Between and Betwixt: A Critical Examination of How Street-Level Bureaucrats Use Discretion and Coping to Accomplish Goals in a University/Public School Partnership

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University partnerships with public schools are heralded as an innovative opportunity to marry research and practice. Partnership between universities and urban public schools, such as the Heinz Fellows Program, can support the development and implementation of evidence-based interventions that improve school culture, academics, and community participation. Particularly, in the absence of adequate school funding. However, for partnerships between universities and public schools to reach levels of sustainable transformation, specific components of partnership must be recognized, addressed, and adhered to by a broad range of participants connected to the effort. Among those components are jointly defined program goals, awareness of organizational mores, and effective communication between the university and public-school partners. This critical examination will discuss the Heinz Fellows Program university/public school partnership and its parallel nature to Street Level Bureaucracy. The phrase critical examination is utilized to convey a capacity to read, write, think, speak in ways to understand power and equity in order to understand and promote justice (Hennessey, 2021). Street Level Bureaucracy theory examines how frontline workers, such as Heinz Fellows traverse between and betwixt highly complex environments with little direct supervision and the use of discretion and coping to accomplish school-based program goals. To be between and betwixt means to be midway between two positions or alternatives, neither here nor there. A description that aptly captured the perception of the Heinz Fellows Program participants who navigated the cross-organizational cultures of both

the university and public schools. The critical examination utilizes a phenomenological lens and qualitative data collection from the Streel Level Bureaucrats. Lastly, the critical examination will offer recommendations that universities and urban public schools should consider before and during partnership that increase cohesiveness and sustainability.

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Preface

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1.0 Section One: Naming and Framing the Problem of Practice

1.1 Broader Problem Area

Schools are a key institution in our society, serving students from all backgrounds (O'Day & Smith, 2016) and influencing children's life trajectories; and politicians, reformers, and citizens often state that education is the great equalizer of opportunity. Yet those of us who study and practice within urban education know this is a hollow promise. A host of factors such as race, economics, and housing coalesce and continue to be predictors of educational outcomes (Thompson Dorsey & Plucker, 2016). As Day and Smith (2016) noted, "The current American system exacerbates the problem [of unequal opportunities outside school] by giving these children less of everything that makes a difference in education" (p. 14). Therefore, if public education is ever to become an equalizer of opportunities, schools must recognize how historical and contemporary policies and associated practices have limited access to learning for certain populations of children and actively work to disrupt inequities for the students, families, and communities they serve. Literature on experiences and outcomes in urban public education offers abundant evidence of administrators, teachers, mentors, and other school-based personnel who are unprepared to teach and work in urban contexts. This lack of preparedness includes philosophies of political neutrality, colorblindness, and lack of the disposition necessary to serve urban students well (Milner, 2008, 2013; Jacobs, 2007). In light of this, university/public-school partnerships can cultivate the opportunities and experiences that address the concerns noted above.

In addition to un- or underprepared personnel, there is a severe lack of investment and disinvestment in urban public schools and the students within them. Urban educational

disinvestment is firmly nestled in multiple, systemic policies and institutions that reproduce and reify inequity, and it is crucial that urban education scholars commit to an analysis that names and interrogates those institutions and policies. As posited by Nygreen (2006), "urban education" is often used as a euphemism for high poverty and segregated underperforming public schools, and research within urban education should orient toward social change to bring about equity and access. Additionally, Nygreen (2006) notes if we understand the problems of urban schools as political ones, we are led to a different set of research questions, and I would posit, reforms. Due to the substantial time urban education researchers and practitioners spend immersed in urban environments, perceptions and beliefs of individual and collective deficiency can be conflated with un- or under-examined history. A decontextualized analysis such as that obscures the concentrated privilege and power of those who are responsible for urban school inequities (Nygreen, 2006). Conversely, Slater (1996) informs the reader that universities are a loosely coupled group of individuals, viewing themselves as removed and protected from shifts of power and authority that are politically and socially motivated. Thus, if universities understand and acknowledge their organizational positionality, university/public-school partnerships can offer promise for mitigating the ongoing disinvestment. For example, insights into learning, community practice, and additional funding are several ways that university/public school partnerships address disinvestment (Buys & Bursnall, 2007). Warren and Peel (2005) additionally note that universities can assist public schools with developing, implementing, and evaluating plans of reform that address contextual needs. Research informs us that there is much potential in a university/school partnership that can advance and offer insights for sustaining equity in education (Albright et al., 2017), which is an urgent project, as disparities deepen and persist for young people in public schools. Notwithstanding, universities and K-12 schools face challenges in partnering, such as different

approaches to defining and forwarding equity, differences in bureaucratic and organizational structure, and differences in the roles and expectations of frontline workers within each entity – all of which are captured within the literature on university/public school partnerships.

University resources such as research capacity, funding, and professional learning for public school personnel are the critical assets found within a partnership, but more is required for effective collaboration. To be sure, there is an incalculable time, monetary, intellectual, and emotional investment made by multiple stakeholders connected to a university/public school partnership. For example, Bishop and Noguera (2019) assert that lack of clarity, shared goals, and administrative support remain threats to university/public-school partnership. These themes point to the need for both inter- and intra-organizational clarity to develop and sustain partnerships and ultimately transform educational outcomes for students. Both the university and public schools must posture themselves as learners and partners to advance the goals of equity, sustainability, and transformation. As Larson and Nelms (2021) point out, a precursor and ongoing focus of such partnerships must be getting people from the university and public schools ready for change by way of establishing interpersonal accountability, trust, and conflict resolution. One way to understand these partnerships and honor the deep investment of all parties is through critical study and analysis of university/public school partnerships. Hence, the problem of practice is how university employees who are hired to carry out the university/public-school partnership pursue external program goals in the midst of cross-organizational culture, competing priorities, and ill-defined roles.

This problem of practice is specifically taken up within the context of the University of Pittsburgh Center for Urban Education's Heinz Fellows Program. The Heinz Fellows Program was a partnership between the University of Pittsburgh and area urban public schools that operated

from 2017 through 2021. It is important to note that a problem of practice presents an opportunity for organizational improvement and that the Heinz Fellows Program overall was impactful upon the urban public education landscape. For example, in years one and two, when data was shared according to the district-level memorandum of understanding, program evaluation demonstrated improvement in student attendance and decreases in suspensions in schools where Heinz Fellows were embedded (Donaldson, 2019). In addition, Heinz Fellows' innovation and commitment led to the implementation of pantries that provided basic needs for the school and community in which they were embedded and are still operational as of the writing of this dissertation. Heinz Fellows successfully wrote and acquired grants to support school initiatives, and to be sure, affiliation with the Center for Urban Education bolstered their legitimacy among community organizations and local leaders. Additionally, results from surveys of school staff, students, and families indicated an appreciation for the skills, dispositions, and attitudes Heinz Fellows displayed (Donaldson, 2019). Another feature of the Heinz Fellows Program, which demonstrated its significance, was the ability to pivot during the COVID-19 pandemic. When schools were abruptly closed down, Heinz Fellows swiftly and seamlessly transitioned from in-school to community-based support, participating in the distribution of food and school supplies for students and families as well as other ad hoc requests. The Heinz Fellows Program collaborated with organizations to coordinate and deliver academic tutoring within learning hubs, answered calls for a dedicated family engagement hotline, and were present as virtual mentors through the remote schooling phase of the pandemic. Virtual engagement enabled Heinz Fellows to center students in ways that traditional, in-person schooling did not support, such as the development and facilitation of cross-school youth-voice activities.

Nevertheless, this problem of practice focuses on the experiences of Heinz Fellows' traversing "betwixt and between" four complex organizations and sought to understand how this experience impacted the perception of their ability to consistently and effectively accomplish program goals. Del Prete (2006) noted that managing the accomplishment of the externally based program goals while simultaneously navigating the organizational structures, roles, cultures, and practices implicated in the process presents challenges to all parties involved. Through interviews, journal responses, and meeting notes, this dissertation explores the challenges faced by the Heinz Fellows as the university's frontline workers navigating the spaces and goals of both the university and the schools to which they were connected. The complexity of fostering change while existing between two bureaucracies can introduce dissonance and necessitate decision-making in isolation. It is the accounts of dissonance and isolated decision-making shared by frontline workers that I discovered street level bureaucracy theory, Heinz Fellows, and the role of discretion and coping as strategies to meet external program goals.

1.2 Organizational Systems

Organizations have different missions and different assumptions, and as a result function in different ways. Despite some overlapping focus on education as a public good and professed commitments to "diversity" and "equity," the university and the K-12 schools where the Heinz Fellows engaged in their work operated very differently from one another. As such, awareness, analysis, and navigation of the distinct and unique properties of organizational structure are necessary to a collaborative effort between universities and public schools. Stakeholders, participants, and decision-makers must understand how tasks fit into and are shaped by the

organizations called schools, school districts, and universities. Thus, providing opportunities to apply a deep understanding of organizations and how they function is a central part of any collaborative partnership. King and colleagues (King et al., 2010) asserted that organizations are actors that exert influence on individuals, shape communities, and transform their environments and are thereby bona fide mechanisms for societal change. They further indicate that organizations are intentional, in that by design they are structured to carry out a particular point of view that the whole organization then orients itself to. Therefore, tending to organizational theory can be used as a navigation tool to unveil and mitigate countervailing forces within universities and public schools. Use of this knowledge can lead to goal achievement and to sustained effective partnerships (Brazer et al., 2014). Researchers and practitioners who understand organizational theory and apply it to a university/public school partnership are better able to anticipate, embrace, and move through the uncertainty, ambiguity, and shifting priorities that inevitably arise, which then supports decision-makers and implementers in a university/public school partnership in critical analysis and problem-solving. It has been noted by Goodlad (as cited in Slater, 1996) that:

> University/school partnerships have not been a failure so much as they have been directed toward arrangements that have not been carefully created arrangements and programs to which both the individuals and institutions separately and collectively have a sustained commitment. Such efforts require planning, equality of purpose and parity, an agenda or mechanism for bringing both sides together, and a structure to maintain momentum and sustainability. (p. 48)

Universities can be described as a loosely coupled group of individuals, viewing themselves as removed and protected from shifts of power and authority that are politically and socially motivated, and lacking formal procedures to accomplish tasks (Slater, 1996). Another

defining characteristic of the university as an organization relates to time. In *Anatomy of a Collaboration*, Slater (1996) noted,

> For the university, time is relative, and deadlines are less dependent on links to other parts of the organization. On the other hand, for public school systems, time is indicative of finances, political feasibility, and approval giving across a complex network of offices. (p. 44)

Urban public schools, on the other hand, have been described as organizations that do not meet the academic and social needs of – nor have they been provided with access to the design, practice, and resources needed to achieve equity goals for – populations of students (Lipman, 2011; Tyack, 1974). Bishop and Noguera (2019) asserted that public schools have been and continue to operate as organizations where inequality based on race, class, culture, and language are manifest and often reproduced. Slater (1996) tells us that as organizations, public schools are inherently bureaucratic, predictable, placid, and top-heavy in reform and administration. She goes on to assert that as an organization, public schools are marked by legislative constraint, decoupled activities, and high response to external demands, which render goals ambiguous.

Despite the vastly different structures of universities and public schools, partnerships remain a powerful lever for advancing equity and transforming change. From a public health perspective, several overlapping and intersecting policy arenas such as housing, health, and criminal justice impact education, meaning that equity in education cannot be addressed singly from within schools. Indeed, it is cross-organizational partnership that can attend to multiple arenas offer an effective solution. So, the establishment of a university/public school partnership should begin with the recognition of a common goal that would be impossible or terribly difficult to achieve without collaboration of one another, where a mutually developed definition of mission,

goals, necessary values, and beliefs become the guiding force. Mutuality and clarity around mission, goals, and values support conflict resolution, as well as when participants enter and/or leave the partnership. The contribution to the abundant literature on barriers, challenges, and bureaucracy of urban public schools underscores why it is imperative for the university to acknowledge and prepare its employees to work within public schools, and denotes the significance of including training and development on critical organizational theory for future iterations of university/public school partnerships that the Center for Urban Education enters.

1.3 Problem of Practice Organizational Context

1.3.1 Center for Urban Education

My formal role as the previous Program Manager of the Heinz Fellows Program at CUE provided numerous opportunities to interact with, observe, and analyze the organizational structure of the public-school partners. Additionally, my previous roles as a Heinz Fellow, former school-based liaison of the Heinz Fellows Program, regular participant in CUE professional learning, and doctoral student afforded me insight into the Center for Urban Education as an organization. The vision of the Center for Urban Education is to learn, share, and transform, which is achieved through community partnerships, educator development and practice, and student academic and social development (Center for Urban Education, n.d.). Also, as a research, teaching, and service center within the University of Pittsburgh, CUE engages in partnerships with school districts across the region. Given this vision, CUE is a well-positioned organization to oversee a project like the Heinz Fellows Program, which was about advancing equity in education. The Center for

Urban Education has come to be a trusted source for collaboration, research, and scholarship among education stakeholders for signature events such as the Center for Urban Education Summer Educators Forum (CUESEF), monthly "lunch and learns" with renowned scholars, and specialized professional learning for local school districts.

There were several events that occurred within CUE during the Heinz Fellows Program that impacted our ability to advance equity within the university/public school partnership. One was a change in program-level administration during the third year. And just as the change in Center for Urban Education leadership necessitated a new vision, so it was at the program level. This change required building new relationships and establishing trust across both organizations and presented a new opportunity to re-evaluate the condition of the university/public school partnership. A second and equally seismic change was the program's expansion outside of the three K-12 schools in the Hill District to additional schools across the city and within Allegheny County. The global pandemic has amplified the realities of educational inequity, including extended school closures as well as device and technical inaccessibility. According to Gottfried and Johnson (2014), the position of the university as a researcher within the public-school partnership enables the identification and the circumvention of barriers that maintain inequity. As the disparities surfaced by COVID-19 continue to warrant urgent transformation towards equity in education, the university/school partnership will remain a high-leverage tool. University/public school partnerships such as the Heinz Fellows Program provide a context for rethinking and reinventing public schools to become dynamic sites for developing and sustaining best educational practices, providers of opportunities for continued development of practicing professionals, and conductors of research and inquiry (Lefever et al., 2007). Support provided by Heinz Fellows in the university/public school partnership was equity in action. For example, Heinz Fellows

distributed schoolwork and lunches at designated sites, leveraged their social capital and participated in fundraising efforts to acquire devices for students, and provided resource coordination to families in collaboration with community partners.

1.3.2 Heinz Fellows Program Overview

The Center for Urban Education in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh managed a multi-year research project that placed frontline workers in urban, public K-12 school settings for the purpose of advancing equity in education. The research project, known as the Heinz Fellows Program, was a collaboration between the university, a grant-making organization, and several "urban emergent" school districts. Socioeconomic features such as concentrated poverty, segregation, high mobility, and underfunding and resourcing characterize urban public education (Milner, 2015), however the smaller population size is what differentiates urban emergent districts (Milner, 2012). Yet, the university and public schools were aligned in their mutual aspiration to advance equity in education. The Heinz Fellows Program was a signature university/public school partnership overseen by the Center for Urban Education, within the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. The Heinz Fellows Program was initially a collaboration between a different local university, The Heinz Endowments, and a community-based organization that operated for approximately three years and worked in one urbanized local high school as the laboratory of practice and was originally conceived as a pathway to bring Black men into classrooms. After an extended break, the Heinz Fellows Program was revamped and spent its second iteration at the Center for Urban Education. At CUE, the Program intended to expand the volume of potential educators and education leaders by welcoming diverse applicants and providing an effective skillset to work in urban contexts. As the Heinz Fellows Program was

reimagined, its goals shifted to increasing attendance, decreasing pushout, and increasing academic identity for students. The Heinz Fellows Program at the Center for Urban Education was given a four-year grant operation cycle, with each program year corresponding with the public school calendar. Thus, each year a call for applicants was released for a minimum one year of participation in the program. After hire, Heinz Fellows participated in an eight-week onboarding, including building and strengthening competencies in urban education, teaching/learning/instruction, arts and technology, critical mentoring and social support, and identity/intersectionality/positionality taught by university faculty and staff and external subject matter experts. Throughout the program year, Heinz Fellows were provided ground-breaking texts, workshops, and access to scholars who focused on critical consciousness, anti-racism, and liberation studies to continue improving social justice and equity practices. Ideally, the knowledge and tools for social justice and equity are transferred to the school sites by Heinz Fellows through shared professional learning with school staff, small group and individual mentoring of students, and co-development of sustainable action research projects. Over the course of the yearlong program, Heinz Fellows spent about three days each week embedded in a school site, one day in CUE, and the other day engaged in community activities and/or self-directed study. The time in CUE was dedicated to ongoing professional learning, including reflection journaling, time with visiting scholars, and site visits to other schools (public, public charter and suburban). Immersion within CUE was advantageous for advancing and sustaining equity in urban education, through aiding Heinz Fellows in establishing and deepening a professional network as well as establishing and deepening collectivism.

1.4 Stakeholders

1.4.1 Heinz Fellows

From their unique and innovative employment through the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Urban Education, the Heinz Fellows were positioned as frontline workers who duly functioned as researchers and practitioners. As researchers, they collected program data, studied urban education, and collaborated with schools to develop youth-inspired participatory action research projects. As practitioners, they brought a diverse set of education experiences to promote equity and social justice in learning spaces. However, as frontline workers, they mostly worked without direct oversight, were impacted by power differentials, and yielded high discretion over the execution of their tasks. Through a year-long professional learning experience, the Heinz Fellows were immersed in scholarship at the CUE, authentic engagement in the community writ large, and embedded in a variety of urban school contexts. Given the range of social locations Heinz Fellows represented, they were all at different places in their social justice and equity journeys. The distinction between social justice and equity is important because as much as the Program provided a robust and prescriptive training, the ways and degrees to which the information was understood, received, and applied looked quite different within and across each cohort. Social justice in education is defined as knowledge that liberates students from the ways in which they are classified and identified by dominant discourses (Brooks et al., 2007), and equity is a commitment to ensure that every student receives what he or she needs to succeed academically (Bishop & Noguera, 2019) – both important characteristics to be exhibited in a program aspiring to advance educational equity. The variation in social justice and equity orientations was reconciled in several ways, including affinity groups within the Heinz Fellows program, reflective

journaling, and continuous critical dialogue as a whole group. Heinz Fellows interacted directly with students, families, school staff, and community members, which further informed their practices of social justice and equity. Because Heinz Fellows were embedded in the schools, they were directly impacted by the design and implementation of the university/school partnership at the Center for Urban Education, particularly at the intersection of loose coupling from the university and rigidity in processes from the public schools (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). A combination of training and disposition bolstered Heinz Fellows' ongoing analysis and interrogation of power dynamics, thus they entered school spaces sensitive to matters of equity. Through professional learning, Heinz Fellows learned the importance of collective advocacy, building authentic relationships, and the power of political advocacy as critical to navigate urban public schooling. Heinz Fellows were prepared to establish communities of practice within school sites as co-producers of knowledge, sharers of best practices in urban education, and co-learners from school partners.

During each program year, Heinz Fellows spent about three days each week embedded in a school site, one day in CUE, and the other day engaged in community activities and/or self-directed study. The time in CUE was dedicated to ongoing professional learning, including reflection journaling, time with visiting scholars, and site visits to other schools (public, public charter, and suburban). Immersion within the Center for Urban Education was a crucial component of and advantageous for shifting the knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions of the Heinz Fellows, which was another goal of the Program.

Heinz Fellows started at each school ready to work to achieve the program goals after an extended training and development period provided by CUE, but often encountered barriers and challenges. For example, one goal of the Heinz Fellows Program was to decrease student pushout,

and the activity to be used by Heinz Fellows to do this was individual and small-group mentoring. However, Heinz Fellows routinely encountered barriers to accessing students. At times, rigid school schedules limited the time available for students to receive the academic and/or social emotional support, and in some schools the Heinz Fellows were viewed as "friends" to students, and thus students were not given permission to see their mentor. Still in other instances, building administrators exerted power and control inappropriately, using the support of the Heinz Fellows Program as carrot and stick to fill personnel and other operational gaps.

1.4.2 Center for Urban Education

The Center for Urban Education (CUE) is a stakeholder as the fiduciary of the grant, the employer of Heinz Fellows, and in terms of the professional reputation associated with the program. The Heinz Fellows Program at CUE was reimagined under the leadership of Dr. H. Richard Milner IV that included a new strategic model of expanding applicant access to anyone interested in urban public education, providing an effective skillset to participants, and expanding the service area to the Hill District K-12 school community. In year two at CUE, Dr. T. Elon Dancy II became the Executive Director of the Center for Urban Education, who deepened the integration of the Heinz Fellows Program into daily operations. It was also under the leadership of Dr. Dancy that the Heinz Fellows Program expanded to serve additional schools throughout the greater Pittsburgh region. As the fiduciary, CUE was able to attract diverse talent to the program, pay a generous salary to Heinz Fellows, and provide ongoing professional learning opportunities. Another important feature of fiscal management of the Heinz Fellows Program by CUE included the purchase of books for study groups, acquisition of certifications, and payment of conference fees. Returning to professional reputation, the caliber of research and engagement attributed to the

Heinz Fellows Program positioned the Center for Urban Education for publications, additional streams of funding, as well as an accomplished pool of talent for admission into graduate programs at the University of Pittsburgh and beyond. In addition, the Heinz Fellows Program continued to contribute to scholarship through this Dissertation in Practice, as well as a Dissertation in Practice by the previous program lead. Lastly, the cache of data over four years of programming is extensive and includes changing racialized dispositions of Heinz Fellows, increased student attendance and academic performance, as well as positive attitudes and beliefs about the Program from school staff and families (Donaldson, 2019). Survey, observation, and interview data from the Heinz Fellows Program has the potential to support new research possibilities and new partnerships between other universities, public schools, and funders for CUE. Ultimately, each of these stakeholder considerations speaks to the adaptive nature of the Center for Urban Education as an effective university/school partnership model. Within the structure of a research-intensive, grant-reliant department such as CUE, university/public school partnerships like the Heinz Fellows Program can provide limitless opportunities for advancing and sustaining equity.

1.4.3 Urban-Emergent Traditional Public Schools

One interest of the urban-emergent school district in the program was as an avenue to demonstrate their stated commitment to equity in education. By participating in the collaboration and opening their school sites to the Heinz Fellows Program, the district was postured to reach and expand its equity objectives. The day-to-day programming that the Heinz Fellows Program brought to schools assisted with social and emotional wellbeing of students, student leadership development, critical consciousness-raising of staff and students, as well as other building-specific needs. Meeting building-specific needs ranged from acquiring grants for Positive Behavior

Incentive Supports (PBIS) and developing clothing closets, food pantries, and student clubs. Other activities performed by the Heinz Fellows Program which shaped the stakeholder position of the urban emergent public school district included community-based tutoring, chaperoning after-school and out-of-school events, and inviting guest speakers. The partner district also received program evaluation reports, which demonstrated positive improvements in measures of discipline, attendance, academics, and engagement of students who worked with Heinz Fellows when the data was made available.

To be sure, a district with over 30 schools and more than 23,000 students complicates the stakeholder relationship. For instance, the priorities of each school building differed due to context, culture and climate of each school is different, and thus information is perceived and communicated differed vastly. The public school system as an organization has clearly defined boundaries that work to maintain themselves at all costs, as this is how it defines itself and its operation (Slater, 1996). In some isolated instances, no or very limited autonomy of operation and legitimacy was granted to Heinz Fellows by the public schools to reach the aspiration of equity in education. This was also manifested in the contradictory levels of supported exhibited for the program between district administrators and school building personnel. By year three, engaging with district administrators was extremely difficult to reach and engage and in year four, they were completely absent from interactions. The result was an inability to discuss concerns, course-correct, and/or determine the effectiveness of the university/public school partnership with this critical stakeholder. At the school building level, principals were balancing multiple competing priorities that severely limited their capacity to provide the degree of engagement necessary for effective university/public school partnership. Stakeholder consideration in a complex organization that has oversight and accountability spread across numerous departments and

divisions, with a reliance on uniformity presents an ongoing challenge for meeting and enacting mutuality. Each school has unique characteristics and needs; therefore, program implementation must occur at the school level to effectively pursue goals, and this includes how, when, and what is communicated between the university and public school.

1.4.4 Urban-Emergent Public Charter School

The urban-emergent public charter school has been in existence in the region for more than two decades. In Pennsylvania, charter law requires that charter schools receive their operating permission from the local school district, which brings it under the portfolio of the urban emergent school district within this university/public school partnership. When the Heinz Fellows Program expanded outside of the urban-emergent school district, this urban-emergent charter school was considered for ease of implementation. One reason for ease of implementation is that as a charter school, the administration team was smaller and mostly in one location, agility that allowed them to make decisions in real-time. Secondly, as a charter school, internally there were less far less political considerations to contend with or concede to. As a stakeholder, the urban-emergent charter school was endowed with the autonomy to implement immediate adaptations to instruction, learning, and policies from within and from external partnerships such as that of the Heinz Fellows Program. CUE was also aware of the school's reputation and history of positive parent and caregiver engagement, working well with community partners, and verbalized desire to improve the ways their social justice and equity practice. Participation in the university/school partnership advanced the aspiration of educational equity through the development of student-led podcasts, student clubs, and professional learning facilitated by Heinz Fellows.

As it pertains to the ability to develop and sustain social justice and equity programming amidst this partnership, challenges existed. One way these challenges were experienced was in the organizational communication between and among Heinz Fellows. For example, there were multiple points of contacts with vastly different communication styles, differing priorities, and differences in the conceptualization of equity. This resulted in frustration among the Heinz Fellows as to who was leading what activities and confusion about who they should take final direction from relative to their activities with students and staff. Though Heinz Fellows reported observations of inequity in this environment such as power hierarchies that discouraged full participation during conversations around race and deficit language and beliefs disguised as high expectations, they found this stakeholder was available to listen to concerns raised by the Heinz Fellows and/or CUE leadership about the partnership.

1.4.5 Urban Characteristic High School

The urban characteristic high school is regarded as such due to its location in a suburban area, a large number of Black students impacted by poverty, and education performance indicators for Black students. The urban characteristic high school was considered for an expansion site based on substantial transformation of the school climate and culture made under a new superintendent and leadership team. Climate and culture transformation including the elimination of police officers from the high school, participation in CUESEF as a panelist on dismantling the school-to-prison-pipeline, and other tailored approaches to achieve equity that aligned with the Heinz Fellows Program goals of increasing student attendance, decreasing referrals, and increasing academic identity among students. However, much like other school sites, the ability of Heinz Fellows to develop activities to support the goals was limited by communication and COVID-19.

Heinz Fellows experienced limited access to students and classroom teachers and multiple communication channels used to convey messaging about school and student needs. For example, it was discovered seven months into the program that not all of the Heinz Fellows in the school were included on all messaging. It is worth noting that Heinz Fellows were invited to be key contributors in a district-wide equity initiative and were able to co-develop and sustain an equity-based community of practice with teachers in this school.

1.4.6 Students

From my perspective, next to Heinz Fellows, students are the next most important stakeholder in the program. Students are direct recipients of the expertise, experience, and interactions with Heinz Fellows. Students also stand to gain additional support as teachers and other building staff improve their praxis through participation in a community of practice with Heinz Fellows. Students and Heinz Fellows often forge meaningful relationships early on and they tend to last beyond the school year. One reason is because Heinz Fellows are "in the school but not of the school," which minimizes or eliminates power imbalances and sets the tone for equity in relationship. This is not to say that there are not boundaries set, rules for engagement, and other behavior standards that Heinz Fellows set when interacting with students. However, the ongoing development in student support provided by the Heinz Fellows Program equipped Heinz Fellows with tools to create and sustain authentic relationships, provide support across several domains (socioemotional, academic, behavioral, social justice and equity) and connect students to other organizations and people to enrich student development. Students received individual mentoring focused on helping build self-efficacy, self-confidence, and critical consciousness. In terms of relevance to this case study and student stakeholder perspective, the Heinz Fellows Program

facilitation of youth-inspired participatory action projects is useful for broadening measures of student success.

1.4.7 COVID-19 and Stakeholders

Systemic educational inequity was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the rapid and unplanned shift to online schooling (Costa, 2020). Many public schools were and continue to be affected, yet as with other disparities, the impact is worse in urban public schools. As COVID-19 warranted remote schooling, the university/school partnership had to contend with technology access, digital literacy divides, and "vanishment" of students from the virtual space. As posited by Vaught (2019), brick-and-mortar schools are a site, a practice, and a story of vanishment of (certain) students, as there is not enough of a concern to look for them. This vanishment was amplified in virtual school as local districts reported inability to contact students and families and unprecedented attendance concerns. Heinz Fellows continuously observed the need for socio-emotional, restorative, and equity- and justice-centered interventions but were unable to do so in virtual classrooms. Sometimes there were extensive delays in processing access for remote schooling platforms for Heinz Fellows, and connecting with teachers was all but impossible during remote schooling. To be sure, teachers, school personnel, students, and families were all simultaneously dealing with concerns of Coronavirus infection of their loved ones, the most vulnerable people commodified into "essential workers," egregious displays of anti-Black police violence, and a political climate that encouraged individual liberty over collective well-being.

1.5 Review of Supporting Literature

Given the high complexity, high autonomy, and low direct supervision the Heinz Fellows Program exists within, understanding how decisions are made is at the heart of this critical examination. Street Level Bureaucracy theory offers a dynamic purview into how frontline workers such as Heinz Fellows develop and utilize discretion and coping strategies to navigate between and betwixt multiple organizations of a university/public school partnership. In addition to a discussion of Street Level Bureaucracy theory, the review of supporting literature will analyze scholarship on university/public school partnerships and critical organizational theory as necessary components to shaping the development and use of discretion and coping mechanisms to traverse complex organizations. Ultimately the review of supporting scholarship will guide and support the following inquiry question of the critical examination:

1) How did Heinz Fellows develop and use discretion and coping to accomplish the goals of the program?

1.5.1 Street Level Bureaucracy/Bureaucrats

One must study the authoritative articulation of program goals from an organization to understand its impact on street level decision making. However, one must also study street level bureaucrats within their specific work context to discover how their decision making is modified, if at all, by ever-changing environment. Thinking of tasks of street level bureaucrats as a form of policy implementation, this relationship can be understood as problematic because in a sense, the meaning of policy cannot be known until it is worked out in practice at the street level (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). This then becomes the impetus for evaluating how Heinz Fellows as street level

bureaucrats developed and used discretion to navigate university/public school partnership. The conceptualization of activities by Heinz Fellows that enabled them to work engage in the school-based goals of increasing attendance, decreasing referrals, and improving academic identify of students was conditioned in large party by the broader organizational culture of the public school they supported. Organizational conditions that conditioned their engagement and resulted in implementation difficulties were the attitudes of administrators towards the Heinz Fellows Program, misalignment of program goals, competing priorities, and organization culture. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) additionally assert in their theory of street level bureaucracy that complex organizations influences the behavior of frontline workers and necessitate discretion and coping as strategies to persist. Thus, conditions encountered by Heinz Fellows within the complex culture of urban public schools included exacerbated workload pressures within the schools, amplified discretion at the local level, and ultimately lessened cohesiveness and sustainability of meeting the goals of increasing attendance, decreasing pushout, and increasing academic identity among students. While no single theory can fully explain how street level bureaucrats exercise their discretion, Cohen (2018) offers remarkable insights through a theoretical lens that considers how personal preference is mediated by organizational conditions.

Street level bureaucrats interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs and have substantial discretion in the execution of their work (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). The substantial discretion is a product of complex organizations and low direct supervision. Thus, to accomplish their required tasks, street-level bureaucrats must find ways to accommodate the demands placed upon them and confront the reality of resource limitations. Through routinizing procedures, modifying goals, rationing services, asserting priorities, and limiting or controlling interaction with clientele, street level bureaucrats minimize dissonance and regain equilibrium (Weatherley &

Lipsky, 1977). In other words, they develop strategies, such as discretion and coping that permit them in some way to process the work they are required to do. Complex organizations are characterized by rigidity, low resources, and competing priorities, which in turn limit capacity to perform assigned tasks such as urban public schools. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) also assert discretion and coping mechanisms form patterns of behavior which govern how they understand and pursue program goals from the organization. In a significant sense, then, street level bureaucrats become the designers of how they will accomplish stated goals within their respective roles.

Cohen (2018) makes the argument that street level bureaucrats are de facto policy makers in the sense that they informally construct or reconstruct their organizations' policies, thereby directly influencing program outcomes. Given the complexity of bureaucratic organizations like public schools, streel level bureaucrats' interpretations of the organizations' guidelines are key to how discretion is utilized in decision making. Because organizational conditions have a significant effect on the parameters of the street level bureaucrats' choices, in many cases they do not necessarily do what they want, but what they can. Therefore, focusing on both the individual and the organization are important and helpful for understanding how street level bureaucrats develop and use discretion and coping. At the individual level, personal characteristics such as personal set of values, beliefs, social networks, and equity orientation help explain their adherence to formally stated policies that run counter goal acquisition. As it relates to the Heinz Fellows Program, equity orientation is critical in deciding how to shape mentoring activities that increase student attendance, decrease student pushout, and improve academic identity. Fredrickson (as cited in Cohen, 2018), argues that social equity requires judgment. Social equity is not expressed in the neutral application of rules, procedures, and laws, nor in the raw preferences of individuals charged

with carrying out state power and authority. And that as such, social equity lives on the messy ground between these poles, where institutions and interpretation shape judgments and outcomes and that deliberative engagement with people is imperative to the practice of equity. In the case of Heinz Fellows, this means the ability to work directly with students, staff and building administration to deliver programming for the university/public school partnership. Therefore, normative judgments of street level bureaucrats exist in the tension between institutionalized rules and norms. The ongoing tensions and mismatch between policy or practice and the case or circumstance provide insight into the nature of norms and the possibility of change. Rules and norms are the working definition of the "right way" to do things. Lastly, Cohen (2018) includes an analysis of the role of politics and political culture as influencing how and when street level bureaucrats use their discretion and coping, like casting a street level bureaucrat as a troublemaker, rogue, and/or acting without authority when questioning inequity.

To improve cross-organizational partnerships such as that of university/public school partnerships we must seek to understand how those on the frontline understand and navigate multiple complex environments, including how the limitation of rules, policies, and practices impact the decision making of street level bureaucrats. The university must consider day-to-day decisions street level bureaucrats adopt to cope with dissonance resulting from the expectations of the university running head long into the limitations of the public school. The following quotes capture the dissonance experienced by participants in the Heinz Fellows Program:

> ***Respondent:*** *"Being placed in the school felt really haphazard, like you were always getting the runaround and not told everything you need to support them."*
>
> ***Respondent:*** *"There was a strong desire to embed social justice and equity; the hesitation was that social justice and equity was occurring in the school when so many anti-social*

justice and equity were happening in the community and district. Heinz Fellows were used as an avenue to "go around" the district."

Ash (2013) offers a compelling analysis of how discretion and coping are developed and used by street level bureaucrats from the organizational perspective, which aligns with the experiences of Heinz Fellows. She states that discretion is shaped variously by how much freedom in decision making the agency permitted and, conversely, by the need to make decisions when agency policy or process was ambiguous. Additionally, types of discretion are shaped within the environments surrounding decision making, such as the relative influence of managerialism and professionalism. As this latter point relates to the Heinz Fellows, school instability, high reliance on law and order, and lack of building-level leadership are persistent features of urban public schools influenced the choice of discretion and decision making. However, it must be noted that choice is not an absolute concept. It is nuanced, contradictory and shaped by social and cultural factors that find expression in social policy. Thus, many of the choices Heinz Fellows were able to make in how to accomplish school-based program goals prevented them from enacting their roles as designed by the university or perceived by them. Analysis of use of discretion within rule-bound organizations and social institutions and the interplay of players, interests, and strategies on goal accomplishment is presented by Maynard-Moody and Portillo (2010). In their work, the authors explore the development and use of discretion within complex organizations as nested in the context of routines, practice ideologies, rule following, and policy. Thus, from this standpoint, street level bureaucrats are situated within organizational context where their relations with supervisors, peers, clients, and citizens shape their motives and judgments and provide three essential characteristics that influence the development and use of discretion among streel level bureaucrats: (1) who they are and their status in an organization as frontline workers, (2) with

whom they interact (students and school staff), and (3) the autonomy they necessarily have due to low direct supervision. In street level bureaucracies, people are changed because of the discretion used by frontline workers; conversely, Heinz Fellows struggled to make direct correlation to positive outcomes for students based on their limited interactions. This also fueled feelings of unfulfillment and lowered confidence in practice among Heinz Fellows. In this way Heinz Fellows are representative of other categories of frontline workers in their limited power and lack of authority to make meaningful choices toward accomplishing school-based program goals. The following quotes from Heinz Fellows illustrates their experience of limited power and authority:

> ***Respondent:*** *"The administration was top-down; not adaptive leadership and teacher concerns did not seem to ever be taken into consideration. Authority never allowed to be challenged. Also, if administration didn't like you, your position was tenuous. At any moment, you could be accused of doing something inappropriate and I did not feel empowered."*
>
> ***Respondent:*** *"There was really an effort made to make sure we were on the same page with school. Like in the beginning, I came into it and there seemed the initial discussions with our liaisons and principal and stuff like that. But there seemed to be ambiguity still, even though you know Fellows had been there for three other years."*

One final significant consideration provided my Maynard-Moody and Portillo (2010) is that street level bureaucrats are not monolithic and as such, their diverse identities and backgrounds factor into how discretion is developed and used as they navigate complex organizations. To be sure, interview data from Heinz Fellows supports this notion, as even those placed in the same school reported different methods, experiences, and degrees of success in achieving school-based goals.

Lipsky (2010) provides an overview of coping mechanisms streel level bureaucrats enact to mediate the dissonance of traversing complex environments and goal accomplishment. He conveys that although streel level bureaucrats work within bureaucratic structures, their independence on the job is extensive and a component of this independence is discretion in making decisions. Further, street level bureaucrats often must perform their jobs in response to ambiguous and contradictory expectation, which may in part be unattainable. Some goal orientations may be unrealistic, mutually exclusive, or unrealized because of organizational power and politics. Additionally, street level bureaucrats in bureaucratic roles both deliberately and unconsciously develop mechanisms to cope with limited control, demands concerning performance, and difficulty in measuring success of performance. And the conditions under which street level bureaucrats are asked to do their jobs may also include distinct social/emotional, psychological threats to safety. For Heinz Fellows, threats to psychological wellbeing included witnessing and observing inappropriate dialogue about and treatment of students and families, ineffective teaching practices, and punitive discipline procedures. As with street level bureaucrats theory, Heinz Fellows developed coping strategies reflective of their environment, including simplifications and routinization. Lipsky (2010) defines simplifications as symbolic constructs in which individuals order their perceptions to make the perceived environment easier to manage and routinization as the establishment of habitual or regularized patterns in terms of which tasks are performed. The development of simplifications and routines permits street level bureaucrats to make quick decisions and thereby accomplish their jobs with less difficulty such as freeing scarce resources through time saving, while simultaneously reducing personal anxiety over the appropriateness of decision making. According to Lipsky (2010), changing roles and role ambiguity also increases the adoption of coping mechanisms to mediate dissonance. As it relates to role expectations, street

level bureaucrats may alter their own expectations about job performance, attempt to influence of those who assign their roles, or they may craft their own definition. The following excerpts highlight the experiences of Heinz Fellows navigating between and betwixt role ambiguity:

> ***Respondent:*** *"The teachers seemed happy to have extra support in the classroom, but always seemed unsure about what we should/could do. Sometimes, I would be asked to lead lessons, then other times the teacher would conduct class as if I wasn't there. I didn't know if I had somehow did something wrong or if they were following an unknown directive from administration or the district."*
>
> ***Respondent:*** *"COVID19 made things worse because I would pre-plan with teachers and tell them how I could support the virtual classroom. It's like, the students are disengaged for whatever reason, let me take them into a breakout room for one-on-one or small group support. Apparently, that was only acceptable if the teacher was ready to tap-out. So a lot of days, I was just on camera, mic off, feeling like I was really not being utilized effectively."*

Lastly, Lipsky (2010) notes that routines, simplifications, and other strategies developed and used by street level bureaucrats occur within a social schema. For the Heinz Fellows, the social schema was the social justice and equity orientation that many of them held as a personal value. However, the university also communicated the goal of shifting the knowledge, beliefs, and skills of Heinz Fellows through ongoing professional learning in social justice and equity. Taken together, the internal and external focus on equity influenced discretion and coping developed and used by Heinz Fellows. Support for this assertion is found in the groundbreaking work of Weatherley and Lipsky (1970), whose responses from street level bureaucrats about their definition of equity revealed normatively complex and nuanced judgments, establishing a context

in which culturally accepted norms are contested and notions of social equity are enacted and redefined. This is in part because social equity is not expressed in the neutral application of rules, procedures, and laws, or the preferences of individuals charged with program implementation, it is expressed in institutions and interpretations which shape judgments and outcomes. Therefore, observation of equity in action, among Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats, is discovered in pragmatic improvisation that characterizes how they perceived the goals of the organization and their ability to implement activities to meet the goals.

1.5.2 University/Public School Partnerships

The National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good (Pasque et al., 2005) states that community engagement continues to be an important consideration in institutions of higher education to improve relationships with the societies it serves. Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and communities as the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. It is a "form of scholarship that cuts across teaching, research, and service" (McNall et al., 2009, p. 318). Described another way, community–university partnerships are an integral part of research and practice, a collaborative relationship involving mutually beneficial exchange and best methods for meeting those needs (Williamson et al., 2016). In this conception, university partners provide the framework, resources, and theoretical knowledge important in creating intervention strategies as well as assistance with the implementation and evaluation of programs and services. Williamson and colleagues (2016) also state the importance of building a solid foundation of trust and mutual respect to ensure sustainable working relationships that meet the needs of all stakeholders within university/community partnerships. Specific to university/public school partnerships, Slater

(1996) shares that identifying areas of mutual concern guide the process of partnership and agreement on change, power sharing, and control through exchanges of ideas and opportunities. In considering what advances or detracts from an effective and sustainable university/public school partnership, discrepancies in expectations, timelines, role confusion, and communication are factors recognized in the literature. For instance, Zetlin et al. (1992) shared how despite lengthy discussions and planning between university and school staff, when a program was implemented, it was perceived differently among the teachers, school principals, and even some university members. Differences in understanding program aims and implementation was a recurring theme in interview responses from Heinz Fellows and public-school staff interviewed over the four years of the Heinz Fellows Program. Additionally, the literature supports procedures for design, implementation, and evaluation as crucial for enacting university/public school partnerships. As an example, Buys and Bursnall (2007) retool the Sargent and Walters framework for partnerships, which emphasizes initiation, clarification, implementation, and completion as phases within a university/public school partnership for effectiveness. However, the framework can be interpreted as a linear progression through the phases, which is limiting given the influence of context on each university/public school partnership. According to Baum (2000), planning partnerships should accommodate ambiguities and changes in the partners' identities, their relationships, and their separate and common purposes. In this way, much is open and left to interpretation in a university/public school partnership and for Heinz Fellows, learning how to thrive in the tension of this reality was key to navigating multiple complex organizations. A final piece of insight on university/public school effectiveness is found in "simultaneous renewal." According to Bullough and Baugh (2007), the essential components of a university/public school partnership are shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration,

promotion of group and individual learning, mutual trust, respect, and support among staff members. It is through the process of simultaneous renewal among the university and public schools in a partnership get better at their requisite tasks in ways that further their mutual interests.

1.5.3 Critical Organizational Theory

Critical organizational theory is a valuable lens for analysis of a university/public school partnership because it surfaces the role of power in the process of reality construction, as well as the complex interaction of power and communication (Mumby & Kuhn, 2019). The function of power is often hidden or unaddressed in an analysis of organizational interaction, despite the explicit and subtle ways it shapes how people think about and experience the world. Thus, critical study of organizations is not only about the cultures of organizations but also about the organization of culture (Mumby & Kuhn, 2019). Accordingly, they assert that construction of organizational meaning cannot be understood without examining organizations as political structures where power plays a central role. Mumby and Kuhn understand power within critical organizational theory as the process by which organization members' identities are shaped to accept and actively support certain issues, values, and interests and emphasizes the deep structure of organizational life – which is to ponder, what are the underlying interests, values, and assumptions that necessitate the development and use of discretion and coping as choices and the possibility of other choices are foreclosed upon? Within the Heinz Fellows Program, power was explicitly and regularly discussed as a characteristic in the pursuit of educational equity. Power was also a shared commodity between the Program Director and Heinz Fellows as a matter of practice and with the recognition that an organizational culture that hampers the development of its members may impede realization of social justice (Jurie, 2000). Further consideration of critical

organizational theory directs us to consider how interpersonal competence, also understood as discretion among street level bureaucrats, is developed and used. Collaborative needs assessment, mutual goal identification, conflict resolution, and procedures to sustain participation are tenets of critical organizational theory relevant to university/public school partnerships (Jurie, 2000).

Deetz (2004) states that critical theory offers a different way of thinking about being directed to and engaged with the world, as well its relation to knowledge, life, and actions. Through this perspective, we then understand that no theoretical framework is neutral and is laden with the values of the researcher. We also understand that critical organizational theory frames structures and practices as social-historical creations accomplished in conditions of struggle and usually unequal power relations and as political sites dominated by some values at the expense of others (Deetz, 2004). Critical organizational theory amplifies concern with reification, suppression of conflicting interests, and domination as operating and impacting goal accomplishment, social realities that necessitate development and use of discretion and coping by Heinz Fellows (Deetz, 2004). Lastly, Deetz calls for more diverse stakeholder involvement and organizational governance in participation processes toward transformative change in the application of critical organizational theory.

Understanding of organizational culture through a critical orientation is important as it effects how Heinz Fellows or other street level bureaucrats carry out their day-to-day tasks. Walker (2011), states that defined and detailed position descriptions, consideration of internal and external conditions, as well as making time to monitor progress are critical actions. These critical actions are relevant and should be applied to university/public school partnerships increase effectiveness, cohesiveness, and sustainability.

2.0 Section Two: Understanding the Problem and Seeing the System

2.1 Inquiry Question

This critical examination is an approach to better understand how Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats developed and used discretion and coping strategies to meet school-based program goals as they navigated between and betwixt a university/public school partnership. Review and analysis of extant data from the Heinz Fellows will add to the literature regarding how discretion and coping are developed, as well as the conditions that constitute development and use of discretion and coping in cross-organizational collaborations such as university/public school partnerships. Lastly, analysis of these data will provide recommendations that create the conditions to increase effectiveness, cohesiveness, and sustainability of university/public school partnerships and attend to the experience of frontline workers. The inquiry question (see Table 2) which will guide the critical examination are as follows:

1. How were discretion and coping used as strategies to navigate the university/public school partnership?

An important feature of the Heinz Fellows Program was collecting the experiences of the Heinz Fellows through journal responses, interviews, and surveys. Given that Heinz Fellows' simultaneously traversed between and betwixt the Center for Urban Education, the University of Pittsburgh, and urban public schools, the collected data speaks to their development and use of discretion and coping strategies across organizations. Responses also reveal how they perceived the public school partners' understanding of the goals of the Heinz Fellows Program. I utilized a qualitative approach to engage the stories and experiences of the Heinz Fellows through their

journal responses and interview responses and document analysis of meeting notes. Qualitative research methods can provide an opportunity to see when program operations depart from expectations and to improve future program planning (Leavy, 2014). Furthermore, Merriam (2002) stated that qualitative research offers the opportunity to understand the social construction of interactions among individuals and is best used to deepen understanding about how particular contexts and the interactions within them occur.

The data used for this critical examination align well with Merriam and Tisdell's (2015) recommendation for various sources of qualitative data collection. In program years one and two, Heinz Fellows were given baseline and end-of-program year surveys to measure growth in their own critical consciousness and experiences working inside schools. Questions used in those surveys included: "I believe race plays a role in the educational experiences of my students," "If students do not succeed it is because they are not working hard enough," and "It is necessary for me to rally the school community to participate in the success of students." During years three and four of the program, notes from meetings, semi-structured interview, journals, and check-in responses were a primary data source. Questions from year three included, "What is your biggest challenge in your placement?" and "What can the Fellowship do differently?" Some of the semi-structured interview questions from year four were, "In what ways did the interview process for the Heinz Fellows Program prepare you for the role?", "What were the goals of the Heinz Fellows Program as it relates to being embedded in school sites?", and "How would you summarize your experience of collaborating with teachers, staff, and school leaders (difficult v. easy)?" Check-ins with Heinz Fellows occurred biweekly in years three and four, in the school sites pre-COVID-19 and virtually thereafter. In year four, the Heinz Fellows Program adopted a workplan to facilitate check-ins and was designed help Heinz Fellows think about their efficacy in navigating public

schools and the new challenges that virtual program participation engagement exposed. Journal prompts were assigned biweekly and included questions such as, “Given your sphere of influence, what specific actions can you take to support your school site (students, staff, admin) through the remainder of the initial period of remote school?” and “As we consider schools, communities, and society, what is something we want to eliminate? What would we replace it with and why? What would have to change about society (e.g., values, mindsets, etc.) for this to be possible?”

2.2 Methods

The methods utilized in this critical examination were surveys, interviews, and document analysis of journal responses. This qualitative method is useful for determining social impact, such as that demonstrated by Heinz Fellows operating as street level bureaucrats in pursuit of school-based program goals of increasing attendance, decreasing referrals, and improving academic identity of students. The findings of the inquiry question will illuminate the ways in which the highly complex organization of urban public schools, competing priorities, and perceptions of the university’s internal and external program goals were reflected in the development and use of discretion and coping (see Table 1). Discretion and coping were a priori codes substantiated in the data analysis of Heinz Fellows responses and were recognized partly due to my direct knowledge of and experience within the program. A priori codes are developed before examining the current data, however they do not limit the analysis, while reflecting the view of participants in a traditional qualitative way (Elliot, 2018). As the researcher connected to the Heinz Fellows Program directly and indirectly throughout its duration, I was aware of some of the ways the experiences of Heinz Fellows would suggest categories of discretion and coping as codes. Indeed, analysis of response

data supported literature which finds discretion as a strategy among street level bureaucrats in mediating the tension of attempting to accomplish organizational goals against the limitations of external environments. Discretion is also germane as a measured variable because as it relates to making exceptions and bending the rules for equity, the task becomes more challenging and mediated by organizational conditions (Cohen, 2018). This means that Heinz Fellows were encouraged to consider ways to disrupt educational inequity, yet doing so in practice required a deliberation of psychological safety, potential consequence to the program and other yet unknown outcomes that could not always be decided in the moment an inequity was observed or perceived. Street level bureaucrats deliberately and unconsciously develop mechanisms to cope with the role ambiguity, psychological wellbeing, and power differentials (Lipsky, 2010). Thus, coping became the other pertinent measure for this critical examination. Lipsky (2010) states that coping strategies involve reappraisal and distortion of the conditions of threat and work-related) stresses. A refrain repeatedly captured in the responses of Heinz Fellows.

Table 1. Matrix of Discretion and Coping strategies used by Street-Level Bureaucrats

Sources/Types of Discretion used by Street-Level Bureaucrats	Sources/Types of Coping used by Street-Level Bureaucrats
Routinization of tasks	Rationing of emotional, physical, intellectual capacity
Accommodations	Securing work environment
Re-interpretation of policies, procedure, and practices	Short-circuiting bureaucratic requirements
Utilization of advocates/influencers	Fostering deference to professional authority

As an urban education scholar practitioner who desires to move beyond observations, descriptions, and explanations of education inequity, my choice of methods is significant. Nygreen

(2006), states that education research should intervene in a way that exposes and disrupts patterns of inequitable practices that define the school experience of students in urban and urbanized schools. Thus, the use of decontextualized analysis of data produced through quantitative methods can obscure the role of power operating in human interactions and replicate inequity. Therefore, the key to understanding qualitative data analysis is embracing that its meaning is socially constructed by individuals and their interactions in the world at a particular point in time (Merriam, 2002). Given this, it is imperative to understand that the qualitative analysis of this critical examination is a snapshot of the experiences shared by Heinz Fellows and my interpretation of those experiences.

Results of the analysis of the combined data sources from multiple years illustrate how Heinz Fellows developed and used coping strategies as they navigated multiple complex organization within the university/public school partnership. The data analysis also demonstrates the ways in which the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of Heinz Fellows were shaped by the internal goals of the Heinz Fellows Program that resulted in equity-driven discretion and coping strategies. The growing recognition of the usefulness of qualitative research and analysis to explore and describe context phenomena (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017), such as that of Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats is another advantage. As a starting point for the qualitative content analysis, I began with reading and re-reading the transcribed texts to understand what interviewees were sharing, while remaining aware of my own biases (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Data was captured by Zoom recording semi-structured interviews and later transcribing them, including taking note of pauses, non-verbal cues communicated with responses, and strong emotional responses to questions. Journal responses and meeting notes were read multiple times as well. Next, themes were identified in the responses to semi-structured interviews, journal responses, and

notes collected from staff meetings based on how frequently words, phrases, and reactions were found. From themes, codes were derived that captured issues and relevance to the research questions. The themes, codes, and categories were used to draw the conclusions of this critical examination.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis method used in this critical examination was qualitative content analysis through inductive reasoning, grounding the examination of and arrival at themes and the inferences drawn from them in the data (Yhang & Wildemuth, 2009). As the researcher who was also connected to the program, I was intimately aware of the challenges, barriers, and experiences of Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats. Given this and supported by the literature, qualitative content analysis was used. The process for identifying evidence of the themes and codes which undergird and conceptualize shared meaning are generated by me as the researcher and were mediated by my values, skills, experience, and education (Braun & Clarke, 2020). To be sure, a conscientious effort was made to limit and substantiate a priori codes, remain aware of my biases, and to welcome data that were in contrast to my own thoughts or beliefs. Street level bureaucrats was the a priori code selected and utilized in this case study. I drew from both inductive and deductive coding methods to interpret the data. While I made a conscious effort to remain aware of my own biases, I drew directly from the literature, discussed above on street level bureaucrats and looked for codes associated with their characteristics, such as discretion, coping, power, and agency.

Braun and Clarke (2020) further note the utility of qualitative content analysis is supported as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data and identification of patterns. For example, through qualitative content analysis, I determined that each year of the Heinz Fellows Program, CUE attempted to answer the initiatives and strategies implemented in our partner public schools as much as possible by returning Heinz Fellows to particular schools, accepting grant funds on behalf of schools, and adapting Heinz Fellows schedules to meet building needs. A mutual decision was made to embed Heinz Fellows in classrooms to academically support both teachers and students and the critical mentoring of students and in schools for shared professional learning, in- and out-of-school enrichment programs, and the yearly youth participatory action research projects. In retrospect, it is more likely that these initiatives were introduced by and ultimately decided upon by district administrators with little no input from building-level staff who would be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the university/public school partnership. From the quote that follows, I applied inductive content analysis as an interpretation of the respondent's dissonance with opposing program goals:

> ***Respondent****: "I was asked to call families whose students were truant (during the pandemic). I didn't feel it was in the spirit of the Program to call families to deliver messages about the consequences of missing school during a pandemic. The other Fellows were able to work directly with students in classrooms and through community-based organizations that really supported the work we were there to do."*

Qualitative content analysis can also be used to compress extraordinarily large data sets such as what was collected for the Heinz Fellows Program. Initial analysis of the data through coding software produced voluminous codes and categories, beyond the scope of this critical examination. Data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material

and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings are a hallmark of qualitative content analysis (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Additionally, Leavy (2014) asserts that data reduction strategies such as compressing codes and themes is an attempt to organize massive amounts of information into manageable chunks.

3.0 Section Three: Results

The critical examination of the program included review and analysis of one semi-structured individual interviews with thirteen participants from cohorts one through four (see Appendix A), responses to four journal prompts and three randomly selected check-ins (see Tables 3 and 4) from year three, and meeting minutes with Heinz Fellows from cohorts one, three, and four of the Heinz Fellows Program. I was connected to the Heinz Fellows Program in year one as a school-based liaison and attended professional learning events alongside year-two participants. I originally joined year three as a graduate Heinz Fellow, then transitioned into leading the program midway through year three and all of year four. I drew from street level bureaucracy theory as a lens with which to study the Heinz Fellows as they traversed between and betwixt multiple complex organizations because of the Networks, Organizations, and Policy course in the education doctorate program. In his seminal work on street level bureaucrats, Lipsky (1969, 2010) argues that discretion (informal practices) and coping strategies street level bureaucrats adopt to manage the dilemmas in their work effectively become how they accomplish the program goals set before them. Heinz Fellows regularly discussed the how they would formulate alternative methods to interact with students when they were prevented from doing so in the normal course of their work. Additionally, the organizational culture within and across the urban public schools compelled Heinz Fellows to develop techniques to salvage service and decision-making values within the limits imposed on them by the structure of their work. This included, but certainly was not limited to, leveraging advocates within the school to raise ideas, concerns, utilizing their differing levels of influence within school sites and reinterpretation of existing policies. Another key finding in the data analysis was the tension in the university's school-based goals of increasing attendance,

decreasing pushout, and improving academic identity of students amid the public schools shifting goals, resources, and priorities. For instance, Heinz Fellows willingly worked beyond their requisite schedules to formulate and facilitate out-of-school time mentorship and health and wellness programs for students that increased their attendance in school, decreased pushout, and improve academic identity. It should be noted that the time Heinz Fellows spent in schools during their scheduled times was used to better understand how to address student needs to accomplish the school-based goals, another strategy utilized to develop and implement discretion among street level bureaucrats. Regarding the development and use of coping, the findings supported feelings of dissonance of Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats and a bent toward equity in strategies used. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) assert, street level bureaucrats must consistently find ways to accommodate new demands placed upon them into the work structure, while simultaneously facing the cognitive and emotional toll of public service work. Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats traversing university/public school partnerships were left to find practical ways of implementing innovation designed in theory. Ash (2013) found that in some organizations, street level bureaucrats were relying on problematic coping techniques, such as protecting themselves with "cognitive shields" to defend themselves from responsibility to act, blaming others, and indifference. However, Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats kept equity at the center of their use of development and coping because of the university's internal goals of improving the skills, knowledge, and disposition of candidates in the Heinz Fellows Program. Frederickson (2010) argues that social equity requires judgment and that judgement, exercised as discretion and coping lives on the messy ground between organizational culture and interpretation, which ultimately shape judgments and outcomes. Some of the coping strategies elucidated in the findings for Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats include securing their work environment, short-circuiting

bureaucratic requirements, simplifications, and routines. Analysis of interview responses and documents produced codes that rolled into larger themes of Heinz Fellows development and use of discretion and coding to accomplish the university's school-based goals. Saldaña's (2016) qualitative coding framework was utilized, which asserts that coding is heuristic and cyclical act of arranging data in a systematic order to develop an explanation. He additionally notes that themes are the outcome of coding, that describes more subtle or tacit processes.

Table 2. Inquiry Question

Inquiry Question	Collection Protocol	Protocol Question	Data Source
How were discretion and coping used as strategies to navigate the university/public school partnership?	Semi-structured interview	How would you describe the process of planning what activities and/or roles you would take on once embedded in the school site?	Interview responses from Heinz Fellows
	Semi-structured interview, Document analysis	How has the HFP impacted your social justice and equity orientation?	Interview responses from Heinz Fellows and artifacts
	Document Analysis	What words, phrases, actions denote incongruence in accomplishing goals that require discretion and coping?	Artifacts (notes from individual check-ins and notes from team meetings)

Table 3. Heinz Fellows Check-in Year 3

1. Build trust and rapport
o What is your biggest accomplishment?
o What is your biggest challenge?
2. Career development, personal growth
o What do you want to improve?
o SMART goal setting
Specific
Measurable
Actionable
Realistic
Timely
3. Giving and receiving feedback
o What do you need?
o How can I support you?
o What can the Fellowship do differently?
4. General well-being
o Are you taking care of yourself?

Table 4. Heinz Fellows Check-In Workplan Year Four

Date	**Activity/Event** (**Bold** If New)	**Collaborators** (Students are collaborators too!)	**What data was collected?** (Permission Slips, Surveys, Attendance, Student Measures, etc. or N/A)	**Goals & Next Steps** (Include Relevant Critical Competencies and Requests for Support)	**Feelings of Efficacy** (1 to 5)
5/17	Weekly Planning and Self-guided Work Portfolio work, Art Showcase Planning	Students Envoy, Teachers, Juliandra Jones		1.4	4
5/18	Westinghouse Virtual Support/ Art Show Case Planning	Students, Teachers, Westinghouse Staff		1.1	4
5/19	Student Envoy Art Showcase event and practice	Students, Emvoy, Westinghouse school Community	none	1.1 2.1	5
5/20	Heinz Fellow PD	Heinz Fellows		1.1 3.4	N/A
5/21	Westinghouse in persons support White Folks Affinity Group	White Folks Group		1.3 1.1	4
5/19	Social Justice Conversation	Ms. Karl and Students	YouTube Videos	2.2 2.4	5

Table 5 represents an overview of the major findings of the analysis of the documents collected in response to the inquiry question. The four overarching themes illuminate the

complexity of the organizations, the misapplied nature of the school-based goals, and the dissonance that arose from role confusion and will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Table 5. Themes, Subthemes, and Descriptions of Collected and Analyzed Data

Theme	Misalignment of goals, priorities, and functions of the Heinz Fellows Program	Development and use of strategies to navigate organizational culture (discretion and coping)	Development of a cohesive, sustainable program	University as a system that replicates inequity
Subthemes	Dissonance	Efficacy	Organizational communication	Equity
Description	Heinz Fellows experienced confusion and frustration as they attempted to implement activities related to the Heinz Fellows Program in schools	Strengthening personal and collective agency of Heinz Fellows was a factor of navigating public schools	Prioritizing time, trust and tools to mediate bureaucracy inherent in urban public schools	Heinz Fellows discussed notoriety associated with the university without tangible benefits

4.0 Section Four: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

4.1 Discussion

This section will explain themes and subthemes of responses to interviews provided by Heinz Fellows of their experience for the practice of university/urban public school partnerships specifically and cross-organizational partnerships broadly. The ways in which discretion and coping were developed and used by Heinz Fellows provided the data to frame their role as that of frontline workers/street level bureaucrats. How street level bureaucrats such as Heinz Fellows who are hired to carry out the university/public school partnership pursued external program goals during cross-organizational culture, competing priorities, and ill-defined roles is the problem of practice studied for this dissertation in practice. This critical examination has referenced the many incidents and missed opportunities of the Heinz Fellows Program university/public school partnership that limited the ability of frontline workers to cohesively achieve the goal of increasing attendance, decreasing pushout, and improving academic identity of students. The critical incidents included direct and indirect opposition to Heinz Fellows activities to achieve the university's school-based goals, competing priorities, and ongoing role ambiguity. Another critical incident for consideration of this university/public school partnership included severely limiting opportunities for Heinz Fellows to work with students. Most often, test scores were cited as the reason that students could not miss academic classes for mentoring, however Heinz Fellows were acutely aware of the inequity of asking students to routinely miss electives for mentoring sessions. As noted by Bishop and Noguera (2019), current education policies are largely inadequate at addressing the pervasive structural inequities in schools and societal factors outside of schools that

profoundly impact students' capacity to access political education that might transform outcomes. The missed opportunities within the university/public school partnership included cross-organizational goal setting that was context-specific, school-based leadership investment, and an evaluative guide to monitor outcomes of the university/public school partnership. Another missed opportunity is the bureaucratic nature of urban public-school districts, which practically ensures that urgent matters and decisions will not be addressed in a timely fashion. Berkovich (2014) asserts that broad, diverse stakeholder participation is necessary for partnership to increase opportunities for mobilizing and sustaining equity efforts. Given this, the limited participation of broad, diverse stakeholders who could champion or sponsor the Heinz Fellows Program within local schools became another missed opportunity. The following is a discussion of the themes that emerged from the Heinz Fellows Program university/urban public school partnership and their implications.

4.1.1 Theme One: Misalignment of Goals, Priorities, and Functions of the Heinz Fellows Program

Perception and understanding are two codes derived from data analysis, which can be further delineated by the following subtheme:

- Dissonance

This subtheme was captured through review and interpretation from interviews, journal responses, and meeting minutes which indicated that Heinz Fellows routinely experienced dissonance as they observed vastly different interpretations in schools about the university/public school goals and what activities they were "allowed" to undertake within schools. Analyzed data responses pointed to an ongoing miscommunication, misalignment, and/or misinterpretation of

goals between the university and public schools. King and colleagues (King et al., 2010) state that goals are properties of the organization and public goals may serve as a basic guide to member-agents' behaviors as well as provide an accountability mechanism for third-party outsiders. In a cross-organizational arrangement such as a university/public school partnership, the members when making decisions must eventually settle on a particular collective view that forms the background for their decision. Then the collective view facilitates the deliberation of choices and helps member-agents determine appropriate future directions (King et al., 2010). The Heinz Fellows mostly agreed on and articulated that they understood the goals as given by the Center for Urban Education. Yet, a university/public school partnership cannot be completely prescribed or ever fully replicated because application of frameworks and tools are unique to the context. Still, Slater (1996) advises, there are guideposts to support wise decision-making and increase sustainability prior to and during the implementation of university/public school partnerships. What this subtheme suggests, according to Heinz Fellows, is that vagueness in roles, activities, and even processes were ongoing and that it was deliberate on the part of public schools. One participant expressed that they believed the vagueness was by design, such that neither the university nor public schools could be bound to much of anything beyond surface participation. The following quotes highlight the ways in which Heinz Fellows perceived the posture of the university "saying what the school wanted to hear," and consistently restating the goals three years into program within the same school building, as well as participation by schools to check equity boxes:

"You kind of need to code switch a little bit between us and the administration."

"CUE made an effort to do it, but there seemed to be ambiguity with administrators and liaisons despite three prior years in the building."

"I feel like they [goals] were shared, but it seems to me just from our first interaction with the school staff it was very confusing what our role was and the goal of what we were trying to get at and I feel like even now going into the last few months of the program, that's still being reiterated in many ways."

"It felt like school leaders weren't interested in or were limited by other factors that the Heinz Fellows Program offered. Like they weren't culturally sensitive and were more concerned with dress code policies."

The following quotes summarize Heinz Fellows' perceptions:

"The administration was deficit-minded and frequently co-opted the language of equity. "Good" students were targeted for support and students were regularly categorized as "good and deserving vs. bad and undeserving."

"Knowing what (Heinz Fellows) were supposed to do and ***allowing*** *(emphasis added) it are two different things."*

Revisiting the quotes above, there was consensus among respondents that the onus remained upon Heinz Fellows to constantly restate what the program was, why the program was needed, and their presence in schools. Heinz Fellows expressed that having a step-by-step guide to implementation was not very logical as the context of schools shifted regularly, however there was agreement that having established objectives, possibly tied to concrete outcomes, would have helped them think broadly and collectively about goal accomplishment. Additionally, Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) assert that identification of potential challenges and barriers for implementation of goals should be discussed, including where they originate and who can resolve them. Lastly, this theme illuminates agency on the part of Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats as they

continuously worked to implement activities and build trusting relationships that would result in meeting the school-based goals (Larson & Nelms, 2021).

4.1.2 Theme Two: The Need to Develop and Use Strategies to Navigate Organizational Culture Among Heinz Fellows as Street-Level Bureaucrats

Discretion, informal practices, and agency are the codes that comprise theme two. One respondent shared that it was commonplace that each day they arrived in the school, there were new priorities that were hyper-focused on law and order and standardized testing. Due to the necessarily and loosely defined structure of university/public school partnerships, Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats were required to exercise discretion in developing and using informal practices to accomplish program goals. Cohen and Hertz (2020) assert that street level bureaucrats use their discretion to produce "informal practices that are more diverse and broader than what their managers may be aware of" (p. 443). As frontline workers, Heinz Fellows were trained in equity-grounded practice and entrusted by the university to develop and use discretion strategies in developing tasks and activities that improved attendance, decreased pushout, and increased academic identity of students. Activities that accomplish goals are dependent on personal agency, or how one defines tasks, employs strategies, views the possibility of success, and ultimately solve the problems and challenges they face (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003). Inasmuch as organizations are made up of an ongoing series of interactions (Brazer, et al., 2014), exposure to organizational theory seems integral to university/public school partnerships. The subtheme in this category is:

- Efficacy

As a loosely coupled organization, the structure of the Center for Urban Education provided tools that permitted Heinz Fellows to enter the public-school partnerships knowing what

the aims were and flexibility in reaching the aims. Heinz Fellows stated that the Center for Urban Education equipped them with the skills, tools, and language of equity that developed discretion and coping strategies that supported how they conceptualized their tasks in pursuit of school-based goals. Using discretion and coping to negotiate dimensions of power, control, and face-saving determined how Heinz Fellows accepted roles, acclimated to roles, and what tasks they would/could engage in inside schools. Concerns did not change much and often were not resolved from one program year to the next. Thus, Heinz Fellows expressed that the partnership was less of an exchange and more about what the Heinz Fellows Program was permitted to do according to a particular building administrator. This is characterized by the following quotes:

"*If you have an inharmonious relationship with the school it can be deleterious, because you have to balance blind spots and strengths between the school community and the Fellows who are there."*

"The school recognizes there is something missing (equity) and invite us in to support, but then there are so many obstacles that prevent that from happening like no time to plan with teachers and the principals are always busy putting out fires."

One respondent noted:

"There is this "we're all family" disposition from the principal, but it really just lessens the ability to challenge discrimination and other oppression. If you do, you'll be seen as antagonistic."

Or as shared by a different respondent:

"We were always at the whim of the administrator. They required a resume, pre-approved building schedule (by admin), and advanced notice of time off, then would decide we couldn't follow the pre-approved schedule and could only interact with students during their lunch period.

We were required to attend the building professional development but weren't allowed to deliver any professional development. It was really all just a power-trip for the principal."

"Sometimes, my head feels like it's going to pop off my shoulders. Sometimes I game plan with my coworkers on projects that empower students"

"I am clear that I'm at the school to acknowledge, articulate, and challenge social inequities with and on behalf of students. Training and workshops from CUE were pivotal."

"The training introduced me to critical thinking, which helped me see and recognize oppression in ways I hadn't before and we spent a lot of time together discussing strategies to disrupt oppression."

4.1.3 Theme Three: The Time Needed to Develop a Cohesive, Sustainable Program

Heinz Fellows who participated in the program for a single year, even if by choice, expressed a sense of discontent because they felt an initiative such as the Heinz Fellows Program required a minimum of two uninterrupted years. The design of the program was that each year, applications opened to the best and brightest talent, and while some participants applied and were offered to return all four years, that was not desired by, requested of, or offered to every applicant. Responses from Heinz Fellows expressed that no sooner than they became comfortable, knowledgeable, or connected to human or organizational resources, the school year would be ending, signaling the end of the program year. The phrase "unfinished business" was used to capture the feeling. Adding to the feeling of unfinished business is the organization of urban public schools ongoing personnel and student changes at any point during a program year. In the course of the four years of the Heinz Fellows Program, the Center for Urban Education also had changes in leadership of CUE, as well as over the Heinz Fellows Program. Those shifts across both the

university and public schools were barriers that impacted the time people were willing to or could commit to the partnership and in some ways required a constant reorientation to organizational culture. Respondents also articulated that the one-year design of the program impacted the institutional memory in both positive and negative ways as it related culture and mechanisms for implementation of activities to accomplish the school-based goals. For example, Heinz Fellows would discuss events and helpful people associated with a particular school, yet a new Heinz Fellow might not ever interact with the events or people due to any number of variables. Conversely, there were some events and people that Heinz Fellows were connected to that when shared, helped new Heinz Fellows develop coping strategies necessary to remain equity-focused. This strategy is supported by Lipsky (2010) who explains that the development of simplifications and routines permits street level bureaucrats to make quick decisions and thereby accomplish their jobs with less difficulty, which may free scarce resources through time saving and at the same time reduce tensions with university and public-school administrators. Maynard-Moody and Portillo (2010) contend routines create shared knowledge and collective beliefs that have causal implications for how the work is carried out for street level bureaucrats. The ways in which Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats created simplifications to mediate theme three included lessening the number of days in schools from four days to three and using the additional day for self-directed learning. Routines were developed by using S.M.A.R.T. goals to guide their time in schools (see Table 3) and collective beliefs were cultivated through ongoing teambuilding and internal mentorship across the Heinz Fellows Program. As it relates to program cohesiveness and sustainability, the ability to help schools acquire grant funds is paramount and the Heinz Fellows Program wrote and was awarded a significant monetary grant to support social justice and equity efforts. Unfortunately, the district would not allow the money to be given directly to the school

and stated that because there was never communication to the school board about the grant, additional steps and signoffs were required to assign the money to the school. In the time it took for the emails to go back and forth between the university, the school and the district, the timeline for spending the grant elapsed, which caused another round of exceptions and workarounds to access the money. Further complicating this particular incident was that all the key personnel from the university and the public school associated with writing, overseeing, and completing the final spending report were new, gone, and/or had transitioned to other roles. The aforementioned themes of regular personnel changes, program and funding timelines, and public school bureaucracy lie within the subtheme of:

- Organizational culture

The following quotes capture Heinz Fellows thoughts about theme three:

"I felt like I was constantly operating at a marathon pace, like I should always be doing more, doing better because the players always shift."

"I felt like I was constantly operating at a marathon pace, like I should always be doing more, doing better because the players always shift."

"*At my school, there was a new administrator every year and they each brought a new agenda with them."*

"Cause really you probably need at least two years to even understand what you're doing with this position."

"Interpersonal conflicts within the Heinz Fellows Cohort manipulated the sense of time; sometimes it felt like all we did was litigate instead doing the work."

"Oh my goodness, if you wanted to do anything, the chain of command for permission could take the entire program year. Even for what seemed like really simple requests of bringing in guest speakers."

"There was a strong desire (from the school) for social justice and equity programming, the hesitation is that what was happening in the school was at the same time so many anti-social justice and equity things were happening in the community and world at large."

4.1.4 Theme Four: The Way in Which the University Acknowledges Itself as a System that Can Replicate Inequity

Emotions, organizational conditions, and impact are the codes that comprise this theme. Specific to organizational conditions, one Heinz Fellow discussed the experience of being a "quasi-employee," where despite being employed by the University of Pittsburgh, they were unable to access tuition and other health and welfare benefits typically associated with full-time employment. Other Fellows communicated this sentiment as in direct opposition to the espoused equity agenda of the university. Several emotions expressed by Heinz Fellows regarding the employment status were disappointment, frustration, and surprise at the juxtaposition of their status in the university against the stated commitment to anti-oppression and liberation. This theme emerged throughout the four years of programming and had varying levels of impact on the socio-emotional state of Heinz Fellows. Bonner et al. (2004) refer to this as a climate of "we/they" that exposes hidden conflicts and contradictions within the university despite espoused statement of vision and slogans. On the other hand, the university's internal goal of shifting the knowledge, skills and dispositions of Heinz Fellows had a highly positive impact on respondents. Many respondents explicitly cited the professional learning of the Heinz Fellows program as the critical

feature of organizational culture that they looked forward to, learned significantly from, and was a key mediator of the school-based experience. Bonner and colleagues additionally note that the organizational conditions provide rational enquiry to clarify objectives, to attend to relationships, and to develop structures that efficiently reach a desired outcome. In this case, Heinz Fellows applied the professional learning as they traversed between and betwixt the university and public schools. The subtheme in this section is:

- Equity

The following quotes highlight the ways in which Heinz Fellows perceived the university's commitment to equity as it related to employees, as well as the existence of complexity both within and across organizations:

"Breaking down that wall between the university and the program would show the university's investment in practicing what they want us to practice in schools."

"What is the place of Heinz Fellows; we're at the University but not of it so because of this we are seen as intellectually critical and capable externally. We don't derive the monetary or academic benefit of being here."

"I was told I was going to "X" school and I assumed it was based on my previous experience. I didn't know if I could request a change, and nobody really talked about what happens if the placement doesn't work."

"I felt like CUE cared about me and to some degree the School of Education did, but that varied over the time in the program because sometimes I had no idea who faculty were. But definitely, Pitt couldn't have cared less about me or how I fared when the Program was over."

4.2 Discussion of Findings for Cross-Organizational Partnerships

Any cross-organizational partnership is an expensive endeavor in terms of time, talent, and treasure. It requires redefining individual and organizational beliefs, as well as the identification of areas of mutual concern (Slater, 1996). As has been demonstrated in this critical examination and is supported by McNall et al. (2009), participants in cross-organizational partnerships should begin by assessing their capacity and internal dynamics. It is through internal assessment and cross-organizational communication that decisions can be made about what tangible benefits can be anticipated and what actions are necessary to cultivate continuity and sustainability. Additionally, outcomes of cross-organizational partnerships are mediated by organizational readiness, prior collaborations and motivations, the leadership abilities of partners, institutional demands, trust and the balance of power (McNall et al. (2009). Acknowledging threats, challenges, and barriers at the onset is useful in developing action plans to address and correct problems that arise throughout cross-organizational partnership. As noted by Williamson et al. (2016), roles, duties, and personnel evolve over the duration of collaborative projects and therefore cross-organizational partnerships benefit from integrated quality improvement and evaluation efforts that can be implemented frontline workers. Accordingly, the recommendations expressed in the latter section of this critical examination are applicable to university/public school partnerships specifically and cross-organizational partnerships broadly.

4.3 Conclusions

The Problem of Practice within the University of Pittsburgh is how frontline workers of the university who are hired to implement partnerships with public school perceive their effectiveness in meeting program goals in the midst of the cross-organizational partnership, competing priorities, and ill-defined roles. What then arises from this problem for the university/public school partnership is an ongoing dissonance among its frontline workers due to organizational culture and power imbalances, inability to determine program cohesiveness and sustainability, and significant reliance on discretion and coping to accomplish goals. Bonner and colleagues (Bonner et al., 2004), inform us that each organization has a formal structure and function and that these different forms of organizations provide constraints and opportunities. Thus, it is imperative that those engaging in university/public school partnerships know about each other and how their organizational behavior, then use this knowledge to achieve goals and manage an effective partnership (Brazer et al., 2014).

A university/public school partnership such as the Heinz Fellows Program holds in tension, establishing activities to guide the partnership and ability to traverse the inherent ambiguity of a context-based engagement for street level bureaucrats. While university/public school partnerships are built upon overlapping interests, setting clear and explicit targets are necessary for cohesiveness (Baum, 2000). There is also something to be learned from negotiating the conflict that is inherent to cross-organizational interaction, such as a university/public school partnership. Dealing with misaligned or competing goals, which are sometimes derived from different constituencies beyond the control of the university or public school leads to conflict to be sure. In cases where Heinz Fellows were able to access classrooms and students' other challenges (e.g., security, power, survival, autonomy, rewards) derived from organizational realities known and

unknown to Heinz Fellows (Bonner et al., 2004), again limiting their ability to navigate and necessitating the use of discretion and coping.

To produce authentic culture change, power relations need to shift, yet this shift cannot occur until trusting relationships are built among all stakeholders (Bishop & Noguera, 2019). Therefore, strengthening partnerships across unequal contexts requires building a new language of collective empowerment based on asymmetrical reciprocity rather than on assumptions of equivalence (Larson & Nelms, 2021). As partners focus on building trust, they embrace that difference is an asset not a deficit. Also, only after trust begins to take hold will people be willing to take risks to change their beliefs and practices, to make mistakes, and to share those mistakes in ways that promote goal accomplishment.

4.4 Recommendations

The characteristics and outcomes of partnerships depend on several factors including prior relationships and motivations, the leadership abilities of partners, competing institutional demands, and trust and the balance of power. As community engagement remains a priority for the universities at large and the University of Pittsburgh in particular, clarifying human, financial, and material resource availability to commit to collaboration from the beginning is warranted and strengthens collective accountability. Clarification and acknowledgement of the characteristics also serves to improve the attention of partners of the extent to which they are relating to each other in the desired ways and achieving the expected results (McNall et al. 2009). Indeed, the Heinz Fellows Program endeavored to complement, enrich, and support urban public-school operations through an innovative model that demonstrated the mission of the Center for Urban

Education. Although this critical examination has focused on experiences of Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats and their development and use of discretion and coping as they navigated the university and public schools, it is my contention that it is the role of the organization to set the conditions for individual actualization of its frontline workers. The university/public school partnership is a collaboration between bureaucracies, discerned and implemented by individuals, that should attend to organizational culture prior to engagement, such that streel level bureaucrats are able to focus on program activities and implementation versus needing developing discretion and coping strategies. Acknowledging, exposing, and discussing what is normally hidden or unspoken in the daily workings of organizations can be the difference between success, effectiveness, and/or sustainability of partnership. Thus, the university as part of its development of employees should help them locate and name the interpersonal dynamics at work expressed in organizational behavior. Though universities and public schools are both bureaucratic organizations, they are unique cultural entities with differing structures, politics, and styles of self-maintenance. This is important for frontline workers to understand at the onset, through an intentional focus on the dynamics that both reflect and shape the experiences of those at work within them, as well as on them. As offered by Brazer et al., (2014) understanding schools as organizations and applying an organizational perspective to the development of a partnership by anticipating, embracing, and moving through change, uncertainty, ambiguity, and changing needs best serves those on the frontline. In this way, critical organizational theory can be used as a roadmap by Heinz Fellows or any other category of street level bureaucrats to improve perceptions of individual effectiveness, to better analyze situations, and make equity-centered decisions relative to discretion and coping. To summarize, it is necessary that the recommendations occur at the organizational level because the organization remains, even as the individuals arrive and

depart. The university as an organization possesses unique identities that make them recognizable, legitimate their existence, and distinguish them from similar others. As identity claims become expressed as institutionalized mission statements, policies, and routines, they operate as the organization's social context, providing its members with a common set of points of reference that guide actions and activities (King, et al., 2010). The following recommendations for university/public-school partnership endeavors are derived from the themes of this critical examination.

4.4.1 Recommendation One: Assessment of External Organization

The primary recommendation this critical examination makes is for the university to perform an assessment of the external organizations prior to partnership. An assessment prior to the commencement of a partnership enables both the university and its public-school partners to determine where challenges, barriers, and gaps in service are so that tailored decisions about activities and implementation are made. An assessment that occurs prior to commencement of a university/public-school partnership can also buffer against time limitations, changes in personnel on either side of the partnership, and unforeseen circumstances. Features of an external organizational assessment should include indicators of the resources, time, and climate/culture. Assessment of resources reveals availability of human and capital capacity within the public school to support, implement, and sustain the programming introduced by the university. In this way, determining and assigning roles as well as activities of street level bureaucrats within the partnership is clearer. Also under the category of resources is examination of the policies, politics, and power dynamics of the external organization. Policies include rules that advance or constrain activities and agreements within the partnership (Brooks et al., 2007), politics includes the

worldview of broad stakeholders (Slater, 1996), and an assessment of power includes who wields formal and informal modes, influence, and the encouragement or absence of sharing power. Larson, et al. (2021) inform the reader that power relations produce changes in culture that in turn generate further changes in initiatives that can improve outcomes. For effective cross-organizational partnership, participants must be willing to share power, reconsider value positions, and make the commitments of time and talent to the process, including providing people time to let go of old ways of behaving (Slater, 1966). Lastly, consideration of the rethinking, rewriting, and rezoning of time as a recommendation of university/public school partnerships is important for future conceptions of schooling and learning for youth in urban public schools. The Time Zone Protocols suggests traditional understanding and application of time in the United States, particularly perpetuates inequity for Black communities (Time Zone Protocols, n.d.), which consequently impacts Black students in urban districts across the country. As it relates to the Heinz Fellows Program and university/public-school partnerships, the relevant considerations of time concern the length of funding for programs and prioritizing program planning and monitoring. Under the category of climate and culture is the need to establish trust across the organizations, which is crucial for street level bureaucrats as they move across organizations. Trust is a catalyst for working collaboratively across organizations and particularly among those carrying out the work on the ground, or street level bureaucrats (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). The authors further assert that trust includes tolerance of diversity, a process for reconciliation, and balance of tasks and assignments between the organizations. Larson and Nelms (2021) inform the reader that working through the daily machinations of urban schools requires trusting relationships that are achieved through the dialogic engagements; struggles to understand one another despite our many differences across a myriad of identity markers (race, class, education, gender, geography) and

roles (teacher, administrator, student, staff, university faculty, parent/guardian). Relating this recommendation back to cohesiveness and sustainability of university/public school partnerships, trust that leads to transformative change is only cultivated in an environment of psychological safety (Dixon & Palmer, 2020). Thus, when a university and public school decide to partner, transparent analysis of the meaning and interpretation of culture are critical components of the discourse and disclosure is a first step in establishing trust. Conversely, espoused partnership that contradicts behavior and action thwarts trust and impairs authentic collaboration (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Engaging in an external assessment confirms that partners possess the internal dynamics associated with effective university/public school partnerships, such as human, financial, and material resource availability to commit to collaboration. Or at the least, reveals where energy in the partnership should be directed. As noted by McNall and colleagues (McNall et al., 2009), the quality of community–university engagement is only as good as the quality of the individual partnerships through which that engagement is enacted. Only when these characteristics are identified can the university and public-school partners begin to deliberately nurture a collaboration.

4.4.2 Recommendation Two: Articulation Agreement

The next recommendation this critical examination makes is for the university to develop and implement an articulation agreement at the school building level, which guides the partnership contextually. Communicating a clear image of what the future will look like, using multiple leverage points, making organizational arrangements for the transition, and an evaluation component to inform the change process that can be tracked over time are useful components of articulation agreements (Williamson et al., 2016). Buys and Bursnall (2007) state that even when

partnerships move beyond the articulation and agreement stage, issues surrounding the planning, goal setting and nature of the project arise throughout implementation and evaluation indicators in an articulation agreement helps determine if goals are being met. An articulation agreement at the school building level is a vehicle that can address the experiences, perceptions, barriers, and impact of the partnership. Managing the complexity of such an ambitious and multifaceted agenda, while simultaneously addressing the organizational structures, roles, cultures, and practices implicated in the process is best captured through an agreement that regularly engages partners in reflection and action (Del Prete, 2006). An articulation agreement can also increase the cohesiveness and sustainability of a university/public school partnership through accountability and redirection through establishing clear, common goals, opening lines of communication, and developing a shared answerability that can lead to improved trust (Zetlin et al., 1992). An articulation agreement should organize partners around regular meetings, changes to personnel, processes, and/or practices, as well as barriers to program implementation. Finally, an articulation agreement can provide an equitable way to address the different perceptions of partnership, role conflicts, organizational cultures, institutional contexts, professional views, and power differentials inherent in university/public school partnerships (Strier, 2010). As stated by McNall et al. (2009), cooperative goal setting in which university scholars and community members come together to address issues of mutual interest is an important characteristic of a university/public school partnership. Bullough and Bough (2007) assert that shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, promotion of group as well as individual learning, mutual trust, and respect and support among staff members are essential components of a university/public school partnership, which can be adequately captured through an articulation agreement.

4.4.3 Recommendation Three: Cross Organizational Training & Development

As revealed in the themes and responses of Heinz Fellows, the training and development component of the Heinz Fellows Program was critical in the development of equity-centered discretion and coping necessary to navigate between and betwixt multiple organizations. To be sure, I can attribute my own increased critical consciousness, justice and equity orientation, and scholarship to training and development through the Center for Urban Education. The highly specialized and rigorous training and development model of the Heinz Fellows Program was designed to raise awareness of unconscious biases, deficit perspectives, and intersectionality of oppressions for marginalized groups. The training and ongoing professional learning also included extensive community and family engagement. Five primary competencies were infused into an intensive eight-week orientation training in rejecting colorblindness, embracing and working through cultural conflict, understanding meritocracy, asset framing, and rejection of context-neutral mindsets and practices (Milner, 2010, 2012). Through this curriculum and ongoing one-to-one and small-group support, the Heinz Fellows learned about equity and how to advance it, that they might become critical change agents in urban educational spaces.

I contend that as valuable as the training and development framework was for Heinz Fellows, so it would have been for the public-school partners. Thus, my recommendation is that future university/public school partnerships require cross-organizational participation in the training and development. Cross-organizational participation in training and development holds the potential for deepening trust across partners, supporting mutual goal setting, and promoting sustainability. These assertions are supported by Volpe, Cannon-Bower, and Salas (1996), who found cross-training is an important determinant of effective team process, communication, and performance because it enhances the knowledge simultaneously. The authors further state that

cross-training improves participants' ability to predict, anticipate, and thus coordinate their activities by increasing the skills, dispositions, and attitudes relative to university/public-school partnership goals (Volpe, et al. 1996). A shared training and development experience across the university/public partnership can also increase agility in the implementation of new pedagogy. By setting the conditions for cross-organizational training and development, the university is facilitating an environment of shared learning and growth, strategic flexibility, and the ability to manage and cope with ongoing change (Muduli, 2017). Lastly, a training and development model for use with frontline workers across both organizations must include exposure to critical organizational theory. While challenges are a realistic feature of partnership, problems also provide opportunities in which to use theory to understand and solve problems. And while no theory can prescribe a set of actions that will produce an intended result, critical organizational theory provides a bridge over the chasm between what is espoused and what is (Brazer et al., 2014). Application of critical organizational theory also improve practices by generating the skills and dispositions to engage in continuous improvement, strategies for weaving together theory, data, and experience inform direction setting for action with the recognition of the presence and role of power. Heinz Fellows as street level bureaucrats are actors that can exert influence on individuals, shape communities, and transform their environments (King, et al. 2010) and critical organizational theory is the tool to do so. Connecting this recommendation to how the university can begin to acknowledge its own participation in the reproduction of inequity, Ahmed's (2012) analysis of the university as an institution is helpful. She notes, an institution, such as the university develops an image that is produced in part for external others and that true equity involves "repicturing" itself (Ahmed, 2012). This necessarily requires internal self-reflection and self-

correction of policies and practices the university inhabits that perpetuate the economic and academic separation spoken about by respondents.

A university/public school partnership must embrace the environmental conditions, including previous collaboration efforts and organizational readiness to implement and sustain programs and activities that result from the collaboration (McNall et al., 2008). Effective, cohesive, and sustainable university/public school partnerships are guided an assessment of the activities that will provide opportunities to establish and deepen trust across the organizations, adequate communication channels and action agenda (Williamson et al. 2016), and resources aligned to purposes (Baum, 2000). Trust in a university/public school partnership is reflected in taking adequate time with all relevant stakeholders and sharing positive attitude about the collaboration and is found to increase program sustainability (Williamson et al., 2016). Additionally, Baum (2000) states that for multiple organizations to work together, time is required to develop sufficient understanding of and trust in one another, as well as confidence in shared knowledge to act. Adequate communication such as that found in articulation agreements is important to introduce all parties and openly communicate the needs and expectations of each and is explicit, frequent, and is bi-directional (Williamson et al., 2016). If the collective purpose is clear, specific, and committed to in a formal agreement, when partnership activity requires flexibility goals are less likely to shift or elude (Baum, 2000). Maximization, use, and exchange of resources to fulfill the purpose of a university/public school partnership allow for more accurate analysis of the social reality and increased likelihood of sustainability (Suarez-Balcazaar et al., 2004) such as is accomplished through cross-organizational training and development.

5.0 Section Five: Reflection

The journey to fulfill the requirements of the education doctorate program have continuously met at the intersection of "Have I done enough?" and "This is but a snapshot." In some ways I feel like some of what I learned could have been acquired through a study group for a fraction of the cost of tuition. Then on the other hand, I feel like I needed far more time and opportunities to practice what I was learning. What I have learned, that is a most invaluable lesson in life and this program, is to "trust the process." Yet, I would add to that phrase to trust the process, "even when it doesn't seem like it's processing." I would be remiss if I did not state the importance of the Center for Urban Education in deepening my critical consciousness as a Black, woman, urban educator. Since I connected with the Center for Urban Education through the Heinz Fellows Program, I have been able to attend and participate in the Center for Urban Education Summer Educators Forum (CUESEF), lectures, and critical book studies that have introduced me to historical and contemporary education liberation movements. Equally important however, my connection to CUE has enabled me to be mentored by and learn alongside some of the most dynamic scholars both in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh and far beyond. My ability to articulate scholarship, theory, and frameworks about education, oppression, liberation, and freedom are absolutely owed to the Center for Urban Education. Also, of consequence to my journey in the EdD program at the University of Pittsburgh and my dissertation in practice product was an Organizations, Networks, and Policy course that I took in the spring semester of year two. Not only did this course provide the framework of critical organizational theory, but it was also in this course that I discovered the phenomenon of streel level bureaucracy and its congruence to the very work I was engaged in. In the end, a course that I selected, which

was not included in my program, became a keystone in my development as an organizational leader and continues to influence my practice.

From this program, I have learned foundational principles of becoming an "improver." The Improvement Science pedagogy of this program taught me how to reframe all outcomes as data with a story to tell, the value of small tests of change and improvement over time. Back when I started my second career as an urban, public K-12 educator, I was introduced to the concept of FADAF (Efficacy Institute, 2016). FADAF is an acronym that means Failure And Data Are Feedback, and it was used to help students rethink their decisions and behaviors. Though Improvement Science is explicit in naming all failure and data as feedback that can be used to modify future decisions, or in the world of Improvement Science small tests of change. In Improvement Science I also learned the benefit of small tests and changes. However, I believe my most fundamental lesson in Improvement Science has been the iterative nature of identifying and refining a problem of practice.

Mintrop (2016) states that a problem of practice should be urgent, actionable, strategic, narrow, and forward-looking to have an impact on the organization. Mintrop goes on to assert that a problem of practice should fit within the larger goals of the organization, be specific to the organizational context, and have support in the literature. In the first two years of the program, I continually struggled with isolating to a single problem within my organization that fit the criteria listed above. One reason the problem of practice eluded me in the beginning of the program is that what I selected to study was a phenomenon outside of my organization. By the second year of the program, I selected a problem within my organization, though the fit for the overall organization was still not well defined. The Carnegie Program for the Education Doctorate defines a problem of practice as persistent, contextualized, and specifically embedded in the work of a professional

practitioner, the addressing of which has the potential to result in improved understanding, experience, and outcomes (CPED, n.d.). To be sure, distilling one problem within the Heinz Fellows Program to this definition was no small task. Not because the Heinz Fellows Program was problematic or that I could not readily name a problem. The tension for me was naming a problem that could potentially improve understanding, experience, and outcomes of those associated with the organization. I do not remember the day of my revelation; however, I do know that with guidance from my advisor and committee, listening to Heinz Fellows and reading literature, and stepping back I began to intimately understand the impact that my dissertation in practice could have for the Center for Urban Education and for the field of university/public school partnerships writ large. I was trusting the process without realizing it, and indeed the process was processing! In addition to how Improvement Science pedagogy helped me distill and sharpen the problem of practice studied in this critical examination, I use the tools throughout my professional practice. Though the university/public school partnership known as the Heinz Fellows Program ended, and I am no longer employed in the Center for Urban Education, my current role still sits firmly between and betwixt the university and community partnerships. Thus, the ability to accurately name and frame problems that are forward-looking, specific, and improve organization functioning is an invaluable skill, as is the courage to opening accept failed intervention strategies as part of learning and getting better.

The lessons I have learned as a leader can be summed up in the phrase "adaptive leadership." I have said and will proclaim for the rest of my life that the Adaptive Leadership course was worth the tuition of the program for me. Adaptive Leadership was a foundations course taught in the first year of the EdD program. It was also fortuitous that I took the course on the heels of a contentious informal leadership role with an organization and on the precipice of a formal

leadership role within the Center for Urban Education. When I completed my master's degree in 2013, I completed a leadership portrait, which I stumbled upon while cleaning files online. The following is pulled directly from the assignment:

> Upon completing the Personal Leadership Assessment in this course, I learned that my leadership orientation is Servant, which accurately reflect my behaviors and traits. Servant Leadership is distinguished by empowering followers to achieve their goals and share authority, with a tendency toward nurturing, listening, and empathy. Harold Waterman (2011) suggests that leaders at the forefront of care delivery are exposed to the needs of clients and the limitations of the structures in which they work, and servant leaders are in a key position to respond to the emotional needs of followers and the needs of the larger organization which they are a part of (Principles of Servant Leadership, 2011). Jenkins and Stewart (2010), further state that the servant leader is able to manage the emotional labor of a position within an organization by providing the emotional reaction and understanding necessary to followers.

Upon entering this program, I was older and wiser, yet still had much to learn about leadership. Through adaptive leadership, I learned about how informal and formal leadership exist within organizations, which is best traversed with theoretical paradigms. The following excerpt is taken from a 2019 leadership case study:

> Of course, I now have the hindsight of understanding several critical factors relative to that leadership role. The first is that the system operated as intended. While there, I often wondered and asked "why doesn't anybody say something" or "I cannot be the only person who is alarmed by what is happening" and of course I was not. Organizations select, reward, and absorb into itself those who perpetuate the existing system (Heifetz et al.,

2009). Those of us who do not go along to get along, ask questions and demand accountability quickly become odd women and men out. A second critical insight I gained regarding this leadership journey is power and necessity of self-reflection and willingness to change my own course of action. Through Adaptive Leadership I have learned that leadership is a practice that requires inquiry into my thoughts, beliefs and actions regarding challenges and barriers. Also, that careful analysis or diagnosis into the 5 W's: who, what, when, where, and why are equally important in arriving at solutions that will solve organizational impasse's (Heifetz et al., 2009). The last and certainly most poignant revelation I have had about my past leadership journey is that no matter how much reflection, willingness to change and careful diagnosing of the system I conduct, I am still beholden to the system authorizers to institute change.

By the end of the semester, I was able to look back with 20/20 vision on not just on my leadership style and journey, but I was able to give grace to others who were in leadership positions without the theoretical underpinning. I continue to apply the tools and knowledge of adaptive leadership in my practice in each of my spheres of influence and have started helping those I interact with recognize and embrace adaptive leadership capacity. The following quote from the end of semester reflection accurately sums up my growth as a leader:

> As I continue to emerge as the best version of an adaptive leader, I must strategically make sense of the system and myself within the system (Heifetz, p 57 and 172) to continually observe, interpret and intervene. Thus, the most remarkable reflection I am taking away about my leadership is to understand how I interact with people to solve adaptive challenges. I am now aware of the responsibility I have to commit to the discovery work

of my own “personal case” and the ways in which my case can reduce my effectiveness, limit my perspectives and isolate members of the group (Dean, 2005).

Truly, completing this program and preparing this critical examination dissertation in practice has been a labor of love and an incredible journey. Over the course of three years, I have experienced and fought against anxiety, imposter syndrome, and frustration. On the other hand, I have also had the blessing of making new friends, learning about myself and the world I am connected to, as well as the satisfaction of finishing the program. I know it is not coincidence that I have spent the last three years deeply immersed in, studying, and adding to research about the Heinz Fellows Program. It is the program that propelled me into this wonderful journey to equitable, urban education. Thus, it was important to me to represent the program and the Fellows well and to share their story with the trust that they placed in me as a colleague, leader, and scholar-practitioner. As I close this reflection, I am reminded of Nygreen (2006) who asserts that an orientation toward equity and justice to bring about change and access is at the heart of urban education research. Furthermore, she states that researchers in urban education should aim to change educational structures and institutions and the conditions that shape them. As a scholar practitioner, who is actively engaged in the lives of PreK-12 students in urban schools, I am deeply committed to the work of shifting organizations and conditions toward just, equitable outcomes. The Heinz Fellows Program and other university/public school partnerships have much potential to intervene on patterns of inequity. However, that will only happen when the organizations involved make and keep commitments to the effectiveness and sustainability of the partnership intervention. It is my hope that this critical examination provides an understanding of the culture of organizations, how those at the frontline of university/public school partnerships experience organizations, and what can be done in the future to improve the experience and outcomes.

Lastly, Dr. Olga Welch affirm that credentials are no guarantee of effectiveness or success, but that it is the preparation of the person assuming the role that makes all the difference (Hodges & Welch, 2018). Additionally, they state “Serve Without Fear, Leave Without Regret” as the strategy best used to tell their “Truth Without Tears.” This sentiment resonates with me quite deeply, due to my disposition of openly crying and also because I recognize that every role I leave will be without regret because of my commitment to serve. Rather I am leading informally or formally. It was my connection to the Center for Urban Education that supported my growth as a leader through conferences, conversations, connections, and the community. For that, I am ever grateful.

Appendix A Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Preamble-
Thank you for participating in this interview regarding the Heinz Fellows Program (HFP, Program). The Program is sunsetting in its current design following a multi-year grant cycle. As the Project Director for the Heinz Fellows Program and doctoral student, I am studying the potential impact on redesign, scope, and implementation of similar projects. The aim of this interview is to gather insights from current and former Heinz Fellows on how they experience(d) the Program in preparing them to advance equity in education. Insights gathered through this interview will compliment other data collected on the Program and will be used to develop an Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice (ISDiP). Of approximately 60 Heinz Fellows who have participated in the Program over four years, 10 have been selected for participation in this interview. Your participation is completely voluntarily, non-compensable, and extremely appreciated. All personal and identifiable information from participants will be kept confidential and I will not include your names or any other information that could identify you in any reports I write. Do you have any questions before we begin? I would also like to record our interview to ensure that I accurately capture all the information shared. Do I have permission to record?
Section One: Program Interest-15 minutes
Q1-How did you learn about the Heinz Fellows Program?
Q2-Please explain your motivation for applying for the Heinz Fellows Program?
Q3-What was your previous experience if any in working with students? Working with students in urban schools/settings?
Q4-What is your undergraduate degree in?
Q5-In what ways did the interview process for the Heinz Fellows Program prepare you for the role?
Section Two: Program Experience-35 minutes

Q1-What were the goals of the Heinz Fellows Program as it relates to being embedded in school sites?
Q2-Based on your experience, were the goals of the Heinz Fellows Program shared between the University and the school site you were embedded in?
Q3-Who were the stakeholders that participated in planning your school site placement?
Q4-What was the process for matching you with a school site (i.e.: was your placement based on a particular skill set, request from administration, etc.)?
Q5-In what ways did you see social justice and equity demonstrated in the school site you were embedded in?
Q6-In what ways did the training and ongoing professional learning experiences contribute to your practice of social justice and equity within the school site?
Q7-How would you describe the process of planning what activities and/or roles you would execute once embedded in the school site? What if you wanted to do something different?
Q8-How would you summarize your experience of collaborating with teachers, staff, and school leaders? (difficult v. easy)
Q9-Please describe the conversation and/or process for sustainability and/or continuity of the social justice and equity practices you brought to the urban school you supported?
Q10-Based on your experience being embedded in a school site, what other professional learning experiences would have supported you?
Section Three: Post Program planning-15 minutes
Q1-What post-program career planning activities did you participate in with the HFP?
Q2-What are five skills that are necessary for working in urban contexts?
Q3-How many years did you participate in the Heinz Fellows Program?
Section Four: Wrap-up-5 minutes
Q1-Is there anything else you would like to add?
Questionnaire Protocol:
Informed Consent-
TITLE OF STUDY
University/School social justice and equity program design (Heinz Fellows Program)
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Shallegra D Moye
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PURPOSE OF STUDY You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.
The purpose of this study is to gather insights from the Heinz Fellows on how they experience the Program in preparing them to advance equity in education. Insights gathered through this interview will compliment other data collected on the Program and will be used to develop an Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice (ISDiP).
STUDY PROCEDURES Surveys
The amount of time estimated per survey is no longer than fifteen minutes (15 mins).
RISKS There is limited risk of a data with electronic collection platforms. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.
BENEFITS
Participation includes contributing to the redesign, implementation, and experience of multiple stakeholders in future iterations of similar projects. Participant insight will also expand and deepen the literature about the implications and continuity of social justice and equity programming within university/school partnerships.
CONFIDENTIALITY

For the purposes of this research study, your comments will not be anonymous. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Investigator, please contact the Institutional Review Board at (865) 354-3000, ext. 4822.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

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