to see how we can get into conversations to get people thinking about equity and thinking about educating all children—dealing with and isolating race, 'cause that's the one thing that's big around his work. And so that is more of a practitioner-based perspective. *My* research is based on looking at the student achievement gap. And so I used some of Derrick Bell's work. [I] put critical race theory and then the counter work of critical whiteness theory to kind of look at my work. And so that's also part of my experience . . . when you know better, you have to do better. So, that's been also part of how I look at my practice and my work. To determine if I'm doing the right thing or not doing the right thing.

Here, Dr. Kirkpatrick places in parallel her experience with both a practitioner-based and research-based training on the issues of race. For her, learning about CRT has informed her practice because it has motivated her both to know about the existence of inequities based on race and to challenge such inequities. Dr. Kirkpatrick also reveals something of her interests and pull towards CRT, stating,

> It came with just that I couldn't quite understand why brown children were not achieving at the level of their classmates. And it wasn't that they were deficit, 'cause lots of theories operate in a deficit-model as opposed to an asset-model. And when you look [at] our brown children, you engage with them [and] they have a lot of assets [that] they bring to the table. They bring more assets than deficits. But, we as educators from time to time don't know how to access those assets. And actually . . . we always focus on their deficits. So if I

always, everyday came in and talked about what you can't do, then you actually begin to believe that you can't do it. And that is also part of the destruction of the *spirit* and the *soul* of a child. 'Cause children are very impressionable and you do a lot, and it goes a long way, of encouragement for them than discouraging to [the] boys and [the] girls

In her statement, Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals that in her search to find a (counter)narrative that could better confront such deficit models, she was led to discovering and recognizing CRT as a useful theory, one that would help in her work as a practitioner. Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals that her first experiences with CRT literature were with a professor during her doctoral program. As a member of a cohort in her doctoral program, Dr. Kirkpatrick and another colleague would meet with professor Grayson and they would talk of the similarities of their work, especially its likeness to the work of Bell. And Dr. Kirkpatrick looks toward me and adds, "my colleague, she actually reached out and heard from Dr. Bell before he passed." Dr. Kirkpatrick was able to meet other colleagues in her doctoral program who, I believe, were stimulants for her experiences with CRT.

Dr. Kirkpatrick then goes on to further explain why critical race theory and Dr. Bell's work resonated with her own conviction. She states,

> I believe in telling the narrative and then having a counter story . . . [that] goes with the oral traditions of African people . . . so, as we got into Bell's work, it really resonated [in its] being able to explain my research. So that's why I tell stories. I work with kids; I tell stories all the time. So when you know that about yourself, you go into something that's going to be where you can do your best work. . . . But really I just enjoy the story . . . knowing that there is a story and then there's a counter story. I like the whole tenets of critical race theory and just being able to look at a problem, see what the problem is, and be able to develop a solution based on being able to see it from multiple lenses and different tenets.
>
> So, I think that being able to know what I know from looking at Bell's work . . . as I told Dr. Grayson, "You've made me this person . . . I get on people's nerves because they don't want you to think." . . . They want you be to be like, "Okay, yes'm boss. I agree." [But] no, I don't agree. They are like well, "Why don't you agree?" I'm like because here's the reason why . . . They're like "I hadn't thought about it." Yeah. Sure you

hadn't. It's okay. That's why I'm here. [My response] it's annoying for people. They don't like it. They don't. They're like, "I don't like having to talk to Kirkpatrick about none of this stuff. Does she have to come to the meeting?" [I] sure do.

Clearly, one can recognize that Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals a great deal about herself not only how her interest in critical race theory developed but also how CRT has influenced the dialogue she readily encourages with her staff. Indeed, when we take a step back from these two school leaders, we can readily recognize how Drs. Grant and Kirkpatrick, both, enact the tenets of CRT in their leadership.

7.1.2   Centrality of race and racism

In this section, I describe the narratives of various participants who show how issues of race and racism have materialized during the participants' K-16 experiences, professional jobs, and their personal lives. As those participants shared their lived experiences with me, I thought it important to see just how the stories they tell would reveal issues of race and racism without any explicit inquiry in my part. The participants readily shared their stories and thoughts about the issues of race and racism they encountered. I was somewhat astonished, that each was readily able to shed stories of their college, teaching and leadership experiences, and ultimately revealed how something of race and racism remains an uncomfortable subject to engage with in our K-12 educational institutions.

During our first interview, Dr. O'Neal shared some lasting stories from his experiences during his undergraduate studies. Here, he volunteers to share his various individual stories:

> *Oh yeah*! I could tell you a couple. Let me tell you, so there was a professor—I wonder if she is still [there]—she is in the history department. And I remember my first semester freshman year. I was in this history [class] . . . first, you know [I am] coming from . . .

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public schools and I am in these classes like 200-300 kids. It was just crazy. I didn't realize until then that I had bad study skills, too, you know studying . . . you got to teach somebody how to study.

So I got a D on the midterm. And so I am like ok, [He reflected to himself] look I am coming to far . . . like I ain't paid for no D's. And again it's that advocacy . . . so I went to the professor like, "Hey, what am I going to do, like I got a D. I am not here for that. Tell me what the next steps are?" And so the professor begins to ask me . . . background stuff about myself. And I was like, "I am from Highland." She said, "Well did you graduate from public school?" "Yup, I graduated from the public schools." And basically to make a *long* story short, she told me, "I wasn't going to do well in her class." Just simply off my background. She was like . . . "African Americans typically coming from your environment typically struggle. So I plan for you . . . you're probably not going to do well in this class." I was like this is really crazy.

Now mind you, I am still adjusting because . . . like honestly coming into River, coming from Highland . . . I remember one day walking on campus [in my] freshman year, I never knew this many white people even existed. Like . . . never all in one space. I lived in a suite with seven other white boys, like it was just an overwhelming . . . experience. I was called a "nigger," [and] they used to write nasty stuff on my . . . you know back then that's when that little dry erase board used to hang outside, [leaving messages] like "Hey, I came by." This was before text, you know phones weren't big and all that. People [would] write little stuff on your board. And so people would draw, like, nasty pictures . . . . it was something that I had never ever experienced before. But just the fact that [my] first semester freshman year the lady was like, basically, you're going to fail. And I was like "Wow." But [being] the type of person I am, that gets me more excited to do better. So I got like pumped. Like oh so now she thinks I am dumb. So I had to prove her wrong. And so that was kind of a crazy experience for me. That's one that I remember, but I can talk about a couple of things. I remember sophomore year they assigned me . . . [the university housing] had run out of rooms and they assigned me to a fraternity house, a white fraternity house and I came there with my dad and my uncle and they locked all the doors and they like refused to let me in and do all that kind of stuff. And where they called the *police*, it was just a crazy situation. I literally had a police escort, it was just a crazy . . . yeah it was crazy.

Above, Dr. O'Neal vividly recalls three enduring experiences he confronted during his undergraduate studies, experiences that highlight the ongoing issues of race in the United States. Yet, the story about his dismissive professor also reveals how some individuals use unfavorable experiences to motivate them into action. The last story that Dr. O'Neal tells was of a positive story about his experience during his senior when he participated in a unique program that took

students around the world to different countries for the semester. Indeed, the stories Dr. O'Neal tells something of the enduring consequences individuals have in their own encounters with issues of racism.

In the second interview with Dr. O'Neal, he further reflects on how his lived experiences have contributed to his own burgeoning development as an advocate for black and low-SES students. Then, Dr. O'Neal, picking up again on his experiences during his undergraduate program, proceeds to reflect on his present notions about being a leader in a predominantly black and low-SES school:

> My own upbringing and, you know, coming from parents that weren't necessarily well versed in how to navigate a school system, and kind of having to do that on my own, and [I] matriculate onto college and having to advocate for [myself] . . . But, dude when you go to a school and you're a poor black dude from Highland and you go to school with like 30,000 white kids and your meal plan ain't working or financial aid is falling through or you got to talk to a professor . . . [that] takes your advocacy to the next step, [and] if you can see yourself *graduating,* you know that you need to be able to have that vision . . . You have to have a sense of advocacy, fighting for yourself and making sure you can see yourself at that finish line by any means necessary. . . . First of all, it was a training ground for being an advocate for myself and then coming to an underserved community . . . *ain't nothing going to be given to us.* Ain't nothing was given to me and I know, and I think the expectation is for people who look like me, people who look like *you*, is for us to *fail*! People who come from impoverished backgrounds it's for us to fail.

Above, Dr. O'Neal points out that his experiences growing up, attending educational institutions and now leading a predominantly black and low-SES school have grounded his belief that the expectations for students of color is *not to succeed*. Indeed, he readily shares his belief that for a black man who grew up poor and now pointing directly to me and saying for "people who look like you," a Latino male, is that the system is set up against us. This mindset has inculcated Dr. O'Neal with a sense of advocacy and determination toward striving to meet the challenge of such expectations.

Mr. Richardson *remembers* an experience that strongly affected him when he was teaching. Mr. Richardson highlights how socially justice-minded white educators navigate in the spaces that make them confront the difficult issue of racism. In his experience as a teacher, Mr. Richardson tells how he was pushed by the school leader of his school to recognize racism, something that Mr. Richardson finds himself having to continually come to grips with. Mr. Richardson states,

> I had an argument with my old [mentor]. This one thing that really affected me. So, I'm teaching Science here and I'm in my second or third year, and I show up at the Carnegie Library in Pinehill, which is huge, with my class at the time, which may have had 15 kids in it. And we walk in the library and the librarian says, "Do you have an appointment?" Appointment at the library? Who makes an appointment at the library? Or do you have reservations or something? I'm like, "I'm starting to get some reservations about coming in here. What are you talking about?" She wasn't gonna let us in. And . . . we ended up getting in but it took a while and I went back and I said to my old mentor, "Yeah, you know what? We have to call and make plans to go there and all that kind of stuff." And she said yeah, "That's 'cause you took a group of black kids to the library." And I said, "That's not it." She said "No, that's it." I said, "There's no way that's it." And to her point I think that was it. But, you know growing up and not knowing that stuff and not seeing that stuff and not being around it with my parents . . . I never would think somebody would do something like that. But I've seen it now. I've seen it enough times where I know that it does happen.

Here, Mr. Richardson describes a racialized experience that powerfully affected him as a teacher. Mr. Richardson's disbelief in his story about the library reveals something of a mindset disequilibrium as he tries to decipher moments of racialization. Indeed, toward the end of the story, Mr. Richardson recognizes that he has confronted enough experiences through which race and racism appear; yet today he is able to recognize that racism does happen.

The above school leaders, both their exposures and engagements with race and racism have resulted in significant memories still etched in their lived experience. The individual stories highlight that dialogues on the issues of race and racism are still going round and round . . . and

round and are significant. Today's dialogues on race and racism remain both prominent and complex to educators. Dr. Kirkpatrick tells about an experience she had that underscores the intensive commitment needed in engaging in discussions about issues of race and racism today. She tells the following story about how her research interest coincided with the professional development training in her district:

> Work and then research began to collide because the district was starting to work on equity and that's where I met Glenn Singleton. One of the things that I learned is that not everybody can take Singleton because he was bringing the *truth* and not everybody wants to hear the truth about race and racism in education. So, we're sitting and some of the colleagues were like, "Well, let's talk about women." Let's not!

Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals how some colleagues in her district when engaging with issues on race and racism found ways to redirect the real subject under discussion: racism. Her response was to challenge such redirection in order for her and her colleagues to continue to not only investigating but also ruminating on the issue of race and racism in education.

Mr. Chambers highlights the challenging task of unwrapping the issue of race and racism in education. Previously Mr. Chambers had revealed to me a story about an adverse experience with racism by black and Muslim students (see 5.2.6). Mr. Chambers offers advice to other school leaders who encounter dealing with a similar issue of racism,

> I think the very first thing that anyone has to do, 'cause this is going [to] inform the next steps, Osly, I think that first thing is reflection. What are the *beliefs* of self? What is the self-capacity of the leader to be able to act in a situation like this? Race makes a lot of people, particularly the white teachers that I work with, very uncomfortable. Much of my staff has remained in this school for quite some time, the vast majority of my teachers have taught here for more than 10 years. And our school has remained extremely diverse. So, I think, for my teachers [race] is something that they embrace and are around on a daily basis. So it isn't a taboo topic to them. However, I just know from personal friendships and colleagues that it often is a very touchy subject.

Mr. Chambers reveals how in his school discussions surrounding the issues of race and racism remain a complication to many of the white staff and colleagues in his school district. Much progress has been made in efforts to reduce issues of race and racism; yet, the stories shared by principals O'Neal, Kirkpatrick, Richardson, and Chambers highlight the issues around race and racism and are germane for our public school leaders to both understand and deliberate on.

7.1.3   Commitment to Social Justice

In analyzing the stories offered by my participants', I was able to gain an understanding of their commitment toward social justice. For these leaders, their commitment to social justice centers on recognizing both the value in and the significance of challenging barriers in order to provide students with the needed social, emotional, and academic needs. For these eight participants, the commitment to social justice had been influenced by several characteristics and experiences, such as their (a) positionalities, (b) their core dispositions, and (c) their experiences with equitable professional development. I came to recognize that such characteristics and experiences work fluidly together to influence the social justice-based responses by the given eight participants. First, I present how the African-American participants recognize their positionality as leveraging their actions. Indeed, in regards to positionality, those participants talked not only about seeing themselves but also about connecting with the students they serve as foundational to their work as school leaders. Also, they recognize the significance and responsibility to be role models for their students. Secondly, I offer how Mr. Chambers and Dr. Kirkpatrick themselves reveal something of how challenging dominant ideologies sits at the core of their personal dispositions. And lastly, Dr. Thompson shows something of what happens when school leaders through their professional development experiences with equity propel an

individual towards the commitment to and the work of social justice. In short, these three characteristics and experiences that I show extend across each other and drive each of those eight participants in their commitment to social justice.

When working with students of color and of low-SES, Dr. Grant reveals how her values are reflected by the students themselves, stating,

> Those babies are *me*. I look in their eyes and I see their potential. If somebody didn't take time with me I wouldn't be sitting where I am. So, I see the greatness in every seat in this classroom—that's what guides me . . . we are going to do everything we can for these babies 'cause we don't know, we don't know what's getting ready to grow. We got a whole harvest of *amazing* people that are in front of us. . . . You might not even know it. I don't think that I was one of those kids where somebody would say, "Yup, she is going to be the one on top." I'd be the last one you would have picked . . .You never know which one it is. And so that's what guides my work. Don't sleep on none of them, don't sleep not one of these babies in this school they all have tremendous potential.

Here, by being able to see something of herself in her students, Dr. Grant seems to have established a powerful bond with her students. In fact, she reiterates something of her bond with students when she is asked if she generally depended upon support from central office for some of her decision-making, she responded, "Nope! The district doesn't tell me . . . *I don't wait for them*! Because I'm one of these kids, I keep saying it. I am just 48, that's the only thing that makes me different from them."

Dr. O'Neal is another principal who reveals how his positionality influences his work towards impartiality. When asked to describe what guides his leadership practices when working with students of color and of low-SES, Dr. O'Neal responds,

> So, I think *that* really sits at the core of my work, making sure that they can *survive.* Like, you know, we have been doing [for] our students . . . Our school is all minority, all mostly low-SES and we've been doing such a disservice to our students. Like, you know, can they get out of here and get a job? Do they have those basics skills? So that's one thing, you know, that I am like you know. . . what are we doing, like we got to make sure

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they have that, [that] really drives [me], making sure that . . . that they can get out of here and make a living, you know, a good living. So then that's a part of . . . that's [what] sits at the core. So then there is another piece of it, to make sure that they are not passive and they are advocates for themselves. So, you know, I told you I was advocating . . . so I am *big* on making sure that even when they come to the principal's office that they have a voice. "All right let's talk about it. What do you think about this?"

Here, Dr. O'Neal shows the core imperative of his commitment toward social justice is making sure that the school is offering students both the appropriate foundation of life skills necessary to both live in our society and to develop their own advocacy.

Dr. O'Neal, moreover, in his commitment toward social justice reveals how his positionality influences his leadership goals and practices. He provides a passionate reflection on such an influence when he gives us a view of today's political climate,

Wow, so that's funny. I was just thinking about this. What was I looking at the other day? You know, I think with [the political developments] . . . And look here, I am getting political. But I was just thinking about [the incoming president] taking office, and all that kind of stuff. But it's just so important—you know, as a black man that's educated—for *me*; it's very important for me to give back to the community. So almost I compare it to like . . . I was just thinking about this . . . I compare it to like Moses. So you had, in like the Book of Moses—you had Moses. Moses could be chilling somewhere. He was chilling, doing his thing, and he went back, he ain't got nothing to do with that place (laughter). But God said, "You've got to go back, and make sure [you] help your people out. These are your people." So I feel like that, I could have been doing something . . . [me and my family] could have been in the suburbs somewhere, and I could have been just with my feet up. Who knows? You know what I'm saying? And so, but I think it's important for me to go back and use my resources and my skills with my community. And I think that drives me. That makes me, you know, proud of the dash, you know, that little thing on your tombstone, that in-between, you know, you live, you're born, then the dash, and you die. And so I think it's important with what I do with my dash (laughter). And so yeah, yeah, yeah, I think all of that influences me . . . especially me being a black man, especially me coming from the inner city, going back . . . But sometimes I do, you know, I think all my experiences have been there. I always think maybe I should have done like a year or two, like in an independent private school, the only reason being so I could take what they do, and then come back and do it here. So I think my identity, it has a lot to do with the work that I do.

Here, Dr. O'Neal reveals how his positionality as a black man has strongly influenced his practice toward equity. Also, the significance of his narrative, I believe, is twofold: the skills and academic attributes possessed by Dr. O'Neal have provided him with greater opportunities to work beyond the elementary school he now leads, but not only that, his racial identity powerfully pulls him to serve his community.

In my efforts to show how positionality influences the commitment toward social justice let's look at Mia Stanfield. Ms. Stanfield directly reveals how her positionality informs her connections with her students. To Ms. Stanfield, such connections are a reflection of her own children and family. Ms. Stanfield offers an account about how she, in her efforts to support her students, challenged outrightly her colleagues located in the school district's central office. When I asked her reason for such a challenge, she replied,

> Why do I do it? Because I care about these kids. And I would want [someone to speak up in my behalf] to be done for [both] my children and my family. Right? And so I look at these kids . . . since a majority of them are brown . . . as people of color, I feel connected to them . . . I mean I can sympathize with that struggle. Right?

In Ms. Stanfield's view, her own actions towards social justice are advanced and made clear by her having a connection with her students, a connection not only based on shared communal identities but also conveying the same responsibilities for her students that she has for her family. Because of this position taken by Ms. Stanfield, then, we can readily recognize the uniqueness of Ms. Stanfield's identities, something independent of principals Drs. Grant and O'Neal: Mia Stanfield's conflating her responsibilities of her family, school, and home, then, are unable to be singled out as separate or distinct.

My fourth, and final principal, who I recognize as demonstrating a commitment for social justice based on positionality is Robert Green. Mr. Green, in reflecting on his experiences as a

teacher, informs me "I was a role model for my students, being a young African American male teacher." Now, as a school leader, Mr. Green readily connects both emotions and a state of mind in encouraging his students to *just dream.* He makes privy his platform about what he desires for his students, "I desire for them to truly understand that there is nothing that they can't do. I desire for them to . . . just dream. To be able to really dream and [to] understand that whatever their dream is they can achieve it." Now, in his emerging work towards equitable practices, he has established a relationship with an external resource to provide his students with snacks and then he informs me, "I just feel the snack program has really helped students to understand where my heart is."

As our interview progressed, Mr. Green makes the following reflections about his role as a school leader at his school,

> I believe I am called to be here . . . for all the things that had to happen to bring me here, I don't think it was happenstance. You know, I am committed to these students and these families and the Arlington neighborhood—I am. . . . Because it's not about me, it's about my students and my parents and the community I serve. You know, it's not, nothing is for my personal gain.

In revealing his commitment toward social justice, Mr. Green shows something of his impartiality through his emotions, determinations, and convictions toward providing all valuable stakeholders in the community school he leads in with the appropriate educational environment. So far in this discussion my interviews touched on positionality as a telling influence of social justice. In my look of the four principals (Lisa Grant, Bill O'Neal, Mia Stanfield, and Robert Green), I've come to see the distinctive positions of these school leaders an their ability to empathize with their students.

Now, I situated the discussion to look at Mr. Chambers and Dr. Kirkpatrick to show how their commitment for social justice is at the core of their disposition. Immediately, I was made privy to Mr. Chambers further elaborating both his understanding of and his responsibility towards equity. He states,

> To me, equity may look different . . . we just talked about urban and suburban environments. I think equity in those spaces will look quite different based on the consideration of the needs of the specific populations and a fair allocation of resources which are going to vary . . . not kidding ourselves there are going to be different resources in those settings that [I've mentioned]. So how are they allocated appropriately and how *willing*—and this is under that whole Courageous Conversations title—how willing are we . . . in positions of decision-making power to challenge the system and call out the change when it's needed or when it's necessary? And a lot of times these things are intangible . . . like institutional racism that's present within systems and I gave you the example of Christian holidays being something that everyone expects, "Oh you know we'll take Good Friday off." But what about Eve? And, and these are things that are . . . I don't think everyone is willing to discuss, but once . . . once they are discussed, and once they are *explained*, and *articulated*, I found at least in my case, I don't know if it's because I'm a persuasive dude or what the deal is, I've been able to establish some buy-in and move some systems to change.

Here, Mr. Chambers provides a great deal about not only his core disposition of open-mindedness but also his willingness to engage in transforming inequitable systems.

Dr. Kirkpatrick, on the other hand, describes two stories that reveal her own core disposition which influences her commitment to social justice. According to Dr. Kirkpatrick, she feels that "one of the first things [teachers] want to do is blame the kids. And so, I'm like *no*!" She first tells the story about using a post conference teacher evaluation meeting to confront a teacher revealing something of a deficit mindset towards students:

> One of the stories was when we were looking at the achievement of African Americans. . . . So one of my teachers has been with me since his student teaching, I brought him on. He teaches math, he is very smart. [The] kids sometimes struggle because he is so smart. Right? Math is very easy to him, so he didn't really have to work hard to teach it . . . since he doesn't have to work he can't understand why you don't get it, why he's taught math and

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you just don't get it. Right? That's that whole, deficit model. You just don't get it and I'm smart, whatever. So, I had him disaggregate his data. And I asked him this question, I said, "Who are your children that are not achieving? . . . What do they all have in common?" It was his aha moment. They're all African American males. I said, "So what does that say about the instruction you're providing them?" And he just, paused. I said, "This is a test that *you* have given and yet these kids have not achieved. So, since they hadn't achieved whose fault is that?" He had to eat it. He had to say, "Well, its mine." I said, "If everybody else is achieving here, African American females, Caucasian females, Caucasian males. And now let's take a look at the Caucasian male, whose the highest achieving?" He said, "My Caucasian males." I said, "Why?" He says, "They look like me." Pretty much. I said "We gravitate and give our energy to people that remind us of ourselves. It's, it's just what it is. So, I remind you that you're going to have to do something differently for your children that are not achieving that don't look like you." I said, "You're very smart, but your smartness doesn't help your kids."

Above, Dr. Kirkpatrick demonstrates her commitment toward social justice as part of her core disposition in challenging deficit mindsets among her teaching staff. She then tells another story,

[I] had another teacher . . . we used some tools to disaggregate [the data] and [I began with], "How are you going to make your African American children achieve, that are not achieving?" *And* I bring it to them, "What's the majority of the school?" They are African American children. So I said, "African Americans aren't achieving, then what does that say about us as a staff and *you* as a teacher?" So, it's part of not being afraid to actually ask the real questions.

The "real questions" asked by Dr. Kirkpatrick here centered on improving the educational opportunities for students of color. Dr. Kirkpatrick does not describe her actions in relation to her positionality, rather her actions appear as function of her core disposition. Indeed, Dr. Kirkpatrick describes how a commitment to impartiality and social justice is something school leaders must confront continually. She expresses her own view of some teachers she must confront,

One thing I found about teachers: if they believe it, they really make major changes [or] if they don't believe it then they slip back to doing the same thing that they [have] always done. Now that's when we run into our issues, that most teachers really don't believe it. They think it's actually somebody else that's at fault or it's not their issue. And so when you

put that data-lens on it, it changes the discussion.

This is a powerful statement by Dr. Kirkpatrick but more importantly, I see something spot-on of Dr. Kirkpatrick's positioning. We can see her resolution to balance. As these discussions show both Mr. Chambers and Dr. Kirkpatrick's show us something of their particular bent of following their equitable inclinations.

And, lastly, let's look to Dr. Thompson and how she reveals how her exposure to professional development based on the idea of equity has pressed her to elevate her advocacy of equity. Here, I am brought to recognize again how throughout our discussions Dr. Thompson's impartiality has always been at the core of her life. Dr. Thompson readily reflects on her previous body of work as a graduate student, [a] teacher, and a school administrator and plainly tells me "I didn't know it was equity back then. Isn't that something? It's who I was. It's who I've always been." She begins to tell me without hesitation the influence her professional development has had on her work:

> Like I said to you, I've always been a leader who believed in equity, even before I knew what to call it. But once I went through the equity summit . . . seven years ago, the Beyond Diversity professional development and trainings, I felt a level of responsibility, of accountability to my craft, to lead as a racially equitable leader and to interrupt issues of racism as they affected my students.

In this statement, we can clearly recognize Dr. Thompson's own recognition of her recent efforts in "interrupting issues of racism." That interruption was supported by the professional trainings she engaged in, training which helped her to ground her language of equity. Indeed, she recognizes her work has always somehow been immersed in fair and just practices; but, it was those professional trainings that went not only to augment but also reinforce her leadership toward equitable practices.

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The six school leaders presented in this section reveal something of their background traits and encounters that significantly influences their own commitments toward social justice. The participants helped to show three distinct examples—positionality, core disposition, and training—the actions of their commitment toward open-mindedness. In particular, their own boundaries separating self, school, and, at times, home become hard to make out.

7.1.4 Counternarrative

In this section, I offer the data of four participants that reveal something of their impartiality. In providing the counternarratives that challenge negative assessments of students of color and of low-SES, I recognize in that challenge consistent elements of fairness and open-mindedness. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) offer four functions that counternarratives serve: (1) building community, (2) transforming established beliefs and/or dominant ideologies, (3) provide alternative possibilities, and (4) being used as a teaching method. To begin, I will use the stories offered by Lesley Kirkpatrick and Mia Stanfield because they both specifically offer their storied actions as counternarratives. I also include the stories of Drs. Thompson and O'Neal because even though they don't use the language of counternarrative, the intent of their argument *represents* a counternarrative. In effect, this section works to reveal those who display equity instinctively provide the counternarrative examples for those who readily place students of color and of low-SES in unfavorable perspective.

Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals something of how her academic experience with critical race theory during her doctoral program continues to influence her leadership practices today. Nowadays, Dr. Kirkpatrick connects that past academic experience with her qualitative researches and uses her experience to provide context to the responsibility school leaders have to

display open-mindedness in their schools. She offers just what school leaders must do and how they mustto take part in such matters:

> You have to review information . . . instruction, attitudes, all types of things and not be afraid to find out the real answers and [to] do something about it. So often times, I find that colleagues are afraid to know something about something, 'cause then you're expected to do something about it. So, it is easier if I don't know something about it then I don't have to *do anything* about the situation, the circumstance. . . . But that's the type of researcher I am . . . I am a qualitative researcher. There is a story, always! So, I spend a great deal of time looking in and finding out *the story,* so that I could do either a *counterstory* or actually change it completely. And you got to be brave in order to do that. We have a lot of people that run in fear [rather than] to do what is right and what's best for children.

Here, Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals something of her open choice of using a counternarrative and how to apply using such a choice in her role as school principal.

Prior to conducting my first interview with Dr. Kirkpatrick, I arrived at her school in time to witness a morning meeting taking place in the school's auditorium. During this meeting, I observed Dr. Kirkpatrick speaking on a microphone and asking a young man who was standing in the back of the auditorium to come to the front. Interestingly, the man—a black man—was not a teacher but a member of a fraternity that was volunteering to conduct the school's reading program. From the front the man asked those students to whom he had read to before to raise their hands, and then he asked those students to whom he hasn't yet read to raise *their* hands. After silently viewing the two groups, he then said, "Ok, I will try to come to your classrooms." Having become curious about this program, I made a mental note to ask Dr. Kirkpatrick in our next interview about this reading program. When the time came, I asked Dr. Kirkpatrick to tell me more about the school's reading program led by a black fraternity. She explains that the

reading program "came about to actually *show* reading from African American men to African American boys [and] to encourage reading and [the] love of reading." She adds, "So in essence we wanted to refute the kids' thinking around" black men stereotypes "*and* to help them to see other examples and role models." Dr. Kirkpatrick demonstrates [here] how a school leader committed toward impartiality might use an avant-garde strategy to provide students with an alternative way of seeing black men. I then asked how effective her volunteer program has been. She explains,

> Every year we increase the number of books that kids are reading. And I *very very* rarely have an African American male student that doesn't read and achieve his books. So that's a great positive. I think, last year we had . . . the goal for every child to read 100 books . . . With no child not achieving. Now we as a school do our part; The [fraternity members] come in [to do their part], and the parents *at home* do their part. But . . . in order to read, to really read, the kids have to do their parts. And that's one of the things we are seeing. That they become excited about reading, the brother's would tell them, "I need you to read, little man." Any reluctant reader, I would have one of [fraternity brothers] speak to them . . . So it was pretty positive.

Dr. Kirkpatrick was a bit excited about sharing this story with me, she even went on to conclude with an intent to present a counternarrative to the children's stereotypical idea of the black male. Such a tangible innovation by this reading program demonstrated itself to me as being a strongly engaging and productive strategy with the students.

A second principal Mia Stanfield expressed that during her doctoral studies she challenged a racist comment by a fellow classmate. The context of Stanfied's challenge occurred in a course during her doctoral studies. Such a counternarrative, I believe, would be a right element to the context of the current training taking place of our future school leaders. Ms. Stanfield tells me something about this "current training,"

So I had a class last fall . . . but that's the only class that we really talked about equity. . . . But also not talking about it continues to support the systemic racism and what we have in [our] current [school] system. And so I wonder, as a black person that I think is relatively conscious, what does that say to these other . . . there's probably 80 to 100 other doctoral students in this cohort not having those conversations. How does that impact them? And they're gonna go off in their respective domains . . . 'cause it was very controversial for that semester. People were angry, people would leave class . . . it was about the context of education. That was the title of the class. We talked about context like racially, we talked about systemic racism, we talked about context meaning like the locality, where you are in this area . . . [A black professor] did a couple of lectures but then they would open it up to questions. And we had different readings within this large group of 60 to 80 people. And I would say within that cohort there's probably maybe ten percent that are black. We've got maybe like ten black doctoral students and the rest are white. And there's a couple of other ethnic groups in the space but there's still minority. By far the vast difference in perspective was huge. And people would be angry leaving class.

We had one woman who actually had left the program [and] who was very vocal about just racism and what she experiences in the course . . . She appreciated [the context of education class]. She didn't like what some of our white colleagues were saying. She was black. She was very outspoken, too. And it just would get very intense. So it was clear that that topic was very uncomfortable . . . She was from Riverdale Public, so she had gone through some training that I had gone through. So our lens was a little bit . . . elevated, where some of the white folks they had never had even those conversations. And so that was . . . so new [to white classmates] and that's where some of the tension came from.

And I still think that there was something that was said, and I don't remember exactly, and then I provided the *counternarrative*. It was a white male . . . and then he came to me and he still does. He came to me after the class and apologized and said, "I didn't mean to offend you." And I said, "I wasn't offended." I was just making sure that there was a counter narrative. What you were claiming in your comments that was your perspective being a white man in the space where I'm a black woman in the space and my perspective is very, very different. And he still, he's in the ed. leadership track. He's like "Oh Mia, I hope you're still not holding that against [me]." I'm like "I'm not holding anything." But he knows he's wrong. I never treated him differently, but his perspective was very much a racist comment. And so he's still thinking about that. I'm not thinking about it. I could care a less 'cause I'm not surprised by it. Coming from who you are, I'm not surprised by what you said. But . . . that's where in these classes I would think that most people would think of me as being someone that's relatively quiet and I'm sure you don't get that perspective from this conversation. . . . Where if it is very aggressive and it definitely impacts who I am I'll speak to it.

Above, Ms. Stanfield describes critical points about the doctoral program she is in. Indeed, she discusses how, in the small sample of classes where race issues have been deliberated on, the class became noticeably contentious. Also, she recognizes that she is usually quiet in-group discussions, but she readily prepares herself to produce a counternarrative on those occasions where her race conscious awareness is heightened.

Dr. Thompson, on the other hand, provides two counternarrative stories not so much to challenge but to show black students in a positive light. The two stories take place during Dr. Thompson's undergraduate studies and as a beginning teacher. In this interview, she shares the following story about some lasting experiences during her undergraduate studies:

> Lasting experiences in college . . . I guess some things that were lasting for me were around . . . so I started a few organizations. I saw that there was no real . . . we had a football team, we had cheerleaders, but as the children of color, how could we show our commitment to the school? How could we show our commitment to the sports teams, which were a big deal at our school? So I started this pep squad where we became a recognized organization at the community. . . . So there was a calling . . . [the school was] not very diverse at the time and there were certainly not a lot of African American organizations doing big things. And this was one of them during the time that I was there. It was a way for our voices to be heard in a positive way, for us to represent our school in a positive way . . . this gave our children of color a voice . . . and just ways for us to be represented in a positive light that they hadn't seen.

The counternarrative that Dr. Thompson desired to reveal here was to show to the larger college community a voice from students of color in college that was never talked about. So her context for creating a students of color pep squad was to provide a counternarrative to demonstrate to the school the commitment of students of color that was previously "not advertised." Moreover, Dr. Thompson offers a powerful counternarrative story about a student in her elementary class:

> I taught first grade. I loved [it]. I just knew that I was walking in my purpose. I absolutely loved teaching first grade. One story that stands out, I can remember a little boy in my classroom not having his homework and [I] not knowing that he went out of the back

door. I actually lived in this neighborhood where I taught. So Morninghill elementary is near my home. And this little boy I knew was my neighbor. He went out of the backdoor, went back home from school and got his homework. His grandmother comes up, *livid*. This is 25 years ago, so this is old school. . . . [She is] livid that her grandson did this. As I reflected on that moment, I couldn't have apologized more. Oh my goodness. I don't know why Nathan thought that he had to do that. It would have been okay for him to do that tomorrow.

And what that said to me . . . and I didn't instill fear, I didn't lead with fear. I led with *love*, and I was firm yet fair and disciplined with dignity, and all those qualities that we want from our good teachers, I thought that I embodied. It was clear to me that this child—this little brown child—he had a *thirst* for learning. He had a hunger for education. It was important to him to be successful in that first grade classroom, and he knew that his bringing his homework back was one piece of the puzzle in his little young mind he was putting together for having a successful day. So, this showed me that you know, when you hear these stories about people saying that children of color don't want to learn, that they don't have a zeal for knowledge, that *that* is a myth. This little boy, this was important to him. I couldn't hurt him. I couldn't do anything to him . . . but it was important to him to be prepared for learning and he knew that this was one of the tools he needed.

Above, Dr. Thompson offers an example of a counternarrative about the dominant ideology that argues that black children do not want to learn. In fact, Dr. Thompson uses this story to show that such ideologies are "myths." The two counternarratives stories provided by Dr. Thompson, here, are based on her trying to show students of color in a positive perspective.

Dr. O'Neal is another participant that does not explicitly use the language of counternarrative to demonstrate his effort to show students of color in a more positive point of view. He reveals something of his counternarrative in his efforts to provide gifted programming for his students:

So this summer I took five teachers to a conference in Connecticut so we can learn how to intervene with gifted students. So that we are really providing the full . . . really looking at getting *all* students what they need, when they need it, for as long as they need it. . . . For so long this community has been drowning and just really trying to work with struggling students and rightfully so, we have . . . we do . . . we deal with a lot of homelessness. There is a partnership in our community that works solely with homeless families. So we get kids who come from a homeless background and they bring [with

them] *a lot* of different . . . academic, [and] behavioral problems. So we do need to get better at that; but we are not going sit here and treat all these kids just because they are from this community and they look the way they look, that they are *all* struggling. No! We need to be able to intervene with kids who are high performing. You know, they can do the work and we recognize that, and we make sure that we can make accommodation for them as well.

Above Dr. O'Neal shows how he desires to meet the needs of all his students. Indeed, his counternarrative is underscored by a solitary belief that just because of the location and demographics of the school, it does not indicate there are not students who should not be provided with gifted programs. Below, Dr. O'Neal further connects such counternarrative with equitable practices:

So when we talk about equity . . . making sure that we are interrupting . . . *the status quo*. We can't just keep moving them, *we are not just* [going to] keep marching on down the path when we [see] students are struggling. We got to step back and we need to do something different . . . so that's one thing . . . so then I have on the flip side of that, another structure that we're kind of *building* and this is like we're really in the neophyte stages is I actually had teachers trained on how to work with gifted students. So I had a cohort of four teachers from here and they went to a weeklong training in Connecticut on strategies and practices (pounds table) of what to do with (pounds table) the gifted (pounds table) learners.

Just to get out of the mindset . . . so *yes* we do have students who struggle, but we have kids who are coming in on that other end of the spectrum and *what are we doing specifically* to support those students. And so that's *really* new conversation for this community. You know what I am saying, like it's *really hard,* and you know rightfully so. We've been consistently struggling for a long time and we still got a lot of work to do. But we still have to start thinking about what to do. This is a comprehensive school. We have people coming through our doors, registering almost every other day . . . and they are coming with *all* kinds of needs. And one of those needs are . . . they're *high*! So we get those gifted students. So that's another thing. So we have [been] putting together . . . a solid plan in place for struggling [students and] we [are] in the neophyte stages of putting a plan in place for the gifted kids.

So we have the MTSS [Multi-Tear System of Supports] that's to support struggling students. That plan is in place. We are in conversations and I am having teachers help with that, we are in *conversation* about the gifted piece, all right. So those are two things. It's *all* equity.

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Here, Dr. O'Neal recognizes that a part of his role as school leader is working to meet the needs of his diverse students. Indeed, the counternarrative Dr. O'Neal presents is to recognize that although his school is strongly working with struggling students, there is also a group of high achieving students that he desires to make sure their needs are also being met. Here, Dr. O'Neal uses a counternarrative, in the manner discussed by Delgado (1989), to challenge complacency and to "open new windows into reality, showing us that there are possibilities for life other than the ones we live" (p. 2414). Dr. O'Neal is purposefully engaged in building a new culture in his school.

The four school leaders in this section willingly and readily offer two strategic purposes—to challenge a dominant ideology and to bring to light a positive awareness—for their use of counternarratives. The significance of the findings offered here is twofold: first, Ms. Stanfield provides the use of a counternarrative at the individual level and Drs. Kirkpatrick, Thompson, and O'Neal reveal the use of counternarratives to amend at both the cultural and institutional level. In short, the use of counternarratives becomes a foundation piece of his balanced leadership.

7.1.5 Historical context

In this section, I offer the lived stories of principals Bill O'Neal, Mia Stanfield, Sophia Thompson, and Lesley Kirkpatrick, stories that show something of the personal viewpoints in the historical context of race in this country. My African American participants readily shared with me their understanding of the historical black experience in the United States. My participants provide four historical contexts—the lack of access to a school culture, the link to slavery, the lack of academic knowledge of African history, and the position of natural survivors—that

influence their perspectives as school leaders. In analyzing the import of these four historical contexts, I group them into three significant categories: (1) the unequal access to educational opportunities, (2) the history of blacks at the forefront of their philosophy, and (3) the historical black experience culminating in *survivorship*.

Dr. O'Neal tells the story about his experience in high school and being the only black student in his advanced placement (AP) classes. Such experiences was the first instance where Dr. O'Neal recognized the existence of a culture he had not been purview to. He shares the following sentiment,

> One of the reasons why I wasn't recommended for AP was 'cause a lot of the stuff had to be computer generated. And so at the time I didn't have a computer or access to a computer. So I would have to write my stuff [and] give it to my mom to take to work and type it up for me. And so a lot of times my stuff was *late*. Because you have a deadline and then I would get points taken off. And so I had a lower [grade] than I should have. . . . And so it was obvious that there were . . . different experiences that the students in the class had. Yeah that was pretty obvious, like I was like, "Wow" . . . they knew a lot of stuff. You know their parents had taken them out of the country for breaks and their parents were the ones that were active in the PTA and they were always there. So I kind of recognized that . . . there was like a culture that I didn't have access to [and] I learned that early on. I was like "Wow" this is kind of interesting.

In the above story, I recognize that Dr. O'Neal is mindful of the fact that as a AP student there was still "a lot of stuff" that he needed to know—some way of behavior, some different experiences, something taken for granted, for example—and that he "didn't have access to." Indeed, his high school experience of being the only black student in the AP course had significantly influenced his future desire to implement in his elementary school a program the school has never had before: a future program for the gifted.

On the other hand, Ms. Stanfield whose viewpoint of a strong awareness of the historical kinship in her family to slavery recognizes the impact of her interactions not only with her

immediate family but also with her leadership practices. She offers something of that recognition of when she reveals the influence her family has had on her being a good person. Ms. Stanfield discusses how her mother's influence on her becoming a good person is grounded in the nurturing provided to her mother by her great grandmother. She continues,

> So my mother . . . her mother passed away when she was a baby . . . and so she was raised by her fraternal grandmother, who was an old, old, wise, wise woman. She's like a . . . god in our family. . . . And, she would always . . . I remember her being very serious and like she didn't smile a lot. . . . We would go down to Alabama, to Princeville the home. Which is where everybody lived and she lived and then my uncles and cousins and where my mother grew up, in this farm, and [my great grandmother] is like a legend in our family . . . Her mother . . . was a slave. And her father's family had just come out of [slavery] . . . and so like, think how close that is. Right? . . . My kids don't know, my son is starting to get it, but like how close *that* bondage is to where we are now. Like that's— it's amazing to me.

Here, I readily recognize Ms. Stanfield reflections on the history of black people in this country and the tangible closeness her family lineage has to slavery. This story demonstrates something both of Ms. Stanfield's awareness of her family history in the historical context of race and the handing down of the lineage of being a good person. Indeed, Mia Stanfield's family historical connection with enslavement lingers to influence Ms. Stanfield's character of being a "good person," a personality feature passed generationally in her family.

Another principal who tells something of the influence of historical context to her school leadership practice is Dr. Thompson. Dr. Thompson reveals something of a critical moment she had in recognizing her own lack of knowledge about both black history in this country and African history. And she reminds me how this critical moment took place during a difficult personal time in her life. Dr. Thompson voluntarily shared with me that she took some time away from her leadership responsibilities in order to reorient herself. It was during that time away when Dr. Thompson began to center her work on African history, revealing to me that she,

needed some time alone with God to just figure out my life and my purpose. It was during that time that I began to do a lot of reading, writing, [and] consulting with some of the elders and the experts in this African centered work. And before really seeing how applicable and necessary it was for my students, I learned how important it was for me . . . just learning the African history that had been denied me for my entire life, realizing that there was life before slavery, for people of color, [and that] we were kings and queens. And we were brilliant and those pyramids that we saw in all those books all those years ago, we did that.

You know, learning the math in having to divide the Nile River so that after it would flood and the water would subside, the people would know what their land was, that's geometry. We're mathematicians. We are brilliant, beautiful people, and strong people that have a story that needs to be told to our children so that if maybe, just maybe, they hear these stories they will now see themselves differently, and despite their local and immediate surroundings, they will see the hope and potential in themselves to know that they can be great and that they can achieve wonderful things. That must be at the center of everything I do when I get back. It must be in the center of everything that I do, say, and who I am as a woman of color. So when I came back to the school, I came back different again. It was another transformational experience for me . . .

Dr. Thompson takes us through her own journey of self-discovery of the rich history of her African ancestry. Indeed, such recognition of historical context seems to have rejuvenated not only her spirit but also her hope that transferring such knowledge will positively effect her students learning. Dr. Thompson's journey of self-discovery, of rejuvenation and hope, reminds me of a similar finding argued by minister Malcolm X over five decades ago, when he gave a speech at Michigan State University on January 23, 1963, about what blacks in America do not know about their African history:

[The black man] doesn't realize that there were civilizations and cultures on the African continent . . . He doesn't realize that he was living in palaces on the African continent. . . . He doesn't realize that he was living in a civilization in Africa where science had been so far advanced, especially even the astronomical sciences, to a point where Africans could plot the course of the stars in the universe. . . . He knows nothing about that. He knows nothing about the ancient Egyptian civilization on the African continent. Or the ancient Carthaginian civilization on the African continent. Or the ancient civilizations of Mali on the African continent. Civilizations that were highly developed and produced scientists . . . He doesn't know this, because he hasn't been taught. (1989, pp. 37-38)

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Though separated by over five decades, both minister Malcolm X and Dr. Thompson bring to our attention with similar force the black America's lack of acquaintance with black history. Indeed, Dr. Thompson talks about her own lack of exposure to the rich history of African lineage and uses that "lack of exposure" as motivation to find out what exposing her students to such linage can have on their learning and being. No doubt, after listening and becoming somewhat familiar with Dr. Thompson's recent leadership goals to inculcate more African centered practices, I am left with the idea of not only holding on to research minister Malcolm X's ideas above but also coming back in a few years to discuss with Dr. Thompson how her work with her student has fared.

Lastly, I offer Dr. Kirkpatrick and her interpretation of the historical context of black, Latina/o, and Native American lives in our country. During our interview, Dr. Kirkpatrick shares something of her belief that people of color in the face of educational inequities and negative stereotypes have shown themselves to be *survivors*. She reflects on her own understanding of the historical context of people of color in this country:

> Public education is the only equalizer for children. It's the only one. Right? People don't support the libraries enough; that's the second equalizer. And if you take away both of those from brown children then there is no hope. And we are by *nature survivors*. So we are going to do what it takes to survive, come one way or the other? . . . We are going to survive because that's just who we are. In general, I think as a people . . . I think that as brown people—and I am talking about my Latino children, my Native American children, my African American children, all my brown and caramel children who've gone through, I am going to say *we* cause I am included in that class. We've gone through so much that in order for us to be successful, we've had to overcome *great* adversity. And in overcoming that adversity, we are going to survive. Period.

Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals through her own way the recognition of the historical struggle faced and overcome by people of color in this country. For Dr. Kirkpatrick, the boundaries between the

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struggles encountered by her students and shared by herself are undistinguishable. As I've come to recognize, the inclusion of herself as a member of the *we* and of the survivor group certainly provides a genuine reference to the way she engages her impartiality in her leadership practice.

7.1.6 Experiential knowledge

By their lived experiences as people of color, the six black participants in this study offer something of the value gained in their efforts toward impartiality. These participants voiced various approaches where their lived experiences not only illuminated their position in society but also influenced their role as school principals. Each of the six participants referenced their use of experiential knowledge in distinct ways: (1) PD trainings to influence colleagues, (2) recognition of their life as it is tied to race, (3) life experience *as* equity training, (4) empathy, and (5) recognition of how people of color are seen. I recognize these distinct perspectives of experiential knowledge as having two themes: fellowship and asset. By fellowship, I mean participants reveal something of an awareness of a communal bond with both families and students of color. I define asset to mean the method school leaders were able to use their own negative lived experiences constructively to engage their impartial leadership practices. Moreover, I use the theme of asset in working with colleagues, families, and self. Ms. Stanfield and Dr. O'Neal demonstrate experiential knowledges by way of fellowship and Drs. Grant, Kirkpatrick, and Thompson show their knowledges as an asset. And lastly, Mr. Green refers to his understanding of how his impartiality as experiential knowledge has shown both his fellowship and his asset.

Let's turn to Ms. Stanfield and Dr. O'Neal and their perspectives of fellowship in their lives. Ms. Stanfield and her recalling her first experience as a teacher shares one story in

particular that has remained with her. It is a story about a time when a student in her class made a racist remark about, and to, another student. Ms. Stanfield shares with me a memorable teaching experience:

> Yeah! It's not so positive but I have one. So, there was a little boy and I remember his name. His name was Jimmy. And Jimmy was a little white boy and . . . he was a little racist and I'm saying that with respect, but he was, [and] his family was. I [taught] one class at each grade level . . . And so Jimmy was a student; he had been there from the very beginning of the [school] year. And he was very disruptive; he was a smart boy, though. But he would get into it socially with other students [and] he wouldn't be immediately compliant to me, even when I gave him choices. . . . And I remember one day specifically he was having a challenging day. . . . To a male student that was black, [Jimmy] called him a nigger. And [next period] we had a special [class], which was music. I don't know why I remember this story like this, I don't remember anything else, but I remember this.

Here, Ms. Stanfield tells of one of her lasting experiences as a teacher, a time when she was confronted with an issue where racism emerged. I proceeded to ask Ms. Stanfield why such an experience remains so vivid and lasting in her memory. Her response was immediate:

> I don't know. I think that it deals with race. I do think my life is very much tied to race. Like I think that. I think about race every single day. I think about my kids and what their experiencing at school every single day. I think about how we're running this school here. And how race shows up every single day. So I think it's always at the forefront of my mind.

According to Ms. Stanfield, her experiential knowledge is strongly attached to race. This lived experience fluidly transfers to influence her practice toward open-mindedness. Such lived experiences become more influential to her development as an equity leader because "it is not necessarily training, but its just life. Living life helps me to be critical and critically conscious." Such statement by Ms. Stanfield demonstrates the influence of fellowship to her leadership practice.

Dr. O'Neal, on the other hand, recognizes that his lived experiences have provided him both a foundation and the training for his advocacy. He offers the following reflection on his own professional engagement with Courageous Conversations trainings:

> (Pause) So, I didn't feel like I needed it. I didn't feel like it *helped me*. To me it's one of those classes for white people to discuss race. Like for them to recognize race and for them to put it on the table. It wasn't necessarily for people who lived it, people who are cognizant of it . . . I mean I see the purpose of it 'cause the majority of the teachers *are* white. But I felt [the training] was more suited for white people.

Dr. O'Neal sees that his most influential training has been his lived experiences. Also, and in my time with Dr. O'Neal I've come to recognize his stories as something of his fellowship and readiness to challenge those issues that lack both objectivity and open-mindedness.

Let us further discuss this subject of fellowship and recognize something of Mr. Green's candid reflection of his own lived experiences as a black male. Mr. Green readily shares his belief that no matter "who I am, or what I say, or even what I do, at the end of the day, I'm still an African American man, and I'm feared by a lot of people . . . just because of that." Mr. Green does not mince words about who he is or about his personal assessment on what he deals with as a black man in this country. I somehow recognized that those lived experiences that he has shared with me have become part of his character and serve his forthrightness and determination as a role model for his students. Now, as we look back, we can recognize how those principals Mia Stanfield, Bill O'Neal, and Robert Green both reveal their own experiential knowledges as people of color and models a kind of fellowshipping that contributes to their open-mindedness when dealing with both students of color and students of low-SES.

Dr. Grant reveals something clearly distinct about how she uses her lived experiential knowledge as an asset when she shares with me how she uses that knowledge to influence her

colleagues. Dr. Grant's strong background in equitable practices has provided her with opportunities to direct professional development trainings on impartiality. She shares a potent story about how she has used her lived experiential knowledge directing PDs:

So one of the things I think is hard for us as black people . . . ok, now I'll speak for myself personally, because that's one of the trainings [and] part of Glenn Singleton's work: keep it personal, local, and immediate. For me it's very hard to talk about race, because it's an emotional thing—it's a painful thing. And I don't want people to know that it impacts me—it bothers me. So I am an administrator, I am sitting in a room with my colleagues who . . . we get along together. And they know, if you're a principal . . . you got some nice money. And I was telling them . . . I am used to being treated disrespectfully as a person, but it hurts me when I've seen it done to my kids. When I walk into the store with my children and [the store employee's] want to follow us around the store: when I go into Macy's, like I can't afford to buy Macy's, you know. You almost want to wear your Degree and your [school] ID on your shirt. *Right*?

(Her and her children's encounter with store employee's)

It was emotional for me because I've never really looked at that pain, you know, I didn't look at the pain of how much it hurts me to have to protect my children. And my colleagues cried with me and they said, "I can't believe somebody would treat you like that. Why would they treat you that way?" But you know me, (and as she addresses her colleagues) "How many other black people have you treated that way that you don't know? You only feel bad because it's me. But, how many other black folks does that happen to . . . that are just as sweet and caring as I am?" So that was very powerful because that's a vulnerability that I don't want to exposed to people—of how it *hurts*. And then it made me think, this stuff does hurt me, and I just push it down so much every day, and I don't talk about it and so . . . if I could just make an assumption, I think that has happened [to] a lot of minorities, that we do that [to]. We do that often and that was the purpose of that particular PD.

We've done some above the line [and] below the line . . . Riverdale is a great, great, great, great, great place! [With] all the hospitals and universities and sports teams and blah, blah, blah. But that below the line information, the poverty rate for black children . . . black people . . . how we are not represented in the universities and you look at our neighborhoods and our communities . . . what they call below line information. And I've felt that was always a powerful PD for me, because it brings up that minority perspective, you have your above the line . . . majority [and] what they are going to say, but how [does] our minority see life in Riverdale.

In these candid statements, Dr. Grant shows how she brings to bear her lived experiences as a form of asset while engaging her colleagues to center themselves on what she calls the "below the line" standpoint. Dr. Grant uses clearly significant—and painful—experiential knowledge in her efforts to engage her colleagues. For Dr. Grant her abilities and career success have not protected her from the negative experiences regarding her race but have allowed her to recognize the power and the influence her lived stories bring.

A second principal to reveal her use of experiential knowledges as a asset, Dr. Kirkpatrick much like Dr. Grant, shares her use of experiential knowledges in working with families of color. In the following story, Dr. Kirkpatrick describes to me how her racial and gender positionalities influence her leadership practices:

> Well, I think it gives a perspective, because you know what it's like to be a minority. Right? Minority as [a] woman [and] what it's like to be a minority, based on race? And so because you can have empathy for your students. . . . I know what it's like to be hungry, I know what it's like to have your lights cut out, police come into your house. Most of my teachers couldn't tell you about that; they have no idea. Some of them do, not all of them. So when you know that, because your experience because you're black, right, stuff happens because I'm a black woman in America. Driving in Deer Park [suburban city] the police officer pulls you over, you know, you better put your hands on that steering wheel and don't move them because in Deer Park . . . they don't care you are driving in a Prius. She stole that Prius. Right? So it's an *awareness*. So when I go in and I operate with my families, I have an empathy for them that without being black you wouldn't always have for them. I don't make excuses. I don't make excuses like, wuu, wuu, wuu, uh, uh. No! I know what it's like. You can't say that to me, because I know.

Above, Dr. Kirkpatrick recognizes how her experiential knowledge as a woman of color provides her with the asset of not only empathizing with her families of color but also challenging her teaching staff. Dr. Kirkpatrick in her position as school principal does not confirm her lived experiences as a unfavorable but rather her open-mindedness embraces it as a tangible advantage.

A third subject, Dr. Thompson, reveals her experiential knowledge as an asset of self-reflection that has ignited her practice of fairness and justice. Dr. Thompson vividly tells a story about an experience she had during a training exercise in a principal pipeline program. According to Dr. Thompson, the experience became significant because it helped her to see just how others viewed her. Dr. Thompson tells me,

> We went through a series of *tasks*, as I was going through the—it was almost like an initiation—but I hadn't yet been accepted into the program. So we were going through a series of interviews and action tasks and we had to do this one exercise. I'm gonna say, let's just say that there were ten of us: white males, black males, white women, black women. We had to organize ourselves, without speaking, according to age. We had to organize ourselves, without speaking, according to what we thought our highest level of educational attainment was. And I'll never forget that the white male was first, and when we deliberated about it, the group was a little surprised that I was the only one in that group with my doctorate. So technically, I should've been first, but we assumed that the highest level of education attainment was from this white male—or they assumed. It had to be a consensus. And so, it was pretty eye-opening for me that we had a great deal of work to do, and that I am constantly seen by many [as having] a disadvantage: . . . [having] somewhat of a deficit mindset, [of] being less than. And at that moment, I committed to interrupting that [viewpoint] for children, to the best of my ability.

In this brief telling, Dr. Thompson provides the story of how her engagement in a training program helped her in becoming cognizant of how she was perceived and in opening her eyes to such inequities. This training program heightened Dr. Thompson's sensibilities on how her experiential knowledge was seen as a disadvantage. And she would use such inference of self as an asset to stimulate her efforts toward personal balance.

And lastly, there is Mr. Green. We discussed described his lived experiential knowledge concerning both the role model he desires to be for students and the conversations he has with parents. Mr. Green tells me that his being as a black man is significant because " . . . I mean, it means everything." He goes on to inform me of his personal thoughts reminding me of his felt idea that, as he puts it, "our students need to see successful African American role models in

their lives." Mr. Green makes pressingly clear the qualities that he intends to make visible for his students. In one situation, he informs me of a conversation he had with a parent, in which he directly informed the parent of his position, "I am an African American man. [And] I've been discriminated against my whole life . . . I know what it takes to help your [son] to be successful." In his engagements with black families, Mr. Green readily, and assertively, shares his standpoint about the qualities that he possesses. The two roles Mr. Green presents to us, then, demonstrate just how he exercises and understands that his own lived experiences are the primary assets that underpin his impartial leadership practices.

Overall, in this discussion of the six participants of color, I recognize something of their experiential knowledges having an influence in their leadership. In the six participants interviews, each uses his or her experiential knowledges both in fellowship and as clear and distinct assets in dealing with colleagues, families, and selves. Their lived experiences as people of color are sources of the strength used to shift and to motivate themselves and others toward impartiality. Yet, it is clear that the promise of such lived experiences come with a heavy toll. Indeed, my participants' lived experiences as people of color in this country reveal to me the enduring emotional taxing their lived experiences produce. Nevertheless, I demonstrate how these six school leaders exercise their experiential knowledges as practical tools in their equity efforts.

7.1.7 Intersectionality

In this section, to show the awareness of intersectionality in leadership practice, I present the narratives of Lisa Grant, John Chambers, Mia Stanfield, and Lesley Kirkpatrick. The significance of intersectionality is that it brings us to recognize how our various identities

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influence how we are socially constructed (Crenshaw, 1991). Awareness of the various points where our identities intersect, then, can better inform us on the inequities based on multiple categories. Some participants provided me, I believe, insight to how they expand their emphasis of impartiality beyond the binary lens race identity to include various intersectionalities. The participants' recognition of the influence of intersectionality is centered on both students and themselves. For example, the participants revealed their endeavors to challenge inequities for student based on socioeconomic conditions, language, immigration status (refugees), and religion.

In addressing efforts on racial open-mindedness, Dr. Grant argues that we must not neglect the influence poverty has on students. Dr. Grant recognizes something of the link effects of race and class, effects that cannot be ignored. She connects confronting the issues of race and poverty as a moral imperative. She states,

> We get back to Dr. King's last book, *Where Do We Go From Here?* And he really was addressing poverty. . . . And so, I think it's a moral imperative for us, bringing it all home, that we do address that issue of poverty. It is as important as race, but I think that it's fueled by race. Because we almost believe that there is a certain group of people that don't deserve to have anything, because they haven't worked for anything. And there's so many things that have occurred to get us to be where we are, and we won't address them. I think it's, yes, a moral imperative to address that.

Above, Dr. Grant highlights confronting both race and class disadvantages many of her students. Dr. Grant demonstrates her own awareness of the importance acknowledging intersectionality. She reveals something of her impartial leadership practice informed by knowledge of inequalities based on race and class.

Mia Stanfield, in response to the context of her student demographics, recognizes her leadership efforts require intervening for students about race, ethnicity, and language. She states

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the source of her advocacy as "just who I am and the children that I am serving." And, she has come to feel that "this school gets a lot of stigma because we're serving *poor*, *black children*. And children that are coming to the United States . . . that have been refugees or have come here on asylum and different things." Mia Stanfield recognizes the context of her school has pushed her to expand her advocacy of impartiality dealing with students of various countries and their immigration and refugee status. She comments,

> And so my passion around equity . . . it's heightened over the last few years and I would say it's because of the population that I am serving here. High levels of English Language Learners, percentages of English Language Learners, you know, immigrants and refugees that have come from very distressed countries . . . that are here now and are still not getting the supports that they need.

In this above statement, Mia Stanfield reveals how her striving efforts have been augmented to provide those students with immigrant identities with impartiality. Such an insight by Ms. Stanfield has shown her ability to understand and share the feeling of others and to support her being a leader that willingly addresses those inequities students face due to both immigration status and to language.

Mr. Chambers is a third school leader who provides the context of how he engages his efforts toward balance on the subject of religion. Mr. Chambers reveals something of a personal conflict with the equity mandate in his district. Mr. Chambers states that his "district is tacking [the equity] issue now, but they are tackling it *solely* in black versus white way. And I brought to the discussion cultural matters, religious, and ethnic matters that transcend the black-white worldview." Mr. Chambers reveals to me that his district defines equity in the binary categories of black-and-white and of high-achievement and low-achievement. Yet, through his balanced leadership, Mr. Chambers has helped his district begin appreciating "entering the totality of the

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diversity into the discussion, 'cause it transcends black-white." Also, in response to the demographic of his students, Mr. Chambers recognizes the significance of acknowledging all religions as being a focal point of his balanced efforts. He reveals to me a vanguard action he took to validate Islamic holidays. He proudly states to me,

> And in a lot of verbiage and the way people talk, they think that Christian holidays get kids off or maybe Jewish holidays. But I, in my particular system, I instituted Islamic holidays as days where students can take [off] without using up an official absence.

Mr. Chambers clearly demonstrates his engagement with balance has meant supporting students at the intersectionality of religion. Mr. Chambers readily engages his leadership practices both to appreciate and to respect all religions. Indeed, he extends his balanced leadership practices beyond the black-white binary borders to the less discussed inequities of religion.

And finally, Dr. Kirkpatrick shares the influence of her own various identity categories. Dr. Kirkpatrick revealed to me how she has recurringly confronted various challenges because of her own identities of race, gender, and age. She shares with me the challenges in her role as a school principal. She states,

> So one of the big things that I always dealt with in my whole career has been ageism. Because I started as a principal at 27 and I was a teacher at what 22. When I got [the principal role at] this other school it was racism. I was the only African American female to be the principal of the neighborhood school. And I remember my Lower Hills parents would look over the gated fence at me and *sneer.* And I'd say, "Good Morning!" 'Cause I figured, if you're going to be mean, then that's your choice; but you're not going to change me. And I am going to be kind and courteous, 'cause that's who I am. So I am going to say "Good morning, welcome, good morning boys and girls, come on in, let's go." And kids know that. So my success has always been the kids genuinely begin to love me. And I genuine begin to love them. I am like, "Come sweet peas, let's go." So, yeah . . . I'll never forget those [discriminations]. So, ageism, racism, and I would get a lot of sexism, a lot from women actually. Women have given me more fits than men.

Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals the complexity her various identities have had on her role as school principal. Dr. Kirkpatrick demonstrates not only something of how she navigated those challenges but also how she has used them to empower her impartial leadership practices.

The participants in their efforts concerning balance reveal something of how their recognition of the effects based on intersectionality. The distinct stories shared in this section by my participants demonstrate the need for school leaders to have an awareness of how intersectionalities affects children found at multiple identities. Moreover, the narrative of Dr. Kirkpatrick reveals that school leaders themselves also need to learn how to navigate their intersections of multiple identities because each identity presents unique challenges. Finally, my participants show their commitment to equity as having a broader perspective to the black-white binary "gaps" and/or inequities.

7.1.8   Dominant ideology

I use the narrative stories of three participants to reveal something of their recognition of the dominant ideology. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argue the challenge of the dominant ideology is regards to "the traditional claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity" (p. 26). I use the stories by Mia Stanfield, Lisa Grant, and Sophia Thompson because they readily and clearly communicated their recognition with various traditional claims of meritocracy, colorblindness, and the deficit portrayal about people of color in film. The participants' recognition of the dominant ideology works to inform their efforts of fairness and justice.

Dr. Grant and Ms. Stanfield provide something of their understanding of the dominant ideology of meritocracy. Dr. Grant in recognizing the difference between *equality* and *equity*

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points to the idea on how the dominant approach by educational policies has been the favored

language of equality has been strongly influenced by the tenet of meritocracy. She states,

> I think that a lot of districts look at equity from an equality standpoint and as long as everybody has this notion of *meritocracy*, you work hard enough, you are going to get there. And they have what I have, I've done it . . . my grandfather was an immigrant.

Dr. Grant describes how she has unremittingly encountered others articulation of the meritocracy

through her extensive work with equity. Such engagement, she believes, has been founded on the

voices by the majority and she argues that "everyone's voices haven't been at the table" in

discussions around providing the necessary opportunities and resources for all students. For this

reason, Dr. Grant inculcates her practice of fairness and justice by purposefully recognizing the

voices of people at the margins.

And also, Mia Stanfield promptly discusses with me her thoughts about meritocracy. For

Ms. Stanfield, however, the discussion of meritocracy is based on how she regards her teaching

staff frequently transmit the ideology of meritocracy in their educational practices with students

of color. Ms. Stanfield believes the forceful application of the ideology of meritocracy by her

teachers' in working with students of color is ineffectual. She shares with me her perspective on

the idea of meritocracy and her engagement with her teaching staff to shift toward more

collective pedagogical practices:

> Most black children and communities are collective, they, you know, work together and I think Hispanic to. You work together to move everybody forward, right? Where it's not so competitive and individualistic . . . Right? . . . But teachers often times . . . it's a competitive, [who] *get done first.* And I mean where does that come from? Well what does it mean to be first? Why do we have to be first? We don't have to be first. It's about getting it right. It's about learning and thinking. And so *how* do you, what do you do specifically in your lessons so that that is interrupted? Right? And are we honoring *effort* and are we honoring growth, are we honoring perseverance, and are we honoring collaboration—working together to get smarter. . . . Did you partner students

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purposefully? Did you put a student that has some understanding with one that may be almost there? So that they can work together around the task. You know, or you just, everybody do it independent and these children are just struggling. And these children are getting it and we are just moving forward. And those children that struggle they are just going to keep struggling. Right?

Ms. Stanfield reveals how she attempts to influence her teachers that hold to the idea of meritocracy by shifting their instructional practices toward a more growth and collective effort model. Ms. Stanfield's recognition of meritocracy, I believe, has enabled her to engage in dialogues with her staff to challenge the preferred pedagogical practices of her teaching staff. Indeed, Mia Stanfield reveals how impartial school leaders who are able to recognize dominant ideologies are able to begin the process of shifting away from the "neutral" ideology of meritocracy.

A second dominant ideology readily expressed by two participants was the idea of *colorblindness*. Sophia Thompson and Mia Stanfield reveal something of the complexity of colorblindness. Dr. Thompson, as a black woman, has come to recognize that she both possessed and embraced the ideology of colorblindness for a long period of time in her life. Dr. Thompson openly shared with me how a professional training based on equity helped move her away from holding to a colorblind ideology:

> And I truly have to admit that before going through the [equity] training seven years ago, I had developed some of that *colorblindness* that we talk about, because I had spent so much of my life kicking down barriers that I was becoming numb to it. You understand what I'm saying to you? I had become so accustomed to just tearing down barriers— racial barriers—that were in my way, that I'd become accustomed to it—it had almost become a norm to me. But the professional development forced the blinders back off— you know what I'm saying? And forced me to see inequity for what it really was. I had become obsessed with just tearing barriers down for myself, and not really acknowledging how often you get to the checkout counter and the light goes off in the grocery store. Or the minute you walk into a retail shop, someone [asks], "Can I help you?" I just stepped foot in the store and I feel like your eyes are over me. Or a child of color seating in a classroom . . . initially coming into this work, "Oh my goodness."

> Before addressing issues of equity, you'd see all the little brown children who had a choice sitting in the back of the class and white peers in the front, or lower level questioning for children of color. I'd just gotten so numb to addressing that kinda stuff that I didn't even see it as an issue. But after going through this training, it was really eye opening for me. And it gave me a new lens when walking in classrooms, in schools, [in] communities, and so forth.

Dr. Thompson reveals how her own ability to successfully overcome the systematic challenges people of color continually confront in this country her whole life had made her become incognizant and/or colorblind. Yet, her participation in the professional training on equity lay bare her racial awareness. Such introduction of racial awareness, then, has catapulted Dr. Thompson to use her new "lens" to provide her students and families with open-mindedness.

And again, Ms. Stanfield is a second school leader who discussed colorblindness. Stanfield recognizes that some of her teachers favor a colorblind perspective. Ms. Stanfield readily shares with me that it is difficult as a school leader to engage in conversations with her teaching staff around dialogues of race. She states,

> It is a challenge, to your question around those conversations, absolutely they are. With some people it comes very naturally and they are reflective, with others . . . they don't have a clue. And that speaks to their level, you know, that *colorblindness* that we know about . . . and [people like to say], "What do you mean that people aren't treated fairly?" Race doesn't impact them! Inequities in their life . . . they don't have them! So they don't even have a sense, they don't even have a lens on it—so they can't even interrupt it. And not that they are bad people, not that they don't have good intentions, but they don't even have an understanding, at a very basic level of what our kids our dealing with—but you are here teaching them!

Ms. Stanfield recognizes a significant difference between teachers who are reflective about their teaching practices compared to teachers who hold vehemently to a colorblind perspective. Indeed, Ms. Stanfield argues how having conversations on race with teachers can be productive. Yet, Ms. Stanfield feels that many of her teachers desire to hold strongly to a colorblind

perspective. Ms. Stanfield's open-mindedness leadership has pushed and motivated her to challenge teachers who favor a colorblind perspective.

Ms. Stanfield also reveals her own awareness on the deficit portrayal of people of color in film. Ms. Stanfield readily shares with me how in an African American studies course she took during her undergraduate studies strongly impacted her. The class "specifically was focusing on theater and movies and historical ways in which blacks showed up—historically in film." According to Ms. Stanfield the course became "life-changing" for her because she "learned *a lot* about black people and how we were being portrayed in the media, that I hadn't [thought] before that moment [and] that I hadn't really looked at it with that type of critical eye before." Indeed, she recognizes "from *that* point, I think that that's when things started . . . to be a little more critical" for her. Ms. Stanfield promptly tells me that her family had always inculcated her with the significance of race, but they didn't "focus on our race in the sense of how the media or how . . . this system that we live in portrays us." Consequently, Ms. Stanfield believes that she didn't grasp the understanding how people of color are negatively portrayed in films "until college . . . Yeah, I think I was in a fog until college." Such awareness by Ms. Stanfield about how people of color are portrayed in film, then, has imparted a racial understanding that provides her with impartiality.

All in all, this chapter helps to reveal something of the possibility of understanding and using the tenets of critical race theory in educational leadership. Again, the narrative stories of the eight participants readily allowed me to recognize how the various tenets of CRT show something of the character and how my participants continually lead their schools toward equitable practices. I recognize that framing the fair and just actions by my participants within CRT tenets shed light on those issues—notable and latent—necessary to challenge and

deconstruct in order to interrupt inequities in schools. Interestingly, I found that in spite of only two school leaders having recognition and use of CRT, all participants revealed through their stories experiences with CRT tenets. In these turbulent times faced by public educators, then, I recognize that both a knowledge of and use of critical race theory can be a useful tool used by school leaders committed to equity.

8.0   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It Couldn't Be Done

Somebody said that it couldn't be done
But, he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;
At least no one ever has done it;"
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

By Edgar Albert Guest

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8.1   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

8.1.1   Research Question #1

One objective of this study is to capture the nuances of school leaders who were recognized as openly engaging in equitable leadership practices. This study attempts to place at its center the lived experiences of eight school leaders who work to improve the educational opportunities for students of color and of low-SES. The use of narrative inquiry—especially the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space design of my research questions—has helped me to survey how the school leaders in this study have come to understand and/or describe equity and their commitment to it. In my gathering of the inward and outward understandings of the character of each of my participants, I came to recognize five overall distinct perspectives shown both in each participants past and present lived experiences and in each participant's future aspirations. The participants readily shared five distinct perspectives related to the commitment of educating their students: (1) the blending and/or crossing of boundaries between self and students, (2) their *heartwork*, (3) the role modeling, (4) as a *life imperative*, and (5) their principles (see figure 1).

Each distinct perspective, I concluded, was informed by various ways of thinking. In one perspective the participants revealed a perspective of blending and/or crossing the boundaries between themselves and their students. School leaders who understood and/or described such a commitment of fairness and justice through this perspective took on three points: (a) those who saw themselves in their students, (b) those who saw their efforts as communal, and (c) those not wanting students to experience the negative experiences they had had. Doubtless, those participants who describe equity and their commitment by way of this perspective did not see themselves as any different from their present day students. For example, Dr. Grant described

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her commitment as "I'm one of these kids I keep saying it." I am able to see how such a consideration by Dr. Grant might well reveal something of how she goes about engaging fairness in her leadership practices. And again, Ms. Stanfield reveals in her commitment to her students as what she desires to be done for her own two children. The lived experiences of my participants reveal to me how their commitments to themselves and to their families are in tune with the same committed efforts for their students. In short, my equity-minded school leaders readily connected their own lived experiences, which in some way closely aligned with their students.

In another perspective, my participants readily understood and/or described equity and their commitment to it as *heartwork*. All participants willingly shared with me that their efforts towards equity has brought to bear considerable stress in their lives. These participants, without much hesitation, emphasized their equity efforts as being "hard work," "not fun," "not comfortable," and so on. Dr. Thompson properly referred to her commitment to "equity work" as *heartwork,* an effort that is not easily quantified, yet "you know it is right when it *feels* right." Indeed, I recognize that my efforts to map my participants' lived experiences reveal some authentic and distinct equity efforts. I am secure in the thought that my participants were striving in their lives towards equity even before my arrival, and no doubt, they will continue their commitment long after I have left them. My engaging in this research has only helped to move my subjects' commitments away from obscurity and on to being observable where it belongs. I recognize my participants did not require affirmation of their commitment as a sign of equity or even that it was valuable because for them such commitment *is* heartwork: *it just feels right*.

In a third description and/or understanding of their commitment toward equity, I was able to determine that they see themselves as role models for students. I came to recognize their

sincere commitment to be role models, both by way of their own recognition and by way of my own learning about each participant. In fact, their commitment to their roles was twofold: they wanted to be models for students and they desired to personify equitable practices with their faculty staff. As school leaders, my participants readily recognized the significance of their role in the community. Mr. Green, for example, encouragingly displayed to his students a successful black man. The school leaders in this study, also shared how their ability to engage in "courageous conversations" with their teachers was possible because they themselves would model the kind of equitable practice they required of the teachers in their schools. My participants recognized that without their actually showing and living equity in their leadership practice their efforts would be in vain.

And a fourth, the school leaders in this study understood and/or described equity and their commitment of it as being what I call *life imperative* for students. The school leaders in this study recognize the tangible life outcomes for their students if inequities remained unchallenged. Such recognition by my participants reveals their enduring commitment to provide students with the opportunities to provide for themselves a better *life*. Dr. Kirkpatrick easily refers to the well-established data on the effects on students who are unable to read at grade-level by the third-grade; yet, she states, "we continue to perpetuate it." Moreover, Dr. O'Neal sees the core of his impartial leadership through the position of several self-reflective questions about his students: Can they *survive*? Can they get out of schooling and get a *job*? Can they get out and make a good *living*? These questions about the livelihood of his students sit at the core of Dr. O'Neal's equity efforts and, I believe, for all eight of my participants.

Lastly, the participants understood and/or described equity and their commitment to it as the essence of who they are. I believe they communicated their equity efforts as intrinsic in

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nature that determines their character. As I collected and mapped their lived stories I was able to capture their potential development as equity school leaders. Mr. Chambers readily communicated his willingness to challenge racial slurs came from something he perceived was necessary in his position as school leader. In addition, participants could not easily explain their commitment toward equity. John Richardson, for example, describes his lived experiences as providing him the training ground for equity effort. The essence and purpose describe by my participants was to provide their students with what they needed for as long as they need them. Put simply, it is *principles* of who they are.

Figure 2 Participants understanding of equity and their commitment to it
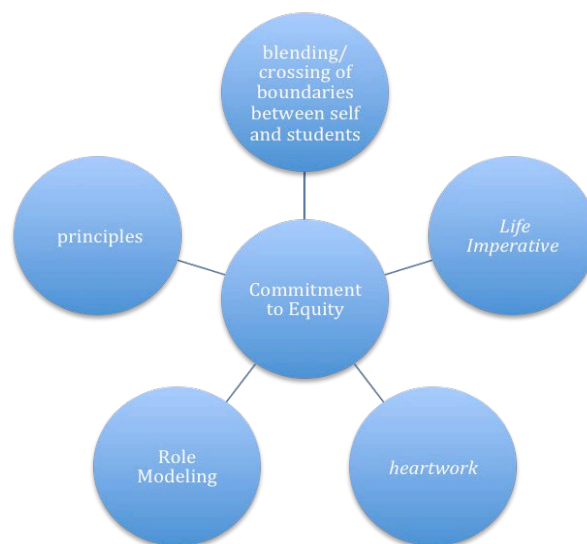
8.1.2 Research Question #2

The eight school leaders in this study have provided variously unique perspectives about their efforts to promote equity in their schools. In this section, I categorize by way of six methods how those school leaders promote equity in their schools: (1) placing race at the forefront of what they deliberate on and what they do, (2) providing access to opportunities for

students, (3) bringing in and/or fighting for resources, (4) believing in holistic approaches, (5) having relationships with a network of like-minded colleagues, and (6) modeling equitable practices. I believe these six methods capture the nuances of how those eight participants take on the challenges of promoting fairness in their schools.

One strategy promoted by such equity minded school leaders was not to avoid engaging discussions of race in their practice. My participants, that is, recognized that discussions on the topic of race were hinged on fairness and justice at the forefront of their leadership. Dr. Thompson, for example, revealed that her belief was that equity's qualities of fairness and justice was *birthed* from the idea of "a need to provide children of color with an additional layer of support in attaining their goals." I came to recognize that school leaders in not shying away from discussions of race were able to implement some significant strategies when focused through a racial equity lens.

Another key point, school leaders Lisa Grant, Mia Stanfield, Sophia Thompson, Lesley Kirkpatrick, and Robert Green strategically used district policies to engage their staff in the much needed discussions about how "race matters" (West, 1994) show up in education. And consequently, in their professional developments, these leaders confidently used the strategy of the *courageous conversation compass* (Singleton & Linton, 2006) to engage in their discussions of race. And again, these leaders both emphasized the component of "implementing lessons equitably" in their responsibility with teacher observational practices and used book studies with their staff that dealt with issues of race. And lastly, these leaders not only implemented an African-centered curriculum (Asante, 1991; Tate, 1994; Tatum, 2004); but also developed sustainable equitable teams in their schools. In such a use of district policies, then, the school

leaders in this study were willing to deliberate in head-on discussions about race and racism in their schools.

On the other hand, in his efforts, Mr. Chambers transcended his suburban district's inclusive policies. That is to say, when Mr. Chambers took over the principalship of his suburban elementary school, he quickly recognized and readily shared that the school had no "school counselor talking at all about race or diversity." To him, "that was a slippery slope." So, Mr. Chambers's had voiced his idea that his school "needed to actively *discuss* our differences and our similarities even at ages five, six, and seven." Such an idea led Mr. Chambers to supply his guidance counselor with those written materials that specifically deal with issues of race and diversity in our schools. An action research study by Husband (2010) found that children as early as the first-grade have already an establish understanding of some critical concepts that relate to issues of race and diversity. I recognized Mr. Chambers, in our discussions, reveals something of his character as a white male: he was not willing to ignore engaging his school in discussions on race.

A second strategy of the school leaders' efforts to undertake equity was in providing their students with an access to opportunities. Recently researchers have argued to make visible those "opportunity gaps" that create inequities (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Carter & Welner, 2013). The opportunities discussed by the school leaders were those opportunities providing access not only to academic programs but also to those enrichment experiences that students would not have access to otherwise. Dr. Grant, for example, assertively shared with me her viewpoint of the district in supporting her efforts to promote more opportunities for her students, saying: "the district doesn't tell me . . . I don't wait for *them!"* Here, I was reminded of Heifetz (1994) who likewise suggests how adaptive challenges require those in leadership roles to take on

"responsibility without waiting for revelation or request" (p. 276). And I was pleased to find my school leaders—my equity-minded school leaders—readily revealing their self-motivated endeavors to provide their students with both academic and enriching opportunities.

One recognizable effort to provide additional academic opportunities to students was that of Dr. O'Neal who shared with me what he and his fellow teachers had recognized when looking over students' achievement data. Dr. O'Neal reports that the data showed many of the achievement gains made by his students during the school year were being lost during the summer months. Upon this recognition, Dr. O'Neal discloses that is why he applied for and received federal grant money to implement a summer school program. Under such a grant, Dr. O'Neal students would gain the opportunity to continue with their learning during the summer. Surprisingly, Dr. O'Neal readily shared that his efforts in "planning that program was like another full-time job" and "it wouldn't have happened at all" if he hadn't taken the initiative to plan and coordinate his summer school programming. He explains that his effort to promote summer programming was because of his students: "they need to have rich experiences."

In another of my interviews, to discuss efforts to provide students with opportunities was with Mr. Richardson who described his fight against, as he calls it, the "narrowing of the curriculum to math and reading." Mr. Richardson believes his students simply need access to the opportunities to participate in enrichment programs. And again, Mr. Richardson shares his idea about his current efforts to improve the facilities of his charter school, asking the rhetorical question "Why don't *my* kids deserve everything that [suburban] kids . . . are getting?" Because of these various personal stories offered by these selected group of school leaders, I can well recognize something of the qualities that lay in each. Each leader has the quality of committing

his or her efforts both to getting the needed resources and to providing their students with the right opportunities to meet their educational and learning needs.

Moreover, to promote enrichment opportunities for their students, these school leaders helped me to understand the important use of field trips. In this study, the school leaders understood their actions in providing students field trip opportunities as something of a reflection of the opportunities they readily provide for their own children. Indeed, these participants willingly revealed the various kinds of field trips they had engaged or intended to engage with their students. The trips included: (1) a trip to the beach, (2) trips to see films like *Race* (2016) and *Hidden Figures* (2016), (3) an upcoming trip to visit the Smithsonian's *National Museum of African American History and Culture,* and (4) an earlier trip to see the ballet *The Nutcracker*. Dr. Thompson steadfastly believes that if educational stakeholders readily engage in providing "every child, despite their color, their race, their gender, the same opportunities that we want for our children and hold others accountable for doing the same, I think schools would be great places to learn and grow." Upon hearing this, I have come to believe that such a readiness to provide opportunities comes from re-imagining our students not as *Other people's children* (Delpit, 2006), but as what our own children would want and need.

Here, I am reminded of a story Dr. O'Neal shared about the effect such commitment to provide enrichment opportunities has meant to his students' families. As he tells me, during a PTA meeting, a grandparent, in her late sixties, who has taken guardianship of her 10 year-old granddaughter since her daughter had passed away, reminded Dr. O'Neal "You all do so much for the kids, and it helps me out so much because I'm older so I don't even have the energy to go and do these kinds of things [enrichment trips]." Because of stories like these, I have come to recognize, on the one hand, the strategy of how using field trips can readily provide students with

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opportunities; on the other hand, such a strategy draws attention to how schools are reducing school-based trips because of the lack of funding and/or the influence of high-stakes accountability testing. Yet, I recognize that for these school leaders, providing their *students* with opportunities is how these leaders resolve to promote equity.

There is a third strategy I recognize of these school leaders, and that is their efforts to bring in to their schools external resources or to argue for resources within their district. These school leaders in recognizing the needs of their students readily took it upon themselves and extended something of themselves to search for and to acquire the right resources. Each of the participants shared several external resources that he or she brought to their schools: (1) technology resources (SmartBoards, iPads, one-to-one laptops for students, and laptops for teachers, for example), (2) snacks and vegetable programs, (3) federal grants, and (4) community partnerships. Dr. Grant, for example, sees the purpose of bringing in additional funding and resources to her school as something that her students "would need to help them be successful." Also, Dr. Kirkpatrick connects her efforts in resolving to bring in additional resources to provide accesses for her students, as she tells me, "because kids need *access*." And, Mr. Green was anxious to suggest that the efforts to bring in additional external resources do not go unnoticed by students. Indeed, Mr. Green expressed to me that he believes his willingness to provide snacks during the day for his students has shed light on where his *heart* is.

Furthermore, in this third strategy, I have become aware of the readiness of some school leaders, in recognizing a *need,* to campaign within their districts to keep and maintain in their schools both the human capital and the resource capital. As my participants, these school leaders willingly shared meeting the challenge of providing necessary resources in the face of the budgetary cutbacks implemented by their school districts. In fact, my participants disclosed to

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me how they engaged the central office administration either to provide additional supports or to maintain the supports they had in the face of cutbacks. Ms. Stanfield, for example, in recognizing both the increase of ESL students in her school and the ESL teacher's struggle in teaching math, submitted a proposal for an additional ESL math teacher. After both her resilient efforts and her careful maneuvering of her modest budget, Ms. Stanfield was able to successfully secure the additional math teacher. In short, I recognize school leaders committed to balance must become strategic and skilled negotiators and advocates for school resources.

The fourth strategy encouraged by the school leaders in this study was to apply holistic approaches to meet the needs of their students. The school leaders recognized that in order engage students in academic learning, they first had to remove those "barriers" that impede student learning. I recognize that such holistic approaches target two specific student needs—trauma and affirmation.The eight equity-minded school leaders in this study discussed and revealed variously distinct approaches that I consider to be holistic and are intended to remove such barriers: (1) revamping the school curriculum to include lessons on character (see Noddings, 2005), (2) providing students the opportunities to represent the school in the community, (3) bringing in external resources to treat student trauma, (4) connecting with community-based organizations to get volunteer social work interns, (5) engaging students with Afromations (celebration of culture), (6) implementing *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools* programs, (7) developing student leadership programs in their schools, and (8) facilitating a student led peace march. Starratt (2004) argues that school leaders have the responsibility, based on the role of the principalship, to mitigate disadvantages and to push for the holistic education of students. I believe the value of these strategies reveals school leaders

recognize their leadership role extends beyond meeting the academic needs of their student, but to the whole student.

In their efforts to inculcate a school culture that support the whole child, I believe, reveals something of the kind of makeup of these school leaders. Indeed, the attempt of providing such holistic approaches was discussed by the school leaders as being "adaptive work" and being part of their efforts for students who have been disenfranchised to "rebond" with the school. More importantly, some school leaders reveal that it promotes something of "a level of respect" from families, because families can understand what the leaders are attempting to do.

The fifth strategy readily revealed by these fair and just leaders was the awareness of searching for and establishing essential relationships with a network of like-minded colleagues. Also, school leaders shared how within the establishment of a network of like-minded colleagues they had continual communications with mentorships who provide additional support for their equity work. All the school leaders shared the importance of "knowing that others are out there" busy taking on the courageous endeavor of promoting equity. Dr. Thompson promptly shared with me that her inner-circle "is small." Ms. Stanfield refers to her voluntary participation with equity affiliate meetings as providing her "nourishment" because "you only know what you know, and you only know what you're dealing with, but then hearing how other people are tackling some of the same challenges and putting some systems in place in their respective schools is important." Freire (1998) argues that we must open ourselves to work with others because not only can we not do things alone but also it is among others that we can do things.

Lastly, the school leaders openly shared how they actively role modeled equitable behaviors as a strategy to promote equity in their schools. The influence of role modeling equitable behaviors by these school leaders extended to influence three significant educational

stakeholders—teachers, students, and families—in their school. School leaders in this study revealed how they could not engage in courageous conversations with their staff if they were not "living it." Also, by openly and forthrightly engaging with students and families, the eight participants desired to model the expected behaviors to their teaching staff.

Figure 3 How participants promote equity in their schools

Equity Leadership: Support system/network & Role Modeling

Barriers

Holistic approaches

Opportunities/Resources

Equity

Race focus

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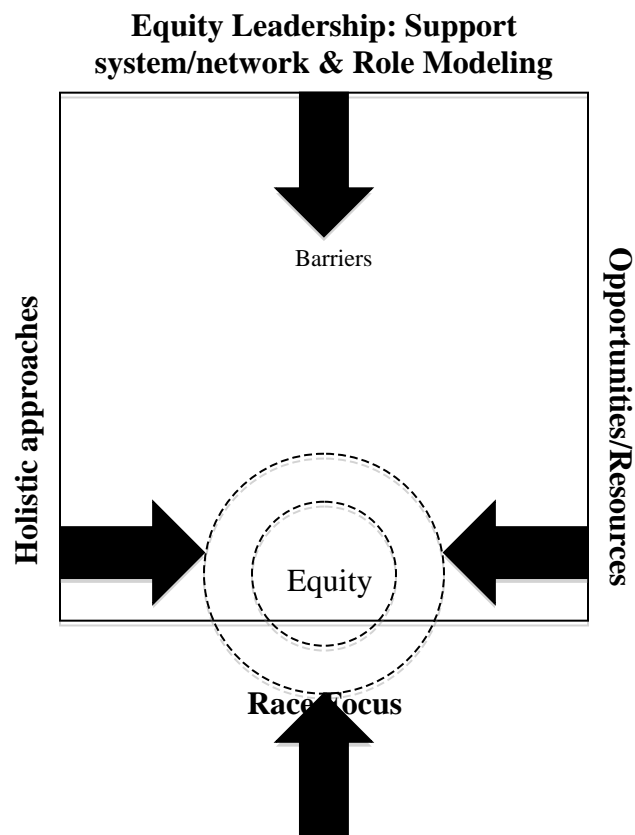
8.1.3   Research Question #3

The overall design of this narrative study has allowed me to both collect and reveal those stories that provide me with glimpses of how each principal in this study took on his or her leadership role focused on a distinct feature of equity. Indeed, the *inward* focus in Clandinin & Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is centered on capturing the nuances of "the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (p. 50) of individuals. So, even though my participants struggled to recognize their drive toward equitable leadership practices, they were ready to share a story that revealed something of that drive. In fact, many researchers argue if a school principal does decide to go forth in the direction of equity, it could be argued that he or she does so because of either ethical and/or moral principles (Bell, 2008; Bogotch, Miron, Murry, 1998; Branson, 2014; Calabrese, 1988; English, 2011; Fullan, 2003; Starratt, 1991, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1996). Through my research and a studied collection of stories I have come to recognize that one's drive in the direction of equity is because of ethical and/or moral principles.

Each school leader that this study has brought to bear has struggled to independently recognize or connect something of his or her pursuit of ethical and/or moral imperatives not only from within themselves but also for students of color and those of low-SES. Overall, five participants agreed the inherent need for moral and/or ethical principles, two participants revealed themselves as "on the fence" about the need for moral and/or ethical principles, and one participant declaratively argued both his use of and need to instruct moral and/or ethical principles in school leadership preparation programs. Within these various perspectives, however, I found it more practical for participants to share with me stories that reveal something of their ethical and/or moral grounding in their leadership roles. This narrative study has worked

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to highlight the value their stories have had in helping me to reveal each participant's own moral and/or ethical commitments (Atkinson, 1998, 2002, 2007; Bruner, 1986, 2002; Chase, 2011; Luwisch, 2001; Polkinghorne 1995, 2007; Riessman, 2002, 2008; Tappan & Brown, 1991; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Dr. Grant revealed a story that exemplifies these eight participants commitment towards equity that is underscored with moral and/or ethical imperative. Dr. Grant shared with me how her character is important to her. So important is her character that Dr. Grant revealed to me, "I almost lost my job" holding to her character values. In a conflict with a supervisor, Dr. Grant took a stand based "on my own morals and my ethics 'cause . . . I could have complied with what she wanted, just to keep my job and my position—but, I didn't." At the conclusion of her story, Dr. Grant recognizes the significance of the stand she was committed to: " I was true to myself." Indeed, Atkinson (2002) argues collecting personal stories can reveal something of "how life is to be lived" (p. 129). The significance and power of such collected stories given by these eight committed school leaders clearly reveals to me how moral and/or ethical principles encourage their efforts to meet the needs of their students.

The participants revealed and expressed a moral and/or ethical imperative supported their leadership in various approaches. The participants discussed how their moral and/or ethical grounding influenced their leadership practices because it facilitated them to connect equity: to their *values*, to who they *are*, to their *will*, to their *humanity*, to their *duty,* to their *integrity*, to their *legacy*, and to helping them move away from *fear*. I recognize ethical and/or moral principles helped these eight school leaders understand the significance of engaging in their pursuit of towards fairness and justice; which determine them to propel their commitment to equity beyond the recognition of challenges and to their theory of action (see figure 3). In

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sharing their stories of commitments with me, they provide telling insight on the human qualities that propel commitments to transform educational outcomes for students who are largely marginalized.

History has shown that stories can become vehicles of social change. According to Riessman (2008) many social resistance movements such as the civil rights, feminist, and gay and lesbian movements came about from the sharing of stories of discrimination that reveal commonalities and therefore set in motion "collective action." The stories by the eight school leaders in this study, I believe, builds on the foundation of previous researches. Those researches that desired to transport the *narratives* of those school leaders committed to providing fair and just educational outcomes away from the periphery and to the *heart* of educational research. Indeed, this study desires to build on the new "eyes on the prize," the collective action focused on the educational equity movement for *our* next generation of students.

Figure 4 Equity Leadership Responsibility Model

The diagram shows circles labeled "Blending/ crossing of boundaries between self and students", "Life Imperative", "heartwork", "Role Modeling", and "principles" connecting to a central oval "Commitment to Equity". An arrow labeled "Challenges" points toward a box titled "Equity Leadership: Support system/network & Role Modeling". The box has arrows pointing inward from four sides labeled "Holistic approaches", "Opportunities/Resources", "Race Focus", with an inner circle containing "Barriers" and "Equity".

8.2   IMPLICATIONS

8.2.1   Theory

My findings in this study have helped me to develop a schema that I offer as Equity Leadership Responsibility Model (see figure 4). I intend for the features of this model to capture and show five distinct commitments that are underscored with ethical and/or moral principles, that propel leaders through the awareness of challenges, and that influence engagements in

action. The model also provides insight into the characteristics of my eight school leaders who have been recognized by educational stakeholders (university professors, administration practitioners, community members) as engaging their leadership competency in the direction of open-mindedness. Such a challenge to engage in providing students with certain character and educational qualities is both complex and continually evolving, and for that reason, we must adopt those advanced theories that can inform both future empirical studies and principal practitioners. I believe this model is relevant today because it both builds upon and improves our previous researches that focus on leadership.

The Equity Leadership Responsibility Model provides valuable implications for schools, school leaders, principal preparation programs, and social justice research. I am convinced that the examination and application of this model can help school districts to target and encourage commitments and approaches, qualities that strongly inform leadership features to both new and veteran school principals. And I am equally convinced that our school districts can employ this model with various district personnel to both challenge and direct their professional developments. And again, I should also point out that the intention of my model is not to be a how to manual, but rather a model to provide both a foundation for and understanding of how our practitioners of school leadership see their work towards impartiality. This model, then, intends to provide a framework to both encourage and help other school leaders who desire to initiate their own *equitable practices* but don't know how.

By understanding the commitments and approaches to action school leaders make in a drive toward equitable leadership, principal preparation programs can use this theory to help structure the instructional programming. The model can help aspiring principals become engage in their own commitments and perspective that can broaden the dialogue of equity leadership.

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Lastly, future studies can both strengthen and extend on this model through further research studies that purposefully examine the work of those school leaders committed to improving the educational and holistic outcomes for students of color and of low-SES. More research is needed that reveals how school leaders understanding and see their commitment to equity influences their efforts to engage in strategies of action. Further purposeful sampling of school leaders is needed to recognize how pertinent the five commitments and six approaches in this model are. In short, I believe the Equity Leadership Responsibility Model functions to center on current and necessary leadership practices.

8.2.2   Professional Practice/Preparation

This study has helped me to recognize two significant implications for both the professional practice and the preparation of school leadership. This study allowed me to capture something of those operations and training that supported my school leaders' efforts driven towards equity. In response, I suggest that school principal preparation programs and doctoral awarding higher education institutions should introduce literature on critical race theory to participating students. Also, I offer the creation of an equity school leadership support group/network through a university-school district partnership.

Six participants in this study received a doctorate, completed all coursework and/or completed the first year of coursework in a doctoral program (see Table 3). Again, two school leaders (Drs. Grant and Kirkpatrick) revealed how they not only used CRT in their dissertation studies, but also how they continue to apply CRT tenets in their leadership practice. Also, I found several other school leaders (Mia Stanfield, Bill O'Neal, and Sophia Thompson) provide some tenets of CRT without a direct recognition. Thus, I believe providing school leaders with

more opportunities to engage with the CRT literature in either principal certification or doctoral degree programs can inform school leaders.

Table 3. Participants (N=8) degree attainment status

Master's degree	Enrolled in Ed.D/Ph.D	Completed coursework in Ed.D/Ph.D	Hold Ed.D/ Ph.D.
Robert Green	Mia Stanfield	John Richardson	Lisa Grant
James Chambers			Lesley Kirkpatrick
			Bill O'Neal
			Sophia Thompson

Furthermore, I believe universities would need to hire faculty with a strong background in critical race theory to lead classroom discussions. The training should cover such germane topics of achievement gap versus opportunity gaps, limits of colorblind leadership, our own perspectives of race and racism, and equity. I recognize the complex demand universities have to comply with the various principal standards can limit the curriculum of principal preparation programs. Indeed, in their study of programming in principal preparation programs, Hess and Kelly (2007) found that less than 10% of the content was focused on "norms and values" that include themes of inequality, equity, and social justice to name a few. Nevertheless, I believe future school leaders need to engage with literature on critical race theory.

I suggest that principal preparation programs can reduce the transition of CRT into the curriculum by focusing on four central tenets: (1) the knowledge of counternarratives, (2) the challenge of the dominant ideology, (3) the centrality of race and racism, and (4) the commitment to social justice. I argue these four tenets can provide the foundational grounding

that informs school leadership practices. I recognize that knowledge of counternarratives can help school leaders look for alternative asset-based beliefs that challenge deficit perspectives. Also, the development of challenging dominant ideologies can move school leaders to move away from the dominant ideologies like colorblind perspectives or acceptance of meritocracy, that I believe, hinder educator's commitment to equity. In short, school principal preparation programs, I recognize, need to make concerted efforts to inculcate literature that can both improve and advance the leaders our schools need. I recognize that critical race theory literature can help to begin shifting school leaders perspectives to fairness and justice.

A second implication for professional practice is the development of an equity school leadership support group/network through a university-school district partnership. Various aspects of my study have informed my reasoning about the creation of such support group/network. I found that my participants engaged in participating in external workshops led by the *Pacific Educational Group,* created by Glenn E. Singleton; engaged in dialogue with other equity committed peers during their own time; interacted with a district supervisor about their leadership practices; and several participants shared with me that they would like to meet the other participants in this study. I recognize that there are school leaders who purposely look to deepen their own learning about issues of equity and there might be more that do not know how to effectively find peer support and resources. The creation of a support group/network partnership can both help school district's support equity minded school leaders and researches on those most effective practices can be identified and studied.

I recognize several preliminary practices that would be necessary for the equity school leadership support group/network. First, the program would be offered yearlong and the meetings would occur once a month and be voluntary. The purpose of making the program

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voluntary is for the program not to be seen as an additional responsibility but as a fulfilling program. Ms. Stanfield informed me how she regretted that she had missed the previously scheduled meeting of the *Pacific Educational Group*, but plan to attend next month. Moreover, one participant discussed how a mandated district supervisor who was provided to give support tended to strongly lament and be critical of mistakes. I recognize a voluntary structure would facilitate the program not be viewed as an evaluation of their leadership.

Second, a strong group/network group would consist between five and ten members. I believe a small cohort model can help strengthen the network support. Third, the direct financial cost of the program should be smaller for the participants. So the school district and university should offset the overall cost of the yearlong program. The program would consist of book talks, handouts, university cost, and food. Lastly, I see the overall program be predominantly led by the school leaders themselves. School leaders can share practices that they use in their schools. For example, Dr. O'Neal could lead a workshop on how to complete federal grants or about the use of restorative practices and Mr. Green could share his strategy to get the snack program in his school. In brief, the purpose of an equity school leadership support group/network through a university-school district partnership is to strengthen and validate school leaders who are committed to improving the educational outcomes of all students.

8.2.3   Future Research

Collecting the lived stories of my eight participants has provided me something of a lens through which I might examine those school leaders whose efforts have focused on improving the educational outcomes for both students of color and of low-SES. I recognize several possible future studies that can not only expand the findings of this study but also develop new findings to

enhance the field of school leadership. The study of school leadership is critical because in relation to student achievement school leadership is second to teachers (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2008). Moreover, as my research study demonstrates, the reach of school leaders extends beyond the classroom to engage many educational stakeholders including teachers, students, community members, and families.

Just as this study can strengthen and support the understanding of equitable leadership, one future research study would be to extend this same study to geographically different regions. The participants in this study come from the northeastern region of the United States. Further studies should examine similar participants located in other regions of the United States. Indeed, Garreau (1981) argues that there are nine distinct nations in North America with varying cultural characteristics. I recognize the context of the location can have a significant influence on impartially minded school leaders. I argue that by studying equity-focused school leaders from different cultural context can provide a greater picture of those qualities our public educators need in order to serve our students.

For a second future study that would extend on this present narrative study could well be to study and to look to understand those characteristics of equity in school leaders garnered from other races and ethnicities. Hearing the stories from other races and ethnicities could further enhance research focused on equitable leadership. For this present study, I have investigated and collected the narratives of the racial demographic of six black participants and two white. Researchers might well take up the challenge to identify and study equity-minded school leaders who are of Latina/o, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander descent. At the same time, more research studies that examine and reveal those practices of black school leaders and those white school leaders, "allies in the struggle" (hooks, 1992),

who willingly navigate their schools towards social justice (Theoharis, 2010; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011) is critically needed as well. In fact, I believe, such research will reveal less of our differences and more of our similarities in those characteristics, perspectives, and qualities that shape and influence equity-minded school leaders.

A third future study that can further extend the finding of this narrative inquiry study would be the application of the methodological use of case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013) and ethnography (Creswell, 2006; Glesne, 2010). The use of case study methods to collect data on several of the eight participants from this study could provide further understanding of the complex phenomena of equity-minded school leaders. For example, the use of both direct observations and participant observations could enhance the findings from this study's collected data of in-depth interviews and documents. Also, taking a prompt from Wolcott's (2003) ethnographic study of an elementary principal, *The Man in the Principal's Office*, the use of ethnographic methods could saliently inform on the culture school leaders create in their schools. Indeed, I recognize, compared to Wolcott's (2003) assumption that school leaders continually maintain institutional norms, the eight school leaders in this study reveal their efforts to challenge institutional norms that create "barriers" that impede the educational learning for students of color and of low-SES. So, I believe the use of methodological data collection, like case study and ethnography, can further develop our understanding of those school leaders committed to fairness and justice.

A fourth future study I desire to explore further from this study's data is to examine the significance and influence of religion in these eight school leaders. All eight participants revealed something of the influence religion has had in their lives and leadership practices. The intention and purpose of this study did not aim to capture the influence of religion on the

commitment and work towards equity by school leaders; yet, I recognize spirituality deserves further investigation. Indeed, researchers have examined specifically the influence of spirituality on black leadership (Bass, 2009; Dantley, 2009; Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009). The purpose of my research would be to extend our knowledge on the influence of spirituality on black school leadership with the findings from my two white participants. The more we can understand the qualities that spirituality has on equitable leadership practices, the more we can train and support fair and just school leaders our schools need.

A fifth future study I want to do is to continue to examine the development of what I call equity leadership-straddlers. I identified five distinctive characteristics that define leadership straddlers: (1) codeswitching, (2) interaction with educational stakeholders, (3) navigating the institution of school, (4) conveyance of straddler knowledge, and (5) an ethical premise. Further studies with similar participants could help build upon and further develop the characteristics of leadership-straddler. I believe the more we continually work to identify the right features that support school leadership driven to equity, the more likely our schools can promote the leadership our students need.

Lastly, and more importantly, future research should engage in studying the influence the actions promoted by equity-minded school leaders has on students. The eight school leaders in my study recognize their commitment as a responsibility to improving the educational outcomes for his or her students. Consequently, in order to gauge the impact such commitment by school leaders has on students, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observational notes could be collected from students in the school. In fact, several school leaders in my study wished that I could have interviewed their `students to get an understanding from the student's perspectives. Yet, the design of my study did not allow me to pursue such efforts. So, future research studies

that collect interview data on a purposeful sampling of equity-minded school leaders should concurrently interview students in the schools. I recognize our school leadership and teachers can learn a great deal from attending to student voices.

APPENDIX A: **Principal Narrative Inquiry Interview Protocol**

Interview I: Temporal/Past

1. Background data information:
   a) Age
   b) Gender
   c) Racial/ethnic background
   d) Years in education
   e) Years in current position
   f) How long have you led this school?

Student:

2. Describe any lasting academic K-12 school experience you have had?
   Tell a story.

3. What kind of university and/or college did you attend? (i.e. public, private, small, big, city, rural)
   a) What did you study?
   b) Can you tell me a story about an experience you had in college?

Ethics/Morals:

4. What do you believe it means to be a good person?

5. How did school, family, or other institution contribute to your growth as a good person?

6. What constrains your ability to encourage ethical behavior? What facilitates it? (Thinking both narrowly and broadly, take into account your personal, your group, community, and your cultural constrains and facilitations.)

7. In working with students of color and/or of low-socioeconomic status, what values guide your leadership practice?

8. In assessing your moral actions, whether you intend them or not, what considerations do you believe should given to those actions?

Teacher:

9. Tell me about how you came into a career in education?

10. Tell me about your teaching experiences.
    a) Do you have any stories from your teaching experience that has shaped who you are as an educator?
    b) Can you tell me a story about a principal who had an influenced in your career?
    c) How long where you a teacher before you decided to move into administration?
    d) How did you choose to move to administration?

11. What is your philosophy of education?
    a) What has had a major influence on your philosophy of education?
    b) Has it change? Why?

Principal Leader

12. What is your definition of leadership?
    a) What leadership capacities and competences are needed?

13. What do you desire for your students?

14. How would you describe yourself as a leader? What qualities are important in your role?

15. What is your vision and/or goal as a principal?

16. What would you describe as having been the successful opportunities in your growth as a leader? Tell a story.

17. What challenges have you faced at your school and how have you dealt with those challenges? Tell a story

18. What would I see if I were a student attending your school?

Interview II: Temporal/Present

1. Please share your definition/understanding of equity and how it is the same or different from equality?
   a) Is there a standard definition of equity in the field of education?
   b) What does equity mean to you?
   c) How does the district define equity and how does that align with your own definition of equity?
   d) What has been the source of your advocacy towards equity?
   e) What would it take to achieve equity in schools?

2. What role does a school principal have in providing equity in schools?

3. Describe any background you have had in either areas of diversity and/or equity.
   a) What has contributed to your development of equity?
   b) Can you tell me a story about such experiences?

4. What approaches do you take toward equity in your school?
   a) Please give examples through stories.
   b) How does your practice of equity affect the various stakeholders (i.e. staff, students, parents, community) in your school?
   c) What have been some opportunities to improve your school towards equity?

5. Can you describe any challenges that you have had in addressing the presence and/or absences of equity? Tell a story.

6. To what extent do accountability factors support and/or impede your work towards equity? Tell a story.

7. What role do relationships (i.e. students, staff, families, community) play in your work towards equity? Tell a story.
8.
9. From your own experience of working towards equity, what advice would you offer principals who desire to work towards equity?

Interview III: Temporal/Future

(The interview questions for the third interview will be informed by the findings from the previous two interviews)

1. Can you please review the timeline is there anything that stands out for you?
   a) Can you describe the substance and experience that you realize from these experiences?
   b) More complex ideas
   c) Can you describe any other strategies that you use in working towards equity?
   d) What skills do you believe school leaders need in working towards equity?

2. Can you please share the moral and/or ethical perspective needed by school leaders in a commitment towards equity?

3. In what ways do you see your positionalities (identities) influence your leadership goals, decisions, and practices?

4. Where do you see your career in the next five years?

5. Please tell me about your future vision for education?

6. What do you believe it will take to reach equity in education? What role will principals play in this?

Dr. Thompson Timeline

Went to superintendent and was hired as assistant principal at comprehensive high school for 5 yrs (*loved it* but got bumped). Experience with Viola Hurston "count the cost." Educating children is a matter of LIFE & DEATH. Principal pipeline program (introduce to equity & Beyond Diversity Training). Thutmose became sanctuary. Collaboration with Dr. A. DuBois led to "aha moment." Took a leave last year to do some soul searching & came back different. Work with Molefi Asanta. Equity not Equal. "Equity" can't help but think about color & race. Student centered. "Just Write" & "Read More." Equity Summit in NO. Uses teacher evaluation for equity (3g). Equity is imperative work. Had develop colorblindness b/c her ability to break racial barriers. School leaders must model the work. She doesn't shy away from conversation about race. Story of exercise of highest level attainment = recognize she is seen from a disadvantage/deficit mindset = desires to interrupt this in her students. Ritchart's *Cultures of Thinking*. Story of morning donuts with families. Story of quiet teacher who after 2 years of equity training finally spoke about how much he has grown. Grapples with data that sometimes does not reveal the hard work of her students. Equity is "messy." *Other People's Children*.

Honor Roll student. Senior year story. A well-liked psychology teacher discouraged her to go to college. Used this as motivation. Had some teachers in K-12 who went above and beyond their role and responsibility & model of goodness. Had both white & black teachers in K-12 that were impactful to her development.

Got hired at Riverdale Public School District right out of college. 1st grade teacher. Taught 1st for 5 yrs. Felt she was walking her purpose. The story of Nathan and his HW =brown boy had a thirst /hunger for learning (counternarrative). Led with love. Wrote plays for students to participate in black history month. Was given an awarded by professors for her work in plays. *Good Morning News* story. Recently attended the baby shower of her own teacher assistants from her first teaching job. In her 3rd year started master's. 4th year of teaching started thinking "if I were principal." At the conclusion of her master's program professor persuaded her to enroll in doctoral program.

1st grade story of Ms. Pepper: was a student assistant and teacher took to Pizza Hut (pivotal moment). Beyond the classroom.

Elementary	Middle School	High School	College	Teaching	Administrator

Attended a PreK-8 performing arts school. This experience helped give her a passion for the arts.

Attended a local state University. Declared education major freshman year. Always knew that she wanted to be a teacher. It was in college where she recognized/awareness she was representing her community. Started a few student organizations for students of color (pep squad) b/c wanted to reveal the voices of color in positive way.

A product of the K-12 school she works in. Family & school contributed to her being a good person. Spiritual person (AME). Always been taught to do things with love.

Started 2-year doctoral program (was told by some professors not possible). Dissertation on social capital/resiliency of black male students (interest was black males from low-SES). Recognizes her own story was social capital. Can't run from failures. After doctoral program got a position as village coordinator (2 months). The story of Dr. Anna Pippen (black female principal true model of leadership & someone she wanted to emulate & does today). Story of bad experience as 29 year old assistant principal with black female principal mean & takes her ideas (leaves RPS)(1st time dealing with adversity & first person she couldn't prove to*) (blessing uses this story with her teachers today & returned stonger). Never had fear of working in tough communities. The story of Riverdale professor Lincoln (tough). Work 2 years at the childcare center at her church.

Her spirituality guides her leadership in working with students of color & low-SES. Began leading her African centered school without knowing what that was. Courageous conversations with *love*.

A lot of her work at her current school is the use of The Compass (feeling, believing, thinking, acting) from courageous conversation. First begins conversation with her staff by being self-reflective. Nguzo Saba

Dr. Grant Timeline

Hated kindergarten. Hearing test b/c would ignore teacher. Dialect. 4th grade 1st tine liked school & 1st time in honor roll (amazing teacher). 5th grade bad teacher. Attended integrated schools.

Great experience. In gifted classes. Teachers pushed her. Recognized by her church for doing well in school. Grandmother very important.

1st teaching job at a white Christian school 1yr. (bad experience). Time off. 1993 RPS 6th & 7th grade general science (got bumped). Taught high school for 12 yrs. 1st year experience with 48 students. Principal wont let her leave certification (respected) & pushed her to get Master's. Assigned difficult students. Got principal cert. but stayed teaching. Taught night school. Patricia story when she was being evaluated & kept composure.

Equity does not mean equal. Funding of schools is a travesty. Equality builds inequality. Meritocracy. Everyone's voice haven't been at the table (education). For her equity has meant bring in resources: Ipads, SMARTBOARDS, robotics program, model aviation, dance, visual arts, nursing home, peace march, curriculum change, teacher help. Don't wait for the district to help her. Equity is giving students and parents a voice. It takes a village. Patriotic means educating all of us. Her own K-12 experience has shaped her work. White teachers who get it can be best advocate. Are we ready to give black children what they deserve. Challenge with teacher union. Not a helpless person. The principal is the gatekeeper & advocate. Diversity/equity training: *Courageous Conversations*, district & state trainer, dissertation, & sit in dissertations. Introduced to CRT in doctoral program. Microaggression was a love letter. It is hard to talk about race b/c it is emotional/painful. Story about Macy's. Story about applying for superintendent .

Elementary	Middle School	High School	College	Teaching	Administrator

6th bad teacher. 7th grade good teacher. Grandmother influenced, took her shopping. Church.

Attended a nearby PWI. Culture shock. Recognized her education experience wasn't the same as other students. Racial tension. Nobody told her how to navigate college. Took remedial courses. Struggled first semester. Encountered a skilled professor in remedial program, introduced her to the field of education (soph.), mom away from home. Bad experience with calculus professor. Knew she belonged in college. Felt unsupported by advisor. Killed at student teaching. Not many good relationship with professors. Grandmother helped pay for school.

Took assistant principal (1yr.). Took over K-8 school (1 yr.)(wanted evidence of effectiveness from organizations (moved to another school). Principal 4 yrs & then promoted to central office. Principal at Lewis. Equity technical-PDs/adaptive-curriculum. Growth mindset. Challenge her own white privilege. Wants kids to feel love in school. Won trust of parents. Equity is unpopular work. Not afraid to address ugly. Swimming analogy to testing. Story about salon about languages. Relationships are foundation. Story about getting feedback on teachers from student. Student work is her data. Equity requires you to fight.

Dr. O'Neal Timeline

Attended the same elementary his mother attended. High expectation from teachers. 5th grade incident with a ruler.

Took 45 min. bus rides. 11th grade did not get recommended for AP classes (had to advocate for himself). Observe AP classes were all white. Recognized a culture he didn't have access to.

5th grade teacher. Recognize the importance of literacy. Worked for a school leader similar to his junior high principal (became mentor). Began doctorate program. Taught at Lewis for 10 years. Used different curriculum than the district. Transition of principals at Lewis led him to focus on completing his doctorate. Best professional growth was attending school and applying it to his practice.

Equity=access to opportunities/goes deeper than equality, need. Story counselor. Students are scholars. Equity is known but not practiced. System is set up to deny access. Has questions about the system. Principal as ministry. Mantra: get what kids need, when they need it, for as long as they need it. Seeks partnerships for additional supports. You need a vision. Creative with budget. Structures are not in place to support equity. Story of nurse. Does not like certain policies. The community, how the school is treated (angry), and interaction with parents has been source of advocacy. Got to fight. Principal has a huge role. Story about multiple emails. It's like advocating for your own child. Training in diversity/equity has been life experiences. Nothing will be given to his community. Believes expectation are for people that look like us& poor is to fail. You have to make noise. Got to see your school/scholars successful. Story gifted program. Story summer school program=equity (full time job).

Elementary	Middle School	High School	College	Teaching	Administrator

Biggest impact. Black female principal was old school & recognized him. Placed in higher track classes. Laid the foundation & expectation for college.

Went out of state (public PWI). Difficult experience with race. Freshman year experience with a professor of history department (being a black male from inner-city). Sophomore year Africana/psychology studies. (did not want to be a teacher). Incident at frat house. Financial aid issues. Rediscovered religion. Started substituting. Junior year ran a summer program back home. Senior year went on Semester at Sea. Tutored a 3rd grade student who had never been told he was smart. After graduation enrolled in MAT program in same school. Student taught at the school he would end up working at.

1 year assistant principal & then became principal at current school. Kids first. Gets strength from barriers (Special ed. story). Leading former colleagues has been tough. Thinking about Master's math. Applied and received funding for summer school program (another job). Neophyte stage of gifted program. Restorative justice.

Freedom school program (affirmation songs). Critical to have mentors & supportive supervisors. Slowly but surely making progress. Relationships 90% of work. Being in the community for so long has gain trust. READ180. Powers that be push back on his initiatives. He values people who have done the work. Loss friendships. Not comfortable work. Defends his school against whole sale change.

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Green Timeline

Loss father early & raised by single mother. Attended public school & had good experience. Elected president. Received criticism when he named the bunny. 4th grade teacher taught him chess.

Returned to public high school. Initially difficult transition, but sports helped him become well-liked.

Months into student teaching at a city high school was given control of the class. Stayed at the school for 8 years. Difficult experience with his cousin as a student. Developed opportunities for students to gain skills in leadership and collaboration. Got his Master's. In 2008 became teacher at the school he currently leads (part of the first teachers & the principal became a mentor). Overall, 10 years of teaching experience.

Equity has been developing over time. Equity part of 3g rubric has been helpful. Last year helped him recognize equity. Chris Emdin book. Values hearing voices from students/parents (PSCC). Student leadership program. Took control of his school. The need of his students has been a major part of his advocacy. Story about email to fix building. Brought in snack program (shows to students where his heart is). Few opportunities for diversity/equity training. Book talk (*Start where you are..*). Sees books and conferences (Danielson) as valuable learning about equity. Wants to see champions of equity. No mentors of equity so far. Story about start time. Task force by community disbanded (story of improvement). Trauma aspect of equity is lacking. Shoot for 90/90/90 school (message to staff). Story about listening to student & father figure to female students. Returning to the school after events from last year is critical story. Story about systems that returns students to the school where they have been disruptive. Positionality (black male important).

| Elementary | Middle School | High School | College | Teaching | Administrator |

During this time started experiencing college atmosphere through his mother's job. Became good at basketball and went to attended local Catholic school.

Attended out-of-state college on basketball scholarship. Math major. Transferred back to local state's PWI to finish college.

Became an assistant principal at a inner-ring suburban district for 5 years. Returned to lead the high school he taught at in 2008.

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Richardson Timeline

Liked school.

Good experience. Regrets decision to not take calculus. Felt that he wasn't challenged in school.

First teaching job at alternative high school in city public. Next year taught at suburban district, but decided he wanted to return to city schools. Liked the city environment better. Got job at charter school he currently leads. Used language that helped students understand the content. Admired and adopted the leadership of all three school leaders he worked under. Return to get Master's and principal cert.

Funding an issue towards equity (but sometimes more than that). Equity is providing opportunities. Treatment of his staff the same is important for him. Seeing things unequal growing up impacted his view on life. Life has been his training ground in diversity/equity (Greek Ortho., always felt different, story about a date, story about name tag, & biracial son). 1st white employee to have children attend school. Don't know exactly what pulled him to return to urban school. Staff in-services & bonuses (everybody the same). Has diversified his leadership team. Challenges: white leader in black school & people wanting benefits. Math team story (data & equity conflict). Has fought against reducing enrichment programs. His implementation: family nights, meals for his staff during 1st week training (building relationships. Hiring teachers critical. Continues legacy of mentor leader (saying)

| Elementary | Middle School | High School | College | Teaching | Administrator |

7th grade recognize struggle with literacy and received no support from teacher.

Attended local public PWI University. History & Philosophy science major. Lived at home and worked during undergrad. Took 5 years to graduate. Did not think about becoming an educator at the time. Senior took several science credit courses.

Was assistant principal for a year. Took over the charter school at 33. Began family nights. Chocolate milk story.

Ms. Stanfield Timeline

Transferred during 2nd grade to a new school: (a) fell behind in school & (b) became aware of her positionality. Got tutoring help and was able to get at grade level with help of reading specialist (critical)

Did not feel connected with her K-12 teachers. High school ELA teacher helped her learn the foundation of writing. Attended predominately white K-12 schools. Summer camp (realize liked to be around children & marginalized kids)

Started subbing in her current district & last day was offered position by principal. Met mentor/ally Florence B. Terry (pseudonym). 3rd grade teacher. Story of Jimmy & Terry (3 years). Applies & becomes a reading coach for 2 yrs.. Bumped and teaches 2nd grade at Sizemore (feels best experience as teachers b/c of skills).

Philosophy of education=education can change lives.

Equity does not mean equal. Equity is adaptive work. Allocation of funding needs to meet the needs of students.

Passion about equity has grown during the last few years.

Training in equity (equity affiliate Pacific Ed. Group training, Courageous Conversations PD).

Critical moment was color line PD during C. Conversation.

Story of Jason 5-yr. Latino student & bus issue (was able to change bus stop).

Has come to recognize her own privilege.

We have to believe in student (mantra).

Feeling of being burnt out. Recognizes racial battle fatigue.

Has seen growth in relationship with parents/families

| Elementary | Middle School | High School | College | Teaching | Administrator |
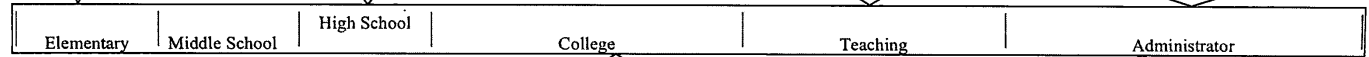
Middle school was a time that she was just ready to move on

Attended local college. Joined sorority freshman year (following family tradition & gave her opportunity for leadership experience). Connected with black students on campus. Found a black female mentor freshman year. Major in early elem. Education. Critical moment was junior taking an A-A studies course that examined portrayal of race in media (gave her critical consciousness). Experience the passing of 2 boyfriends. Continued right into 2 master's program at different local university (principal cert.)

Dad & herself to pursue admin. Got into the admin pipeline program in the district (1 yr program). Both principal at the same time.

Now 9 yrs. as principal at current school.

Desire for students to see beyond current situation. Meeting former student at mall recognize her work.

Story of her son (bangs) has influenced her research on identity (race). Story of Nasir (5th grader) and teacher not being adaptive.

Feels her life has always been connected with race.

Keeps conversation on 3g (equity teacher eval.)

Story pushed for and got ESL teacher.

Family (parents, great grandmother, & sisters) & sense of spirituality present during K-12. Race has always been part of her life. Mom's lesson on based on need (equity)

Chambers Timeline

Attended K-8 Catholic school (conservative). By 3rd/4th grade valued diversity. Experience with Miles (story). Had good relationship with teachers.

Attended an in-state public PWI university. Began with pre-law. Started volunteering with conversation partner's freshman year (did it for 4 yrs. & led him to transfer to education major). Car accident story. Korean food/burgers story. Senior year awarded for his volunteer work.

Equity=all perspectives valued. Story of celebrating all holidays. Willingness to call out for change. Sees issue of equity beyond black-white. His background source of advocacy (experiences critical). Equity needs effective leadership. Doesn't get along with "jaded" staff. Principal is a facilitator/communicator. SLA. Training: ESL, real world experiences, seeing success. Story of misguided Culturally Responsive Teaching PD. The need of students requires outside the box thinking. Adjunct professor. "Rebonding." Story of using data in PD to present diversity of school (to lead discussions). Understands his positionality (white male), seeks to learn about different perspectives. No fear of asking question (life long learner). His passion is on his sleeves/hasn't felt much pushback. Kids fall through cracks b/c lack of best resources and lack of communication (SAP story). Meeting student social & emotional needs important to him. Relationships-chief role. COBS (chart data). Equity leadership requires self-evaluation of readiness, measure school culture, & passion. Unorthodox opportunities for supporting students (story custodian & special ed. teacher). Funding constraints are dastardly. Desires for all stories to be told.

| Elementary | High School | College | Teaching | Administrator |

Attended Catholic high school. Recognize that he needed to expand his experiences.

In 2006, got his first teaching job at an inner-city public middle school (22 yrs. old). Would challenge teachers who had negative mindsets. Loss job due to budget cuts & went to inner-ring diverse suburban district. 2nd year teaching one of his student's loses his father (worked 2.5 years at school). It was during this time he learned about the human element of education. Returned back to the area he grew up and continued teaching. Became K-12 ESL supervisor in 2010. In 2012 started teaching at local university. 2013 principal certification. Had only one memorable principal.

Became assistant principal (9 months). Given principal at current school. Story about empowering a black father to improve education of son. Recognize some of his black students needed external supports & reached out for support.

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Dr. Kirkpatrick Timeline

Raised by grandparents. 1st grade teacher could not connect with her. Teacher recommended "tutoring" (sent bus with MR students). Refused to return for tutoring. Had a good Title 1 reading specialist. Raised in church.

Recognize the value of diversity in teachers. Did not have many black teachers in K-12, but influenced by a1 black teacher (now hires diverse staff). Challenge counselor when placed in cosmetology courses. College was her goal.

Began at a mental health facility. Began substituting at local public elementary school. Taught 1st & 2nd grade. Pursued Master's to improve craft. Had many mentors who pushed/supported her. Taught for 5 years. Black mentorship was critical (Felt like she had a personal executive board).

Equity is to give students support/resources they need. Access. Unalienable rights to learn. Put things in place to help them be successful. "By any means necessary." Source of advocacy has been her own K-12 experience. To achieve equity you have to have the will to do it. Public education is the equalizer. People of color are natural survivors. Principal has to take information, not be afraid to find real answers, & do something about it. She is a qualitative researcher-looks for the story/counterstory. Can't be afraid. Diversity/equity training: *Courageous Conversations*, dissertation, critical race theory, whiteness theory. Challenge deficit thinking & seeing assets. Try to take successful things others do. Taught at CCAC. Opening exercises: celebratory space, model behavior. Important to build space to show to students care. Story on fraternity (counternarrative). Story working with different parents.

| Elementary | Middle School | High School | College | Teaching | Administrator |

Lima beans story with Spanish teacher (cultural differences & now celebrate diverse holidays at her school). Led youth church group.

Attended nearby PWI college. Racist town. Negative experience during freshman year with teacher (D grade). Supported by black high school educator was able to advocate for herself. Major in science education & minor in Spanish. Overall, felt she had a good experience in college.

In 2001 became principal at 27 yrs. old (9/11). Ran 1st school for 5 years and then transferred to current school 2005 & started doctorate (completed 2009, experience with BAS).

Story of songs. Story of conflict with teachers over electronic lesson plans. Principal management of money critical for equity. Funding a major issue. Picking her staff critical. Relationships important. She is a relationship builder. Being transparent/honest. Her reputation. Story about teacher and data on black males. You have to call it what it is. We are accountable to educate kids, its our job. It is a crime if children aren't achieving.

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