

VOICES FROM THE FIELD: STORIES OF
SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of PHILOSOPHY

by

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San Marcos, Texas
May 2013

VOICES FROM THE FIELD: STORIES OF
SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS

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DEDICATION

To my son Carson Travis Weems who was just a baby when I began this journey. You mean the world to me, and I will always love and admire you. You are the light that I look to when things are dark

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of my committee for helping me make my way through this process. Dr. Jovita Ross-Gordon provided support and encouragement many times over the course of my time in the doctoral program. I have always admired her approachable manner and cheerful demeanor. She is a great asset to Texas State University, and to the doctoral program in Education. Her detailed edits helped me a great deal as I worked to produce the final version of this study. Dr. Jennifer Jacobs was always willing to take time out of her schedule to meet with me, even though she didn't know me very well. Her assistance was crucial in the early stages of this dissertation, as she helped me develop the phenomenological approach I utilized. Dr. Michael O'Malley helped me a great deal by questioning some of the things I took for granted, and by serving as a critical eye. I believe this dissertation is much better due to his efforts. Finally I would like to thank and acknowledge Dr. Sarah Nelson. I have known Sarah for nearly a decade. She has been a great source of inspiration. Her scholarly work on Social Justice Leadership led me to take up this line of inquiry. She believed in me when I doubted myself. She encouraged me when I was tired and depressed, and felt like giving up. She is a leader and a friend, and I will always remember the many kindnesses she has shown me over the years.

In addition to the members of my dissertation committee, there are others at Texas State University who helped me. Dr. Pat Guerra helped me identify the participants in this study. I will always be grateful to her for encouraging me to travel north to meet these two inspiring leaders. Ellen Ermis helped me to navigate my way through the doctoral program. It was always comforting to hear her cheerful voice when I called the department for help with whatever crisis I was dealing with at the moment. David Stafford, technologist extraordinaire, was always a source of encouragement and support. He is a good friend with a great sense of humor. Many excellent professors such as Dr. Ann Brooks and Dr. Charles Slater helped me to develop as a scholar and a person over the course of my time in the doctoral program.

I would also like to thank my family and friends who supported me, and helped me complete this journey. My mother and father taught me the importance of education and hard work. They have always loved and supported me, through good times and bad. Diana Weems kept the home fires burning during my many absences, and served as a source of inspiration to me. My daughter Serena Afton Poore also inspired me with her easy going manner and her kind heart. My son Carson has been my greatest source of inspiration. I look forward to being there to watch him as he makes his own educational journey.

Finally, I would like to thank the two participants in this study. They gave up their time, and were willing to help me during one of the most difficult times of my life. They are both a great source of inspiration, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share their stories.

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ABSTRACT

VOICES FROM THE FIELD: STORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS

by

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May 2013

SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: SARAH NELSON

This study examines the experiences of two social justice school superintendents who are known for rejecting deficit views of traditionally marginalized groups, questioning and resisting oppressive and exploitative social relations, and critically articulating, conceptualizing, and creating more equitable educational arrangements. The study was carried out in the Lakeside School District, a suburban district adjacent to a large mid-western city. This phenomenological study shares the stories of Paula and Marsha, the current and former superintendents of Lakeside School District. Marsha and Paula served as leaders in the district during a period of rapid demographic change. A state level policy known as Schools of Choice was passed in the late 1990s allowed parents to send their children to school districts other than those in which they resided. Over time one result of this was that significant numbers of African American students from the neighboring city began transferring into the district. Marsha and Paula's efforts

to deal proactively with these changes met with a great deal of resistance from both staff and community members. Themes that emerged included Deficit Thinking, Policy Effects, Resistance to Change, Cultural Disconnects, Networks of Support, Working Through Campus Administrators, Identity Conflicts, Evolving Leadership, and Personal Costs. The study also shares three critical incidents that illustrate these themes and offer a glimpse into the life and work of these leaders. In the final chapter of the study Valencia's (1997) Deficit Thinking Model, Bourdieu's (1992) concept of doxa, and Mezirow's (1990, 2000) Transformative Learning Theory are used as lenses for interpreting selected data from the study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 80 years ago George Counts (1932) challenged educators to work to achieve a more socially just society. He described the type of leadership he believed would be required to achieve this lofty goal;

Under certain conditions education may be as beneficent and as powerful as we are wont to think. But if it is to be so, teachers must abandon much of their easy optimism, subject the concept of education to the most rigorous scrutiny, and be prepared to deal much more fundamentally, realistically, and positively with the American social situation than has been their habit in the past. Any individual or group that would aspire to lead society must be ready to pay the costs to leadership: to accept responsibility, to suffer calumny, to surrender security, to risk both reputation and fortune. If this price, or some part of it, is not being paid then the chances are that the claim to leadership is fraudulent. Society is never redeemed without effort, struggle, and sacrifice. Authentic leaders are never found breathing that rarefied atmosphere lying above the dust and smoke of battle.

(Counts, 1932, p. 4)

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of two school superintendents who purportedly fit Counts' description on an authentic leader. In contemporary terms, this means the participants in this study are leaders for social justice.

Conceptualizing Social Justice

What do scholars mean when they use the term social justice? Johnson-Bailey et al. (2010) note the difficulties inherent in attempts to arrive at a consensus:

On the surface, it seems that we all know what we are talking about when we reference social justice by pointing to a host of social injustices such as racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, able-ism, and so on. Yet the depth and contours of the term are not easily untangled. (p. 346)

As the scholarly literature illustrates, scholars have experienced difficulty in defining what social justice leadership entails. Despite this difficulty, scholars have advanced a number of conceptualizations of the term social justice leadership. Young (1990) builds upon Harvey's (1993) work to conceptualize social justice as freedom from oppressive relations. She argues that this conceptualization extends on distributional aspects of social justice to include "all aspects of institutional rules and relations insofar as they are subject to potential collective action" (Young, 1990, p. 16). Harvey (1993) identifies the following five faces of oppression:

Exploitation (the transfer of the fruits of the labor from one group to another, as, for example, in the cases of workers giving up surplus value to capitalists or women in the domestic sphere transferring the fruits of their labor to men), *marginalization* (the expulsion of people from useful participation in social life so that they are 'potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination') *powerlessness* (the lack of that 'authority, status and sense of self' which would permit a person to be listened to with respect), *cultural*

imperialism (stereotyping in behaviors as well as in various forms of cultural expression such that 'the oppressed group's own experience and interpretation of social life finds little expression that touches the dominant culture, while that same culture imposes on the oppressed group its experience and interpretation of social life'): and *violence* (the fear and actuality of random, unprovoked attacks, which have 'no motive except to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person').
(p. 106-7)

Gewirtz (1998b) draws on Young (1990) to argue for an expanded conceptualization of social justice. Gewirtz notes that traditional conceptualizations of social justice have centered on the idea of distributional justice, which "...refers to the principles by which goods are distributed in society" (p. 470). She goes on to argue for the development of a *relational* dimension, which "...refers to the nature of the relationships which structure society" (p. 470-471). She explains that the relational dimension "is about the *nature* and *ordering* of social relations, the formal and informal rules which govern how members of society treat each other both on a macro level and at a micro interpersonal level" (p. 471).

Dantley and Tillman (2006) point out that scholars in the field of educational leadership tend to frame the concept of social justice around issues including race, gender, diversity, age, ability, sexual orientation, and spirituality. They go on to note that scholars working in this genre often examine "... how institutionalized theories, norms, and practices in schools and society lead to social, political, economic, and educational inequities" (p. 17). These inequities are often embodied in the marginalization of certain

groups within educational institutions.

Scholars have also identified a number of factors that serve as barriers to school success for members of marginalized groups. Theoharis (2004, 2007, 2009) identifies poverty, racism, and the differential educational opportunities available to special education students, and English language learners (ELLs) as factors within the larger social and political context that serve as barriers to school success for some students. Other scholars have identified physical disability, sexual orientation, and religion as factors that contribute to the marginalization of some students within the public school system (Marshall & Oliva, 2006). The marginalization of students creates inequitable conditions in schools.

A number of scholars have conducted empirical studies that examine school principals who serve as leaders for social justice. In this section I review the ways some of these scholars conceptualize Social Justice Leadership. The different ways these scholars conceptualize and operationalize the work of social justice principals reflects the contested nature of the concept.

One group of scholars (Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Vibert & Portelli, 2000) tends to coalesce around the idea of leadership for equity and excellence, which is defined to mean high levels of achievement for traditionally marginalized groups of students, as reflected by high scores of standardized tests. Scheurich (1998) provides a prototypical example of this type of conceptualization. He examined Texas school principals who led successful efforts to improve schools that served a high percentage of low SES Mexican American students. The key marker he used to identify

such schools was higher than average scores on state accountability exams.

Other scholars (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2009) have advanced conceptualizations of social justice leadership that center on the idea of inclusion. Sapon-Shevin's (2003) work has been particularly influential on many of these scholars. She argues that inclusion is a matter of social justice, and that “Inclusive classrooms can teach us important lessons that go far beyond individual students and specific settings and help us create the inclusive, democratic society that we envision for our students and society” (p. 26). She urges educators to embrace inclusion as a model of social justice by 1) challenging exclusion, 2) dealing with teasing and bullying, 3) trying other perspectives, 4) and fostering courage and challenging oppression.

Frattura and Capper (2007) note that one of the side effects of the accountability movement is a trend toward segregating traditionally marginalized students and tracking them into various programs that are intended to remediate their perceived academic deficiencies. They argue that despite the good intentions of the educators involved, this type of segregation serves to further marginalize these students from the school community. Brown, Irby and Yang (2008-2009) also link SJL to the concept of inclusive schooling, in this case for English Language Learners (ELLs). They argue that bilingual education can be characterized as a moral endeavor in a diverse democracy such as the United States.

Furman and Gruenewald (2004) criticize scholars who view social justice “as synonymous with school achievement, to the extent that social justice has been

operationalized as achievement test scores in some research studies” (p. 51). They draw on McNeil (2000) to argue for the inadequacy and potential counter productivity of this approach, asserting “educational reforms designed to increase equity in achievement through testing often translate into regimes of remediation and segregation that have a record of putting further behind the very populations they were supposed to serve” (p. 54).

Frattura and Capper (2007) join Furman and Greunewald (2004) in criticizing studies (Scheurich, 1998; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Vibert & Portelli, 2000) that equate leadership for social justice with high student achievement on standardized tests for failing to consider where students in the subject schools are educated. They argue “that a school cannot be considered a social justice school, or a high-achieving school, or a highly successful school, or a school that is led by a social justice leader, unless that school has also eliminated segregated pullout programs” (p. xv). In a similar vein Nelson (2002) takes this line of research to task for failing to consider the unintended consequences of accountability systems.

In view of these criticisms I did not use high scores on standardized tests as a marker of social justice leadership in identifying participants for the proposed study. While most of the existing studies of SJL focus on schools that are considered successful, Touchton and Acker-Hocevar's (2001) research shows that leaders can engage in social justice work in schools that are considered low-performing under various accountability schemes. I would argue that the scholarship on accountability indicates that such schools might be a fertile ground for those seeking to investigate how principals negotiate

barriers to SJL.

I did not consider any single factor as a marker of SJL. I agree with Bogotch (2002) who, as noted above, characterizes social justice as being dependent upon the practical experiences of participants. I share his social reconstructive viewpoint, and believe that the forms social justice leadership take are ever changing, emerge over time, and are dependent on the contexts in which the leaders in question operate. Like MacKinnon (2000) I believe that social justice leadership begins with critiques of the status quo. Leaders for social justice then seek to enact practices that are meant to remedy the inequities these critiques reveal. The forms such critiques take, and the actions that are proposed to remedy the perceived inequities, are dependent on the nature of the situation in question.

Background of the Study

Children often bear a disproportionate share of the burdens associated with poverty. The Children's Defense Fund (2008b) notes that in 2007 the number of children living below the poverty line was 13.3 million (18%). To contextualize these numbers consider that an average of 2,483 children were born into poverty each day in 2008 (Children's Defense Fund, 2008a). The poverty rates for children from ethnic and racial minorities were even more pronounced with 3.9 million (34.5%) African American children, and 4.5 million (28.6%) of Latino children living in poverty in 2007 (Children's Defense Fund, 2008b).

Education is often identified as a means by which individuals living in poverty can improve their employment status, earning potential and general well being.

According to the Children's Defense Fund (2005), U.S. mean family income for those who lacked a high school diploma declined by 14% between 1979 and 1995. It has also been argued that higher levels of educational attainment can equip citizens with the socio-political awareness needed to develop critical views of institutionalized discrimination (Kose, 2005). Lack of educational opportunity is linked to higher rates of crime and delinquency among youth (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Inequities in educational attainment also impose costs on society and government. Citizens who lack a high school diploma are three times more likely to receive welfare benefits than those who completed high school, but never attended college (Children's Defense Fund, 2005).

As Shields (2004) notes, there are a number of factors that negatively impact the educational chances of students from traditionally marginalized groups:

In North America, high failure and dropout rates, over identification of behavior problems, and placement in low-level academic programs are particularly prevalent among minoritized children. In the United States, many indigenous, African American, and Hispanic children find that schools as they are currently made up, present particular challenges and often barriers to their success. (p. 111)

In the following sections I will briefly examine some of these factors.

According to the Children's Defense Fund (2008) an average of 2,467 students dropped out of high school each day in 2008. Another report notes students from low-income families drop out at six times the rate of those from wealthy families (Children's Defense Fund, 2005, p. 91). Poor and minority children comprise a disproportionate number of high school dropouts. According to the U.S. Department of education (2003)

while 6.9% of White students did not complete high school, rates were much higher for their African American (13.1%) and Hispanic (27.8%) peers. Kose (2005) argues racial disparities are probably even greater than reported, noting “the dropout rate does not include persons in prison, in the military, or not living in households” (p. 1), categories that include disproportionate numbers of Black and Hispanic citizens.

According to the Children's Defense Fund (2005) “41 percent of Whites are reading at grade level compared to 15 percent of Hispanic and 13 percent of Black students” (p. 93). While in math “...37 percent of White eighth graders perform at grade level compared to 12 percent of Latinos and 7 percent of Blacks” (p. 93). Furthermore, “Black children are much more likely than White children to be in programs for children with mental retardation or emotional or behavioral disturbances” (p. 93). As I will argue in the following chapter these disparities are related to racism (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994) and deficit views of ethnic minorities (Valencia, 1997). These views often go unquestioned, and are reflected in the norms and routines of many social institutions, including schools (Theoharis, 2004). These profound disparities in wealth and economic opportunity create and reinforce class divisions (Lyman & Villani, 2002). Educational leaders who are committed to social justice are needed to help develop educational arrangements that redress the inequities described above. In the next section I will consider some findings from the scholarly research on Social Justice Leadership in education.

Social justice leadership in schools. Marshall (2004) notes the traditional knowledge base of the field of educational leadership “is being challenged by research

and policy demands for leading and structuring school that create more socially just societal outcomes” (p. 6). A growing number of scholars are challenging the dominant discourses of managerialism and accountability, and developing counter-discourses based on the idea of social justice leadership. This type of leadership is posited as an alternative to traditional forms of leadership that some would argue serves to reproduce the social and educational inequities described above (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Lugg & Shoho, 2006). These efforts to challenge traditional constructions of leadership have resulted in the development of a body of research related to the work of school principals who strive to achieve more socially just educational arrangements and outcomes for their students (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kose, 2007, 2009; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Marshall, 2004, Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Maynes & Sarbitt, 2000; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch & Skrla, 2002; Scheurich, 1998, Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis, 2004, 2007). For the purposes of this study, I refer to these individuals as social justice principals.

Scholars associated with social justice leadership (e.g. Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kose, 2007, 2009; Maynes & Sarbitt, 2000; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch & Skrla, 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Theoharis, 2004, 2007a, 2007b) have delineated some of the practices of school leaders who exercise social justice leadership. These scholars have also provided evidence to suggest school principals who are committed to seeking more socially just forms of education face countervailing pressures (Theoharis, 2007a). Further, there is evidence that in resisting these pressures principals are suffering a number of negative consequences in both their personal and professional

lives (McGhee & Nelson, 2005, Theoharis, 2004, 2007b, 2009). These consequences seem to be particularly pronounced for those who serve traditionally marginalized student populations (McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

Problem Statement

A review of the empirical research on social justice leaders reveals that these leaders face a number of barriers as they work to advance social justice. Themes in this body of research include: persistence of deficit thinking (Kose, 2009; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Theoharis, 2007a, 2007b); local expectations and attempts to preserve the status quo (Garza, 2008; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Perry, 1997; Theoharis, 2007b); negative effects of accountability policies (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marshall, 2004); historical and intellectual foundations of educational administration (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Marshall, 2004); influence of normative standards on scholarship and practice (Achilles & Price, 2001; Anderson, 2001; English, 2000); absence of a social justice focus in many educational leadership preparation programs (Hoff, Yoder & Hoff, 2006; Merchant & Shoho, 2006; Theoharis, 2007b; Young et al., 2006); and personal and professional costs associated with seeking social justice (Garza, 2008; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; Theoharis, 2007b).

These barriers make exercising social justice leadership a difficult task for school leaders. Fortunately, scholars have also cases in which school leaders are able to advance socially just educational arrangements in the face of resistance. A review of the literature

sheds light on the practices these leaders utilize. An analysis of this body of literature indicates social justice principals tend to: develop shared beliefs (Riester et al., 2002; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003); engage in democratic and distributed forms of leadership (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001; Vibert & Portelli, 2000); develop indigenous solutions (Kose, 2007; Scheurich, 1998; Scheurich and Skrla, 2003); promote meaningful professional learning for themselves and their faculties (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Kose, 2007, 2009; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis, 2007a; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001); establish inclusive learning environments (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2009); and serve as community builders (Scheurich, 1998; Theoharis, 2007a; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001).

The Superintendency and Social Justice Leadership

As the Chief Executives of school districts, superintendents are well placed to work toward socially just aims in their school districts. Garza (2008) argues for a strong role for school superintendents in working to ensure socially just schooling for all students.

Superintendents hold the position of greatest administrative authority in a school district. It is a position of power and immense influence. Reciprocal to this power is the responsibility and moral obligation to provide equitable opportunities for all students and their parents. (p. 163)

Garza (2008) relates his experiences as a first year superintendent in a South Texas school district. He discusses the resistance he experienced when his attempts to promote

equity and socially just educational arrangements ran afoul of traditional ways of doing things, and confounded the expectations of local elites. His efforts to challenge the status quo earned him the enmity of school board members and powerful local political leaders. He found that he was unable to continue in his position after his first year. In a similar vein, Perry (1997) relates the experiences of a superintendent who was forced out of her job when she challenged the status quo in her district, and attempted implement a more inclusive model of schooling.

Alsbury and Whitaker (2006) found that the superintendents they studied spoke of social justice in terms of doing what was best for kids, and did not tend to discuss the issues associated with traditionally marginalized groups. They also found these superintendents talked about the difficulties associated balancing community expectations, the demands of accountability policies, the needs of students, and their own moral and ethical beliefs. They argued that “these findings support and possibly extend Furman and Shields’ (2003) suggestion that in practice, social justice must be a combination of moral purpose or democracy, and community” (p. 169).

Rosilez (2011) noted a paucity of studies that focus on the resistance superintendents face as they work to promote equity and student achievement. Similarly, Rorrer (2006) argues “A better understanding of the nature of resistance, how inequitable beliefs and practices endure efforts for change, and how district leaders address this resistance would contribute to our understanding of leadership’s role in emancipatory organizational change” (p. 245). My aim in carrying out this inquiry is to address this gap in the literature on social justice leadership by exploring the experiences of two

superintendents, and the resistance they faced as they worked to advance social justice in their school district.

My Subjectivities and the Research Project

In keeping with the phenomenological research tradition (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), this section clarifies my perspectives and pre-conceptions related to the topic. As a teacher and school librarian who has worked in public schools for sixteen years, I have come to realize that there are many challenges associated with educating an increasingly diverse student population. I have witnessed the inequitable conditions scholars describe and I agree that social justice leaders are needed to serve as a bulwark against the countervailing pressures, and to help faculty and staff members develop the knowledge, skills, and beliefs that will help them to work successfully with students who are members of traditionally marginalized groups. Unfortunately my experience working in a number of different school districts leads me to believe that those who attempt to exercise such leadership are a rare commodity.

My experience also leads me to believe that there are few incentives for leaders to serve as advocates for marginalized students. I also believe that school leaders who challenge traditional attitudes and beliefs often do so at great personal and professional risk. This seems to be particularly true when the attitudes and beliefs in question involve deeply held social and cultural prejudices and stereotypes. As I will explain in subsequent sections, a significant body of research (e.g. Garza, 2008; McGhee & Nelson, 2005, Nelson, 2002; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Theoharis, 2004, 2007a) seems to support this perception.

Fortunately, I have also had the privilege of knowing a few leaders who, despite great resistance, were able to lead in a way that promoted socially just arrangements for all the students in their schools. In doing so they faced many challenges, and often risked careers they had worked hard to build. I am interested in gaining a better understanding of the ways such leaders challenge oppression, the barriers they face as they engage in social justice work, and the ways this type of work plays on their identities.

Larson and Murtadha (2002) identify three strands in recent research on just and equitable education: (1) the deconstruction of existing conceptualizations of leadership; (2) the portrayal of alternative perspectives on leadership; and (3) the construction of theories, systems, and processes for enacting social justice. Theoharis (2008) advances an argument for the production of scholarship that seems to align with Larson and Murtadha's (2002) second strand. He notes that while scholars have made some headway in delineating the practices of school leaders who exercise social justice leadership (SJL), there are few “constructive models or real-life examples of principals doing this type of work” (p. 4).

Theoharis (2008) argues there is a need for studies that address this gap in the scholarly literature on social justice leadership. He joins Marshall and Ward (2004) in advancing an argument for producing scholarship that includes these types of portrayals:

To make equity and justice a meaningful part of current and future administrators' agendas, real-life descriptions and models of socially just leadership are critical. These real-life models help create a sense that social justice in schools is not just educational theory or rhetoric but actually practiced by leaders and indeed

possible. To begin to understand the principals committed to social justice, it is necessary to investigate who social justice leaders are and why they do this work. (Theoharis, 2008, p. 4)

Purpose of the Study

My purpose was to carry out study that examines the experiences of superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools. More specifically, I identified and portrayed two school superintendents who are known for rejecting deficit views of traditionally marginalized groups, questioning and resisting oppressive and exploitative social relations, and critically articulating, conceptualizing, and creating more equitable educational arrangements. My goal was to gain a better understanding of the resistance these leaders face, and the practices they enact as they work to develop educational arrangements that are socially just. To accomplish this goal I carried out a qualitative inquiry within the phenomenological research tradition. The inquiry is a multi-case study utilizing a life history approach and in-depth interviewing. In carrying out the proposed study I was guided by the following over-arching research question:

What can be learned from the experiences of school principals who are engaged in social justice work in their schools?

In seeking to explore the topic in question, I was guided by the following sub-questions:

- How are the identities of school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools evolving/transforming?
- How do school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their

schools question and resist oppressive and exploitative social relations?

- What countervailing pressures do school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools face?

Significance of the Study

In a discussion of Geoff Whitty's book *Making Sense of Education Policy*, Apple (2003) critiques Manheim's call for an "unattached intelligentsia" who would "clarify what the hidden tendencies of that society actually were" (2003, p. 281). Instead, Apple asserts, "We must attach our criticisms to identifiable social movements that aim expressly to challenge the relations of exploitation and domination on the larger society" (p. 282). Instead of rhetoric alone, critique "must use the best of a wide range of conceptual, historical, political, and empirical tools available and use them in the service of clear and defensible ethical and political commitments" (p. 282). I would argue that loose grouping of scholars and practitioners associated with the concept of leadership for social justice in education represent one such social movement. In carrying out the study my hope was to produce finding that would prove useful to both scholars and practitioners aligned with this movement.

The many barriers, and the personal costs outlined in the literature review above can make exercising social justice leadership seem like an impossible task for many practitioners. My hope is that, by sharing the stories of their colleagues who are engaged in social justice work, the proposed study can serve to inspire those who are, or aspire to be, school leaders. It takes a great deal of courage to confront long-standing, deeply held prejudices. It takes tenacity and persistence to critique and attempt to change the status

quo. The stories the participants in this study told could help those in field realize that, while exercising social justice leadership is a process that is often tentative and imperfect, it is possible for school leaders to have a positive impact on the educational opportunities and life chances of traditionally marginalized students.

In a discussion of teacher education programs, Valenzuela (2002) argues “...every single practitioner needs to possess the intellectual capital that enables him or her to distinguish between teaching that is culturally relevant and politically aware and that which is culturally subtractive and politically unaware” (p. 235). I would argue that educational leadership programs should strive to equip their graduates with similar intellectual capital. Many of the scholars and practitioners tasked with educating aspiring school administrators seem to agree. Young et al. (2006) predict an increase in the number of educational leadership programs that focus issues related to social justice. Unfortunately, those tasked with creating such programs face a daunting task.

One of my aims in carrying out this study was to inform educators who aim to design and develop educational programs that will produce graduates who serve as leaders for social justice. An important step in designing such programs is to develop a better understanding of the experiences of school leaders who are already doing social justice work. To be successful, these programs must help students develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will lead them to focus on issues related to social justice. Understanding the role of experience in this process could help educators design programs that have a better chance of leading to perspective transformation. If students do not value social justice it is doubtful that they will be willing to face the pressures and

make the sacrifices that are necessary to serve as leaders for social justice in difficult political environments. Without the requisite knowledge and skills it is even less likely that they will be able to successfully enact this type of leadership in the face of numerous countervailing pressures. In the next chapter I will present the themes that emerged from a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on social justice leadership in education.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews selected studies that examine social justice leaders in education and identifies themes that appear in this body of scholarship. The majority of literature on social justice leadership focuses on the principal as social justice leader. Far fewer studies consider the experiences of school superintendents who serve as social justice leaders. This being the case, the majority of the literature reviewed in this chapter focus on the social justice work of school principals. In the first section I describe the ways social justice leadership (S JL) has been defined by a number of different scholars, and how this scholarship influenced the development of the definition I used in the proposed study. In the second section I review themes that emerged from a review of the scholarship on barriers to enacting social justice leadership. In the final section I review themes that emerged from an examination of the ways scholars have delineated the characteristics of social justice leaders, and the practices they tend to employ in their schools.

Social Justice Leadership as a Contested Concept

Scholars in the field of educational leadership sometimes utilize the concept of social justice to consider the work of school leaders, using terms such as S JL and social justice principals. Bogotch (2002) characterizes social justice as a concept whose meaning is contested and dynamic, and dependent upon the practical experiences of

participants. He argues “there can be no fixed or predictable meanings of social justice prior to actually engaging in educational leadership practices” (p. 153). He draws upon a social reconstructive view of knowledge to offer the following explanation of how conceptualizations of social justice emerge from the interaction of theory and practice:

The educational leader of a school needs to create an environment that permits a variety of programs based on the diverse needs and beliefs of others. However, as soon as the conditions are right for this confluence (in terms of both community and social justice), different conditions emerge (demographically, contextually, etc.) necessitating actions that attempt to hold the center (i.e., the common core leadership values; see Maxcy (1995)) together and adjust the practices to the changing conditions. Thus the meanings of social justice emerge without prediction, control, or permanence. (p. 142)

Like Bogotch (2002), MacKinnon (2000) notes the fluidity of meanings attached to the concept of social justice. He argues that social justice is not a one-time objective to be accomplished, “but rather that it is as life-long as learning, an ideal never lost, a way of schooling rather than a school project” (p. 7). He defines leadership for social justice in schools as leadership that “. . . concerns itself ultimately with the quality of relationships among all those who constitute 'the school,' and the nature of the school circumstances in which children learn.” He argues this type of leadership “can only arise through a critique of the status quo founded on a belief that schooling must be democratic, and an understanding that schooling is not democratic 'unless its practices are excellent and equitable' (Skrtic, 1991, p. 199)” (p. 7).

Shared Understandings of Social Justice Leadership

While the conceptualizations reviewed above reflect the contested nature of the idea of SJL, some commonalities have been identified. Johnson-Bailey et al. (2010) note two perspectives that run across all of the social justice literature. “One prominent social justice perspective declares that there is a right and moral position that should direct our society. The second category adds an activist component” (p. 340). Dantley and Tillman (2006) review a number of studies that conceptualize social justice leadership and find they share themes including justice, care, equity, moral values, and an emphasis on investigating how membership in marginalized groups impacts the educational outcomes of students. McKenzie et al. (2008) review a similar sample of conceptualizations and definitions of social justice as applied to educational leadership and find that they share a twin focus on activism and equity. Kose (2009) notes that while scholars argue against a unified conception of leadership for social justice “many implicitly argue that leading for social justice means re-cultivating individual and institutionalized practices rooted in low expectations, deficit thinking, marginalization, and cultural imperialism of diverse students” (p. 630).

Furman and Greunewald (2004) draw on Bogotch (2002) to argue that while there is no single widely accepted definition of social justice, the concept has generated some “shared, although imprecise, meaning during certain periods of time” (p. 50). They link one such set of shared meaning to a “critical-humanist perspective” that critiques the inequalities inherent in prevailing social structures as value-laden human creations that result from unequal power relations. They go on to note that scholars who follow this line

of discourse often propose initiating “(often radical) social change” to overcome such inequalities.

Furman and Greunewald (2004) go on to identify a second set of shared meanings that are centered on the “desired outcomes of these social justice/critical-humanist interventions in schools” (p. 51). They note some scholars who share this perspective “focus on school under-achievement as an indicator of social injustice” (p. 51). They criticize this line of research for failing to consider ways this approach can reinforce some of the injustices they seek to remedy by promoting regimes based upon remediation and segregation. In reviewing the literature associated with SJL I will examine the ways other scholars (e.g. Frattura & Capper, 2007) have extended this critique of scholarship that associates SJL with more equitable student outcomes on high-stakes standardized tests.

Furman and Greunewald (2004) note a number of pitfalls associated with attempts to exercise SJL and propose the adoption of a “moral, transformative, and communal perspective on leadership in schools” (p. 65). They discuss recommendations for enacting this type of leadership that are organized into five main areas:

- (a) shaping the cultural politics of the school, (b) negotiating the practical issues as well as the ideological dissonance between a critical pedagogy of place and externally mandated reform initiatives, (c) working with the community to support community-based learning aimed at reinhabitation, (d) securing resources to support the school-wide learning methodologies of a critical pedagogy of place, and (e) attending to professional development for educational and

community members (p. 67).

In reviewing selected scholarship that considers the role of social justice principals I was able to discern a number of themes. These themes refer to the ways these leaders reject deficit views of traditionally marginalized groups (Riester et al., 2002; Theoharis, 2004; Valencia, 1997), question and resist oppressive and exploitative social relations (Dantly & Tillman, 2006; Rapp, 2002), and critically articulate, conceptualize, and create more equitable educational arrangements (Blackmore, 2002; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). In the following sections I will examine each of these themes. These themes influenced the development of the definition of SJL I utilized for this study.

Rejecting deficit views of traditionally marginalized groups. Valencia (1997) has contributed significantly to our understanding of what he refers to as the deficit thinking model. He defines deficit thinking as “. . . the idea that students, particularly of low-SES background and of color, fail in school because they and their families have internal defects, or deficits, that thwart the learning process” (Valencia, 1997, p. 83). Valencia's ideas relating to deficit thinking have exerted a strong influence on scholarship relating to social justice principals.

Drawing upon Valencia (1997), Riester et al. (2002) argue that principals who wish to serve as leaders for social justice must possess an “anti-deficit leadership mindset” (p. 283). They go on to argue that such leaders should strive to “create school cultures that serve to empower teachers to enact specific practices that lead to learning for all” (p. 283). Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, and Murphy (1996) advance the idea of four-part “sensitivity towards social justice,” which 1) foregrounds ethical concerns; 2) commits to

structural analyses of ethical problems; 3) adopts an activist orientation; and 4) seeks identification with others.

Like Reister et al. (2002), Theoharis (2004) utilizes the concept of deficit thinking in conceptualizing the work of social justice principals. He defines social justice “. . . to mean that these principals advocate, lead and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalizing factors in the United States” (p. 8). He goes on to explain:

...the principals in this study sought equal rights for all, treated all people as individuals, provided equal opportunities, and given the inequities that already exist they kept a focus on and favored students and families influenced by marginalizing factors. In enacting social justice, they build inclusive communities that actively rejected the deficit-thinking model. (p. 8)

Questioning and resisting oppressive and exploitative social relations. Dantly and Tillman (2006) set out to define social justice leadership, and establish a link with the concept of moral transformative leadership. They advance three components of social justice: leadership for social justice, moral transformative leadership, and the praxis of social justice. They review the work of several scholars who have offered frameworks and conceptualizations that apply the concept of social justice to the field of educational leadership. They note that these perspectives tend to emphasize “moral values, justice, equity, care, and respect and the imperative for investigating the impact of race, ethnicity, class, gender sexual orientation, and disability on the educational outcomes of students” (p. 19). They define leadership for social justice as a leadership that “... interrogates the

policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other markers of otherness” (p. 19).

Like Dantly and Tillman (2006), Rapp (2002) highlights the idea of questioning and resisting oppressive relationships in educational institutions. He argues that there is no relationship between educational administration and social justice at the present time. He goes on to assert that few educational administrators are authentic leaders for social justice, which he defines as those who “resist, dissent, rebel, subvert, possess oppositional imaginations, and are committed to transforming oppressive and exploitative social relations in and out of schools” (p. 226). Instead, he argues, “educational administrators are trained, hired technicians of the status quo who generally believe in, benefit from and often coerce teachers and students into supporting unjust state and corporate agendas” (p. 226).

Equitable educational arrangements. Operating from a critical perspective that views leadership and organizations as disciplinary practices, Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) define social justice as the exercise of altering power arrangements “. . . by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining, and advancing inherent human rights of equity, equality, and fairness in social, economic, educational, and personal dimensions, among other forms of relationships” (p. 162). They define leadership for social justice as “the propensity to critically articulate, conceptualize, create, and promote spaces for change coherently with these values” (p. 161-162).

Blackmore (2002) asserts “A socially just education requires educational leaders

to practice moral outrage at the persistence, if not worsening, of homelessness, hunger, and poverty” (p. 218). She calls for “a strong, moral, and passionate leadership that will educate the public about human rights and obligations toward fellow human beings and not leadership that gives over responsibility to the market” (p. 212). She goes on to argue this type of leadership:

. . . will be about principals being able to undertake short-term strategic and practical advances that deal with circumstances now, while keeping the more altruistic long-term view of social justice in mind by asking questions of policy and its implications not just for their students but for all students. (p. 213)

For the purposes of the proposed study I would like to advance a definition of SJL that is firmly aligned with the critical perspectives reviewed above. I define social justice leaders as those who reject deficit views of traditionally marginalized groups (Riester et al., 2002; Theoharis, 2004; Valencia, 1997), question and resist oppressive and exploitative social relations (Dantly & Tillman, 2006; Rapp, 2002), and critically articulate, conceptualize, and create more equitable educational arrangements (Blackmore, 2002; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). For the purposes of this study I join Dantly and Tillman (2006) in defining *marginalized groups* as “those groups that are most often underserved and underrepresented and who face various forms of oppression in schools” (p. 19). In the next section of this chapter I will review the body of research related to barriers social justice principals face.

Barriers to Social Justice Leadership

A substantial body of research examines the historical, political, and educational

forces that hinder those who seek to enact social justice leadership. Themes that emerged from an examination of this scholarship include: the persistence of deficit thinking (Kose, 2009; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Theoharis, 2007a, 2007b); local expectations and attempts to preserve the status quo (Garza, 2008; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Perry, 1997; Theoharis, 2007b); the negative effects of accountability policies (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marshall, 2004); the historical and intellectual foundations of educational administration (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Marshall, 2004); the influence of normative standards on scholarship and practice (Achilles & Price, 2001; Anderson, 2001; English, 2000); the absence of a social justice focus in many educational leadership preparation programs (Hoff, Yoder & Hoff, 2006; Merchant & Shoho, 2006; Theoharis, 2007b; Young et al., 2006); and the personal and professional costs associated with seeking social justice (Garza, 2008; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; Theoharis, 2007b). In the following sections I examine the scholarship related to each of these themes, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the many factors that make exercising this type of leadership a challenging endeavor.

The persistence of deficit thinking. It has been argued (e.g. by Kose, 2009; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Theoharis, 2007a, 2007b; Valencia, 1997) that deficit thinking plays a role in the oppression of traditionally marginalized students. Valencia (1997) has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the concept. He describes the deficit thinking model as an endogenous theory in that it blames victims for their own oppression. For example, explanations based on deficit thinking locate the

causes of low academic achievement in supposed cognitive and motivational deficiencies of students of color and those from low SES backgrounds, while structural and economic forces are held blameless.

Shields (2004) provides a good explanation of how deficit thinking plays out in schools:

Based on socially constructed and stereotypical images, educators may unknowingly, and with the best of intentions, allocate blame for poor school performance to children from minoritized groups based on generalizations, labels, or misguided assumptions. . . . Anticipating or permitting lower performance from any group of children is inequitable. Educational practices that ignore such inequities, either by essentializing difference or attempting to ignore it, are manifestations of firmly rooted and pervasive attitudes that may best be described as pathologizing the lived experience of students. I use the term *pathologizing* to denote a process of treating differences as deficits, a process that locates the responsibility for school success in the lived experiences of children (home life, home culture, SES) rather than situating responsibility in the education system itself. (p. 110-111)

Deeply internalized negative beliefs about the abilities of minority students serve as a barrier to attempts to promote high levels of academic success for all students. They lead educators to question how such efforts could possibly succeed when the causes of low achievement are located outside of their control.

Shields goes on to describe how students and their families often internalize these

pathologized images of themselves:

In large part because educators assign blame for school failure to children and their families, many students come to believe they are incapable of high-level academic performance. Pathologizing may be overt when, for example, policies, statements, or practices use discriminatory language. However, it is equally common for pathologizing to be covert and silent, engendering in students and their families feelings that, somehow, they and their lived experiences are abnormal and unacceptable within the boundaries of the school community and their abilities subnormal within the tightly prescribed bounds of core curriculum or transmissive pedagogy still too common in many schools and classrooms. (p. 111-112)

This description is reminiscent of Paolo Friere's (1970) contention that oppressed populations often internalize the views of their oppressors.

Local expectations and attempts to preserve the status quo. A link has been established (e.g. by Garza, 2008; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Perry, 1997; Theoharis, 2007a) between deficit thinking and attempts to preserve the status quo. Theoharis (2007a) argues that educational leaders often face resistance when their actions confound the expectations of local constituencies, which are founded on deeply held deficit beliefs and a desire to preserve the privileges some groups have traditionally enjoyed. Reflecting on his experiences as a first year superintendent, Garza (2008) links the resistance he faced from school board members and affluent parents to the deficit thinking model noting, “the community was set in the belief that certain children simply

could not learn” (p. 164).

Oakes et al. (2000) found that powerful groups in many of the communities they studied were committed to protecting their traditional privileges. Perry (1997) relates the case of a superintendent who was forced out of her job when parents and teachers banded together to resist her efforts to move the district toward a more inclusive model of schooling. Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2001) found teachers' attitudes concerning children of poverty and color and their lack of understanding of the effects of poverty on the teaching and learning process hindered principals' efforts to combat discrimination in the schools they studied. These examples make clear the difficulties that school leaders face when they confound the expectations of local constituencies, and attempt to build a shared belief that all students can learn.

Negative effects of accountability policies. A number of scholars (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marshall, 2004; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; Nelson, 2002; Rodriguez, Murakami-Ramalho & Ruff, 2009; Stevenson, 2007; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001) have examined the relationship between social justice leadership and accountability policies. These scholars tend to argue accountability policies have produced a number of negative consequences. In this section I will review some of these findings.

It has been argued that one result of the educational reform movement is a focus on leadership as the focal point of any attempt to enact reforms intended to increase student learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Leithwood and Day (2005) argue that

educational leadership that attempts to serve any end other than student learning “...is viewed as illegitimate and ineffectual” (p. 14). Unfortunately, the concept of student learning, particularly in schools that serve large number of students from traditionally marginalized groups, is often reduced to a narrow focus on student's scores on standardized tests (Marshall, 2004).

It has also been argued (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Nelson, 2002; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001) that the current policy environment is characterized by increased pressure on school administrators to exercise leadership as a way of increasing scores on these tests. These scholars argue this pressure has produced a number of negative consequences. Nelson's (2002) findings indicate one of the negative consequences of accountability is the creation of school cultures where people care more about accountability ratings than about students. McGhee and Nelson (2005) draw on their data to argue that test scores trump all other factors under the current accountability system in Texas.

A robust body of scholarship (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Marshall, 2004; Rapp, 2002) argues the single-minded focus on standardized test scores noted above leads to the marginalization of social justice concerns. Karpinski and Lugg (2006) note the pressures associated with accountability lead administrators to focus on managerial issues, as opposed to issues related to social justice. Rapp (2002) utilizes a similar line of reasoning to argue “The frenetic explosion of systems-oriented accountability, standards, and accreditation agendas is only serving to mask unjust social conditions with amplified languages of

autonomy” (p. 229). In a similar vein, Furman and Gruenewald (2004) argue a narrow focus on increasing test scores “. . . distracts from community well-being as well as other important 'moral purposes' of schooling” (p. 48).

There is a significant amount of evidence (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Dantley, 2002; Nelson, 2002) suggesting that, beyond marginalizing concerns related to social justice, the pedagogic and administrative routines that dominate schooling actually serve to reproduce existing social conditions. Dantley (2002) forcefully expresses this argument:

The culture of positivism is reproduced through the interaction between teachers and students monitored by the educational leaders who have been trained to see to it that the dominant notions . . . including stereotypes regarding representation, are taught and maintained. . . . Through a system of testing, teachers and administrators are being held accountable for the accurate transmission of the systemic cultural thought birthed under the auspices of the positivist agenda. (p. 340)

In a similar vein, Nelson (2002) found accountability policies can serve to perpetuate educational inequities. In the following paragraphs I will examine some of the ways this takes place.

Attempts to achieve higher scores on standardized tests often lead to a narrowing of the curriculum. Larson and Murtadha (2002) assert many educational leaders “. . . are narrowing the curriculum to basic reading and math skills in an effort to improve lagging skills and competencies” (p. 151). These tendencies seem to be particularly pronounced

in schools that serve poor children and children of color. In other words, in an era where schools that serve affluent communities are working to develop learners who possess “21st Century Skills”, students from poor communities are limited to unimaginative basic skills curricula.

The push for higher achievement on standards-based tests can also serve to inhibit attempts to promote inclusion for all students. Rodriguez, Murakami-Ramalho and Ruff (2009) found significant tensions between the requirements of accountability, ethical considerations related to the desire to develop inclusive learning environments for special student populations, and the need to build community through authentic actions. Stevenson (2007) argues that this creates values conflicts for school administrators who are often faced with negotiating between seemingly contradictory objectives. When administrators’ jobs depend on producing high scores on standardized tests, it seems likely that conflicting goals will be abandoned.

Accountability policies can also serve to place limits on who is seen as a legitimate stakeholder in decision making processes. Larson and Murtadha (2002) argue “The adoption of high stakes testing has silenced discussions of curriculum and closed school doors to the insights, concerns, and needs of the children and families served by public schools” (p. 146). In other words efforts to increase student test scores are often characterized by a curtailment of the rights of many parties exercise any power in curricular decision making, as mandates received from external sources determine the nature of many educational efforts.

The scholarship reviewed above indicates that accountability policies have

produced a range of negative consequences for multiple stakeholder groups in educational system. They also suggest the need for leaders who can enact more just educational arrangements. Unfortunately, a body of scholarship exists that suggests the historical and intellectual foundations of the field of educational leadership may hinder scholars and practitioners' efforts to enact social justice leadership.

The historical and intellectual foundations of Educational Administration. It has been argued the field of educational administration's historical links to traditional business models, Social Darwinism, and anti-immigrant tendencies have resulted in a technical-rational orientation, and have left the field ill-equipped to deal with issues related to inequality and social justice (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Marshall, 2004). Scholars who examine these historical trends also tend to argue that this has produced conditions that make it difficult for practitioners to exercise socially just leadership. In this section I will briefly review this body of scholarship.

Scholars aligned with the critical tradition assert the field of educational administration is dominated by normative discourses and practices, and is ill-equipped to deal with issues related to inequality and social justice (Blackmore, 2002; Dantley, 2002; Marshall, 2004). Blackmore (2002) argues that scholars have historically sought to legitimize the field of educational administration by linking it to “high status knowledge fields” such as psychology, management, and economics, while failing to address “the core work of teaching and learning” (p. 202). Dantley (2002) contends this state of affairs has served to silence those whose views do not fit with the dominant paradigm, and has left the field ill-equipped to deal with issues related to social justice.

Larson and Murtadha (2002) note that the dominant technical-rational orientation of the field of educational leadership is rooted in its links to traditional business management models, and leads many scholars to “. . . abdicate responsibility for questioning of redressing the numerous inequities they see in education” (p. 135). Going further, Karpinski and Lugg (2006) argue that in addition to drawing on simplistic business models, the field of educational administration was influenced by the concepts of Social Darwinism, and anti-immigrant tendencies. They go on to note the history of the field “. . . is replete with examples of indifference at best and outright hostility at worst by practitioners and scholars toward issues of social justice” (p. 279).

It is argued that this intellectual lineage has left the field domesticated and subservient to the interests of economic and political elites. Rapp (2002) contends many scholars in the field do not consider issues related to social justice to be “legitimate domains and questions to be pursuing” (p. 231). He questions what scholars associated with the field that do pursue these issues mean when they make enthusiastic appeals for social justice. He notes that while more scholars are appropriating democratic language, few in the field are willing to actively confront injustice.

The idea that the field of educational leadership is in crisis because of a reliance on empiricist, positivist, and structural paradigms, and a tendency to reproduce deficit views of those who are different has also been advanced (Dantley, 2002; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Marshall, 2004). Dantley (2002) elaborates on this contention, writing “In an effort to inculcate a cult of efficiency, rationalism, and a fact-value neutrality, educational leadership has subsumed the verities of cultural

differences in a grander narrative of control, standardization, and empiricism” (p. 334). I am led to wonder whether these tendencies have been exacerbated by the pressures of various accountability systems reviewed above, leading to the preference for technical forms of leadership that some scholars have noted (Marshall, 2004; Theoharis, 2007a). This preference seems to be reflected in the International School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards For School Leaders, which were adopted in 1996. In the next section I will discuss the influence these standards exert on the field of educational administration, and their relationship to socially just leadership.

It is instructive to contrast the historical and intellectual foundations of educational administration with those of adult education. Johnson-Bailey et al. (2010) trace the field’s history from its foundations in the 1920’s, noting “there are deep and rich social justice roots in adult education” (p. 339). They note the field’s links to progressive and radical philosophical and social movements, and a history of programs aimed at improving the life chances of adult learners. They note that despite this historical and intellectual lineage, “the yield harvested from the field’s social justice tree may in fact be heavier with the fruit of critique and theoretical abstraction than with activism” (p. 339), and argue “...the field has fallen short of its stated goals of leveling the playing field for all adults through educational opportunities” (p. 340). If scholars and practitioners in a progressive field such as adult education have found it difficult to achieve success in promoting social justice, it stands to reason that those working in a field with deep conservative roots, such as educational administration would encounter even greater difficulties

The influence of normative standards on scholarship and practice. It has been noted that while the ISLLC standards shed light on the common practices of school administrators, they lack a focus on issues related to social justice (Achilles & Price, 2001; Anderson, 2001; English, 2000; Marshall, 2004). These scholars contend this absence is particularly troubling because the standards exert a strong influence on the field of educational leadership by determining the content of certification examinations and influencing scholarly research and teaching. For example, Marshall (2004) argues the ISLLC standards are used by accrediting agencies such as the National Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (NCATE) to review schools of education. In a similar vein Cambron-McCabe (2006) found that the ISLLC standards strongly influenced the development of standards for school administrators in six of the seven states she examined.

English (2000) critiques the epistemological foundations of the ISLLC standards. He notes the developers of the standards relied on professional consensus, which means “that those who were asked believed something to be true” (p. 160). This being the case it does not seem surprising, given the intellectual lineage of the field of educational leadership, and the lack of diversity among practitioners, that issues related to social justice are marginalized. He argues the standards privilege the expert knowledge of the school administrator at the expense of the communities in which they practice.

There is some empirical research to support the idea that concerns relating to social justice are marginalized in the ISLLC standards. Anderson (2001) examined the *School Leaders Licensure Assessment: 1999-2000 Registration Bulletin* published by the

Educational Testing Service (ETS 2000) and found that “Implicit in the language of the exam is a focus on control, public relations, deficit theories of children and poor communities, avoidance of controversy, glibness and anti-intellectualism” (p. 199). Cambron-McCabe (2006) found that while participants in her study responded affirmatively when asked whether the standards in questions included social justice concerns, most could not identify specific social justice aspects. This ambiguity is troubling given the need for school leaders who can address the injustices described in the introductory sections of this study.

The absence of a social justice focus in many educational leadership preparation programs. Given the intellectual history of the field of educational administration, the powerful influence exerted by normative standards that lack a significant focus on issues related to social justice, and the persistence of beliefs based upon deficit thinking, it is not surprising that a number of scholars have identified difficulties for those who attempt to educate leaders for social justice (Hoff, Yoder & Hoff, 2006; Merchant & Shoho, 2006; Young et al., 2006). Merchant and Shoho (2006) note that many of the school leaders they interviewed mentioned the lack of any focus on social justice in the preparation programs they attended. Hoff et al. (2006) found students in an educational leadership program were limited in their understanding of concepts related to diversity, felt their master’s program only prepared the “somewhat” to deal with issues of diversity in schools, and did not see the promotion of social justice as an important responsibility of school leaders.

Young et al. (2006) examined the perceptions of students in an educational

leadership doctoral program that was re-designed to include a focus on issues of diversity and social justice. They found that “after a year of exposure to readings and written assignments about gender and other diversity issues, few students had undergone significant transformations in their learning regarding gender issues” (p. 275). These findings are troubling as they indicate how difficult it is to educate leaders who can face the barriers to exercising SJL described above.

The personal and professional costs associated with seeking social justice.

Studies have produced findings that shed light on the risks school leaders take when they attempt to change existing educational arrangements, and lead in socially just ways. Garza (2007) narrowly survived persistent efforts by powerful members of the local community to defame him and force him out of his job when he sought to enact socially just educational arrangements in his district. As noted above, Perry (1997) discusses the case of a superintendent who was forced out of her job when parents and teachers banded together to resist her efforts to move the district toward a more inclusive model of schooling. Oakes et al. (2000) relate how groups in the communities she studied organized to resist attempts to enact a social justice agenda, and forced out school leaders who threatened the status quo.

Evidence indicates that the fear of suffering the type of negative consequences described above can stifle efforts to exercise social justice leadership. Hoff et al. (2006) found that the fear of running afoul of local attitudes relating to race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion kept practicing and aspiring administrators they studied from addressing issues related to social justice. Rapp (2002) expresses pessimism when

evaluating the likelihood that many scholars and practitioners associated with the field of educational administration will be able to sustain a true commitment to social justice because “each of us has too much to lose” (p. 230).

McGhee and Nelson (2005) argue principals who serve traditionally marginalized student populations are more likely to experience negative consequences. They reflect on the possible negative impact of this situation.

Given that principals, regardless of where they work, are already overburdened with the many demands of school leadership, it is reasonable to assume that many, if not most, of the best principals will choose to work in White, middle-class schools where they are least vulnerable to the impact of accountability test scores.

This would perpetuate the trend of having the least-qualified educators in the schools that serve students with the greatest educational needs. (p. 371)

This situation seems truly unjust, given the need for highly qualified leaders in communities that serve large numbers of traditionally marginalized groups.

Theoharis (2007b) also found that the principals who participated in his study faced resistance “within the school and immediate community” (p. 238), as well as “in the district and beyond” (p. 239). They felt that facing this resistance took a great personal toll and caused them to feel “a persistent sense of discouragement” (p. 242). Coping strategies the principals used included “prioritizing their life outside of school, utilizing mindful diversions, engaging in regular physical activity, providing for others, and employing potentially self-destructive behaviors” (p. 246). The preceding discussion seems to paint a bleak picture for principals who seek to lead in socially just ways.

However, a body of research exists that suggests that some principals are able to achieve some success in seeking socially just educational arrangements. In the following section I will discuss the findings of selected studies from this body of research.

Characteristics of Social Justice Leaders

A number of studies have produced findings that shed light on the personal and professional characteristics of principals who exercise SJL (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Fraturra & Capper, 2007; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis; 2009; Vibert & Portelli, 2000). A number of common themes can be discerned from a review of these studies. Themes that I discerned in reviewing the scholarship on the personal characteristics of social justice principals included the following: Social justice principals are visible, accessible and responsive leaders; they are tenacious in the face of resistance. Themes that appear most often in the empirical literature deal with the role of ethics, moral purpose, values and beliefs in guiding social justice principals. A final theme relates to the high expectations for student learning and achievement these shared beliefs lead social justice principals to hold. In the following sections I will discuss these themes.

Successful social justice principals tend to maintain a high profile, and actively involve themselves in the day-to-day operations of their schools. Maynes and Sarbit (2000) note the role of the “visible, accessible and responsive” principal in providing necessary resources, coordination, communication and assistance to members of the staff. In a similar vein Vibert and Portelli (2000) describe the principal and vice principal of the school they studied as energetic, passionate, and visionary leaders who were personally

involved in all aspects to teaching and learning at the school. This high level of visibility allows social justice principals to serve as role models in their schools.

School leaders must also be tenacious if they wish to confront the status quo, and achieve socially just outcomes for members of traditionally marginalized groups. The need for this type of tenacity is not surprising given the many barriers to social justice leadership discussed above. Scheurich & Skrla (2003) found that one essential characteristic of the principals who participated in their study was a refusal to quit striving to achieve equity and excellence. Riester et al. (2002) found the principals who participated in their study demonstrated a stubborn persistence in “getting there.”

What motivates leaders to maintain high visibility and involvement in their school, and to refuse to quit striving to achieve socially just outcomes for their students? I would argue that it is the influence of ethics, moral purpose, values, and beliefs. As noted above, these were the themes that appeared most often, and emerged most forcefully from my review of the empirical research of social justice leaders. In the following sections I will examine these themes in greater detail.

Ethics and moral purpose. The role of ethics and moral purpose in guiding social justice principals is a theme that appears repeatedly in the scholarly literature, and has been examined in some detail (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Stevenson, 2007). For example, Stevenson (2007) found that a key feature of leadership in the schools he studied was the possession of values based on a commitment to equity and inclusion. He notes that all of the leaders he studied possessed a strong sense of moral purpose, and an explicit commitment to social justice. He goes on to argue

that the values base shapes the way the principals in question negotiated the ambiguous environment created by often conflicting policy aims.

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) note the importance of moral purpose for leaders for excellence and equity. They argue these leaders share three essential characteristics: 1) a strong ethical and moral core that holds excellence and equity as central elements of schooling in democratic societies, 2) a belief that advancing toward equity and excellence is possible, and 3) a refusal to quit striving to achieve equity and excellence. Brown, Irby and Yang (2008-2009) found that the great majority of teachers they surveyed had positive perceptions of their principals' ethical leadership. They also found teachers believed the principals in question followed ethical codes of conduct, and took firm actions to address unethical issues and practices. These findings show that ethics and a sense of moral purpose are important factors in motivating social justice leaders. In the next section I will discuss the related theme of values and beliefs and their role in the quest for social justice.

Values and beliefs. The importance of values and beliefs in guiding social justice leaders is a theme related to the characteristics of social justice leaders that emerged most forcefully, and appears most often in the body of literature I examined. In this section I will discuss the findings of selected studies that consider the role of values and beliefs at the personal level. In a later section I will discuss the role of shared values and beliefs at the organizational level.

Scheurich (1998) found that the personal beliefs of the principals played an important role in the schools he studied. He found the principals he studied shared five

common core beliefs. Without exception, these principals believed 1) all children can succeed at high academic levels, 2) our school will be child centered, 3) without exception, all children must be treated with love, appreciation, care, and respect, 4) children's racial culture, including their first language, is highly valued, and 5) our school exists for and serves the community, with little separation. Scheurich (1998) goes on to argue that it is the operationalization of these core beliefs that is “chiefly responsible for making these schools superior to academically high-performing Anglo schools” (p. 460).

Riester, Pursch, and Skrla (2002) found that the principals they studied shared the belief that “all students can be academically successful and all students *will be* academically successful in this school building” (p. 301). Maynes and Sarbit (2000) found that the administration, faculty and staff of the schools they studied shared a belief in “the value of language learning and good literacy skills” (p. 51). These findings indicate that, like ethics and moral purpose, values and beliefs play an important role in guiding social justice. In addition, it seems clear that the values and beliefs of other members of the school community are important to efforts to develop socially just educational arrangements.

The empirical research indicates that shared values and beliefs lead social justice leaders to hold high expectations regarding learning and achievement for all students. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) found that successful leaders for excellence and equity set high expectations for student learning. Brown, Irby and Yang (2008-2009) found that the teachers they surveyed believed their principals showed care and concern for all students, and made their learning a priority. Theoharis (2007a) found that one way principals

enacted social justice was by raising achievement for all students.

Practices Associated with SJL in Schools

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) argue that leaders for excellence and equity share similar practices. They argue that these practices help principals to meet the needs of traditionally marginalized students, and link schools to the larger communities they serve. The findings of a number of studies (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Scheurich, 1998; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003) shed light on the nature of these shared practices. Themes that emerged from an analysis of this body of literature indicate social justice principals tend to: develop shared beliefs (Riester et al., 2002; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003); develop healthy organizational cultures (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Scheurich, 1998; Theoharis, 2007a; Vibert & Portelli, 2000); engage in democratic and distributed forms of leadership (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001; Vibert & Portelli, 2000); develop indigenous solutions (Kose, 2007; Scheurich, 1998; Scheurich and Skrla, 2003); promote meaningful professional learning for themselves and their faculties (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Kose, 2007, 2009; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis, 2007a; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001); establish inclusive learning environments (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2009); and serve as community builders (Scheurich, 1998; Theoharis, 2007a; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). In the following sections I will discuss some of these findings.

Develop shared beliefs. As noted above, the personal beliefs of social justice leaders play an important role in guiding and sustaining them in the face of the many

barriers discussed above. In this section I will discuss the role of values and beliefs at the organizational level. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) note that successful leaders for equity and excellence work to instill a belief in staff members that all students will be successful. Riester et al. (2002) found the programs, strategies, and practices utilized in the schools they studied were similar to those employed by many schools that had little success in educating children from low-income homes. What was unique about the schools in question was that their programs and practices “exist in a culture that is permeated by a set of shared beliefs about the possibility of, and responsibility for, educating all children to high levels” (p. 202).

Riester et al. (2002) assert the crucial importance of this shared belief, noting “This mindset, coupled with the culture that evolved, provided the time, space, and freedom for educators to invent and craft their practice, resulting in teacher empowerment and teacher leadership” (p. 301). Riester and her colleagues grouped the shared beliefs and concomitant practices they identified under three themes: 1) promoting a democratic culture; 2) adopting a prescriptive approach to literacy and academic success; and 3) demonstrating a stubborn persistence in “getting there.”

Develop healthy organizational cultures. A number of studies (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Scheurich, 1998; Theoharis, 2007a; Vibert & Portelli, 2000) examine the role of social justice leaders in promoting the development of healthy organizational cultures. Maynes and Sarbit (2000) found that over time the school they studied developed a culture that rejected deficit thinking and embraced administrative and teaching practices centered on the ideas of social justice and critical

practice. Kose (2007) argues that principals should lead efforts to develop a school mission “that creates a fertile context in which discussions such as teaching for social justice can grow” (p. 42). Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2001) found that the principals they studied attempted to build the capacity of their organizations to use data to drive decision making.

Scheurich (1998) found that the schools he studied shared seven organizational culture characteristics. The staff members at these schools 1) possessed a strong, shared vision, 2) created loving, caring environments for children and adults, 3) collaborated to build a family-like social structure, 4) were open to new ideas and embraced innovation and experimentation, 5) found ways to work hard without burning out, 6) build appropriate conduct into the organizational culture, and 7) without exception, held themselves accountable for the success of every child. He goes on to point out that these characteristics are interwoven and mutually reinforcing.

Engage in democratic and distributed forms of leadership. Furman and Greunewald (2004) critique the discourses of social justice as being part of the legacy of the Western Enlightenment tradition, which they argue can be characterized by a flawed focus on “anthropocentrism, individualism (a view of the individual as the basic social unit), and assumptions about the linear nature of change” (p. 52). They go on to argue that such a perspective results in the reproduction of the existing social order. They argue attempts to delineate leadership practices that aim to promote moral conceptualizations such as social justice tend to operate under the assumption that the heroic actions of individual leaders can create the type of radical change that is necessary to address to

address large scale concerns such as social justice.

Bogotch (2002) notes a tendency in American education to promote material conditions that support a desire for practitioners who exercise heroic, individualistic forms of leadership as a way of addressing pervasive social issues. He goes on to note that exercising this type of leadership is difficult in educational systems where reforms are implemented in aggregate, schools are pressured to adopt 'best practices', and “... an individually minded principal is often called a maverick” (p. 148). Blackmore (2002) advances a similar critique, arguing that a focus on formal positions of leadership (e.g., the principalship) personalizes and individualizes wider social and moral issues while ignoring “the wider terrain upon which we collectively walk, a fast moving terrain reconfigured constantly by changing forms of political and educational governance, shifting social relations of gender, race, culture, and class” (Blackmore, 2002, p. 201-202).

In view of this line of criticism, it is interesting to note that the findings of a significant number of studies depict social justice principals who engage in democratic and distributed forms of leadership (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001; Vibert & Portelli, 2000). Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) characterize socially just leadership as involving the facilitation of opportunities for empowerment. They argue this type of leadership “focuses on building critical, participatory, equitable, and just relationships; creating safe and trusting spaces, urban sanctuaries – not by working on the community members, but with them” (p. 170). Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2001) found that the principals they studied worked to

develop teacher leaders as one way of increasing the capacity of their organizations, and viewed democratic and distributive leadership as integral to their work.

Maynes and Sarbit (2000) found that the school they studied developed a culture that valued collegiality and teamwork, and that the principal encouraged leadership initiatives at all levels of the organization. Vibert and Portelli (2000) produced similar findings, noting that while the principal and vice principal of the school they studied provided educational leadership, the school “evolved a shared approach to leadership, whereby teachers and staff were encouraged to take leadership roles in connection to activities or programs in which they have expertise” (p. 30). In a similar vein, MacKinnon (2000) found leadership to be “... a community effort rather than the efforts of a single individual” (p. 13).

Develop indigenous solutions. Scholars have noted that social justice principals work with their faculties to develop indigenous solutions to educational problems (Scheurich, 1998; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Kose, 2007). Kose (2007) cautions against adopting curricular frameworks that are overly prescriptive to avoid constraining “teachers creativity and abilities to adapt to student needs” (p. 41). This is consistent with Scheurich (1998) who found the principals he studied did not adopt an existing reform model, but instead engaged in grassroots, democratic efforts that involved their entire school communities. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) found that social justice principals tend to work to align curriculum, standards, and assessments across grade levels and subject areas. In a similar vein, Kose (2007) argues that principals should “articulate the importance of curricular coherence and provide the encouragement, opportunities, and

available resources for their school to develop this coherence” (p. 41).

Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) argue that an important role of leadership for social justice is to advance opportunities for authentic participation, which they consider to be “a cornerstone of experiencing and solidifying participatory democracy among those communities that historically have been displaced and excluded from power arrangements in relation to their own living conditions” (p. 161). They argue that leaders for social justice resist the imposition of centralized policy interventions, which they argue represent a form of symbolic colonization.

Promote meaningful professional learning for themselves and their faculties.

If school leaders wish to engage in distributed and democratic forms of leadership, and involve others in the development of indigenous solutions to intractable problems, their faculties must possess the requisite knowledge and skills. A number of studies have considered the role of social justice principals in promoting meaningful professional learning for themselves and their faculties (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Kose, 2007, 2009; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis, 2007a; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). Scheurich and Skrla (2003) note that social justice principals foster professional development for culturally responsive teaching, and employ multiple strategies to assist teachers in becoming more proficient. Brown, Irby and Yang (2008-2009) found that the teachers they surveyed believed their principals updated their own knowledge and expertise in curriculum and instruction, and supported quality professional development for teachers and staff. Theoharis (2007a) found that the principals enacted social justice by “recentering and enhancing staff capacity” (p. 231).

Kose's (2007, 2009) research is noteworthy for its singular focus on the role of the social justice principal in providing professional development. He advances a framework for understanding the principal's role in professional development for social justice, which describes the ways principals “enact five transformative professional development roles to create the conditions for two interrelated types of professional development: subject matter expertise and social identity development” (Kose, 2009, p. 654). The five principal roles he identifies are transformative visionary, transformative learning leader, transformative structural leader, transformative cultural leader, and transformative political leader. Finally Kose (2007) urges principals to provide teachers with the time and discretion they need to develop the capacity to engage in critical teaching and learning.

Establish inclusive learning environments. As noted above, one group of scholars (Brown, Irby & Yang, 2008-2009; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2009) advance conceptualizations of social justice leadership that center on the idea of inclusion. Sapon-Shevin's (2003) work has exerted a particularly powerful influence on many of these scholars. She argues that inclusion is a matter of social justice, and that “Inclusive classrooms can teach us important lessons that go far beyond individual students and specific settings and help us create the inclusive, democratic society that we envision for our students and society” (p. 26). Brown, Irby and Yang (2008-2009) found that the teachers they surveyed established an inclusive campus environment focused on fairness and equity.

Frattura and Capper (2007) identify eight characteristics of leaders for social

justice, most of which relate to establishing inclusive learning environments. First, leaders should hold as one of their core beliefs the idea that all students should be educated in heterogeneous settings. Second, leaders should possess the knowledge and skills to put this belief into practice. Third, leaders should be able to imagine schools where students are not segregated, and where all students belong. Fourth, leaders should be able to see the similarities in the ways students should be treated, despite their differences. Fifth, leaders should serve as advocates for marginalized students. Sixth, leaders should not be defensive about their limitations, and should be able to honestly evaluate where they are in the process, and should be tenacious in their pursuit of inclusion and social justice. Seventh, leaders should continually educate themselves about the aspects of equity and diversity that they lack knowledge in. Finally, leaders should seek to continually develop and sustain their ethical core regarding heterogeneous schooling so that they can withstand pressures to do otherwise.

Serve as community builders. The role of the social justice principal as community builder is another theme emerged from my review of the empirical research. Some studies (Scheurich, 1998; Theoharis, 2007a; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001) found that these leaders often seek to build community within their schools, and establish connections with the wider community. Scheurich (1998) found that the principals he studied shared a belief that their school existed for and served the community. He notes that these principals worked to worked to minimize separation between their schools and the larger community. Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2001) found that the principals they interviewed stressed the importance of community building in developing their

organizations. Theoharis (2007a) found that the leaders of the schools he studied worked to strengthen school culture and community. Maynes and Sarbit (2000) found that the administration, faculty and staff of the schools they studied worked to form partnerships with parents and community members.

Models of Social Justice Leadership

Theoharis (2009) offers a framework for understanding how SJL tends to play out in schools. The framework is made up of the following four components; the social justice leader, challenging injustice, facing barriers, and developing resistance. These components are associated with the following 'keys' to social justice leadership:

Key 1. Acquire broad, reconceptualized consciousness/knowledge/skill base.

Key 2. Possess core leadership traits. (p. 14)

Key 3. Advance inclusion, access, and opportunity.

Key 4. Improve the core learning context-both teaching and the curriculum.

Key 5. Create a climate of belonging.

Key 6. Raise student achievement.

Key 7. Sustain oneself professionally and personally.

Theoharis explains “these keys to SJL provide specific aspects of the complicated nature of how these leaders worked to close the access, opportunity, and achievement gaps” (p. 13).

Frattura and Capper (2007) operationalize social justice leadership as inclusive leadership by presenting a model they refer to as Integrated Comprehensive Services (ICS). They base the model on the related concepts of integrated environments and

comprehensive services:

Integrated environments are the settings that all students, regardless of need or legislative eligibility, access throughout their day in school and non-school settings. That is, in these settings (e.g., classroom, playground, library, field trips), students with a variety of needs and gifts learn together in both small and large groups. Comprehensive services refer to the array of services and supports, centered in a differentiated curriculum and instruction, which all learners receive to ensure academic and behavioral success. (p. 4)

Frattura and Capper (2007) go on to identify what they refer to as the four cornerstones of ICS: 1) Core principles: Focusing on equity; 2) Establishing equitable structures: Location and arrangement of educational services; 3) Implementing change: Funding and policy; and 4) Providing access to high-quality teaching and learning: Building teacher capacity and curriculum and instruction. They note that each cornerstone serves as a goal for those seeking to “achieve” ICS, and that each cornerstone builds upon the one that preceded it. They delineate a number of techniques educators can utilize as they attempt to implement the ICS model. Each of these models is useful in helping one to gain a better understanding of the nature of social justice leadership. However, as noted above, I am conceptualizing social justice leadership as emergent, changeable, and context dependent. As such I did not use any single model to help me identify participants for this study.

Conclusion

The body of research considered in this review suggests Theoharis (2008) is

correct in asserting that scholars have made headway in delineating the practices and characteristics of school leaders who exercise SJL. However, as he also notes, there are few “constructive models or real-life examples of principals doing this type of work” (p. 4). There are even fewer portrayals of school superintendents who are engaged in this type of work. In the next chapter I will outline the plan of inquiry I used to carry out a study focused upon the experiences of two such superintendents.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The focus of this study was the experiences and perceptions of two school superintendents who are known as leaders for social justice. My goal in carrying out the study was to gain a better understanding of how these leaders developed a commitment to social justice, the ways they resisted oppressive and exploitative social relations, the countervailing pressures they face, and the alternatives to traditional educational arrangements they articulate, conceptualize, and create as they seek to achieve socially just educational outcomes for their students. This chapter delineates the methods I utilized in carrying out the study.

Conceptual Framework

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that we are living in what has been referred to as the postmodern moment. Lincoln and Guba (2000) argue that the postmodern moment is characterized by a blurring of the boundaries between different perspectives, or a “blurring of genres.” They advocate borrowing, or *bricolage*, and the incorporation of multiple perspectives whenever it seems, “useful, richness enhancing, or theoretically heuristic” (p. 167). This is consistent with the methodological approach I utilized in carrying out this study. In the following sections I will describe the methods I utilized.

In carrying out this study I utilized life-history approach, and in-depth interviewing (Seidman, 1998). This approach is similar to the research method Seidman

(1998) refers to as in-depth, phenomenologically based interviewing. As this nomenclature implies, the method is closely allied with the philosophical movement known as Phenomenology. Marshall and Rossman (2006) note that phenomenological approaches are often utilized by researchers who wish to examine the individual life experiences of participants. These approaches are characterized by a focus on distilling the essence of a particular phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Researchers operating within the phenomenological paradigm have traditionally attempted to bracket out their own preconceptions in order to focus on the phenomenon in question. As someone who has worked in education for a number of years, I have developed a number of values and beliefs related to social justice in schools. As I reflected on the data I attempted to be mindful of how these values and beliefs influenced my interpretations. In keeping with the phenomenological tradition, I gave precedence to the interpretations of the two participants (Moustakas, 1994).

While research within the phenomenological paradigm has traditionally focused on the lived experience of research participants, social theory can also provide a lens to assist in examining and interpreting participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). For example, I use Bourdieu's (1997) concept of Doxa as a lens for examining resistance the two participants in this study experienced as they sought to enact social justice leadership. It is important to note that as I used theory to make sense of the data I collected, I attempted to be mindful of Lather's (1986) warning that "theory adequate to the task of changing the world must be open-ended, non-dogmatic, informing, and grounded in the circumstances of everyday life; and, moreover, it must be premised on a

deep respect for the intellectual and political capacities of the dispossessed” (p.129). First and foremost, this study is about school superintendents who have shown the courage it takes to serve as leaders for social justice. Great care was taken to ensure that the views of participants were given the attention and respect they deserved.

Research Questions

In carrying out this study I was guided by the following over-arching research question:

What can be learned from the experiences of school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools?

In seeking to explore the topic in question, I was guided by the following sub-questions:

- How are the identities of school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools evolving/transforming?
- How do school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools question and resist oppressive and exploitative social relations?
- What countervailing pressures do school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools face?

Participant Identification

I used purposeful sampling (Siedman, 1998) based upon expert recommendations to identify two school superintendents who engaged in social justice work in their schools. I asked members of the educational community (professors of educational leadership, central office personnel, school principals, teachers, etc.) to identify current or former school leaders who have at some point worked to advance social justice in

schools. I received a number of recommendations, mainly from professors at Texas State University-San Marcos. I selected two participants from among those nominated. The two participants are Paula and Marsha (pseudonyms) the current and former superintendent of Lakeside School District (pseudonym). I chose these two as participants for this study for a number of reasons. First, a professor known for her own work involving social justice and equity issues told me that these two leaders “epitomize social justice leadership.” Second, as noted above, I found a number of studies that consider the experiences of school principals who enact social justice leadership, but far fewer that consider the experiences of school superintendents who do so. Selecting participants who had served as superintendents allowed me to address this gap in the existing literature on social justice leadership. Finally, I was pleased to find two participants who had worked in the same school district. I believed that having two participants who had experience in the same context would allow me to study the phenomenon in greater depth.

Data Collection

In seeking to answer these questions I carried out a multi-case study utilizing life-history, focused in-depth interviewing, and a site visit. In the following sections I describe each of these data collection techniques.

Life History. According to Jones (1983), life histories “examine and analyze the subjective experiences of individuals and their constructions of the social world” (p. 147). The life history method seems particularly appropriate for examining how school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools make sense of

their work. Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue life histories are “uniquely suited to depicting and making theoretical sense of the socialization of a person into a cultural milieu” (p. 116). They go on to note the usefulness of life history methods in focusing on “critical or fateful moments” (p. 116). These aspects of life history approaches were useful in examining how the identities of school superintendents who are engaged in social justice work in their schools are evolving and transforming.

Troyna (1994) identifies two reasons the life history method is useful for examining education policy:

First, it provides an insight into how respondents . . . perceive and interpret their cultural and social worlds. It offers a context in which they lay bare their taken-for-granted assumptions and how they act upon them. Second, when used in conjunction with other sources of data, life histories enable the researcher and the respondent to triangulate and transcend individualistic and psychologistic analysis: to make the link, that is, between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues'.
(p. 81)

I utilized this feature of life history research by asking participants to describe incidents that were particularly critical in leading them to develop a social justice orientation. In keeping with the critical orientation of the study, I not only captured the participants' stories, but also attempted to analyze them to gain a better understanding of how their identities changed and evolved (Seidman, 1998).

In-depth Interviewing. Seidman (1998) argues that in-depth interviewing allows researchers to develop an understanding of participants' experiences, and the meaning

they make of those experiences. As the focus of this study was to gain a better understanding of how social justice leaders make sense of their experiences, Seidman's approach seemed particularly well suited to my purposes. To gather data for the study I carried out one individual interview with each participant, and one joint interview with both subjects. The individual interviews were used to gather background data on the participants and to ask them to relate some of their experiences working to promote socially just schooling in the Lakeside school district. The joint interview was a chance for the participants to discuss their shared experiences and ways that they supported each other in their work. Each interview session occurred at a place that was convenient for the participant.

My first interview was with Paula, the current superintendent of Lakeside School District. This interview took place in Paula's office on a Tuesday morning. The second participant was Marsha, the former superintendent of the Lakeside School District. Marsha picked me up at my motel, gave me a tour of the city, and then took me to a local coffee shop for our interview. During these initial interviews Paula and Marsha talked about their backgrounds and upbringing, and described the many challenges they faced during their tenure with the Lakeside School District. Many of these challenges had to do with community and staff resistance to demographic change. Both participants talked about ways the district leadership worked to combat this resistance, and equip staff members with the knowledge and skills they needed to meet the needs of all students.

The third interview included both Marsha and Paula, and took place at a restaurant in an affluent suburb of the city. This interview unfolded more as a conversation between

two friends. It was a chance for the participants to remember events from their time working together. The third interview was a good opportunity for Paula and Marsha to reflect on their shared experiences and reminisce about old friends. I felt privileged to be able to spend time with these two leaders as they discussed ways governmental policies impacted their social justice work.

Site Visit. To better understand the context in which the participants worked, I traveled to Lakeside and spent four days at the research site. I visited the Lakeside school district, and spent a considerable amount of time in Lakeside and in the neighboring large city. I visited a number of public institutions including museums and libraries, and toured a number of neighborhoods with the participants in an attempt to get a better idea of the cultural makeup of these communities. During my time at the research site, I documented my perceptions by keeping a reflective journal. These perceptions are woven into the description of the site in the following chapter.

Data Analysis

Interview data. Individual interview sessions were audiotaped (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Each interview was transcribed by a professional transcription service. I spent a great deal of time listening to each interview, and reviewing the associated transcripts to gain familiarity with their contents. Interview data was labeled and filed in a way that allowed me to easily trace interview data to its source, and readily contact participants if the need arose (Seidman, 1998). Care was taken to ensure the security, and integrity of all data, particularly that which could reveal participants' identities.

Data analysis corresponded with the seven phases described by Marshall and

Rossmann (2006): “(a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories and themes; (d) coding the data; (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos; (f) searching for alternative understandings; and (g) writing the report or other format for presenting the study” (p. 156). I used an inductive approach to data analysis. As I analyzed the data I looked for themes and patterns.

I used an inductive approach to coding in that I used codes that emerged from the data (Patton, 1990). The coding scheme was tentative in nature and changed as additional themes and linkages emerged. From the beginning of the data analysis process I wrote memos as a way of exploring themes, theoretical concepts, and linkages that I discerned (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Member checks (Marshall & Rossmann, 2006) were used to test the validity of my analysis. This involved more than simply sharing transcripts to check for accuracy. Instead these member checks focused on sharing emerging themes and interpretations.

Once the themes were firmly identified, I analyzed the themes in regard to the research questions. First, I considered how the themes related to the overarching research question: What can be learned from the experiences of superintendents who are engaged in social justice work? I then considered how each of the themes related to the topics of the supporting research questions: countervailing pressures; resisting oppressive and exploitive relationships; and evolving identity as a social justice leader.

Site-visit data. During my time at the research site I took notes to record any information I believed to be pertinent to the research project. I also kept a journal to record my perceptions, and to allow me to revisit and reflect on the data at a later time. I

used a still camera, and a digital video camera to record images I felt captured the essence of the places I visited. Data from the site visit were critical in helping me to understand the context in which Marsha and Paula operated. In particular, the time I spent visiting neighborhoods in the large neighboring city, and in the city of Lakeside helped me to understand the history of racial segregation in the area.

Limitations of the Study

The portraits I presented and the conclusions I drew are subjective in nature, and were influenced by my own biases and preconceptions. It is important to note that small sample size is actually an inherent characteristic of this type of research. As limited research has been carried out that examines the experiences of school superintendents, my hope was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of a few individuals, as opposed to discovering universal truths.

Methods of Representation

I utilize a number of methods to present data. First, I present a portrayal of each participant, sharing their own words while adding my own perceptions when warranted. Second, I provide contextual information I gathered over the course of the three interviews. Next, I present a discussion organized around themes that emerged from the data. Finally, I share three critical stories that serve to illustrate some of the themes, and offer a glimpse at the leadership these superintendents enacted. This representation of the data is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the results of my study, which explored the experiences of two school superintendents. The two participants were selected because of their reputations for having strong social justice orientations, and their experience working in difficult social and policy environments. To carry out the investigation I conducted a site visit to gather contextual data and conducted individual and group interviews. The individual interviews were used to gather background data on the participants, and to ask them to relate some of their experiences working to promote socially just schooling in the Lakeside school district. The joint interview was a chance for the participants to discuss their shared experiences, and ways that they supported each other in their work.

The first section of this chapter provides a context for the study. An understanding of context is an essential part of qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and as one of the participants noted, is particularly important in attempting to understand efforts to promote socially just schooling. Member checks with each participant were used to assess the accuracy of these descriptions.

Context of the Study

The Lakeside School District is located in the community of Lakeside. Lakeside is a majority White, working class suburb of a large midwestern city. The Lakeside School District currently serves approximately 2,500 students. The district has one high school,

one middle school, and three elementary schools. In the last decade the district has experienced rapid demographic change, with African-American students constituting the fastest growing demographic group.

The rise in African American students attending Lakeside was precipitated by a policy change. In the mid-1990s, voters in the state passed a ballot initiative known as Schools of Choice. This initiative tied school funding to the number of students a district served, and gave parents the right to transfer their children to school districts other than those that had historically served their geographic area. Initially, most of the movement of students occurred among White students in suburban districts, with students moving from one suburban district to another.

Over time, African Americans families from the city began to exercise their rights under the Schools of Choice policy and transfer their children into suburban districts, including Lakeside. This trend was met with resistance from community members and staff members in the district. The two participants in this study served as district leaders during the span of time when African American students from the inner-city began to transfer into Lakeside. In describing their experiences, the participants discussed the resistance they encountered, the ways they attempted to deal with this resistance and difficulties they encountered along the way.

While the Schools of Choice policy provides the backdrop for this study in social justice leadership, the effects of this policy and the participants' experiences are better understood in light of the history of race relations in the Lakeside area. The large city neighboring Lakeside was once a thriving industrial center. During the period known as

the Great Migration, large numbers of African Americans left rural areas in the South in search of jobs in Northern factories and mills (Boyle, 2005).

In the early years of the 20th century, African Americans who moved into the city lived in segregated neighborhoods. Following a landmark Supreme Court case, *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), which negated racial covenants on private property, African American citizens began to move into neighborhoods that had previously been legally established as White neighborhoods. This trend was met with fierce resistance from the White community. For decades after this event, acts of violence against African Americans were common (Boyle, 2005). Over time, as more African Americans moved into central city neighborhoods, White citizens began to leave, moving to communities on the periphery of the city. The result of this trend is that although no longer required by law, the metropolitan area is still largely segregated. Marsha addressed the segregated nature of the area:

The city is unique. I mean you would think that it would be much more integrated and would have been integrated much earlier. The metropolitan area is the most segregated metropolitan area in the United States.

The area's history of segregation and White flight still play a role in race relations today. As Marsha noted, many of the older citizens of Lakeside were members of families that left the city during this time period.

The segregated nature of the area was apparent during my visit. Most of the neighborhoods I visited in the city were predominately African American. There were many cultural institutions that centered on African American life. For example, I visited a

museum of African American culture, which proved useful in gaining a better understanding of the history of race relations in the area. In contrast to the neighboring city, most of the people I saw during my time in Lakeside were White. Lakeside had the feel of a close-knit community. The restaurants were filled with what appeared to be White, working class men and women.

In the large neighboring city, The dividing lines between neighborhoods were often easy to discern. The divisions between the larger city and surrounding communities such as Lakeside were even starker. By walking only a few blocks one can sometimes pass from an affluent area with numerous restaurants into an economically depressed neighborhood with few businesses and many abandoned houses and buildings. I interpreted these dividing lines as being based upon both race and class.

Understanding the experiences of the participants as leaders for social justice requires an understanding of how the participants developed a social justice orientation. The next section describes the early experiences of the participants as well as their professional backgrounds.

Participant Background: Paula

Early experiences. Paula discussed her background and some of the early experiences that led her to develop a social justice orientation. She explained that she had grown up in a suburb that was known as a Polish-American enclave. Later her family moved to another suburb down river from the city.

It was a totally segregated community. When I was growing up, all through my school years, I did not go to school with students of color. That was kind of my

background.

Due to the segregated nature of the community, Paula had very little experience with African Americans as a child.

When I asked Paula if there were any early experiences that she feels contributed to the development of her social justice orientation, she explained that her father was from North Carolina and when she was a child, her family visited the state during the summers.

That's when I had some of my first exposures to what I would consider to be racially motivated behavior. It was really upsetting to me. While I didn't grow up in an integrated community, I did not have feelings of racism fostering in me that I could recall. I had no feelings of negativity to people of other backgrounds.

When I would visit and see things such as the fragments of Jim Crow, which I didn't know about at that time, but I would see things like colored soda fountains or drinking fountains or bathrooms; they weren't necessarily overtly displayed but it was still adhered to.

Paula related the story of an incident involving African American children that she found to be particularly troubling.

When I was in my teens during one of my last visits there, I had an older cousin who I was out in a car with and joyriding with friends. They thought it was really funny to run a trio of African American children, younger than even I was, flying down the road and acting as though they were going to hit them; the kids tumbled into a dry ditch.

Paula talked about how this incident struck her as being unjust, and led her to question her beliefs.

That was upsetting to me on so many levels; I had never experienced anything like that and they thought it was funny. I never talked to them about it, but it was one of those pivotal moments where you think, “Wait a minute, there’s something wrong here. . . . I think I was fourteen. I don’t remember if I spoke to my parents about it. I probably didn’t while we were there because we were staying at their home. I don’t know if I spoke to them or any of my friends about it later, but it was just one of those things you knew innately that it was wrong to treat anyone that way.

This troubling incident raised Paula's awareness of the idea of social injustice. It was clear to her that the event was racially motivated.

It was very evident to me why they did that; they wouldn’t have done it if it were three White children. I don’t know why I went along with it, I don’t know if there were things said that made me realize it was a racially motivated attack. It didn’t look to me as though the kids were not accustomed to that.

Paula went on to explain that these early experiences led her to question her beliefs and reflect on the injustice of existing social conventions.

Adulthood. Paula noted that her husband served in the United States Air Force. She explained that during term of service they lived in numerous military base towns, and acquired a diverse group of friends.

You had this engagement of people that was really quick because you’re all over

the place, and it transcends any kind of boundaries of race, where you're from, North/South, country/city; those things are kind of erased because you're all in this organization together.

Paula explained that these experiences had an impact on her feeling and beliefs about race. She talked about some of the friends she made during this time.

We experienced many different types of people who were from different walks of life that brought them together here. When we moved into our first home, it was an integrated neighborhood, which I thought was good; I liked that. Some of our dearest friends were African Americans. We were friends with a couple who lived two doors down. She was Caucasian and he was African American. I learned a lot having conversations with them about what they were experiencing as a mixed race couple in the Seventies.

The difficulties these friends experienced because they were a mixed-race couple helped raise Paula's consciousness, and led her to question what she perceived as injustice.

Paula explained that during her husband's time in the Air Force she made many connections with African American friends and neighbors.

The lady next door to us was a single African American who had no children, was just single; across the street was an African American couple whose daughter babysat my children; one of my son's really good friends was an African American boy. . . . When we first lived here, we lived in an apartment, I was pregnant at the time and the man who was on call for me, was a retired military man. His name was Clint, and he was an African American man. When I began

to realize this area really was not known for tolerance and social justice, it came as a shock to me, because it hadn't been a part of my experiences.

I asked Paula if she could talk more about some of the influences that led her to develop her social justice orientation. She reflected on ways people she has known shaped her views on race and social justice.

I have a need for fairness in every part of life. I couldn't explain; my dad was a skilled tradesman who brought a union in for the skilled trades, so maybe some of that? Maybe somewhere along the line that was influencing me. People I've met and interacted with. . . . When I went to college in the '70s, it was just the right time for that.

Paula went on to reflect on her upbringing, and ways her views were shaped by her environment.

This sounds really bizarre . . . but maybe because I grew up in a segregated environment, that I did not have a lot of stereotypical beliefs about people because there wasn't anybody to have stereotypical beliefs about. There weren't kids or families that were frowned upon or ostracized because they were Black or this or that.

Professional experiences. Paula discussed some of her early experiences as a teacher. She explained that she worked in the Huron Valley school district prior to coming to Lakeside Schools. She described the district as culturally mixed. "We had a lot of students who were first generations Albanian and a significant number of African Americans, lots of different ethnic groups."

After being laid off Paula came to work in the Lakeside School District. Paula explained that during her early years working for Lakeside there was little to indicate the potential for racial conflict.

I taught here for five to six years. I had about as many African American students as you could count on your hand, but you didn't think anything of it. Their parents and grandparents had gone to school here so it was that type of a community. So you're in this community and you're thinking everything is wonderful; you love the people you're working with, they're very supportive of education, there are lots of great things happening. It's almost like there's this thing under the surface that you're not aware of.

Paula discussed how she came to be a school administrator. She explained that the superintendent invited to apply for the principalship of the school where she worked. Paula hesitated to apply for the position because she enjoyed teaching, but decided to do so after attending a leadership camp.

Paula explained that when she began working as a principal she faced some challenges. She felt that the community was somewhat fragmented due to what she viewed as ineffective leadership by the previous principal. Paula explained "I viewed it as my job to heal." She worked as campus principal for five years. She then went on to serve as Curriculum Director for the district. It was during the latter part of Paula's tenure as principal that Marsha came to work for Lakeside.

Paula worked under Marsha's leadership for several years and then had the opportunity to become the Lakeside superintendent when Marsha announced her

retirement. Paula joked that when the position opened Marsha advised her “Don’t do it. You won’t be happy. It’s a terrible job.” Despite this warning Paula submitted her name for consideration. She interviewed for the job, and was selected. In the next section I will present information Marsha shared about her background and upbringing

Participant Background: Marsha

Early experiences. Marsha explained that she was born in New York City and lived on the east coast until she was in the ninth grade. In the ninth grade her family moved to a small town in Ohio. She shared her perceptions of this change of environment.

I found that to be shocking, really, even as a ninth grader. We moved in the middle of my ninth grade year and I wanted out of there. . . . I immediately felt the sense of being out of place, different from other people. Even though I looked like everyone else . . . I just never felt like everyone.

Marsha talked about how these early experiences of being different helped shape her social justice views. She went on to note that her sense of social justice began with her parents, both of whom held progressive political views.

My dad and mom were big Roosevelt democrats. My dad is deceased, but my mom still has a big photo of Roosevelt in the house. So that was pretty influential in my life.

Marsha also talked about her mother’s background, and the stories she told about the family.

My mother always told stories. . . . Her mother was very poor, she was the

youngest of thirteen kids and her mom had been and indentured servant. She had been sold to a family, she was Irish. And she had been sold to a family and so she married my mother's father when she was 18. She was answering an ad, really; he had been married before and his wife died in childbirth. He had six kids and he was just looking for somebody to take care of the kids and she answered an ad to take care of the kids and they ended up having seven more kids and then he died. My mom was the youngest. So my mom always told stories of the depression and of people coming to the door to ask for food even though they were very poor themselves, they lived on a little farm. She always told stories about her mother always giving to people no matter what, no matter who they were or what they were like. So it's sort of a narrative in our family, these stories.

These stories were a formative influence on Marsha, and led her to develop an outlook that emphasized the importance of helping others.

Marsha related a story about her father's social justice outlook, and his unwillingness to compromise his beliefs.

There was a breach in our family between my father and his uncle. His uncle was actually two years younger, one of those weird deals, but he was literally his uncle but more like a brother. We stopped going to see them because they were so anti-Semitic and they would make all these comments and so my dad just didn't want anything to do with that. He wouldn't even be around them.

Marsha explained that her father's commitment to acting in ways that were consistent with his beliefs was influential in her developing an activist orientation.

As a teenager Marsha worked as a tutor for underprivileged youth. She explained that her experiences working with these young people greatly influenced her outlook.

When we moved to Hudson, Ohio there was an Upward or Outward Bound program. They would bring in underprivileged kids for the summer to stay there and take classes. They would try and get families to take these kids in, like on a Sunday or something, to their homes for like a barbecue and so I began early on in high school I worked as a tutor in Upward or Outward Bound.

Marsha's parents encouraged her to take the tutoring job, and invited the students she tutored into their home.

So I was encouraged to do that by my parents, it was always a part of our lives and so I started to tutor young kids early on so I was always in the African American community. . . . And on these Sundays when the kids would come to other families' it kind of got to be that all the kids wanted to come to our house. So we'd have all these kids at our house and my dad would be cooking for them and barbecuing and some of these kids became part of our family and are still connected to the family.

These early experiences working and socializing with African American students helped Marsha to understand the challenges these youth faced. These experiences and were very influential in the development of her social justice outlook.

Marsha went on to talk about how her family became particularly close with one African-American youth. She also talked about how her father reacted when he felt the young man was being treated unfairly.

He was just like part of the family so on holidays or whatever he would come to the family and we would go out to dinner, and I can remember times when my dad would . . . we would go out to dinner and if people didn't want to seat us in the right place in the restaurant he would leave the restaurant. He is really very, very firm about what he believes in, particularly for a person of his generation.

Clearly, both Paula and Marsha's social justice outlooks were influenced strongly influenced by their parents and by experiences they shared with members of the African American community. While their experiences and backgrounds are different, both Paula and Marsha developed outlooks that can be characterized as focusing on a need for fairness and justice, and that emphasizes the importance of helping others.

Professional experiences. I asked Marsha how she came to work as an inner-city public school teacher. She explained that her first position was as a middle school teacher in a district outside of the city. She soon moved to the city to attend Law School, and began substituting for the inner-city school district. "I was in a middle school in the city and I had just really fallen in love with kids, so I decided to apply to teach in the city."

Marsha noted the skepticism some expressed at the idea of a young White woman staying in the inner-city schools for any length of time.

And I remember when I applied to teach in the city that the guy told me "you know you're never going to stay here, you won't stay in the city, I know you're not going to stay here." So I have lasted, stayed in the city for 26 years. I taught in the public schools in a variety of places and did all kinds of things. I did a lot of diversity work within the city itself and have pretty much always been involved in

that work with kids first and with a variety of organizations and on my own and would take kids traveling and doing things on my own.

As Marsha talked about these early experiences, it was clear that they had a profound impact on her outlook.

I asked Marsha if she could talk about how she came to be a school administrator. Like Paula, she explained that she did so somewhat reluctantly.

I love teaching. I still think that is the best job, you know, and I definitely think it's the job where personally you get the best satisfaction and you get out of it the most joy. So I became an administrator because people kept asking me to be an administrator and that's how it happened. I finally said OK and I applied for the job. I got my first job as an administrator and I was working in the city public schools, pretty crazy place. Not the kids, the whole system, there were more than 10,000 teachers at that point.

Marsha worked as a campus level administrator for a period of time, then as supervisor of foreign language programs for the district.

I asked Marsha about the events that led her to leave the inner-city school district. She explained that at one point all administrators in the district were laid off, and forced to reapply for their jobs if they wished to stay. These types of indignities, and other political and bureaucratic forces beyond her control led her to feel frustrated and unappreciated.

So at that point I had been working in the district twenty-six years and when they told me I had to reapply for my job. . . . I'm required to take this other job and

three weeks later I get this . . . we all get a layoff memo . . . it's starting to feel abusive, like I'm in a marriage where somebody's abusing me, and I'm not staying, you know? As loyal as I am to the city and its kids in particular, I'm not going to stay.

Marsha talked about how conflicted she felt about leaving the city. In the themes section of this chapter I will examine how her decision to leave was complicated by issues related to her identity as an inner-city teacher. After a great deal of thought and indecision, Marsha applied and was selected for the Director of Curriculum position with Lakeside Schools. When the superintendent left the district a few years later, Masha applied for the position, and was selected.

Collectively, these experiences contributed to Paula and Marsha developing outlooks that emphasized social justice. The fact that these educational leaders shared such an orientation seemingly shaped the practices they employed as they served as leaders on the Lakeside School District.

Themes

This study was guided by one over-arching research question and three supporting questions. Several themes emerged from the data. In analyzing the data I identified eleven themes: 1) deficit thinking; 2) cultural disconnects; 3) resistance to change; 4) lasting policy effects; 5) personal costs; 6) supportive school culture; 7) training in inter-cultural communication; 8) student voice; 9) networks of supports; 10) working through campus administrators; 11) identity conflicts; and 12) evolving leadership. Discussion of the themes is organized around the three supporting research questions that guided this

inquiry (See Appendix C).

Facing Countervailing Pressures

Theoharis (2007a) submits that educational leaders who pursue social justice can expect to face countervailing pressures. They can also expect to suffer negative professional and personal consequences (McGhee & Nelson, 2005, Theoharis, 2004, 2007b, 2009). The data from this study supports this notion. Paula and Marsha faced a number of countervailing pressures in their work as leaders of the Lakeside School District. They also experienced negative consequences as a result. In fact, the majority of themes that emerged from the data concerned these countervailing pressures and negative consequences. These themes are described below.

Deficit thinking. The most prevalent theme that emerged from the data relates to deficit views of African American students. Throughout the study, Marsha and Paula conveyed that many in the Lakeside district and community thought of African American students as being less than White students. This attitude illustrates Valencia's (1997) deficit thinking model. He describes the model as one of several conceptualizations that have been advanced to explain school failure among economically disadvantaged and/or minority students. According to Valencia and Black (2002) "Deficit thinking refers to the idea that students, particularly of low-SES background and of color, fail in school because they and their families have internal defects, or deficits, that thwart the learning process" (p. 83). Valencia (1997) argues that theories based upon the deficit thinking model share six common characteristics: 1) blaming the victim; 2) oppression; 3) pseudoscience; 4) temporal changes; 5) educability; and 6) heterodoxy (p. 3).

Valencia (1997) draws upon Ryan's (1971) analysis of 'victim-blamers and victims' to argue that deficit thinking is a form of oppression, which he defines as “the cruel and unjust use of authority and power to keep a group of people in their place” (p. 3-4). He notes that deficit thinking is usually translated into action through a four part process: First, those with power (the victim blamers) identify social problems. Second, research is carried out to identify differences between the disadvantaged and advantaged. Third, once these differences are identified, they are pathologized as the causes of the social problems in question. Fourth, governmental policies are generated and implemented to correct the differences, which are viewed as deficiencies. He goes on to argue this type of oppression plays out in a number institutional contexts including: “state constitutional statures, state educational agency policies, judicial outcomes, state legislation, local school board policies, and classroom teacher policies” (p. 4).

Valencia (1997) draws upon Blum (1978) to characterize deficit thinking as a form of pseudoscience. Blum defines pseudoscience as a “process of false persuasion by scientific pretense” (p. 12). Valencia contends the continued appeal of the deficit thinking is due to the model's association with the scientific method. He goes on to argue that researchers operating under the model often violate the basic tenets of scientific research. He notes that studies based upon deficit thinking are typically based upon unsound assumptions, use instruments that are psychometrically weak, utilize flawed data collection methods, and fail to consider rival explanations for observed findings. Despite these shortcomings, explanations of difference based upon deficit thinking are often legitimated in the eyes of lay persons, policy makers, and practitioners because of their

use of scientific jargon and their association with accepted social science theory.

Among theories of race and class, Valencia (1997) contends the deficit thinking model “has the longest currency,” having served as the dominant discourse for over a century, with roots stretching back even further (p. 2). He describes deficit thinking as a protean model that transforms, to conform to the zeitgeist of the period in question. He goes on to note that temporal changes typically do not involve the basic framework of the deficit thinking model. Instead these changes center on the perceived transmitter of the alleged deficits. Over time variants of the model have spawned explanations of race and class differences based upon genetics (Valencia, 1997), culture (Foley, 1997), and family relations (Pearl, 1997) as well as more complex conceptualizations that combine all three factors (Valencia and Solorzano, 1997).

Noting that one of the goals of the social and behavioral sciences is to modify behavior, Valencia (1997a) addresses the concept of educability and its role shaping policies based upon the deficit thinking model. He goes on to note the tendency of deficit thinkers to generate prescriptions for dealing with targeted populations. These prescriptions are often translated into large scale policy interventions through the four-part process described above. Valencia argues that the nature of these policy interventions is influenced by contemporary views as to the educability of the populations on question. He cites arguments supporting the segregation of Mexican-American in the 1920s because supposed 'language handicaps' and their “alleged intellectual dullness and ineducability . . . would slow the learning process and academic development of White students” (p. 8). He goes on to argue that the fact that Mexican American students who

did not speak Spanish were also segregated exposes the racist nature of this argument.

Valencia (1997) argues deficit views emerge and change form depending upon the context. Some of the data gathered for this study seems to support this contention. For example, I asked Paula if she could talk about her perception that the racist views of community members was hidden under the surface until demographic changes brought them to light.

Why would it percolate up if there's nothing provoking it, it's just there. You never heard any comments about Black families because there weren't any there. If there had been even one, maybe we would have seen racism more growing up. When I was teaching, there weren't so I just assumed everyone thought like I did.

Valencia (1997) notes deficit views are often taken for granted by members of dominant groups. A statement Paula made addresses this phenomenon.

One of the things Marsha and I talked about was how do I feel when people I've known in this community would come up to me as a Caucasian and say thing with the assumption that because I'm White I must feel the same way. I'm very offended that you would think that because I'm White/Caucasian that I feel the way she does about them.

These comments provide an illustration of how assumptions linked to deficit thinking are often taken for granted by members of the majority culture, and thought of as common sense. Paula explained she believes it is very difficult to confront deficit views when they are widely held and taken for granted.

Paula and Marsh shared their interpretations of how deficit views played out with less affluent members of the White community.

Marsha: We have a lot of White, working class kids who had a lot of needs, too. They had incarcerated parents and they came from a lot of drug situations. And that was ironic to. It wasn't like they were all perfect. They had a lot of issues themselves.

Paula: They tried to convince themselves they were better than.

Marsha: Whiter than, right. Coming from the lens that we knew this group of White folks had moved from this really poor area of the city, the lower east side, and that they were the first ones who moved into from these smaller homes in the community. They were this dysfunctional group of White folks who moved there. But they still felt "better than."

The taken for granted nature of deficit views, and the ways they are deeply ingrained in the culture lead people to persist in believing them, even in the face of contradictory facts and data (Valencia, 1997). Paula provided a good example of how this phenomenon played out in Lakeside.

We'd look at the data, our "schools of choice" kids were doing better academically than our other students . . . We actually examined the data for discipline and we discovered that the "schools of choice" kids were having fewer discipline problems. We would present these things but it's just like anything else, sort of like you could present Obama's birth certificate 5,000 times and if people just believe something or are just plain racist it just doesn't matter, I mean they

don't believe you anyway. You can show them the data, they don't believe you anyway. They think that you've manipulated it, that you're lying, you're this, you're that, you know?

Deficit views emerge and evolve over time. Individuals' views are shaped by the context in which they operate. Their taken for granted nature makes it very difficult to change them. Marsha noted the difficulties associated with attempting to combat the deficit views of district staff and community members.

Changing people on such a large issue is not necessarily something one or two people are going to be able to do. These are ingrained beliefs. In some cases, they aren't even necessarily consciously aware that they are based on race. They believe that these are their belief systems, how they relate.

Deficit views often manifest themselves in unexpected ways. Marsha described some of the reactions staff members had when the demographics of the district began to change.

So they wouldn't correct the kids, they would be . . . racism makes you act in all kinds of crazy ways, so they wouldn't want to correct the kids at all, they wouldn't want to say anything to them because they would be afraid. Some of them, on the other hand, would be confrontational and had no understanding again of African American culture or African American kids.

Marsha related a story about how one teacher's deficit views shaped her interactions with African American students.

We had one teacher that we actually ended up firing. What happened were online

classes that kids could take, maybe because they were trying to graduate and they were behind so they could take a couple classes online to catch up. She was working with that program, and she would just accelerate all the African-American kids through it. She would cheat, and the African-American kids would hang out in her room. She ran the diversity program but it was just fraternalism in that case, it was like I'm just going to give you the grades.

Marsha talked more about how the complex nature of racism and deficit views was reflected in the variety of interactions between staff members and African-American students.

So you have this whole continuum of reaction that comes out of racism and racial misunderstandings and some of it was to her extreme which is like, I'm just going to give you the grades because you couldn't possibly do it on your own, that's got to be the assumption. She had no expectations with these kids. She believed that the way to have a relationship with them is to have no expectations of them.

The taken for granted nature of deficit views, and the unpredictable nature of the behaviors they influence make it difficult to enact change.

Garza (2008) provides support for the idea that deficit thinking can serve to complicate efforts to enact change and lead in ways that are socially just. He notes that during his tenure as superintendent “. . . my philosophy of social justice was constantly challenged, and it required great ethical stamina to withstand the negative pervasiveness of a deficit-thinking society” (p. 176). In the following chapter I will use Valencia's (1997) deficit thinking model as a lens for examining the research questions that guided

this inquiry.

Cultural disconnects. Another theme that emerged from the data concerns the existence of cultural disconnect between staff members and African American students. This theme has to do with ways differences in the cultural backgrounds and life experiences of teachers and students created difficulties in schools. Marsha and Paula both expressed a belief that teachers in the district came from cultural backgrounds that were very different from those of many of the African-American students who were transferring into the district. In our first interview Paula described this phenomenon.

There's disconnect in our backgrounds and cultures. If I have working class White, middle-class teachers who have had no experiences like this, they feel very threatened by urban kids.

During the second interview Marsha explained that she was shocked by the lack of knowledge of African-American culture the staff displayed.

Our Superintendent . . . brought in this African-American speaker. . . . One thing he asked in the auditorium was "What's February to you, what happens in February?" I have 26 years in the city, I live in the city, I'm married to an African-American but, you know, everyone knows February is African-American History Month, right? It immediately hit me in my mind. Not one of them could answer that. . . . Nobody could answer.

Marsha described a professional development session with a well-known African-American speaker.

The most threatening thing he says to people which they all freak out about is he

always asks them if they see color, you know, that's one of the first questions he asks them and all these White people are like "no we don't notice color" and I'm like, this is bullshit, you know. I mean if you look over there and you see a few Black people you see a few Black people, right? You don't "not notice," and to say "I don't see color!" How we going to get anywhere that way?

To Marsha, episodes like the one described above showed that many staff members were in denial as far as issues related to race were concerned. She saw breaking through this denial, and raising awareness as a crucial starting point in the attempt to provide more culturally responsive educational arrangements.

Paula elaborated on this theme, explaining that because of their different experiences, some African-American students did not understand rules in the same way that teachers did. She and Marsha both expressed a belief that teachers in the district wanted African-American students to change, and be more like them, as opposed to changing their practices to meet the needs of all students.

"What can I give you so you can now be like me?" You don't have the rules, but you need the rules because the rules aren't going to change. Rules do not change for you, so you learn the rules, you better learn it.

Paula described ways that cultural differences complicated relations between faculty and students.

They don't understand; some of it is them trying to fit these children in to a White middle class culture, that's the hole they're trying to put the peg in; they need to be like us.

Marsha perceived a major disconnect between the lived experience of staff members, and the culture of the nearby city.

So you could see again I can say the metaphor one mile is a thousand miles. So every time I was mentioning anything like the Negro National Anthem which is everything in the city, it's a religion thing, no one had ever heard of it. So you can see this, it's almost unbelievable that you could have this huge mass city here and have this little tiny school district and have this total disconnect and have no one on the staff . . . who had any direct experience with African-Americans.

Marsha explained that despite efforts to build cultural understanding, many staff members continued to see the students as the problem.

There's that article that a lot of people have seen, you know, unpacking the backpack or the backpack of life or, a standard diversity article that people use, but our staff didn't see that they had any White privilege, they didn't see that, they couldn't get that idea, you know?

This inability to see things from any perspective other than that of the dominant culture is indicative of the taken for granted nature of deficit views, and reflects the ways the values of that culture are often viewed as common sense.

Marsha and Paula noted three ways they tried to combat the negative impact of cultural disconnects; by developing supportive school cultures, by providing training in inter-cultural communication, and by giving students more voice in decisions regarding their educations.

Resistance to change. Another countervailing pressure that the participants described is the idea of resistance to change. Resistance can take on many forms, and originate from numerous places. For Marsha and Paula resistance to change took two forms; community resistance to change and staff resistance to change.

Community resistance to change. Marsha explained that there was little resistance initially because of the homogeneous nature of the students who were transferring to the district.

So Lakeside at this point is pretty much an all-White school district. It had so few African-American kids that they don't matter . . . and they're the kind of African-American kids who were . . . they're sort of an anomaly so everybody's sort of, you know, patting them on the head and likes them still, you know . . . good little African-Americans, you know, they're in their right number. . . . You know you could just basically open the doors because these White parents were trying to get their kids out of east side schools and at that point there were very few Black kids.

Marsha explained that resistance developed and intensified as demographics began to change.

So as more African American families started moving into the community parents started to come to the Board meetings they started to say "your kids don't live here." That was the big line, "they don't live here, they can't live here," you know? "Black people can't live here, it's impossible."

Paula also noted that as demographics began to change, the district began to

experience resistance from some community members. “The community reacted by saying, 'you opened the schools, now look what’s happened.’” She noted that as time went by the term Schools of Choice became a code word for African-American students. The perception among many community members was that the schools were in decline because the district was admitting African American students from the inner-city. Paula and other members of the district administration felt that many of these negative views were based upon misconceptions and misinformation.

Paula described efforts to educate community members, and dampen the criticism and resistance the district was experiencing.

We worked really hard to educate the community on what Schools of Choice really meant. We did the disaggregation of the data . . . and what it was showing them was that many of our Schools of Choice students were Caucasian. Then they decided we were letting students from the city in illegally; they saw them getting on and off buses and they only see them in the community during school time. They would now say “You’re letting in city students and they’re ruining our school.”

Marsha explained that she tried to combat the negative views of community members by showing them what was really happening at the high school.

I would take all these people up to the high school and say “let’s just go walk around the high school” and we’d walk around the high school and they’re actually shocked, literally and utterly shocked that there weren’t kids fighting in the hallway, smoking weed or drinking, you know, hanging out.

Paula explained that Caucasian students began to transfer out of the district around this time. Many of these students transferred to the school district to the North of Lakeside Schools. Paula shared her perception that administrators in this district manipulated the system to ensure that only Caucasian transfer students were accepted. She described some of the tactics the administration of the adjoining district employed.

They've found very creative ways; they assess new students and then say to them, because it's pretty accurate, they're not assessing them to where they want them to be for ninth grade, but we'll take you in eighth grade. Not many students are going to and will think "Well, let's see where I can go that will take me in ninth grade."

Over time negative perceptions in the community led many families to transfer their students out of the district.

Paula talked about how the history of race relations in the area shaped community reactions to demographic change. She explained that many community members were raised in the families of the people who fled the city when it was integrated. "You have this culture of fear that when African Americans move in, property values go down, schools go down, we have to get out of here, etc."

Marsha and Paula both talked about community members' deficit views regarding African-American students, and ways these views led them to behave in ways that complicated the leadership of Lakeside Schools' ability to deal with demographic changes, and meet the needs of all students. Paula talked about how she feels racism existed "below the surface in the community." She explained that she was unaware of

racist feelings when the community was more homogeneous.

Why would it percolate up if there's nothing provoking it? It's just there. You never heard any comments about Black families because there weren't any there.

Paula explained that in the years immediately after passage of the Schools of Choice legislation, most of the students who were moving into the district were White. As time went by, more African American students began moving into the district. She shared her perceptions as to how this phenomenon played out.

The conflict was, when the Caucasian students leave first, a few years later, African American students began to follow. Now my school, which is on the other side of the express lane, by the time I left, was probably 32-33% African American students. We had a very good reputation because we believed that these are our kids; educate the kids that are in front of you.

Paula explained that many of these early transfer students were from middle class families. Over time more students from the inner city began transferring into the district.

Then it was the second wave of kids who were coming more from "inner-city experiences." We found that they were coming to us with a lot of achievement deficits. What also happened around that time was we became a Schools of Choice district, so there was this unusual collision.

Community resistance grew as more African American students moved into the district. Over time the deficit views some community members held became more apparent.

Paula noted that negative community perceptions were reinforced by members of the community government, including the police department. She explained that she felt

as if the entire community was working against the district. Her perception was that these attacks had to do with race.

Everyone was against us. Even the police were telling resident's they should send their kids to another school, they should send them to the other two schools and so it was as if you were being assaulted from everywhere and the assault was strictly based on race. At that point Lakeside was as good as or higher than the contiguous districts . . . and the programs were as good or better, so it had solely to do with race.

Marsha also felt as though everyone was working against the school district. Even the police were telling resident's they shouldn't send their kids to that school, they should send them to the other two schools and so it was as if you were being assaulted from everywhere and the assault was strictly based on race.

She elaborated on the theme of resistance from members of the community government.

The police were horrible. They were telling the parents not to send their kids to South Lake. The mayor, the mayor was weak, weak, weak, with about a 1950s view of race. On the city council you had some people who are sort of progressive but then some really, really, really right wing people.

The fact that governmental officials were involved served to legitimize and reinforce deficit views some community members held regarding African American students

Marsha explained that the history of the area shaped community members' reaction to community change.

You have to remember that these people actually moved to get away from the

city. Many of them had moved from the city, had connections to the city, they really did not want anything to do with it.

Marsha felt that negative perceptions of African American students were based upon misinformation. She talked about the things she and other district employees did to try to reach out to community members. “So I started to have a senior citizen’s breakfast where I would bring senior citizens into the building.” Students played a key role in these attempts to shape community attitudes.

The kids would greet them in the parking lot and take them into the building, show them all the things that were happening in the building, then the kids would perform. . . . They’d actually be in the school and see the kids and dispel some of these rumors that were going around and being spread on these terribly racist blogs.

Marsha was very candid in her assessment of the effectiveness of these efforts. She believes that while they were successful in shaping the views of some citizens, many more clung to their deficit views, and began to enact various forms of resistance.

Staff resistance to change. Marsha and Paula both talked about ways staff members clung to deficit views of African American students, and undermined efforts to meet their needs. As negative perceptions of Lakeside Schools grew, students began to transfer to neighboring districts. As noted above, this was significant because of the nature of school funding in the state. Funding for public schools is provided on a per-pupil basis. As more students transferred to neighboring districts Lakeside School received less money from the state. This limited the district’s ability to add staff and

resources that were needed to meet the needs of all students.

Marsha talked about some of her experiences working with staff members after she became Superintendent. In particular, she had difficulties with some staff members at the high school. She explained that many of these staff members had worked for the district for a significant amount of time, and formed a close-knit group. Marsha felt that many of these teachers “didn’t want to have kids who were different than them.”

Paula also discussed teachers' negative views regarding African-American students. I asked her how she believes teachers in the district would characterize African American students from the inner-city.

I think they would say they don’t see color. They’re still at that level on the continuum. . . . I think I find the teachers perceive that the African American students are disrespectful. They see a universal definition of “respect” that everyone has to adhere to and operate under. If they don’t, it’s my job as the authority to nail them.

Marsha also addressed staff members’ perceptions of African American students from the inner-city. She believed that some teachers were motivated by fear.

Some of the teachers were afraid of the African American kids and the African American kids capitalized on that. They would pick up on that. I don’t know that the African American kids, most of them, would be able to articulate that but they knew it. Like the kids know when a good teacher walks into a classroom they know, they just know.

Paula explained that she believed negative comments by staff members had an

impact on the district's ability to meet the needs of African American students, and led to an increase in the number of students who were transferring to neighboring districts. She talked about how this phenomenon played out.

We were seeing teachers were really kind of their own worst enemies with some of the things they were saying. . . . The phenomenon they didn't get, that I had to explain to them . . . you have these teachers who believe they've known these families, they've taught two of their four kids, they think they're friends, they say things negatively about "these" kids and then they expect that they love you so much and that they're going to stay.

Paula believes many people choose to leave the district because of negative remarks by staff members.

You've said things about these kids and you're a teacher, so you really must know . . . our conversations that we're having in the hall these past years are what has harmed your school; your climate and your culture. If everyone had embraced the changes and not said, done and shown some of these things, but instead had said, "Yeah, we're changing, but so what." A lot of these families would have stayed.

Paula talked about some of the initiatives Lakeside Schools sponsored in attempting to help teachers gain a better understanding of African American culture, and equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they required to meet the needs of all students in the district. She explained that they began with a multi-cultural awareness day, which was intended to be a low-pressure experience that would serve to help teachers better understand African American culture. "We had a workshop day on Martin

Luther King, Jr. Day and they could go to different sessions to learn about various cultural things.”

Marsha also talked about this first diversity day. The day was a holiday for students and a professional development day for faculty and staff members. Marsha was serving as Curriculum director for the district at that point. She formed a diversity committee that included both staff members and parents to develop programming for the day. She explained that her connections in the city were helpful. “I had a lot of city connections and it was easy for me in certain ways to get people to do things.” She described the first diversity day as follows:

We did it as sort of a smorgasbord; people could choose what they wanted to do and different time periods. We tried to be pretty non-controversial, only a couple topics. . . . So it would be what I’d call diversity light, you know we’d have the Mariachis playing at lunch, stuff that, there was nothing that you had to change in yourself, you could just kind of go and people pretty much liked it. And the diversity committee was going strong and we debriefed and celebrated doing it.

Marsha explained that, as time went by, the committee designed events that were meant to be more challenging. “And then the next year, each year we sort of upped the ante and expected more of people and did more things that required more self-reflection.” Paula described these more challenging professional development experiences.

The next year we upped it yet again; we had some guest speakers, we had people come in and show our data off, how our African-American students are doing versus our White students. We brought in Pat & Sara, which a lot of teachers

weren't ready for; everything they teach is what we need to know. It's about communication style, respect, low-distance power, high-distance power, all of the things that if you could really embrace that and apply it to the kids.

Next, the Lakeside Schools formed what they call the Achievement Gap Task Force. Paula addressed the leadership's reasons for adopting this title. "We called it that specifically to try looking at the data and situations objectively and wondering what can we do to close this gap." The district also sponsored training in Marva Collins' framework of poverty model. Paula felt that this model was based upon deficit thinking, in that it put the blame for low academic performance on students. "The majority of our community and teachers do not understand the concept of "White privilege"; they feel that if you behaved like this, you, too, would be fine." Paula went on to explain that she believed this model played on teachers pre-existing beliefs about African American students.

Paula explained that she felt that many staff members lacked the cultural understanding they needed to meet the needs of African American students. When district leaders facilitated professional development experiences meant to help them develop this type of cultural awareness, they met with resistance. Paula shared the story of one professional development experience.

How do you give them that pivotal event or life changing moment when they realize? We tried a few years back during one of our staff development days; we had a group of kids from the high school. Marsha and I had worked with them over a period of weeks and months and heard their stories to get them ready to

stand up on the stage to tell the teachers some of the things they feel good about with the school and then the things that are hurtful and harmful in the areas they feel discriminated in. The teachers got angry.

Marsha also addressed this event. She described the efforts the students took to ensure that the presentation was sensitive to the feelings of teachers.

Well the kids really worked hard on it, and there are some great kids, these kids were just adorable, you know, great kids. They tried to figure out ways to say things that would not be hurtful, that would not be problematic. They were very sensitive about the whole thing.

Marsha explained that she was surprised at the negative reactions many staff members expressed after the event.

And afterwards there were a few staff people who were really, really happy with what the kids had said and were really moved by what the kids had said, but the majority of the staff people were angry with the kids and defensive, extremely defensive. Even though the kids had been so circumspect in what they said and so careful with their choice of language, and they really only named one teacher by name, and that was in a complimentary way . . . they just talked. They were really very low key, what they said, but the reactions were really bad . . . that showed you that the teachers didn't want to hear what they had to say.

Marsha elaborated on the defensive nature of some teachers' reactions, and the difficulties they exposed.

The teachers were like "how come we didn't get to ask them any questions?" We

didn't allow them to ask any questions, these were just kids on the stage, we're not going to say "oh you can question these kids now, you can tear them apart" you know? We knew that kids were not being confrontational, they were not being jerks in any way, and it showed how much the staff didn't really want to hear from the kids, that they really didn't want to hear what they had to say, that they really didn't want to change, that they really didn't want any challenge to their firmly held beliefs about kids. To me it was one of the best things we ever did.

As Marsha reflected on the nature of staff members' reactions she concluded that, because of the strength and persistence of their deficit views, it was unlikely that staff members would react in a positive manner to the presentation.

Maybe it was OK that that's the way the staff reacted, it's not how I would have wanted the staff to react but maybe it was impossible for the staff to react any other way.

Marsha explained that some staff members began to enact subtle forms of resistance. This included increased absenteeism on the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, which was when the district sponsored annual diversity training.

What started to happen was that people would start to call in sick then, on Martin Luther King Day, because they didn't want to be part of it, so we'd always have a certain set of people who would call in sick. And the more challenging it became the more people pushed back.

Lasting policy effects. Another theme I discerned relates to the effects of governmental policies. This theme concerns the ways policies can shape and influence the context in which school leaders operate. The effects of various governmental policies helped shape the environment Marsha and Paula operated in as leaders of Lakeside School District. In particular, the schools of choice initiative exerted a powerful influence upon the Lakeside School District. Paula and Marsha also felt that governmental policies related to school funding and accountability, as well as union contracts constrained their ability to deal with these changes in a positive way.

Schools of Choice. Bogotch (2002) argues that the forms social justice leadership takes in practice situations are fluid, and change according to external factors. Passage of the Schools of Choice initiative had a profound impact on Lakeside Schools. By giving students the opportunity to transfer to another school district, the legislation served as a catalyst for demographic change in the district. This demographic change, and the varying reactions it provoked, were the focus of Marsha and Paula's leadership efforts, and shaped the nature of the social justice leadership they enacted

Governmental policies often have a range of effects, both intended and unintended (Ball, 1997). A consideration of whether the effects the schools of choice initiative exerted upon Lakeside School District are those that the authors of the initiative intended is beyond the scope of this study. It is also not my intention to make any judgments as to whether schools of choice was a good or bad piece of legislation. Like most policies it had a range of effects, and individuals and groups would most likely offer differing interpretations of the legislation depending upon their viewpoints. For the

purposes of this study I will only consider the participants' interpretations of how the initiative played out.

I asked Paula if she could discuss the Schools of Choice policy. She explained that in 1993, voters in the state passed a ballot initiative that allowed students to transfer to school districts other than those they lived in. The initiative also tied school funding was determined by the number of students attending a school district. Paula explained how the system worked.

It took a few years down the line, but what began to happen was since the primary amount of money per pupil allowance came with the child, the Republican agenda was to get vouchers for students to take and go anywhere. That was not passed by the community and the voters put in "Schools of Choice" where you didn't actually have a voucher but your child took the funding so they were free to go to different communities for school.

Like Paula before her, Marsha discussed the Schools of Choice initiative and its impact on Lakeside Schools. Marsha talked about how the segregated nature of the area, along with the demographic changes brought on by the Schools of Choice legislation led to "White Flight," and facilitated the de facto segregation of school districts.

And, so Lakeside at that point was a huge recruiting district for "schools of choice" kids because the East side of the city was the first place that African-Americans moved to. So "White Flight" began there with Schools of Choice.

Marsha discussed her perceptions as to how the phenomenon played out in the area.

You had black families who moved into the Eastside school district. If you look on the map you'll see East View, you can see where it is, and you'll see it is right contiguous to the city, people came right in through from the city hoping to get their kids into a better, safer school district. So as soon as they'd move in the White families started moving out.

Marsha explained that the school funding system under Schools of Choice led school districts to begin competing for students.

School funding in our state is provided primarily through sales tax, not property tax, OK? So school funding is per pupil and that made a huge change . . . in how everything functioned because everybody's fighting for pupils then. The battle for pupils begins because all your funding is based on the number of students that you have. So now school districts are battling school districts to get students with advertisements.

Districts were faced with the choice of re-allocating money that could have been used to meet the needs of students to pay for advertising, or losing revenue when students transferred.

In our first interview Paula explained she believes that the district to the north of Lakeside developed ways to ensure that only White students transferred into their schools. Many of the more affluent districts found ways to circumvent the initiative. As such students were not really free to move to any school they choose.

What they're saying is if you're in a lower achieving school, you can move. What they're not saying is really where you can move. If I live in the inner city, can I

make it to a county school? The wealthy district is closed, they're not letting you in, and they've never been open. . . . They don't want kids of a different ilk in those schools and they suffer, too, if they happen to be there.

As my goal in carrying out this study is to examine issues related to social justice I believe it is important to consider the ways policies such as schools of choice impact marginalized members of society. Paula also noted that transportation issues kept many students from fully exercising their right to attend the school of their choice.

Parents say, 'I tried to get them to school but my car has 120,000 miles on it. I can't drive them back and forth to Warren and then go to work.' That's our system.

The Schools of Choice legislation is not the only governmental policy that affected Lakeside Schools. In my interview with Marsha, she explained that cuts to the state's education budget and the nature of accountability policies limited Lakeside Schools' ability to address changing demographics, and meet the needs of all students.

At the same time this is all happening, we're getting cuts in funding from the state. . . . You're facing more issues with less money to deal with them. And then I would say the pressure of Testing, and the idea of identifying schools, of failing schools and grading schools complicates things.

Paula went on to explain that labeling campuses as low-performing reinforced community members deficit views regarding African American students and declining schools.

Paula noted that teachers know they are judged by the scores their students

receive on high-stakes tests. She talked about the inter-play between accountability policies and teachers fears regarding African American students.

We don't have a lot of models of marginalized culture, such as the African American culture, which is also economically disadvantaged, moving in to an area and not negatively impacting achievement. Since we're judged by scores, what was their fear? It was kind of this self-fulfilling prophecy and they continued to look at the students as the problem.

The idea of seeing African American students as deficient, and as a source of problems is consistent with Valencia's (1997) deficit thinking model.

Marsha and Paula discussed the interplay between accountability policies, union contracts and budget cuts.

Paula: Sometimes you're kind of geared by the contract agreement, because it doesn't always allow you to put the teachers where they need to be. It doesn't make it as easy to change things. . . . If we could start with people who are committed to social justice it would be much better.

Marsha: And they ask us if they've made changes, but all they've really done is tied our principals even more in a system that keeps them from going in and interacting with our teachers in a meaningful manner. It's really a divisive thing. As soon as you start ranking schools, then what, you're ranking teachers? I mean, I don't need to rank the teachers to know if they're effective or not. But as soon as you have to start labeling them, now you have to reprimand them more firmly. And when they feel that way, you're not going to get work done. They're going

to feel angry.

Marsha: And when you're in layoff mode, teachers are moving from school to school, automatically, that's just going to happen. So you're not able to create that strong culture inside that school. Once you start to create that cultural change inside that school, then you have a layoff mode because of budget. Then, in our state, at that point, with seniority and everything, you end up having to change your staff . . . and so that was huge. That was huge. It was a real confluence of a lot of things.

As these comments, as well as those related in earlier sections show, governmental policies shape the environment in which social justice leaders operate, and generate a number of both intended and unintended consequences.

Personal costs. As the literature suggests, social justice leaders bear professional and personal costs for their stance. While Paula alluded to these costs, Marsha talked explicitly about them. She explained that the dissonance she was experiencing made her feel as though she had moved thousands of miles away from the nearby city. Marsha explained that she began to feel that she was personally under attack.

And so in the community I clearly was the leader of all of this, I'm from the city, I'm married to an African American. It actually got to the point where people were walking in the community saying "she believes in pupil integration", that was really bad, you know. Then it was "she's married to a Black man" and "she lives in the city." I almost felt like I couldn't tell people where I lived, you know? They said "everything's changed, she's here and it's changing, look at all the

Black kids here at the schools, she must be bringing them in and it's changing.”

Marsha talked about the personal toll particular events began to take.

But it did take a toll on me. . . . I was feeling like “this is exhausting, I’m feeling really exhausted.” I felt like it was really taking a toll on my house. . . . I’m trying to get the staff to change, I’m trying to get the parents to change, and also dealing with the real issues of African American kids coming into the district from the city, and every time there would be like a fight or something it would be a major disaster with police cars in front of the school. You’re hoping against hope that the kids coming into the district will just blend in but they won’t either because they come in with all their own issues, and they do come in from city schools and neighborhoods, and they do have achievement issues and it’s all real.

Paula shared her perceptions of the personal costs associated with Marsha’s tenure as superintendent. She explained that she believed contradictions between what Marsha believed, and the situation she found herself in created a great deal of personal tension.

My thought was you’re too big . . . ideologically, your knowledge base. That’s why we have to get what we can from you while you’re here. You’re not going to stay there because too many more years will kill you. You can’t stop the clash between what you believe and what you live. . . . That’s who she is. She’s trying to live what she’s doing.

Marsha and Paula agreed that social justice leadership is difficult to enact. Resistance from community and staff members, personal attacks, and identity issues create tension, and lead to burnout and fatigue.

Resisting Oppressive and Exploitative Social Relations

Resisting oppressive and exploitative social relations is a recurring theme in the literature on SJL in the field of education. Marsha and Paula enacted this type of resistance by seeking to build supportive school cultures, providing training in inter-cultural communication, giving students a voice in decision making, utilizing networks of support, and by working through campus administrators. In the following sections I will review each of these themes.

Supportive school cultures. One way these leaders resisted oppressive social relations was by working to develop supportive school cultures. Paula explained that this involves providing teachers with the resources, training and flexibility they need to meet the needs of students from marginalized cultures. Paula explained that she feels developing school cultures that provides teachers with the supports that will allow them to be responsive to the needs of students, while maintaining rigor in the classroom will reduce the number of disciplinary incidents, and lead to higher student achievement

I understand that high school teachers feel they don't have the time because they're teaching and they have the pressures of the curriculum. I understand that, so we have to innately put in a culture that supports them and so the incidents will be fewer.

Training in inter-cultural communication. Paula expressed a belief that providing teachers with training in inter-cultural communication can alleviate some of the negative effects of cultural disconnects. She elaborated on the theme of communications

problems between faculty members and students.

I talked to one teacher and asked if they were respectful and if they ever sat down to define “respect” with their class. . . . How can you expect something as abstract as “respect” when you haven’t even defined it, yet you expect them to have your definition because you think your definition is the definition?

Paula explained that she believes training in inter-cultural communication can help teachers learn how to de-escalate situations such as the one described above. She related the story of how such training helped one teacher learn how to diffuse conflict in her classroom.

I had a teacher, who was part of our diversity achievement task force. . . . An African American girl came up to her saying, “Why do we have to do this?” and she said the first thing that happened to her was the hair on the back of her neck stood on end and she thought, “She’s questioning me, the teacher?” She said, “Thinking about all of our conversations on the task force, I decided to answer her, not to look at how she asked me and my first innate response was disrespect and in-my-face-attitude, I had to maintain authority; I decided just to answer her.” It was part of the training regarding communication styles and what respect looks like. She said, “I thought about all of this since we learned and I just told her. She just looked at me and said, ‘Oh, okay,’ and walked away.”

Paula talked more about some of the issues associated with inter-cultural communication.

We’ve adapted our staff in the possibility that they don’t have the vocabulary or

the experiences. If I'm a teacher, what is my job, then? It's harder to meet an African-American child where they are because you're associating where they are with their Blackness. "Because you're Black, you don't get it, you're disrespectful, etc." It's so deeply inside of them that they couldn't even articulate that, but it's how they behave and the kids know it.

This quote reinforces the idea that staff resistance is often based upon deficit views of students, a theme that I will explore in greater detail in the following chapter.

The idea of providing training in intercultural communication is similar to Kose's (2007, 2009) findings related to the professional development role of social justice principals. One of the five professional development roles Kose (2009) identifies is that of transformative cultural leader. Kose (2007) found that one principal focused on diversity training centered on a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity.

Student voice. Marsha and Paula both discussed ways the effects of cultural disconnects and deficit views can be reduced by allowing students to have a say in their own schooling. Paula explained that she believes that giving students a voice decision making processes can help to ameliorate some of the cultural mismatches, and give them a stake in building a more inclusive culture in the schools.

We have to go to the kids now, in my opinion, with where we are now. We have to give them a voice in how they feel and what they think we need to do.

Paula explained that she believes that giving students more voice also has the potential to change the community in positive ways.

Then the community will change. I used to think that would be the next step or it

would be up there, but after my years in the administration, kids shape parents in a lot of ways because they're there and the parents are not. . . . The kids are going to be key in changing the community, and they're really good ambassadors who haven't been used.

Marsha explained that the accomplishments she is most proud of have to do with giving students the opportunity to have a voice in decisions related to their educations.

I think the proudest legacy probably is that the kids are still involved with the Round Table for Diversity and Inclusion, and that the kids are still doing that and that the kids are still celebrating Memorial Day and they have their parades and they have a float that deals with diversity and inclusion, and so you still have the kids having that voice. So I think probably the proudest thing is that I was really to listen to the kids. Again, as a teacher, that was the most satisfying part, to be able to give that to the kids. To give the kids some voice and to try and have the principals give the kids some voice. And some of the teachers really did change and really did pick up on things and really tried to move forward. It's a process, it's just a process, and it's not an easy process.

Networks of support. Another theme both participants expressed is the importance of utilizing networks of support. This theme has to do with ways leaders draw on a diverse group of individuals to help them carry out their social justice work. Marsha explained that she believes that such networks are crucial to leaders who are engaged in social justice work.

One of the key things if you're going to do that sort of social justice work, you

need to have people to partner with. You need to have support because it's really difficult if you don't have that support, if you don't have someone who can be there for you when things are difficult, and that you can run ideas by.

Marsha and Paula talked about they depended on each other for support.

I asked Paula and Marsha if they remembered when they first met. Paula explained that she was on the committee that interviewed Marsha for the curriculum director position.

I remember when Marsha came in because she was so not necessarily fitting the mold of people we had been interviewing. She had a very short haircut. She was very worldly. She sort of stood out in that regard, and it was kind of incredible.

That's what I remember. I was really impressed with the depth of her answers to the questions we asked. I think she brought more perspective than the typical responses.

Paula explained that she valued Marsha because of her different background and perspective.

To have someone come in who was totally from the other side of life from me. . . .

When you have a little bit of faith in someone, you can really learn a lot from them because you can then focus on professional things. . . . When you first meet someone, anyone, you hear what they're saying, you listen to it, you kind of put it in the place of where it meets up with what you already believe or . . . where you're ready to make a change. But I think when you respect someone and actually like them personally, I think it's even more of an impact.

Paula explained that Marsha was a powerful influence in the development of her social

justice viewpoint.

I had a great deal of respect for her when I was a principal. She provoked me to think in a certain way. . . . She came from the city, and was there for many years. She could look at it from a different perspective, and also a non-district perspective and she could be a new lens for us. She was very influential in energizing me and getting me to look at things and see if there weren't things I could do.

Paula and Marsha both talked about how they felt frustrated by the lack of support from the former superintendent. Marsha explained that when she began working for the district she felt unsure about what to do in her new job.

I remember my first day, my desk was completely empty and I was like 'What am I supposed to do?' And the superintendent doesn't even come in and talk to me." Marsha recalled that she came to depend on Paula because of her experience working in elementary schools.

Paula was a principal then. She had also worked in Central Office. She knew a little about what had been going on in Central Office. . . . she became the person who really helped me most in the district. . . . She helped me a lot with understanding what was going on at the elementary level, period, in terms of curriculum.

Paula explained that after a period of time Marsha became the human resource director for the district, and she became the curriculum director. While serving in this position, she also felt frustrated by the lack of leadership from the superintendent. "I

never felt that I knew what he expected.” Marsha also expressed frustration at the lack of direction from the Superintendent. “He never set any goals, he never set goals. We never sat down as an administrative team.”

Paula explained that there seemed to be very little long-term planning going on in the district.

The importance in what we’re saying is that he did not look at the district as a whole, analyze the changes, the changes that were coming. Look at some trends, some small little ripples in the radar. Then develop a vision and a plan based off “this is what I’m seeing.” “This is where we may be going.” The trends are showing that we may have difficulty. He never did that.

One consequence of this lack of strategic planning was that there were no plans in place to deal with the impending demographic changes, which Marsha explained took place in a short period of time. “In six years, the district completely changed. This is how fast change happens when it happens with race.”

Paula explained that support is also very important when the demands of leadership become too much. Marsha and Paula didn't just rely on each other for support. As some of the critical incidents related in a later section of this chapter show, they also drew upon a diverse group of individuals both within and outside of the school district. As the next section shows, campus administrators played an important role in supporting efforts to lead in socially just ways.

Working through campus administrators. Another theme that I identified was evident in all the interviews I carried out for this study was the idea of working through

campus administrators. Paula talked about how she works to ensure campus that campus level administrators hired by the district have a social justice orientation.

It's something we screened for. We screened for other attributes that lend themselves to that. We used a very specific system that looks for certain characteristics: empathy, collaborative, fair, etc. They have questions that are looking for these big attributes. When you find a person who really meets those, they tend to be the reflective type of person who will reflect on practice; you can say to them, "what else could you have done in this situation?" and ask them those kinds of reflecting and self-evaluation questions.

Paula explained she believes that, as with teachers, training in cultural sensitivity and inter-cultural communication is crucial in equipping administrators with the tools they need to address behavioral problems.

In discussing her accomplishments as superintendent, Marsha talked about the hiring of African American administrators. "I think we set the stage for the fact that the district now has Black principals, Black women principals. I mean that's unheard of."

Paula explained that she has worked hard to identify and hire African American administrators.

I had the opportunity to put a former high school district principal who is an African-American female; she is now my middle school principal. I've also had the opportunity to hire a high school principal and an assistant principal and my high school principal is a young, energetic African American female from the neighboring district. She is very dynamic and big on relationship building and

very deliberately hired by me, not because of her color, but who she is.

Paula elaborated on this topic, explaining that she believes it is important for students to have positive role models who are African American.

My kids need some people in authority who look like them and understand them and their experiences, someone who has some more cultural history. . . . Her experiences aren't exactly identical because she's Black, but she has a cultural understanding of where students are.

Paula explained that she feels one of her greatest accomplishments was putting together an administrative staff that has embraced socially just schooling for all students in the district.

I'm very proud of them and will go in the ditches because of them. They work very hard to promote our district because they don't want people to think of our school and students the way that they are.

In the joint interview, Paula talked about how she and Marsha depended on their administrative team.

One thing that I did feel powerfully is that, and you know there are weaknesses in an administrative team, but we had in general a good administrative team, an administrative team that did really want, more than that, want the kids to be successful. And all kids. That was the saving grace, really.

As these quotations show, the support of campus administrators is crucial for school superintendents who seek to lead in ways that are socially just. Campus administrators work directly with teachers and students, and exert a powerful influence on the culture of

their schools. As such they are well placed to effect change, and combat deficit views.

Evolving Identity as a Social Justice Leader

In describing their experiences, Paula and Marsha conveyed that as children they saw the world as a just place. Each described particular experiences that challenged this view and led them to develop identities that emphasized helping others and working for just aims. However, even as adults, Marsha and Paula seemed surprised by the racism and oppression they encountered in their work as educational leaders. As African American students transferred into the district, deficit views began to emerge and intensify among staff and community members. These viewpoints were a source of consternation and distress for Marsha and Paula because such views conflicted with their social justice outlooks. Both Paula and Marsha indicated that they experienced conflict between their social justice values and beliefs and the situations they found themselves in while serving as leaders in the Lakeside School District. Both participants faced personal costs and experienced identity issues as they worked to exercise social justice leadership.

Identity conflicts. A number of themes emerged that reflect ways Marsha and Paula's identities evolved during the time they served as leaders of the Lakeside School District. In this section I review these themes. One theme that emerged deals with identity issues Marsha and Paula experienced as they attempted to enact social justice leadership. These issues have to do with conflict between Marsha and Paula's pre-existing views and the situations they found themselves in. Marsha experienced conflict where her identity was concerned. In her case these issues centered on ways her identity was tied up with her work as an inner-city teacher. In our first interview she discussed the difficulty she

had in deciding to leave the inner the city and go to work for Lakeside.

I was totally conflicted, more conflicted than I'd ever been about anything. It's really interesting because I was so self-defined as an inner-city teacher and thought it was so important to work in the inner-city schools.

Marsha explained that her work as an inner-city teacher was an important part of her identity. This made the decision to leave the district a difficult one.

I was so loyal to working in the city and thought that work was so important, that for the first time in my life I was literally pacing the floor trying to figure out what to do, whether I should go or not go.

Marsha went on to discuss how these conflicted feelings were intensified by some of her early experiences working for Lakeside Schools.

I remember January came and it was Martin Luther King Day, and at that school it was like nothing, you know? And here I'm coming from the city and I'm kind of shocked, but at that point, my first year at Lakeside which is about eight years ago now, not that long ago. There were very few African American students.

Marsha also talked about how she believed she was perceived when she came to the work at Lakeside Schools.

Actually when I was offered the job some of the board members who hadn't met me at the vote, they were totally surprised when I walked in because I was coming from the inner-city public schools, you know, my resume was all from the city.

One of them assumed I was going to be Black and she was totally set to vote against me, you know? I had the name Marsha Johnson, I could be Black, White,

you know? It could be an African-American name. So she just assumed that I'd be Black.

These identity issues were exacerbated by stressful events, and staff and community resistance to change.

Evolving leadership. Paula discussed ways her leadership practices have evolved over the course of her tenure as superintendent. For Paula, the incongruence between her identity as a social justice leader and her work in Lakeside caused her to change her approach to leadership. Paula's tendency was to work collaboratively to bring about change. She tended to use indirect approaches rather than tackling issues head-on. A lack of positive results led to an evolution in Paula's leadership style. She saw the need to lead in ways that were more direct. These changed conflicted with her natural inclination towards being more collaborative. She explained that while she still works in collaborative ways whenever possible, she recognizes that it is sometimes necessary to issue directives when the best interests of students are at stake.

I used to think you tried to instill the big picture. I've changed; I have the big picture, my administrators must have the big picture and I work with them. When it comes down to it, it's the detail; "You will not do this. You will do this. You will use culturally responsible teaching." If I have to get the script on how you behave and what you have to do, then I will do that, because I can't forfeit anymore children waiting for you to get it, so this is how it's going to be.

Paula gave an example that illustrates ways she has become more direct in her leadership style.

For instance, I said to my administrators at the beginning of the year: “You will have to be in building activities in your classroom that all teachers are doing the first day and I want to know what they’re going to be and how they’re going to go and if I walk in to those classrooms, I want to see them happening. You will have two or three reading strategies every teacher uses whenever asking a student to read; how you do it and what you choose will be up to you.” We put reading support in to the high school and every teacher is using reading strategies that the teacher is facilitating, not me.

I asked Paula if she could elaborate on some of the factors that led to the changes in her leadership style. She explained that over time a lack of positive results led to a questioning of her current practices.

Lack of change because what I realized is that, for me, it’s not my job anymore. It’s an evolving of me, from a teacher, who I am, who I went to school to be, what I feel like in the community. . . . It’s always the give and take, to a principal where it was still working with a small staff and working with the school, developing a vision and a culture.

Paula talked about how this evolution in her leadership style conflicted with her natural inclination to lead in more collaborative ways.

I was such a collaborative person that it was against who I am to be directive. It was hard, because I believed in that collaborative and empowering world; we’re all on this train together.

Paula explained that she came to realize that she was dealing with difficult social

problems, and that eradicating these difficulties was beyond the capacity on one person.

I'm one person, I can't erase racism, but I can make us do things that will meet the needs of these children. That might be the thing that shifts the big picture and repaints it.

Paula explained that this evolution of her leadership style caused some tension because of her pre-existing beliefs.

I looked at how I change things differently now that I am in charge; I've never been a "boss person." I don't believe in "boss management" I believe in "lead management" but I have to be a boss, too.

Paula explained that her perception that she was serving a higher purpose led her to change her leadership style despite conflicts this caused with her identity as a collaborative leader.

It's my responsibility because I'm in this role for a reason today and it is affect change so that these schools survive and they meet the needs of kids as well as make people want to be here because they see how great we are. I need to make sure that I have teachers in classrooms behaving a certain way, not that it's what they believe and what they want, but it's what I expect. I have administrators who believe, embrace and make sure it happens.

Paula went on to elaborate on how she works with her administrative team to ensure that policies are enforced in a way that centers on the needs and interests of students.

The way I work now is through the administrators; that's the key. I have put in

administrators who are committed to social justice and if they don't get it, it doesn't matter. I had an administrator who is suspending kids right and left. I said last year: "You will all determine what alternative to suspension you will use; you determine what you want to do, share with me what it is, but this stops now. Your students are not learning when they're out of the classroom."

In the third interview Paula talked more about how her views have changed over time.

As a teacher I always thought that if I love you and care for you all, it's going to be good and it's going to be fine. But sometimes kids need more. They need specifics, like as we're finding out now. They need specific interventions to help them with specific skills. It's not about me loving you; it's about me caring enough about you to maybe take it this way, because you need to learn to read. And that's how I'm going to care about you. I'm going to teach you to read, and you're going to read as close to grade level as possible. That's the door you knock down.

Paula explained that the implementation of the new reading strategies yielded positive results.

I just gave the directive and it got funneled down in the best and most beautiful way and they embraced it as their idea; I love it, it's perfect. They will tell me, "Well, we invented reading strategies this year." You know what happened? The reading and writing performances have gone up, remarkably. When they see these kids able to do this, what does it do for how they feel about these kids and their

ability to learn? When they're meeting the needs of these kids, what happens to the behavior? When the kids are getting the help and support they need, what's happening, little by little?

In the next section I will examine some of the personal difficulties Marsha experienced as she attempted to exercise social justice leadership.

Critical Stories.

Siedman (1998) explains that stories “convey experience in an illuminating and memorable way (p. 72). Marsha and Paula often used stories to convey their experience. This section I retell three stories that seem particularly useful in illustrating some of the themes that emerged in the data analysis phase.

The Ipod incident. During the first interview Paula told a story she believes illustrates the idea that deficit thinking and oppressive relationships between staff members and African American students often cause what should be routine disciplinary matters to escalate out of control.

One of the issues I will tell you about that was an issue I share widely and say “this will never happen again” has to do with the inability to deescalate situations with African American students. There's a cultural mismatch between the teachers who are teaching and some of the children who are learning.

Paula explained that the situation involved a student who had behavior issues in the past. The student and a number of his classmates were wearing headphones and listening to music.

He was told to turn his down because it's too loud, he turns it down. He's told

again, this time he doesn't. He's then sent to the responsibility room and at this point he's angry and he makes the comment while he's waiting, "this is why you see violence towards teachers on TV." So the responsibility room teacher asks some questions, has him fill out his plans, and sends him back to class. The teacher goes back to the office and she says how she feels that's a threat.

The student was escorted to the office, and told that he had to go home. The student was never given an opportunity to tell his side of the story. Paula shared her perceptions as to how she believes the student felt.

He's already felt unfairly treated, for whatever reason and now it comes to this point. He won't move, so the police liaison is there and he tries to get him to move; they scuffle, next thing you know, the kid is in cuffs, the police liaison calls for backup and he's taken to the police station. His parents are called on transit to come pick him up at the police station. I think, "you have to be kidding me." I have a student who's at the police station now because of an ear phone incident when we have a policy they're not supposed to have ear phones anyway?

Paula explained that she believed the situation was escalated unnecessarily, in part because of a cultural disconnect between staff members and African American students.

That is an example of the issue; that the disconnect causes internalized stereotypes from both sides, but you're the adult and while you feel you're being threatened over an iPod/earphone incident, you have to send this student and then it escalates. Then you're an administrator you have to automatically say "you're leaving" because this kid has had some behavior issues before. Obviously it's a

kid that nobody wants in this school.

Paula described how she believes these types of incidents are interpreted by other students.

These kinds of things send messages to the other kids. It doesn't send the same message we learned about in Ed-Psych, with the halo effect, where if I talk to you, others who are doing that are going to straighten up because they don't want me to talk to them. It sends a different message, one of insecurity and unfairness and unsafeness; "wow, he's at the police station because of that"; the kid is sixteen or seventeen years old so just by nature, he's going to be confrontational.

Although Paula characterized this incident as illustrating a cultural disconnect, it is perhaps a better illustration of deficit thinking and oppressive relationships. Paula felt that the unnecessary escalation of the situation, and the harsh consequences the student views were a direct result of the negative views people in positions of power held. The fact that law enforcement became involved in what many would characterize as a trivial incident indicates the existence of oppressive relationships in the school and community.

The letter. Marsha talked some about how unexpected obstacles and controversies took up great amounts of time and energy, complicated efforts to exercise socially just leadership. She related the story of a district administrator who unintentionally created a major controversy when he attempted to address racial issues in his school.

High school principal came from the city, worked in the city schools, felt very comfortable with African American kids. He goes through this courageous

conversations training, and he goes back to the school and he looks at the latest testing data and the latest testing data is as predicted, the African American kids are doing much worse than the White kids on the standardized tests, a considerable achievement gap. So he decides - at this point I'm Superintendent – he decides without contacting me to send out a letter to all the African American families in the school indicating what the achievement data says. School is about 28% African-American at that point. And the school explodes.

Marsha talked about how media scrutiny served to intensify the backlash this situation created.

The news media is outside the school and the head of the City Council right now is a guy named Smith, at that point he worked for Fox News and he had a radio show on a very popular African American channel. He carried the story; he's in front of the school. He called this meeting, right, and the parents come to the meeting, they're furious, the kids are walking out of class, I have to go up to the school, I take the group of African American kids who walked out of class by myself and I take them to the cafeteria and I'm talking to them, trying to diffuse this thing.

Marsha described how the situation reinforced the deficit views of some of the White community members, and caused a great deal of consternation and anger among African American students and parents.

The White parents are like “yeah, that's exactly what we thought, the black kids are doing terrible” and the Black kids are like “now everybody's looking at me in

class like I'm stupid." Some of the Black parents are like "well my kid's got a 4.0." I mean, there are a lot of White kids in school who aren't doing well either. In his mind, it was completely well-intentioned. He was going to personally attack the achievement gap himself by doing this. And probably, if you work in the city in an all-Black school, you could have that meeting and address achievement and talk directly about these issues. In a racially charged environment like that it was a disaster, it was horrible. He never lived it down and it was in the newspapers, it was everywhere.

Marsha explained how she used her connections in the city in an attempt to reach out to an African American parent who was particularly incensed by the incident.

Parents were coming into my office, one time it was so bad, this parent came to my office and she was so angry and I couldn't get her to calm down and I finally asked her "where do you work?" you know, trying to start another conversation with her, trying to diffuse the situation, and she told me she was a bus driver in the city. I said "oh, OK". One of my students at a High School on the East side was head of the bus driver's union and he was a student that I knew really well and was really close to his whole family, so I actually called him and I said "Bill, could you call this woman and tell her about me so that you can kind of vouch for me and tell her that I'm not this terrible racist that's running the school district?"

So he, in fact, did.

Marsha's outreach to this gentleman illustrates the importance of role networks of support can play in helping social justice leaders deal with crisis situations.

Marsha spoke more about how the incident reinforced prejudices in the community, increased community resistance to demographic change, and increased African-American students' negative feeling regarding school.

It was a really terrible time. It played into every racist stereotype in the community. The community was all like "yeah look at these kids, they're not achieving" and the kids felt horrible.

The kill list. Marsha told about another controversial event involving a young African American boy.

There was an African American student at the elementary school. He was living with his aunt and uncle, we had his brother in school, too, his brother was in high school at that point, maybe it was a half-brother, or maybe even a cousin, anyway there was another family member, probably a cousin because he was living with his aunt and uncle, anyway whatever his family situation was, it was not good. So he's living with them and he's a kind of odd kid, and he is in the sixth grade. He writes a note in class, he was seeing a counselor and his counselor told him that when he's upset he should write down what he's upset about, OK. So he writes this note, and he writes on it "Kill List" and he writes all these people on the list, and number one is his half-brother, like he's just upset and he's writing all these people down on his list and then he throws it away. And so this girl digs it out of the trash and she brings it to the teacher and we follow all of the protocol which is then you send him to the counselor, and the counselor interviews him. . . . He's like "no I'm just having a bad day. I'm just upset and my other counselor told me

that when I'm having a bad day I should just write down something and think about it and then throw it away so that's what I did." We send him then to an independent psych evaluation before he can come back to school. So he goes to an independent psych evaluation and they say he's not harmful, he's not going to hurt anybody.

Marsha described the community's reaction when news of the episode became public.

The community just blows up. I'm trying to deal with this at the school level and the principal tries to deal with this at the school level and the community, they want him kicked out, and I refuse to kick him out. And really, it's just horrible, I mean they were trying to meet behind my back with the board . . . and they were just relentless. They wanted the kid transferred out of the school.

Marsha went on to how she utilized a somewhat unlikely ally to try to diffuse the situation.

We had a great police officer who helped us too, even though the police department was very racist we had the best police officer we could have possibly had, and he resisted and met with the kid. He talked to the kid and he really tried to help the kid, too. The media was all over it, the media wanted to make it into this huge, huge deal. The media kept calling him. He knew all these media people because he'd been a cop for so long and they'd call him. I honestly can say that he's one of the major reasons I survived it because he diffused the media all the time. He was good friends with this one guy who wanted to, that the parents kept calling to do the story, and he kept telling the guy "there's nothing there, I'm

telling you there's nothing there.”

Like the official from the bus driver's union in the preceding story, the role this police officer played in helping Marsha deal with the media illustrates the importance role networks of support can play in helping social justice leaders.

Marsha talked about how the personal attacks and the racist rhetoric surrounding this event made her feel.

At that point I felt like I didn't want to work in this community, you know, that I didn't like these people and that they were the worst people that I ever would want to know. Coming from the city I'm shocked, I can't believe that these are the attitudes and it was totally because it was a Black who had done this. If it had been a White kid, you know, sort of like if it were a White kid that that guy shot, you know, everybody would be like, you know, but no it was a Black kid and, so basically you just need to hang him, really there was just as much hysteria as that, like the old days of lynching. They were pulling kids out of the schools, they were pulling them out of the school district, they were talking outside of buildings, they were going door to door, and I never did kick him out of school.

These feelings serve to illustrate the personal costs of leading for social justice. Dealing with frequent crisis situations, working to combat deficit views, and dealing with ad hominem attacks can lead to depression and burnout. Taken together, these critical incidents illustrate a number of the themes discussed above, and offer a glimpse at the difficulties associated with leading for social justice.

Conclusion

As the finding reported in this chapter show, the participants in this study faced significant resistance as they attempted to lead in ways that were socially just. Both participants indicated that they felt this resistance was based upon deficit views of African American students who exercised their right to transfer into Lakeside School District as a result of the passage of the schools of choice initiative. In the next chapter I will use Valencia's (1997) concept of deficit thinking as a lens for examining the findings reported above, and exploring possible answers to the research questions that guided this inquiry. I will also share my perceptions as to the significance of my findings for practitioners and researchers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of social justice leaders. Specifically, this study examined the work of two superintendents who have placed equity and social justice at the center of this work. In this chapter I consider teacher resistance and SJL, and use Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory, Valencia's deficit thinking model, and Bourdieu's concept of doxa to help interpret the results of this study in relation to the research questions and discuss implications for policy, practice, and future research.

Resistance and SJL

Resistance to change is a theme that figured prominently in this study. The idea of community resistance to social justice leadership is consistent with the findings of a number of scholars (Garza, 2008; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Perry, 1997; Theoharis, 2007) who have examined the experiences of school principals who seek to lead in socially just ways. As Theoharis (2007) notes in examining the experiences of school principals who sought to enact socially just leadership practices, these leaders often face resistance that originates in a number of different locations.

While advancing justice, these principals met resistance within their own schools and communities. They described that they felt this resistance coming directly from the demands of the principalship, the momentum of the status quo,

obstructive staff attitudes and beliefs, and insular and privileged parental expectations. (Theoharis, 2007, p. 238)

In his autoethnographic study of his first year as a school superintendent Garza (2008) argues that “leading for social justice incites political unrest because the hegemonic culture will resist change that provides equity to all members of society. He notes that the greatest resistance to change “. . . came from adults, including board members, a few 'elitist' parents, and some school employees” (p. 164). Garza notes that he learned the following lesson from his first year as superintendent.

I learned that it is not easy to be a leader for social justice. Leaders for social justice consistently challenge the hegemonic culture, and this often results in an adversarial relationship between the superintendent and those who use their power to demand and create privilege. (p. 176)

Oakes et. al (2000) also report findings that address community resistance. At one campus they found parents resisted efforts to eliminate tracking, and teach in ways that were more just, in part because of parents fears “. . . that racial diversity at the school had brought a decline in academic standards” (p. 573). The researchers found that the parents most often stated fear was that scores on college entrance exams would fall, and their children would not be able to attain admittance to top-tier universities.

In her study of a school district that attempted increase inclusion of special needs students in regular classrooms Perry (1997) found that community resistance took on unexpected forms, and created unlikely alliances. Perry offers the following description of how this resistance played out.

While the internal agitation continued among district administrators, teachers, and union leaders, the voices of parents and community members began to swell as they joined forces to campaign against inclusion. The local newspaper was flooded with letters denouncing the superintendent's actions. Parents spared no punches. They applied pressure towards elected members of the board of education. They threatened to recall those members who supported the superintendent. One board member later admitted that the success of his local business was in jeopardy because of a threatened parent boycott of his services. These findings show how resistance can build quickly when school leaders attempt to challenge the status quo.

Scholars (Oakes et al., 2000; Theoharis, 2008) have also produced findings that deal with staff resistance to change. Theoharis (2008) discusses the resistance the principals in his study experienced.

These principals experienced a continual struggle with the attitudes held by some staff members who did not want to take at least some responsibility for their students' not learning and who did not want to be reflective about changing their practice (p. 316).

Theoharis' findings are consistent with those of Oakes et al. (2000) who made the following observation about teachers in a school where the leadership was attempting to eliminate tracking, and equip teachers with the tools they needed to meet the needs of all students.

As hard as the school struggled to be caring, many faculty members couldn't let

go of their harsh judgments about students' families and potential.

This suggests that teacher resistance is often based upon deficit views of minority students.

The Deficit Thinking Model and Doxa

Valencia and Black (2002) describe the deficit thinking model as an endogenous theory in that it blames victims for their own oppression. For example, explanations based on deficit thinking locate the causes of low academic achievement in supposed cognitive and motivational deficiencies of students of color and those from low SES backgrounds, while structural and economic forces are held blameless. In other words, ideologies generated by deficit thinking models are based upon differential power relations in that “the more powerful blame the innocent” (Valencia, 1997, p. 3).

Valencia (1997a) argues that Bourdieu's (1992) discussion of doxa is useful in understanding the relationship between deficit thinkers and those who seek to disrupt taken for granted assumptions. He notes that doxa refers to “that part of the class society in which the social world is 'beyond question' or there is a 'universe of the undiscussed (undisputed)’” (p. 9). Bourdieu (1992) notes "The truth of doxa is only fully revealed when negatively constituted by the constitution of a field of opinion, the locus of the confrontation of competing discourses." (p. 168). These competing discourses can be characterized as representing *orthodoxy*, those discourses that defend the integrity of doxa, or *heterodoxy*, those discourses that represent dissent and nonconformity.

Valencia (1997a) goes on to note that while the deficit thinking model has historically represented orthodoxy, “through an evolving discourse, heterodoxy has come

to play a major role in the scholarly and ideological spheres in which deficit thinking has been situated” (p. 10). In other words, criticism and critique of theories based upon the deficit thinking model have shaped the ways in which the model has evolved. In the next sections I will use Valencia's (1997, 2002) deficit thinking model, Bourdieu's (1992) notion of Doxa, and selected themes from the preceding chapter to examine each of the three sub-questions that guided this inquiry.

Disrupting Doxa. In examining Paula and Marsha's experiences working as social justice leaders a consideration of his use of Bourdieu's (1992) concept of doxa seems particularly illuminating. Doxa refers to the values and beliefs that individuals often see as self-evident. Doxa often support current power arrangements, by making the dominance of certain groups seem natural. Many of the findings of this study are similar to the findings of studies that address the work of school principals as social justice leaders. One difference is the considerable time and effort Paula and Marsha expended working to disrupt doxa.

Disrupting doxa was the key to social justice leadership for Paula and Marsha. Deficit views of African American students played a powerful role in shaping and intensifying the resistance to change Marsha and Paula experienced. Much of these leaders' time and effort was spent disrupting the notion that the presence of African American students and families equated to problems in the district. This doxa manifested itself in allegations that African American students transferring into the district were 'ruining' the schools and that African Americans moving into an area caused property values to decline.

The demographic change brought about by the schools of choice initiative met resistance from both community and staff members. Both participants indicated that they believe community resistance was based largely upon misconceptions and deficit views of African American students. These views were influenced by the history of segregation in the area, and were transmitted and reinforced by members of the community power structure. The taken-for-granted nature of these views indicates that they represented doxa.

Both participants indicated that they believed staff resistance to demographic change was based upon deficit views of African American students. Staff resistance was muted at first, but grew as more African American students transferred into the district. These views coalesced around the idea that African American students were somehow 'less than' their White peers. Paula indicated that she believes negative comments by staff members reinforced and intensified community resistance, and led many families to transfer to neighboring school districts.

As noted above, much of Marsha and Paula's time was spent attempting to disrupt these negative doxa regarding African American students. As leaders of the district they believed it was important to present an alternative viewpoint built upon the idea of rejecting deficit views, and working to understand and meet the needs of African American students. Paula and Marsha's views represent a form of heterodoxy in that they offer dissent to the dominant doxa.

One way Marsha and Paula sought to disrupt doxa was by developing professional learning experiences in an attempt to help teachers better understand African American culture, and to equip teachers with the tools they needed to meet the needs of all students.

Both Paula and Marsha explained that as these professional development experiences became more challenging some staff members began to enact forms of resistance, including increased absenteeism on professional development days. Marsha explained that her experience leads her to believe that staff resistance, and efforts to combat such resistance, can reinforce each other.

So you have this whole continuum of reaction from the staff. As the staff are pushed more and more the staff resists more and more.

One way of interpreting this phenomenon would be that conflicts between the doxa of the teachers, and the heterodox viewpoint Marsha and Paula held led to tension for some staff members. This tension led to resistance which manifested itself in a number of ways.

Paula and Marsha both indicated that they believe cultural disconnects between faculty members and African American students intensified staff resistance, and often caused routine disciplinary matters to escalate out of control. Both participants perceived disconnects between the lived experience of middle class white teachers in the district, and African American students from the neighboring city. A lack of cultural knowledge combined with deficit beliefs can lead teachers to misinterpret the words and actions of African American students, and to adopt negative doxa (Guerra & Nelson, 2011). Paula indicated that she believes that many teachers were afraid of urban students, and that cultural differences led students and teachers to interpret policies and rules differently. Paula noted her perception that many teachers ‘thought less’ of students with non-traditional living arrangements, and Marsha explained that many teachers seemed

incapable of grasping concepts such as the idea of White privilege, and continued to view students as the problem. These perceptions reinforce the idea that many of the countervailing pressures Paula and Marsha faced were influenced by deficit views of African-American Students .

Another way these leaders disrupted doxa was by providing training in inter-cultural communications. As noted above, Paula explained that cultural mismatches sometimes lead to communications problems between faculty members and students. She believes training in inter-cultural communication can help to alleviate these difficulties, and equip teachers with the tools they need to de-escalate difficult situations. She also believes that this type of training can help combat deficit views by helping teachers gain a better understanding of how students' cultural backgrounds shape their behaviors.

Marsha and Paula also sought to disrupt doxa by working to give students a voice in decisions regarding their educations. Paula believes that giving students a voice decision making processes can help to reduce the negative effects of cultural mismatches and give them a stake in building a more inclusive culture in the schools. Paula explained that she believes giving students more voice is the key to developing more inclusive school cultures. “When kids change and embrace the culture and teachers support that, then we have a different place.”

Marsha and Paula utilized diverse networks of support as they worked to disrupt negative doxa. Marsha noted the importance of networks of support for leaders who are engaged in social justice work. She and Paula explained that they relied upon each other for support. Paula valued Marsha's opinions because of her diverse experience, and

Marsha relied upon Paula for her expertise in working with the elementary curriculum.

These leaders also drew upon a diverse group of individuals to provide advice and assistance when needed. Examples from the critical incidents shared in the last chapter include the police officer who helped Marsha deal with media scrutiny during the Kill List incident, and the bus driver's union official who helped her with fallout from the incident involving the letter. Other individuals these leaders relied upon include a trusted and valued secretary who worked with the district's central administration, staff members who served on various committees, community members, university professors, and campus and district administrators.

Marsha and Paula both indicated that, in particular, they relied upon campus administrators to help them carry out their social justice work. As noted above Paula explained that during the hiring process she screens prospective administrators for certain attributes that indicate a social justice orientation, and the ability to reflect upon their own practices. She also noted the importance of providing campus administrators with training in cultural sensitivity and inter-cultural communication. Paula explained that these efforts have allowed the district to develop a corps of campus administrators who forcefully reject doxa based upon deficit views of African-American students.

They are personally offended and upset when they hear our school being talked about a certain way because of “those kids.” They are embracing the social justice, whether they say it or not and I’m really proud of that.

Marsha and Paula both indicated that they see campus administrators as key players in attempts to enact change in the district. When serving as superintendent these

leaders worked with faculty, staff, community members, and students to develop a vision for the district. They both relied upon campus administrators to bring this vision to fruition at the campus level. They also relied upon campus administrators to transmit certain directives to staff members, and to monitor progress toward reaching district goals and objectives.

Another way that Marsha and Paula worked to promote social justice was to recruit African-American administrators. Paula addressed the importance of providing students with positive African-American role models.

I have made a concerted effort to try and find employees of color because 38-40% of my students are African-American. They need to have some role models who are like them.

Both Marsha and Paula indicated they see the hiring of African American Administrators as one of their greatest accomplishments. These administrators serve as living contradictions to the negative doxa many in the district and community seem to hold regarding African Americans

These leaders were both committed to providing an equitable and socially just educational experience for all the students in their district. Deficit views and negative doxa relating to African American students threatened to make this goal unattainable. As a result, disrupting doxa became a central part of Marsha and Paula's work as social justice leaders.

Transformative Learning and Evolution as Social Justice Leader

In addition to uncovering the central role disrupting doxa played in Marsha and

Paula's social justice work, their experiences also illustrate a transformative process in their development as leaders. As such Mezirow's (1990, 2000) Transformational Learning Theory (TLT) is a useful theoretical construct for examining how perspective transformation plays out.

Mezirow (1991) conceptualizes the transformational learning (TL) process as being made up of a number of components. First, the learner experiences a "disorienting Dilemma" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168). Next, the learner engages in critical reflection and reexamines their This reexamination arises out of cognitive dissonance the learner experiences when they "realize something is not consistent with what (they) hold to be true" (Taylor, 1998, p. 9), and can result in a change in perspective, or world view. Then, the learner engages in "reflective discourse" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 2) as they seek to obtain consensual validation as they talk with others about their new beliefs. Finally, The subject begins to act in ways that are consistent with their new perspectives and beliefs.

In a more recent works Mezirow (2012) asserts that perspective transformation often follows some variation of the following phases: 1) a disorienting dilemma; 2) self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; 3) a critical assessment of assumptions; 4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared; 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; 6) planning a course of action; 7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; 8) provisional trying of new roles; 9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and 10) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (p. 86).

Baumgartner (2001) notes “transformational learning, which can occur gradually or from a sudden, powerful experience, changes the way people see themselves and their world” (p. 16). Baumgartner (2001) explains Mezirow's original conceptualization of the theory has been criticized for over-emphasizing rational thought and reflection, and ignoring the importance of affective, emotional, and social context aspects the process. In more recent publications Mezirow (2012) acknowledges the importance of these contextual elements in the meaning making process. Baumgartner (2012) describes ways Mezirow's original conceptualization of TLT has been revised as follows:

Since 1975, Mezirow's theory has evolved from a rational process grounded in a particular context, with reference to concepts from psychology and critical pedagogy, to an increasingly holistic theory infused with ideas from Jurgen Habermas's (1971) conception of critical theory and open to the importance of emotion, context, intuition, and relationships in the transformative learning process (p 110).

Many of the narratives Marsha and Paula shared center on the idea of perspective transformation. TLT can serve as a lens for interpreting these stories. Baumgartner (2001) notes “transformational learning, which can occur gradually or from a sudden, powerful experience, changes the way people see themselves and their world” (p. 16). Paula's story of the White youths who ran African American children into a ditch can be seen as an example of a sudden, jarring incident, or “disorienting dilemma” that served as a catalyst for perspective transformation. She experienced cognitive dissonance, as she perceived that “... something's wrong here.” This dissonance spurred her to reflect upon her own beliefs about race relations, and contributed to a perspective transformation that was

embodied in an awareness of the existence of racially motivated injustices in society.

The ways in which professional experiences led Paula to change her perspective on how she should lead as a Superintendent can be seen as an example of how perspective transformation can take place gradually over time. Paula did not identify a single incident as causing her to re-evaluate her leadership style. Instead she talked about how, over time, a lack of results led her to determine that she needed to be more direct in communicating her expectations.

TLT, emotions, and resistance. Marsha and Paula were both frustrated by the resistance they met as they attempted to lead teachers to change their instructional practices, and their perceptions of African American students from the inner city. As noted above, Marsha found that the harder they pushed teacher, the harder teachers pushed back. The role of emotion in TL could help account for the vehemence of teacher resistance. Mezirow (2012) notes the affective aspects of perspective transformation:

Transformative learning, especially when it involves subjective reframing, is often an intensely threatening emotional experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions undergirding our ideas, and those supporting our emotional responses to the need to change. (p. 75)

Soloman's (2002) findings regarding Canadian school leaders' efforts at addressing anti-racism lends credence to the idea that professional development experiences involving race often meet with resistance. He notes the existence of a body of research (Carr & Klassen 1997; Donaldson, 1997; Sleeter, 1992; Troyna, 1993) that has tended to find that teaching staff resist participation in antiracism projects. Robertson

(1997) notes “Paradigms that are most critical to the way in which people see their world and themselves in that world evoke the fiercest resistance” (p. 111). Professional learning that centers on confronting racism often challenges individuals' deep epistemological beliefs by exposing contradictions between how they see the world, and how it is experienced by members of frequently marginalized groups (Soloman, 2002). This being the case, it is probably not surprising that Marsha and Paula encountered fierce resistance when they sought to lead professional learning experiences that challenged staff members view of themselves as individuals who “did not see race.”

Social and contextual aspects of TLT. Some of the stories Marsha and Paula shared support the idea that social and contextual factors can play an important role in TL. Marsha expressed dismay at the way teachers reacted to the increase in African American students from the inner city. She contrasted their response with her own immersion in African American culture and history when she first went to teach in the inner city. Clearly Marsha's life history played an important role in shaping her response. One could also speculate on the role context and social factors might have played. When Marsha taught in the city she found herself in a context that celebrated African American culture. She interacted daily with African American students and educators. In this setting the idea that society reproduces many inequities regarding the life chances of African American youth was most likely a widely accepted idea (Soloman, 2002).

The social and contextual field at Lakeside school district was very different. Many of the mainly White members of the staff saw their practices as racially neutral, and viewed the internal deficiencies of African American students as responsible for the

problems they were experiencing. The social and contextual factors operating in the Lakeside district seem to have reinforced these perceptions, making perspective transformation less likely. Like Marsha and Paula, the principal's who participated in Soloman's (2002) study experienced a great deal of resistance from parents and community members when they sought to confront racism in their schools. This type of resistance, often based upon deeply held deficit views, also serve to buttress and intensify resistance from faculty and staff. The taken for granted nature of deficit views, and their repeated presentation serves to create a social context that reinforces a world view that holds the dominant culture blameless.

As the discussion above illustrates, TL seems to hold some value as a lens for interpreting some of the data from this study. A number of the stories Marsha and Paula shared deal with perspective transformation. The perspective transformations Marsha and Paula experienced led them to change their viewpoints and practices in a number of ways. On the other hand, attempts to lead staff members to change their perspectives and practices met with mixed results. This points out the difficulties associated with attempts to translate what is often a very personal process into professional learning experiences meant to transform the perspective of groups. Some scholars in the field of adult education (e.g. Johnson Bailey & Alfred, 2006) have examined the difficulties associated with attempts to foster perspective transformation with regard to issues of race and ethnicity. Further work in this area could serve to clarify the role of contextual and social factors in perspective transformations of this type. Such research could also serve to help school leaders develop ways to ameliorate the resistance that frequently accompanies

such efforts.

Implications for Practice and Research

A number of implications can be drawn from the results of this study. In this section I will discuss implications for practice and research.

Implications for practice. Practitioners who seek to serve as leaders for social justice can draw a number of implications from the results of this study. The superintendency can be a lonely position. As the chief executive of the school district superintendents are often isolated, and lack peers with whom they can share. Reviewing the stories Marsha and Paula shared can help these individuals understand that they are not alone in facing difficulties as they seek to lead in ways that are socially just.

Data reviewed in the preceding chapter suggest developing diverse networks of support might be one way superintendents can work to advance social justice in their districts. This type of support was crucial to Marsha and Paula in their work as social justice superintendents. They relied upon each other to generate and evaluate ideas, and to provide emotional support during difficult times. Support networks also provided help in dealing with crisis situations by providing allies who could help disrupt doxa related to African American students. Further research might help to shed light on how leaders develop and utilize these support networks.

The data also suggest superintendents might also find it useful to focus on developing healthy school cultures as they seek to advance socially just schooling in their districts. Marsha and Paula worked to develop school cultures that provided teachers with the support and flexibility they required to meet the needs of all students, particularly

those who are members of traditionally marginalized groups. They might also find it useful to focus on professional learning in their schools. Marsha and Paula focused on developing professional learning experiences that helped equip staff members with a knowledge and understanding of different cultures. This type of professional learning can serve to disrupt deficit views, and lead to better relations between staff members and students. A working knowledge of the literature on TLT could help practitioners develop professional learning experiences that are more likely to lead to successful perspective transformations for faculty members. In particular, a better understanding of how resistance to these types of efforts forms could help leaders who are engaged in developing these types of experiences. The shape these professional learning experiences take will vary depending upon the context in which leaders operate. In Marsha and Paula's case training in inter-cultural communication was the key to efforts to improve relations between students and teachers. Other contextual situations would most likely call for differing forms of training.

The data also suggest Social justice superintendents might find working to develop strong administrative teams to be a fruitful strategy for advancing social justice in their districts. Marsha and Paula both saw campus administrators as key players in efforts to provide socially just educational arrangements for all students. In their case the key concerns were to recruit and develop campus administrators who rejected deficit views of African American students. They also worked hard to recruit African American administrators who could serve positive role models.

Finally, the results of this study suggest social justice superintendents might find

it useful to work to give students more voice in decisions regarding their educations. The pervasive, taken for granted nature of deficit views often leads educators to design educational systems and learning environments that are oppressive in nature (Valencia, 1997). Teachers may be unaware of the oppressive nature of some relationships in their schools. Members of traditionally marginalized groups might be better equipped to recognize and communicate relationships that other students might find unfair. Paula and Marsha both indicated they believe including students in decision making can help alleviate some of the tension between students and teachers, and help transform school cultures.

Practitioners who are engaged in educating aspiring superintendents can also draw some lessons from this study. Both participants in this study professed a belief in the importance of long term strategic planning. Educators should assist students in acquiring the skills they will need to carry out this type of planning so that they can prepare for changes in a positive way. Educators should also provide these leaders with learning experiences that will help them to understand cultural differences, and lead them to reject deficit views of members of traditionally marginalized groups. Preparation programs should be designed to include learning experiences that help leaders learn how to reduce resistance to change, and other countervailing pressures.

Implications for research. Researchers can also draw a number of implications from the results of this study. The role of the school superintendent is complicated, and fraught with contradictions. This study provides a glimpse at the efforts of two social justice superintendents. Additional research is needed to further clarify the role of the

superintendent as a social justice leader. As noted above, researchers have framed the concept of social justice around issues including race, gender, diversity, age, ability, sexual orientation, and spirituality. Current academic conceptualizations of SJL tend to focus on the idea of intersectionality, and the ways membership in multiple groups lead to marginalization for some students.

The participants in this study chose to relate experiences that had to do solely with race. As this study is aligned with the phenomenological tradition, and focuses on the meaning of SJL for these particular participants, I did not try to lead Marsha and Paula to consider other factors that often lead to the marginalization of some students. I do not interpret this absence to imply that these leaders do not consider these factors to be significant. Instead I believe that the historical and temporal context in which Marsha and Paula operated influenced the form SJL took for them. This is in keeping with Bogotch's (2002) assertion that the meaning of social justice dynamic, and emerges from the context and practical experiences of practitioners. He draws upon a social reconstructive view of knowledge to offer the following explanation of how conceptualizations of social justice emerge from the interaction of theory and practice:

The educational leader of a school needs to create an environment that permits a variety of programs based on the diverse needs and beliefs of others. However, as soon as the conditions are right for this confluence (in terms of both community and social justice), different conditions emerge (demographically, contextually, etc.) necessitating actions that attempt to hold the center (i.e., the common core leadership values; see Maxcy (1995)) together and adjust the practices to the

changing conditions. Thus the meanings of social justice emerge without prediction, control, or permanence. (p. 142)

In Marsha and Paula's case demographic changes led to resistance from the community and from staff members. As noted above, both Marsha and Paula expressed a belief that this resistance was based solely upon race. They both worked to deal with the realities of this resistance, and to change the perceptions of community members, and the perceptions and practices of staff members while remaining true to their own values.

The results of the study indicate such leaders often face great resistance when they seek to enact change based upon ideas that conflict with doxa, or orthodox views. More research is needed to further investigate the forms this sort of resistance can take, and the practices school leaders can employ as they attempt to disrupt doxa, and promote socially just viewpoints. Case studies that examine the experiences of social justice leaders operating in different contexts and geographic regions could serve to illuminate ways context shapes the factors that lead to marginalization, the forms of resistance leaders face, and the practices social justice superintendents employ. Studies carried out in differing contexts could also serve to illuminate ways practitioners perceive and define SJL. These types of studies could also prove useful to scholars interested in comparing practitioners perceptions of SJL with definitions advanced in the academic literature.

This study also provides a significant amount of data on the role of deficit views in shaping resistance to SJL. Deficit views played a key role in shaping community and staff perceptions of African American students, and served to intensify resistance to change. Additional research is needed to further illuminate ways deficit views circulate

and evolve over time. Studies that examine the history and genealogy of discourses based upon deficit views could illuminate ways these views are transmitted, and how they evolve over time.

Further research is also needed to examine resistance to professional learning experiences that seek to change staff member's perspectives on race and other factors that lead to the marginalization of some students. In this chapter I shared some of my thoughts on ways TLT can be used as a lens for examining these types of learning experiences. Further research utilizing TLT could help researchers better understand how this type of resistance develops, and enable practitioners to develop professional learning experiences that are more likely to yield positive results.

Final Thoughts

As I reflect on the things I learned while carrying out this study a number of thoughts come to mind. The time I spent at the research site helped me to appreciate the importance of understanding context. Contextual factors played an important role in shaping the forms SJL took for Marsha and Paula. Gaining a good understanding of these factors helped me to better understand and interpret their stories. I also agree with Bogotch (2002), that contextual factors shape the forms SJL takes in practice situations.

I also came to appreciate the difficulties associated with interpreting others' words and actions. As I analyzed the data from the study, I was reluctant to make judgments about the decisions Marsha and Paula made, or to offer interpretations that conflicted with those they advanced. I sometimes felt as if it would be disrespectful for me to judge the actions of leaders who were caught up in the day to day struggles of leading a school

district, and who were faced with making difficult decisions on a regular basis. These feeling reinforced the idea the Phenomenological approach I utilized was well suited to both the subject matter of the study, and to my own inclinations and temperament.

Finally, as I read and re-read the stories Marsha and Paula told, I came to truly appreciate the courage it takes to serve as a leader for Social Justice. Challenging the status quo and working to change deeply ingrained beliefs are difficult tasks. Marsha and Paula both spoke about the countervailing pressures they faced, and the price they sometimes paid in seeking to do what they thought was right. The determination these leaders displayed, and the compassion they showed are a source of great inspiration for me. It is my hope that these stories will help to inspire others to take up the challenge of leading for social justice.

APPENDIX A

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background

1. What can you tell me about your childhood?
2. Were there any experiences that contributed to your developing a social justice orientation?
3. How did you come to be a teacher?
4. What made you decide to become a school administrator?

Resisting Oppressive Social Relations

1. What are the biggest challenges your district has faced?
2. How have you worked to advance awareness of SJ issues with your staff?
3. How have relations with the community impacted your work?
4. What accomplishments related to social justice are you most proud of?

Countervailing Pressures

1. What barriers have you faced in your work?
2. Can you think of a time when you felt constrained in your ability to do what you thought was right?

Evolving Identity

1. Have your views changed over time as a result of your work?
2. Have your practices changed over the course of tenure as superintendent?

3. Can you tell me about some of the people who have influenced you?

APPENDIX B

GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you talk about how you first met?
2. What were your early impressions of each other?
3. During the individual interviews you both talked about how you relied on each other for support. Can you talk a little about the forms this support took?
4. You both talked about schools of choice. Can you talk more about how this and other governmental policies impacted your work?
5. Can you talk more about how have negative views of African American students complicated your work

APPENDIX C

GUIDE TO THEMES BY PARTICIPANT

Theme	Sub-Theme	Paula	Marsha
<i>Facing Countervailing Pressures</i>			
Deficit Thinking		x	x
Cultural Disconnects		x	x
Resistance to Change		x	x
	Community Resistance	x	x
	Staff Resistance	x	x
Lasting Policy Effects		x	x
Personal Costs			x
<i>Resisting Oppressive and Exploitative Social Relations</i>			
Supportive School Culture		x	
Training in Inter-Cultural Communication		x	x
Student Voice		x	x
Networks of Support		x	x
Working Through Campus Admin.		x	x
<i>Evolving Identity as a Social Justice Leader</i>			
Identity Conflicts			x
Evolving Leadership		x	

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VITA

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