The Dissertation Committee for Heather Ann Cole certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Realizing Inclusive Social Justice Leadership:

Two Principals Narrate Their Transformative Journeys

Committee:

_____

Barbara Pazey, Supervisor

_____

Mark O' Reilly

_____

James Schaller

_____

Richard Reddick

_____

Mark Gooden

_____

Julian Vasquez Heilig

Realizing Inclusive Social Justice Leadership:

Two Principals Narrate Their Transformative Journeys

by

Heather Ann Cole, B.A., LL.B., M.P.A., M.Ed.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May, 2015

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter,

Alexandra Leslie Thomas

This is to remind you that you can do and be anything you want. You can change your life if you set your mind to it and believe in yourself. The world is full of possibilities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank the two incredible participants in my study. They shared their inspiring stories and took time out of their very busy lives to help a graduate student finally complete her dissertation. I am forever in your debt and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee and particularly, my advisor, Dr. Barbara Pazey. Without you, I would never have finished. You have been a mentor, a collaborator and most importantly, a true friend. I am glad we found each other in the early days at the university. It has been an incredible ride. I hope that we will always keep in touch.

I would also like to thank my parents who have tirelessly supported my educational endeavors. This is my fifth degree and I promise, it is the last one. I realize I am extremely privileged. In a family of four, we have three PhDs. Education does matter and I know that I am very fortunate to have been able to take full advantage of all it offers. I will not waste what I have learned.

Finally, and most of all, my sincere gratitude to my little family made up of my husband, Jeff, and my daughter, Alexandra. You are the real forces behind this degree. You pushed me to finish and you gave up some of our precious time so I could have this. I know that was a sacrifice. I will make it up to you. I appreciate and love you both more than anything in the world.

Realizing Inclusive Social Justice Leadership:
Two Principals Narrate Their Transformative Journeys

by

Heather Ann Cole, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

SUPERVISOR: Barbara Pazey

This interpretive biographical case study relies on the personal narratives of two successful public school principals to explore and build upon current theory of inclusive social justice leadership in the pursuit of understanding not just the characteristics of such leadership but its actual implementation. Using transformative learning as its theoretical framework, it seeks to create a theory of action for inclusive social justice leadership. Delving into the life journeys of two educational leaders, the study looks at how their backgrounds as special education teachers and their experiences in childhood, as young adults and as professionals shaped their perspectives on full inclusion of students with disabilities as well as larger concepts of fairness and social justice. The study seeks to answer the overarching research question: How do two former special education teachers and experienced public school principals who have successfully implemented a full inclusion model describe and understand their

commitment to and implementation of inclusive social justice leadership? Additional sub-questions are also asked: How has this developed over time? What, if any, events in their lives do they see as significant to their evolution as inclusive social justice leaders? What role does their current leadership position play in their social justice journey? A comprehensive literature review of inclusion, social justice leadership, and inclusive social justice leadership in theory and in connection to student success and school reform is provided. The methodology of interpretive biography is explained. Findings illuminate the individual journeys of each participant as they come to realize inequities in education and their personal struggles to address them first on small and then larger scales. Cross-comparative analysis brings to light corresponding themes with existing theory including advocacy, collaboration, intersectionality and inclusive practice but adds new action-oriented dimensions of the impact of fear and failure as an asset. Conclusions are drawn about the impact of these future leaders on the persistent inequities of public education today and recommendations are made for the training and professional development from within the education profession for more inclusive social justice leaders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

xiv

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration—aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken. When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience."

Mezirow, 1997, p. 5

Overview

Public education in the United States is at a crossroads (Frattura & Capper, 2007). After years of accountability reform, classrooms across America are still plagued by large achievement gaps (Ravitch, 2010; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Many students remain unable to access the type of education they need to succeed (Garcia & Ortiz, 2008; Losen & Orfield, 2010; Vasquez Heilig, Cole, & Springel, 2011). Despite this, the targeting of low performing students through aggressive testing and test performance-oriented interventions remain a focus for the sector and is indeed, the dominant paradigm in education reform circles (Vasquez Heilig, Khalifa, & Tillman, 2013).

The persistence of accountability-based policy has generated plenty of fodder for its critics. Many have written about the unintended consequences of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era (Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree, & Fernandez, 1993; Benjamin, 2008; Brantlinger, 2005; Brayboy, Castagno, & Maughan, 2007; Karen, 2005; Kunc, 1992; McLaughlin, 1992; Meier & Wood, 2004; Nichols & Berliner, 2007, 2008; Reyes & Valencia, 1993). While accountability policy and its sweeping implementation legislation were supposed to protect those students traditionally failed by the system, i.e. poor, minority, English language learners and special education students, the end result

1

may be further marginalization (Bejoian & Reid, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Linn, 2000; Ravitch, 2010; Superfine, 2005; Supovitz, 2009; Thurlow, Quenemoen, & Lazarus, 2012). Having schools held accountable for these students' performance has resulted in greater segregation of the students by relegating them to remedial programs that isolate, disengage and even push them out of school (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Linehan, 2002; McLaughlin, Malmgren, & Nolet, 2006; Nagle, McLaughlin, Nolet, & Malmgren, 2007; Thurlow, 2004; Vannest, Mahadevan, Mason, &Temple-Harvey; 2009).

The failure of accountability reform to rectify the inequities of our educational system has spurred another movement in the educational sector oriented around social justice. Over the last two decades, a number of scholars have begun to write about the importance of addressing equity issues in our schools (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Education researchers have espoused on the successful teaching of English language learners (Lopez, Gonzalez, & Fierro, 2005; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005), students or color (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Conchas, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2001), students at-risk of failing or dropping out of school (Slavin, 2002; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2002) and students with disabilities (Friend & Bursuck, 2006). Instructional strategies (Tomlinson & Reis, 2004) have been proposed and broader implications of teaching to attain and reflect a more just and equitable society reflected upon and discussed (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; French, 2002). In addition, scholars have looked at ways to not only prepare teachers but also school leaders with the skills to further social justice ideals (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1998; Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005;

2

Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Furman, 2012; Gooden, 2012; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; McKinney & Capper, 2010; Nieto, 2000; Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002).

Within the social justice movement, a subset of researchers have challenged their colleagues to expand social justice discussions to ensure inclusive practice (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Pazey & Cole, 2013; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012; Theoharis, 2007, 2009). They are concerned specifically with students with disabilities. These researchers believe in a more radical rethinking of traditional schooling to confront persistent inequalities. They do not believe in separating students different from their peers. Separate is not equal. Difference must not only be accounted for, it must be embraced and celebrated so that all students can learn together (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012). Inclusive social justice leadership, thus, is a "revolutionary feat" that necessitates a transformation in organization, teaching and learning (Frattura & Capper, p. xv). This study derives its focus from a concern about the implementation of full inclusion of students with disabilities in classrooms around the country. It challenges the very underpinnings of the current special education system and looks at disability as a social construct that needs to be dismantled (Smart, 2009). To achieve equity in the public education system, this study argues that all students must be included in school programming and students with and without disabilities educated seamlessly in shared spaces. Inclusive social justice is a concept that evolves from the pursuit of equity for students with disabilities but acknowledges the overlapping issues of race, ethnicity,

3

class, culture, gender and other identifiers of difference that are used to separate students and produce inequitable outcomes. Students with disabilities have the unique distinction of being in a class that can encapsulate any or all of the other constructs of marginalization. No one is immune to being born with or developing a disability (Fleischer & Zames, 2001).

While a handful of researchers have taken up the mantle of inclusion in social justice leadership theory, few empirical studies exist (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Theoharis, 2009). It is still not known exactly how an educator becomes an inclusive social justice leader (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010; Young & Laible, 2000). We have yet to determine if inclusive social justice leaders emerge fully realizing their potential in childhood, college, or during their tenure in our public schools. It is not known whether inclusive social justice leadership is an inherent or latent trait of certain people waiting to emerge. Can it be simply taught or does it have to be experienced? Some scholars have argued that a deep understanding of students with disabilities is necessary and expertise in special education an asset (Pazey & Cole, 2013; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012; Polat, 2011; Shepherd & Hasazi, 2008; Theoharis, 2004a, 2004b, 2009). To test this theory, this study documents the stories of two leaders with direct teaching experience in special education. Following their personal biographies, the study documents the impact of that shared history and other events in their lives that affected their realization of inclusive social justice leadership. Through their voices, the study attempts to initiate a theory of action to inform inclusive social justice leadership development. Comparing and contrasting these two principals' life stories lends

understanding and potentially, new ways of thinking about the process of becoming inclusive social justice leaders. Transforming a system depends on transforming individuals. To realize equity in all our schools, we need to understand those people who have found ways to make it happen.

Problem Statement

Despite great strides in law and public policy to protect people against discrimination, our society still finds itself wrestling with unfair and inequitable treatment of its citizens. This problem is reflected in our public schools that have been working to close an achievement gap between students for decades. The poor educational outcomes for marginalized students, particularly students with disabilities, are depressing. The inequities suffered by these children in our schools have long been documented (Bishop, Foster, & Jubala, 1993; Franklin, 1992; Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Gersten & Woodward, 1994; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Mehan, 1992; Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986; Rueda, Klingner, Sager, & Velasco, 2008; Wasburn-Moses & Frager, 2009). The unfortunate correlate of this dismal history is that many teachers and administrators working within our educational systems have come to believe that failure is a pathology of the student and that it is inevitable that certain students will never experience school success (Skrtic, 1991, 1995a, 1995b). Central to this study's exploration into inclusive social justice leadership is a desire to understand how people can find meaning and in turn, take action in the face of incredible injustice.

Even in the face of persistent inequity, there are educators who refuse to accept the status quo. They are willing to challenge foregone conclusions about their students.

5

These are the educators that take risks, do things differently and somehow, come out stronger and more committed to change. They are transformative learners (Mezirow, 1997). They manage to learn from their experiences in ways that do not leave them jaded and ineffective but rather motivated to act, to adapt and to find ways to turn discrimination on its head. They are successful in fully including all students in their schools and achieving equitable outcomes that are the envy of their peers and the toast of their country. They have created models that others want to emulate. They embrace what is different and are able to reconcile new notions, ideas and ways of being. The problem to be addressed in this study is that in the field of education and more specifically, educational leadership, too little transformative learning is taking place. We are not changing the ways we think about children. Deficit thinking is pervasive (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008; Valencia, 1997). Full inclusion is a lofty ideal, and for many, still far from reality (DeMatthews, 2014). Students remain segregated and labeled, with many excluded from traditional schools altogether. The historically marginalized - poor, minority, English language learners, and specifically, students with disabilities, remain on the fringes blamed and ostracized by a system that has failed them (McDermott, 1989; McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006; McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Varenne & McDermott, 1998).

To address the exclusionary, pervasive discrimination that plagues education, this study proposes we do not need to know more about our failures; we need to know more about our successes. The problem is injustice perpetrated by people and bolstered by a broken and unfair system. But, there is a possible solution. There are people who have

6

managed to work within the system yet not perpetuate injustice. They have learned from other's mistakes and from their own. This study is about listening and taking note of those who are successfully challenging the status quo, critically reflecting on their own roles and when necessary, changing the way they think, act and lead. For greater context, the literature related to inclusion, social justice, inclusive social justice leadership, leadership and student success and the role of social justice in school reform provides a backdrop for the problem this study seeks to address.

Understanding various constructs of inclusion helps to explain the ideals and potential conflicts embedded in the notion of inclusive social justice leadership. As Zollers, Ramanathan, and Yu (1999) explain, inclusion is a complex construction within the educational system and has been an integral part of not only social justice discussions but also those regarding pedagogy (Wang & Zollers, 1990), school reform (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997) and programmatic issues (Stainback & Stainback, 1992). The history of inclusion is tied to civil rights and anti-discrimination movements. Federal legislation dictating the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools dates back to the 1970s but finds its origins twenty years earlier in the seminal civil rights case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954; see also Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012).

There is little agreement on the meaning of inclusion. Broad definitions, like that proposed by Polat (2011), extend inclusion beyond children with disabilities. In his view, inclusion means "inclusion of *all* regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, socio-economic status, and any other aspect of the individual's identity that might be perceived as different" (p. 51). But others have tried to be much

more limiting in their approach to inclusion, confining inclusion to the education of students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers. An important aspect of this view of inclusion is that it occurs with appropriate supports and services (Gilhool, 1989). With this condition lies the rub regarding theories of inclusion. The absence of this condition of supports and services has led to deep-rooted disagreements about the efficacy of inclusion. Practitioners and scholars alike have argued about the dangers of including students with disabilities in the classroom (Kauffman, 1994) and the necessity to have specialists to address their needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

At the heart of any scholarship on inclusion is a more nuanced exploration of teacher preparation, classroom management, resource availability and administrative support (Henderson, 1994). Fundamental understandings that equality does not equal sameness are the foundation of this scholarship (Crockett, 2011). This important distinction is made real in the knowledge and sometimes lack of knowledge, of special education and disability law (Pazey & Cole, 2013). Ideas of differentiation to meet all the needs of students on an individualized basis add to the complexity in notions of inclusion (Doyle, 2004; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino 2009). Building upon the numerous conditions required to realize inclusion, some scholars have linked inclusion to social justice. Sapon-Shevin describes inclusion and social justice as interchangeable (2003) while Nussbaum (2006) explicitly ties the inclusion of students with disabilities to social justice. Polat (2011) expands upon her theory by linking the inclusion of all marginalized students to social justice.

8

The depth and breadth of understandings of inclusion can be daunting and the same can be said about the meaning of social justice in education. For the most part, writing about social justice in education has largely focused on the characteristics of those that practice it. While there is some literature on teachers and social justice (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; French, 2002; Gaudelli, 2001; Traudt, 2001), a good deal of the scholarship revolves around school leaders. It is generally agreed that school leaders committed to social justice interrogate issues of and find solutions for inequitable treatment and marginalization of members of their school community due to race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or other forms of difference (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). Recognition of inequality and taking action to eliminate it are key aspects of social justice leadership (Bogatch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Furman, 2012; Gerwitz, 1998; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001; Vibert & Portelli, 2000). Those that demonstrate social justice leadership do so through active engagement in activities that alter the marginalization experienced by others (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). In essence, social justice leadership is an interplay between the leader and his/her school context (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Thus, what a social leader looks like and how he/she acts is dependent on what he/she encounters over the course of his/her life and career.

Research on social justice leadership has been largely theoretical. While theoretical approaches prescribe ways of being for social justice leaders, empirical studies

9

that examine the realization of social justice leaders are limited (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). Empirical studies to date describe among other things, successful models (Jansen, 2006; Maxwell, Locke, & Scheurich, 2013), document principals' responses to change (Cooper, 2009), describe challenges of leading for social justice (Theoharis, 2007), look at leadership preparation for social justice (Jean-Marie, 2008; Osterman & Hoffman, 2009), and assess leaders' relationships with stakeholders in the educational community (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002).

Despite largely theoretical work in social justice leadership, the literature is dominated by a prevailing idea – social justice leaders are action oriented (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Furman, 2012). Included in this notion of action is an additional characteristic of awareness that makes social justice leaders more in tune with issues of oppression and more willing to take risks and confront inequity (Jansen, 2006). Out of the descriptive research comes a composition of social justice leaders as committed, principled people (Jean-Marie, 2008) that personally reflect upon their experiences (Jansen, 2006) and have developed ways to manage the inevitable conflict and resistance they encounter to implementing social justice (Theoharis, 2007). Social justice leaders are also great collaborators who know how to share leadership and empower others (Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Wasonga, 2009). In addition, social justice leaders are proponents of distributed leadership (Giles, Johnson, Brooks, & Jacobson, 2005). They are advocates for change and model for others the pathway to reform (Jansen, 2006).

When a commitment to full inclusion of all students and broader concepts of social justice are materialized in demonstrated leadership, inclusive social justice leadership arises. Inclusive social justice leadership extends notions of social justice leadership in an effort to put at the forefront the education of all students (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012). As noted, Shapon-Shevin (2003) argued that social justice is about inclusion and the two cannot be separated. School leaders that adopt social justice principles embrace the belief that the practice of inclusion of students with disabilities within the school community leads to positive outcomes for every student (Pazey, 1995). Inclusive social justice leaders are change agents (McKenzie, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2006; Osterman & Hafner, 2009), helping others to recognize the varying abilities of each student and the complexities inherent in understanding the "challenges of individuals with disabilities, and the interaction of their disabilities with their cultural and linguistic backgrounds" (Shepherd & Hasazi, 2009, p. 477). They see how labels of difference overlap and are acutely aware of the over-representation of students with diverse backgrounds in special education (Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012).

As with the literature regarding social justice leadership, inclusive social justice leadership is currently a theory only but arguably, it shows the greatest promise of moving toward a theory of action. The important component of inclusion drives this direction because it dictates action through student representation. Inclusive social justice leadership entails making issues of difference central to school leaders' advocacy, leadership, practice and vision (Theoharis, 2007). This means a "focus on eliminating marginalization [which] necessitates an ongoing adherence to inclusive schooling

11

practices for each and every student, despite opposition from outside and inside forces"
(Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012, p. 195).

Theoharis (2007) provides the most used definition of inclusive social justice
leadership but Pazey, Cole, & Garcia (2012) expand and refine it introducing four pillars,
or principles, to describe an inclusive social justice leader. These pillars include:

(1) a belief, vision, and leadership orientation for the success of all children,

(2) a commitment to eliminate marginalization,

(3) a willingness to advocate in the best interest of every learner and,

(4) accountability for diversity, the opportunity to learn, and the promotion of
inclusive practices.

Given the theoretical nature of literature regarding social justice and inclusion,
scholars have been preoccupied with leadership preparation. It is clear from the literature
that too little preparation has been focused on issues of disability. This has, in part,
compromised the profession's ability to truly account for all children. Leaders have not
realized their full "equity consciousness" (McKenzie, Scheurich, & Skrla, 2006).
"Equity consciousness" occurs when leaders understand that all children can achieve
academic success, regardless of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, learning
difference, culture, language, religion, etc. According to scholars that prescribe to a more
inclusive approach to social justice, leaders must recognize that traditional school
practices have failed to yield equitable results and may even perpetuate inequalities. It is
a leaders' responsibility to bring all those responsible for children in their school
community toward a common vision so that students can achieve their greatest success

(McKenzie, Scheurich, & Skrla, 2006; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012). But, the literature is remiss in identifying when and how leaders engage themselves and their school communities in this common vision of inclusion and social justice. It is not enough to simply know the destination; this does not explain the journey. More research is needed to create maps for social justice.

Any literature review of leadership implications must acknowledge the scholarship on school change and the association between the identified need for reform, its actual occurrence and exemplary school leadership (Fullan, 1993, 2001). Researchers have found strong mediating effects of school leadership on student outcomes (Bruggencate, Luyten, Schreerens, & Sleegers, 2012). Causal effects are unclear. More complex models are needed that account for an integrated model and investigate the broader leadership activities, attitudes and approaches that occur within a school (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Levin, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Thoonen, Sleegers, Orrt, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011).

While different organizational models abound, few have relied upon a social justice, equity-oriented approach to advance inclusion. The models address aspects of instructional and transformative leadership, based largely on organizational theories of shared or distributed leadership (see Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003; Mayrowetz, 2008; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Such theories speak to leadership built on mutual responsibility and trust as well as innovation and risk taking (Moolenaar, Daly, & Sleegers, 2010). However, they fail to consider the greater and more challenging aspects of public education, particularly the failure to

13

account for the marginalization and exclusion of certain students and specifically, students with disabilities.

Fully assessing what effect leadership plays in school equity may be difficult, but understanding the broader implications for the school landscape may be more obvious although equally challenging. In the greater school context, social justice is placed at the core of how schools operate and function. Advocates of social justice in educational reform argue that for it to be a reality, a paradigm shift must occur in our public schools (Frattura & Capper, 2007). The cultural and organizational aspects of schools and communities must fundamentally change. There is a strong organizational element to inclusive social justice theory that sees schools as the institutions that must provide access to equal opportunities and outcomes (Shepherd & Hasazi, 2008). This requires school leaders to possess a strong sense of will and purpose. Paradigm shifts are not easy and to facilitate one, leaders must be able to identify both their goals and the underlying reasons of those goals (Pazey & Cole, 2013).

While the literature provides insight into aspects of inclusion, social justice, inclusive social justice leadership, the impact of leadership on school success and even the role of inclusive social justice leadership in broader school contexts and reform, those interested in inclusive social justice in practice still have only a skeletal model. The gap to be filled in the research is the construction of a theory of action for inclusive social justice leaders that explores not only *what* a socially just leader who is committed to inclusion thinks about and his/her experiences but *how* that leader operationalizes his beliefs and makes meaning out of his/her life.

14

Using transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) as the conceptual framework, the study uses the experiences of current leaders to suggest that significant events in a leader's personal and professional life can transform their development as an inclusive social justice leader. Paradigm shifts are emic and etic, occurring internally for the leader as well as affecting the larger school context in which he/she operates. Looking at leaders already well entrenched in the educational system adds to the literature by providing new insight about inclusive social justice leadership in practice and allows for discussion and implications of individual's experiences to inform both leadership development and training.

Statement of Purpose

As noted, over the past two decades social justice has become a popular theme in education reform discussions and especially with respect to educational leadership (Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010). Not surprisingly, it has also become an area of concern for educational leadership preparation programs with respect to preparing school leaders to lead for social justice ends, i.e. greater equity in schools and education (Brown, 2004; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Hafner, 2006; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Nieto, 2000; Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002). Specialized professional associations for school leaders in educational administration (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2011) and accreditation agencies (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2008) have also voiced the need for more equity-minded approaches to education. If educational leaders are to embrace and perform social justice and equity-oriented work, they must be

15

adequately prepared to ensure that schools provide equitable educational opportunities. But, such a focus begs the question- what about the people who have already devoted decades of their lives to educating children?   There must be something we can learn from them. Surely, the conversations about training and education to become inclusive social justice leaders cannot be limited to emergent leaders only.

This study is rooted in the belief that there is much to be learned from the stories of leaders entrenched in our current system yet modeling inclusive social justice leadership. The purpose of this study was to test and challenge the current conceptualizations of inclusive social justice leadership development by dissecting the lives of school leaders who have lived and succeeded in traditional school models but managed to break from dominant and problematic leadership practices; they have successfully transformed themselves into inclusive social justice leaders. Chronicling the lives of two urban high school principals who have changed the trajectory of students historically marginalized by race, poverty, language, and disability, their stories provide context and meaning on how and why we need leaders with an equity consciousness in public education today. The purpose of this study, then, was to both explore and add to the theory of inclusive social justice leadership by creating the groundwork for a theory of action.

Research Questions

Furthering our current ideas about inclusive social justice leadership, this study drew upon participant voices to give meaning to the lived experiences of successful school leaders who have promoted equity for their students. This study was guided by

16

one overarching research question and sought to explore the question in greater detail by eliciting responses to additional questions in relation to time, significant events and current leadership positions. The research questions for the study were:

1. How do two former special education teachers and experienced public school principals from a conservative southern state who have successfully implemented a full inclusion model describe and understand their commitment to and implementation of inclusive social justice leadership?

    a. How has this developed over time?

    b. What, if any, events in their lives do they see as significant to their evolution as inclusive social justice leaders?

    c. What role does their current leadership position play in their social justice journey?

Overview of Methodology

This study is a qualitative, multi-case narrative biography (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009) of two school principals and their personal journeys to realize inclusive social justice leadership. Comparing and contrasting their biographical experiences allows documentation of their transformative journeys illuminating inclusive social justice leadership through actual implementation.

This case study is instrumental in its purpose because it facilitates "insight into the [research] question(s) by studying a particular case…[aiming] to understand something else" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). As Merriam (2009) explains, the qualitative case study builds theory. In this sense, the analysis of the data helps the researcher to expand

17

upon current ideas or beliefs about a particular phenomenon. Interpretive (Merriam, 1988) in its analysis, the biographical data gathered enables the study "to illustrate, support or challenge theoretical assumptions" (p. 28). The overarching research question has been specifically designed to build upon existing theory by adding a theory of action to the construction of an inclusive social justice leader.

Purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to select two school principals to be a part of the study. The principals were chosen using six criteria:

1. They were former public school special education teachers who had actual experience with providing programs and services to children with disabilities and believed in a full inclusion model.

2. They had spent the majority of their time in traditional public school environments in the southern United States.

3. They had 15 to 20 years of experience as public school administrators.

4. They had a documented record of working with traditionally marginalized student populations and a proven track record of turning around previously low performing schools into high performing schools.

5. The current and previous schools at which they taught and were administrators had diverse populations composed primarily of poor, minority students with large numbers of English language learners with at least ten percent of their overall enrollment being students with disabilities.

6. Their current schools practice full inclusion and have high achievement rates with respect to academic performance, drop-out/graduation rates and college

acceptance for all students, including those with disabilities.

The first participant, Brenda Thomas (a pseudonym), is an African American female and the principal for the all-girls' middle/high school that enrolls primarily young women of color. The second participant, Mike Todd (a pseudonym), is a White male and the principal of the STEM focused high school that specifically targets minority and disadvantaged students. Both participants have been recognized at the local, state and national level for their outstanding service, dedication and success working with marginalized students and for their full inclusion models. They are exemplars of inclusive social justice leadership in action.

This study relied on the personal experiences of these two principals because they are representative of inclusive social justice leaders – engaged with large populations of poor, minority and culturally and linguistically diverse, and special education students. Both principals have managed to turn around the dismal trajectories of their students and boast increased student performance and high graduation rates.

Through narrative analysis of the biographic stories told by each participant, the study uses personal histories to chronicle the development of these inclusive social justice leaders. In addition, using a modified interpretive biographic method (Denzin, 1989; Wengraf, 2001) and imposing Daiute's (2014) significance analysis, the study focuses on challenging situations as described by the participants to lend meaning to the interview data and aid in both the collection of and analysis of the data through a transformative learning theory framework.

19

Both participants were interviewed multiple times in an attempt to elicit their life story told in their own words with minimal interruptions from the interviewer (Wengraf, 2001). A process of iterative, open-ended coding (Shank, 2005) was used to create natural themes in both the personal narratives and the analysis of the data as a whole. In addition, transcripts were also segmented to identify significant events (Daiute, 2014). These significant events were then analyzed through inductive coding to create categories for this subset of data. Further, the data between the two subjects was analyzed using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to look for indications of transformative learning in the overarching narratives and identified significant events.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study rests with the furtherance of inclusive social justice leadership theory and its practice. Inequity in schools is pervasive and if the study can bring new insight to leadership practices that address that inequity, it is well worth pursuing. One of the greatest educational scholars believed that the best education arises from experience (Dewey, 1938). The subjects of this study generously share their experiences and through the documentation of their stories, the scholarship in the field grows and our understanding of how leaders can ensure all students succeed is improved. The significance of the study is in what it can potentially lend to the field in terms of further research, current leaders' practices and the potential training of new leaders. By laying the groundwork for a theory of action for existing school leaders, it is possible to conceptualize ways of transforming our schools into places where inclusive social justice can be realized.

Definition of Key Terminology

Child or student with a disability – children identified with a disability and eligible for

services under federal legislation, either under the Individuals with Disabilities in

Education Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 1973 (now incorporated into the

Amended Americans with Disabilities Act).

Equality – in theory, refers to the treatment of individuals in the same way to confer

equal benefit or fair distribution.

Equity – encompasses the acknowledgement of historical disadvantages that necessitate

different treatment in order to confer equal benefit. Fairness in equity is more nuanced

than in equality. Equity takes into account that in order to get to equality, fair distribution

may not be equal (for further explanation see *The Glossary of Education Reform*,

retrieved from http://edglossary.org/equity).

Equity consciousness - an internal and external awareness within educational leadership

that recognizes the rights of children with disabilities and the responsibility of school

leaders to account for these students on all of their campuses (McKenzie, Skrla, &

Scheurich, 2006; Pazey & Cole, 2013).

Inclusion – an educational model broadly defined in which all students, regardless of

difference, are educated together and afforded the same access to teaching, supports and

services (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Polat, 2011).

Inclusive social justice – directly and inextricably links the concept of full inclusion with

social justice.

Inclusive social justice leadership – the practice of school leaders accounting for all students of difference, particularly the historically marginalized (poor, minority, English language learners, and students with disabilities) and making their inequitable treatment central to their advocacy, leadership, practice and vision (Theoharis, 2007).

Interpretive biography – studied use of personal life stories to describe turning point moments in individuals' lives (Denzin, 1989).

Marginalized student – describes students who have been left out or excluded from traditional schools (Lopez, 2001; Theoharis, 2009).

Narrative – accounts of daily lives (Daiute, 2014).

Public school principal – a person who holds this administrative title and is responsible for leadership in a publicly funded school.

School leader – an administrator in a public school such as a vice principal, principal, or director.

Social justice – an active concern with searching out, understanding, critiquing and taking action about injustices (Ryan, 2006).

Social justice leadership – school leaders who undertake efforts to bring about equity in schools and combat injustice.

Theory of action – a framework for individuals to use to guide, interpret and justify their actions (Argyris, 1997; Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1982, 1996; Malen, Croninger, Muncey, Redmond-Jones, 2002).

Transformative journey – the process of transformative learning over time.

Transformative learning – a new way of making meaning by reinterpreting an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations (Mezirow, 1991).

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter has provided an explanation of the significance of the problem of inequity in our schools and the need for inclusive social justice leadership. It has presented the research questions aimed at expanding current theory of inclusive social justice leadership by developing a theory of action through the exploration of the transformed lives of two leaders who embody the characteristics of the theory. It has contextualized the study with a brief description of the literature and conceptual framework surrounding it and offered insight into qualitative, narrative biography as the methodology of choice. Further, it has summarized my role as researcher in planning and conducting this study, my own related assumptions and defined some key terminology. Chapter 2 presents a more comprehensive literature review of scholarship related to the theory and implementation of inclusive social justice leadership as well as the conceptual framework of transformative learning used for the study. Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of the study's use of narrative biography as its methodology. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings emanating from the life stories of the two participants presented through detailed narratives. Chapter 6 is an analysis of all the participants and related data with particular emphasis on the transformative nature of the individuals' experiences. Finally, Chapter 7 presents the conclusions and recommendations coming out of the study including implications for the introduction of a theory of action and its

potential impact on creating more inclusive social justice leaders. The dissertation closes

with some final thoughts.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to inclusive social justice leadership in public schools. Its goal is to provide the necessary background for the biographical case study of two principals practicing inclusive social justice. To achieve its goal, this literature review covers related topics grouped from the broad to specific relative to the identification of inclusive social justice leadership and then follows this with literature related to its implementation in terms of student success and school reform. As the purpose of this study was to build upon existing theory of inclusive social justice leadership and expand it by building a theory of action to support its actual development, a broad theoretical context for inclusion, social justice, leadership practice and school reform is offered.

Specifically, the first section of the review provides an essential understanding of inclusion in educational contexts. What distinguishes inclusive social justice leadership from more general theories of social justice practice is its emphasis on this concept of education for all students. Thus, the first part of the review is devoted to issues of inclusion. At the end of the section on inclusion scholarship, literature that links inclusion to social justice is discussed. This leads into the next section covering social justice leadership. This is followed by a review of the limited research on inclusive social justice leadership. After covering the elements of inclusive social justice leadership in theory, the review explores the literature of its practice, connecting school leadership and student success. From there, it looks more broadly at the implications for

school reform in consideration of inclusive social justice leadership. The gap in the literature with respect to a theory of action is then discussed. This is followed by a comprehensive review of the study's conceptual framework, transformative learning theory. Finally, Chapter 2 concludes with a synthesis of the presented literature and its implications for the study.

The strategy used for the literature search was tied directly to the purpose of the study. As this study attempts to build upon theory, it was important to address each element of the existing theory and then cover the area the study attempts to address, i.e. adding a theory of action to inform the practice of inclusive social justice leadership. Delving into theories of inclusion, social justice leadership and inclusive social justice leadership naturally flowed from the overarching research question. Finding relevant literature was done using educational databases, with the topics, or variations thereof, as search terms. In addition, previous literature reviews done by the author and other colleagues were considered to ensure that all relevant literature was captured. Edited books often cited in the field were reviewed and special journal issues devoted to the topics were consulted and mined for articles. The implementation literature proved more challenging but cues were taken from existing literature on social justice in education more generally. When this literature was considered as a whole, it tended to focus on issues of leadership effects (i.e. connections between leadership practice and student success) and school reform. Thus, these two areas were chosen based upon a prevailing theme in this body of relevant scholarship.

Overview of Inclusion

History of Inclusion

When the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act (EAHCA) was passed in 1975, it ushered in a new era for students with disabilities. Children with disabilities could no longer be relegated to "special" schools or denied a public education altogether (Yell, 2012). They became part of the mainstream system, their civil rights protected, free to attend school without discrimination (Doyle, 2002). When the Act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990 and through its subsequent reauthorizations in 1997 and 2004, the rights of students with disabilities grew but the ideals codified in the law do not necessarily match what has happened in schools (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Burrello, & Sailor, 2013; DeMatthews, 2014). While students with disabilities have access to public schools, they may not share the same quality of opportunity. Scholars have documented the poor instruction, lack of attention to need and relegation to segregated, resource classrooms where students fail to learn, become disengaged and often, drop out of school (Darling-Hammond, 2007; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Harry & Klingner, 2006).

Part of the continuous crisis of inequitable treatment (McLaughlin, Krezmien, & Zablocki, 2009) suffered by children with disabilities in public schools may be due to misunderstandings and misapplication of the federal law and its policies (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Burello, & Sailor, 2013; Frattura & Capper, 2007). Despite a presumption for full inclusion in the law, some argue that its application has resulted in further segregation. While the legislation looks to protect students with disabilities, the

delineation of these students as "different" has allowed teachers and administrators to make decisions "in their best interest" with deleterious effects (Haines & Turnbull, 2013). Brunello et al.'s (2013) edited book on unifying the educational system is a collection of scholarship that essentially calls for the dismantling of current disability law and educational structures to protect children with disabilities. These scholars believe that true inclusion will only be achieved when all children are part of one system. They argue that holding onto a special education system only perpetuates the problem of separation.

Constructs of Inclusion

In order to understand any argument for restructuring the delivery of education to further inclusion, it is necessary to grasp the various constructs of inclusion being compared. Indeed, there is great variation in how inclusion is defined (Ainscow et al., 2006). As noted, this may be due to language in disability legislation. IDEA calls for a continuum of services for students with disabilities yet also requires that they be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE). While the presumption of the legislation is that LRE will be a fully inclusive placement where students with disabilities learn alongside their peers without disabilities, the continuum of services leaves it open for educators to place students in "inclusive" settings that cover a broad spectrum (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Burrello, & Sailor, 2013; Haines & Turnbull, 2013).

On the different sides of the inclusion spectrum, some scholars have written about the risks of full inclusion models and the negative effects on students that are not able to get the supports they need from general education teachers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Henderson, 1994; Kauffman, 1994). These scholars are more restrictive in their view and

28

believe the integration of students with disabilities can only occur when they are brought into classrooms with support. In some cases, a general classroom may not even be appropriate (Kauffman, 1994).

Scholars that view inclusion without limitations think of it more comprehensively. For them, it is essentially education with no exclusions (Slee, 2009). As noted, Polat (2011) defines inclusion as "inclusion of all regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, socio-economic status, and any other aspect of an individual's identity that might be perceived as different" (p. 51). Broad definitions call for a departure from what are deemed as "conservative" views of inclusion because they do not "permit the marginalized to participate because they will not have the resources, tools, or skills to do so, or the means to acquire them" (Ryan, 2006, p. 7). All encompassing definitions like Polat's essentially amount to a complete overhaul of the education system. Meaningful inclusion, it is argued, requires turning the current education system on its head (Ryan, 2006). This makes inclusion a compelling idea but one that may still not happen for a considerable time (Osgood, 2005). The reality is that schools remain largely segregated, with many children with disabilities still in self-contained programs and lagging behind academically (Friend & Bursack, 2006).

Teacher Preparation, Classroom Management & Resource Support for Inclusion

The realization of full inclusion has been attributed to several issues. One problem is the inadequate preparation of teachers to address a diverse array of needs in their classrooms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). Literature on this issue contends that teachers do not know how to adapt or differentiate their instruction in the classroom

29

(Sands, Adams, & Stout, 1995). In a literature synthesis on mainstreaming and inclusion, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that teachers, while presenting as if they would support inclusion, defined it narrowly and were uncomfortable with the inclusion of many types of students in their classrooms. Attitudes of exclusion were largely due to feelings of being unprepared to teach these students.

In addition, teachers' classroom management has been noted as a major impediment to inclusion. Teachers leave the profession because of their inability to cope with the demands of their students. As Gershon (2012) explains, classroom management is the topic that most concerns future teachers. While Gershon contends that classroom management essentially comes down to good teaching, many general education teachers do not believe that students with disabilities are their responsibility and relegate these students to "specialists" rather than incorporating them into their classrooms (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006).

Even if teachers are committed to full inclusion in their classrooms, they may feel unable to practice it due to programmatic restraints. Large class sizes, heavy-handed accountability requirements and lack of support from other school personnel, including administrators, can thwart attempts to bring about real inclusion (Pazey, Vasquez Heilig, Cole, & Sumbera, in press). When trying to implement full inclusion, bureaucratic limitations, time constraints, and overemphasis on perceived compliance and procedural concerns add to the difficulty of fully incorporating students with disabilities into regular classrooms (Dentith & Frattura, 2004).

Inclusion and School Leadership

Scholarship on inclusion and school leadership has looked critically at the ability of school leaders, particularly principals, to support inclusion in their schools. Like teachers, principals are also challenged in their interpretation of inclusion as they attempt to find balance between demands to meet the needs of all students in their schools but to also differentiate instruction and services on an individualized basis (Crockett, 2011; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009). This weighing of needs and demands is particularly difficult given traditional models of leadership in schools. Schools tend to be very hierarchical. Power is invested with individuals in certain positions and done so in a way that "promotes efficiency and productivity at the expense of more specific ends" (Ryan, 2006, p. 8). One of the things sacrificed in this model is inclusion (Marshall, 2004).

Hierarchical structures are not consistent with ideals of inclusion. But, models of collaboration and collective decision-making are and some schools have shown promising practices of a more shared leadership model, reflective of inclusive principles. Scholarship on distributed leadership (Spillane & Orlina, 2005) speaks to this aspect of shared leadership. Researchers linking inclusion with school leadership have stressed the importance of an inclusive school culture (Hehir & Katzman, 2012; Riehl, 2000). They have also provided criteria for inclusive leadership, focusing more on embracing ideas of collaboration, dedication to teaching and learning, schools as communities, teacher support and professional development and management of resources to ensure inclusion (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997; Guzman, 1997).

Leaders capable of implementing inclusion in their schools must be knowledgeable about inclusive practice, policy and law (Pazey & Cole, 2012). Numerous scholars have highlighted the need for a strong knowledge base related to the education of students with disabilities as a critical component of the training and preparation of educational leaders (Bateman & Bateman, 2006; Carpenter & Dyal, 2001; Crockett, Becker & Quinn, 2009; Deisinger, 2007; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Hirth & Valesky, 1990; Johnson, 2009; McLaughlin, 2009). Unfortunately, many school leaders still fail to see a connection between leadership and inclusion, passing on any responsibility to their colleagues in special education (Lashley, 2007).

Inclusion and Social Justice

For some scholars, the importance of inclusion extends beyond equality for students or less hierarchical leadership models. Inclusion is about social justice. Sapon-Shevin (2003) argues that social justice and inclusion are intertwined. Nussbaum (2006) ties the inclusion of people with disabilities to social justice through a capabilities approach. This notion of capabilities in a social justice framework is a departure from earlier concepts of social justice as merely redistribution of resources (Rawls, 1972). The focus on capabilities dives directly into issues of mental and physical impairments and thus links to ideas of disability and inclusion. Nussbaum identifies 10 uniquely human capabilities that she identifies for all people:

(1) life (living a full life span),

(2) bodily health,

(3) bodily integrity,

32

(4) using one's senses, imagination and thought,

(5) emotions,

(6) practical reason,

(7) affiliation,

(8) other species (being able to live with concern for and in relation to),

(9) play, and

(10) control over one's environment.

Nussbaum argues that these capabilities must be respected and go to the heart of human dignity; they are human rights and for her, the core of social justice extended to *every person* regardless of disability.

In education, scholars have adopted Nussbaum's capabilities approach. Kleinhammer-Tramill, Burrello, and Sailor (2013) posit that thinking of inclusion and social justice through Nussbaum's lens drives an understanding of schooling in the fulfillment of three roles -"liberation, empowerment, and participation" (p. 8).

Social Justice Leadership

As theorists of social justice have begun to embrace a broader equity minded, action-oriented stance in relation to education, scholars interested in the topic have turned their attention increasingly to issues of social justice leadership. For the past two decades, numerous articles have been published on the topic and a growing body of work is emerging. Three prevalent categories of scholarship seem evident:

(1) research on characteristics of social justice leaders,

(2) research on successful models, and

(3) research on social justice leadership preparation.

Defining Characteristics

Like inclusion, there have been a number of definitions for social justice leadership proposed (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Despite this, there are some key characteristics of socially just leadership that can be gleamed from the literature. A discussion of those characteristics follows.

Addressing inequity. As noted, in the last two decades educational leadership scholars have been changing direction and looking less at school management issues and more at equity studies centered around transforming society through schools (Otunga, 2010). These studies have looked at social justice issues as defined by inequitable treatment and marginalization of members of the school community due to race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or other forms of difference (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). A key issue is the promotion of greater equity in schools and a willingness to confront structures and practices that marginalize some students while privileging others (Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

Taking action. Social justice leaders are actively engaged in righting the wrongs they see in their schools (Bogatch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Furman, 2012; Gerwitz, 1998). Furman (2012) calls social justice leadership "action-oriented" and argues it is not only about identifying problems but also dismantling them and creating solutions that facilitate more equitable outcomes (p. 194).

Meeting challenges. For social justice leaders, problems of inequity and marginalization are constantly changing. The social justice leader seeks out oppression

34

and actively engages in remedying the problem (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). As the leader learns and adjusts through his/her own experience, defining social justice can be difficult. As Bogatch (2002) explains, "there are no fixed or predictable meanings of social justice prior to engaging in leadership practices" (p. 153). The social justice leader develops as he/she addresses challenges and seeks solutions. He/she is aware of injustice and is willing to take risks to address it (Jansen, 2006). This also means that a social justice leader does not shy away from the inevitable conflict that arises when this type of work is undertaken (Theoharis, 2007).

     Sharing power. A key aspect of social justice leadership is a willingness to share power and to collaborate with others (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Wasonga, 2009). Social justice leaders embrace a distributed leadership model and are not afraid to relinquish control (Giles, Johnson, Brooks, & Jacobson, 2005).

     Change agents. McKenzie, Skrla, and Scheurich (2006) call social justice leaders change agents because they are actively embroiled in fighting injustice and affecting new realities for oppressed members of the school community. They are activists that take up the charge of equity, pushing forward in the pursuit of better outcomes for all their students.   In a later publication, Skrla, MacKenzie, and Scheurich (2009) create a framework for equity oriented change agents. They note seven elements to their framework for such agents. To be equity change agents, leaders must:

        (a) have an equity attitude,

        (b) avoid demonizations,

35

(c) initiate courageous conversations,

(d) demonstrate persistence,

(e) remain committed but patient,

(f) maintain an asset attitude, and

(g) maintain a coherent focus.

Successful Models

While theories of what social justice leaders should look and act like abound, empirical studies are much less plentiful (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). The models that are being documented largely substantiate the theoretical characteristics described. But, contributions are starting to take shape. Rooted in real practice, the research does not sugarcoat the challenges faced by social justice leaders (Theoharis, 2007). It is also expanding the scope of the scholarship by testing models of social justice leadership in a variety of settings, e.g. rural schools as opposed to urban ones (Maxwell, Locke, & Scheurich, 2013).

Leadership Preparation

Just as social justice leadership has gained momentum in educational leadership literature, so too has research on the preparation of social justice leaders. A number of scholars have published in the field, all calling for more training to produce more social justice leaders (Bogatch, 2002; Brooks, Jean-Marie, & Normore, 2007; Brown, 2004; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Hafner, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKenzie, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2006; Tillman, Brown, & Campbell-Jones, & Gonzalez, 2006). In their article on leadership for

social justice, Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009), scan the social justice and

educational leadership literature. They find four dominant issues or needs arising out of

the comparison between the two searches they use to support the expansion of social

justice as an integral part of educational leadership programs:

> (1) conceptualizing social justice and a new social order in leadership preparation,

> (2) reaching beyond traditional leadership preparation to leadership for social

> justice,

> (3) moving toward critical pedagogy, and

> (4) making connections between local and global research to extend leadership for

> social justice.

They conclude more work is needed in the field to adequately prepare school leaders to

be advocates for social justice. According to Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks,

"research suggests that leadership preparation programs ought to engage in new ways that

promote a broader and deeper understanding of issues such as social justice, democracy,

and equity" (p. 19).

Inclusive Social Justice Leadership

If the field is still a long way from training social justice leaders, it may be even

further from embracing the idea of an inclusive social justice leader. This concept arises

out of the convergence of full inclusion and social justice models. An inclusive social

justice leader extends the ideals of a social justice leader and elevates the importance of

educational attainment for all students (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia,

37

2012). Thus, an inclusive social justice leader has as his/her defining characteristic the belief and commitment to full inclusion in education.

Importance of Full Inclusion

Full inclusion is absolutely fundamental to inclusive social justice leadership. The model adopts Shapon-Shevin's unbreakable link between inclusion and social justice. Taking on this kind of leadership means buying in wholesale to principles and approaches that involve embracing all inclusive schooling and rejecting all exclusionary practices. As DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) argue, "all students deserve access to the general education classroom and to obtain all the same benefits granted to nondisabled students" (p. 851). In describing inclusive social justice leaders, they clearly state that "principals who choose to segregate students cannot promote inclusion and do not reflect values of social justice" (p. 851).

Scholars concerned with inclusive social justice posit that school leaders who live their lives by inclusive social justice have an unwavering commitment to fundamentally change the ways schools traditionally operate (Slee, 2009). They believe inclusion benefits all students (Pazey, 1995). Indeed, they cite research that supports that student achievement increases when all students are educated together but decreases when students are segregated from one another (Peterson & Hittie, 2003; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). Their concept of inclusive social justice "requires leaders to be advocates for literally all learners in their schools" (Frattura & Capper, 2007, p. xv).

Within the scholarship, there is some debate about current operationalization of full inclusion. Some see full inclusion as a process and argue there may be times when

principals may need to separate some of the students in the short term. As DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) explain,

> For example, in a school that is beginning an inclusion model, students with more severe emotional and behavioral disabilities could present extreme behaviors that could raise serious safety concerns, especially if the staff was not trained appropriately. Surely a school would not be socially just if the school was fully inclusive but unsafe for students and teachers (p. 851).

Other scholars have been much less flexible in their inclusion orientations. For them, full inclusion for social justice leadership does not make exceptions. There is no pull out time or resource rooms. Instead of DeMatthews and Mawhinney's (2014) modified version, all students come together and the issue is providing the teacher and support needed to make this happen, not stop gap measures that prolong the inequity (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kleinhammer-Tramill, Burrello, & Sailor, 2013). For inclusive social justice leaders, eliminating marginalization means strictly adhering to inclusive practice even when faced with opposition (Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012).

Understanding Disability Law, Rights, & Responsibilities

As is the case with social justice leadership, preparing school leaders to fully embrace difference in their schools means providing them with the education necessary to understand fundamental civil rights and the duties and responsibilities that go hand in hand with those rights (Hirth & Valesky, 1990; Valesky & Hirth, 1992; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009; Powell, 2010). A number of leadership preparation programs still have limited special education related courses (Cusson, 2010; Powell, 2010). Cusson (2010)

39

conducted a synthesis of literature and identified 12 components of training she deemed

necessary for addressing the needs of students with disabilities. These components

included:

(a) relationships and communication,

(b) leadership and vision,

(c) budget and capital,

(d) special education laws and policies,

(e) curriculum and instruction,

(f) personnel,

(g) evaluation of data, programs, students and teachers,

(h) collaboration and consultation,

(i) special education programming,

(j) organization,

(k) professional development and,

(l) advocacy.

Based on an extensive survey of 293 professors of educational leadership, however,

components that were incorporated the least into their training programs were advocacy

and special education programming.

Despite professional standards for educational administrators related to students

with disabilities and other marginalized student populations, attention in the field is

almost nonexistent (Pazey & Cole, 2013; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012). Given that a

call for greater attention to be paid to issues of students with disabilities within

educational leadership went out more than twenty years ago (Valesky & Hirth, 1992), scholars lament a persistent gap in preparation programs (Pazey & Cole, 2013). Several scholars have empirically addressed the experiences of school leaders that were ill prepared to address the needs of students with disabilities in their schools (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Burton, 2008; Robicheau, Haar, & Palladino, 2008). This line of research adds to the arguments in favor of creating a broader knowledge base for inclusive social justice leadership by providing direction and recommendations on teaching and preparing school leaders to act as advocates for change by effectively challenging inequitable practices in schools. Policy makers and legislators laid the foundation for equitable education when *Brown* was decided in 1954. But, if educators do not have the necessary background to inform them of the intention of civil rights and equality agendas, they will be hard pressed to realize their capacity to become inclusive social justice leaders.

Robust Definition

As with social justice leadership, empirical studies that document inclusive social justice leadership in practice are limited (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Literature is still largely descriptive but the theory has great potential to create more practical implications through a theory of action. As noted, inclusion in practice requires very deliberate and purposeful decision-making that involves an understanding and a desire to rectify inequity cause by segregation (Hasazi et al., 1994; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012). Dedication to inclusive social justice speaks directly to the way school leaders go about their daily lives, both personally and professionally (Theoharis, 2007).

According to Theoharis (2007), social justice leaders practice inclusion by making "issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their [school leaders] advocacy, leadership, practice and vision" (p. 223). Eliminating marginalization requires embracing inclusion as the state of affairs in schools. It is *the way* school leaders approach difference. They look to eradicate it and create new ways of thinking, teaching and learning. Theoharis (2007) offers a working definition of social justice accounting for disability, noting ten characteristics of leaders for inclusion. Such leaders display:

(a) values and respect for diversity,

(b) attempts to extinguish segregated programs that eliminate the possibility for academic and emotional success,

(c) the ability to enable diverse students to access the core curriculum through instructional leadership practices,

(d) supports for professional development and collaborative efforts to strengthen understanding of race, class, gender, and disability,

(e) recognition of the imperative of providing an opportunity to learn, socially and academically, for all students,

(f) the ability to address the need of every child to achieve success,

(g) collaboration with others to maintain an activist stance,

(h) the ability to examine data through an equity lens,

(i) an understanding of the importance of working collaboratively to provide differentiated instruction to ensure student success and,

42

(j) an engagement fully with the life and substance of the school.

Pazey, Cole & Garcia (2012) expand upon and refine Theoharis' definition in their framework for inclusive social justice leadership. They propose inclusive social justice leadership be made up of four pillars, reflecting core principles for school leaders dedicated to this type of leadership. Those four pillars noted and explained (see pp. 196-197) are:

(1) A belief, vision and leadership orientation for the success of all children. This entails recognizing that cultural and organizational aspects of schools must fundamentally change to create a better world with a more equitable reality. Leaders have a strong sense of will and purpose and are able to advocate for others because of a deep understanding of their goals and what supports them. Leaders have an informed consciousness they can translate from passion to action.

(2) A commitment to eliminate marginalization. This refers to a strong social and historical framework that informs practice. Leaders possess an equity consciousness that bolsters their belief that all children can learn and traditional schooling has perpetuated system inequalities. They are dedicated to moving other adults to their vision so they too can embrace the belief in and ultimately the practice of success for all children.

(3) A willingness to advocate in the best interest of every learner. This means the leader is willing to stand up and fight for children even though he/she is aware that doing so will be challenging. He/she recognizes certain students have

been excluded from traditional schooling, mislabeled and segregated from others because of difference. Leaders acknowledge the pathology lies not with the child but with an unjust system that has historically failed these marginalized students.

(4) Accountability for diversity, the opportunity to learn, and the promotion of inclusive practices. This requires an understanding of the paradox of individualizing instruction in an era of accountability. Leaders must understand the needs as well as how to provide services for a diverse array of students. They must be able to ensure students can get what they need in shared classrooms, all learning together and included in one coherent educational system.

Equity Consciousness and Leadership Preparation

In a review of social justice literature, Capper et al. (2006) found authors of articles making recommendations about leadership preparation neither addressed educating students with disabilities nor did they offer any insight into the "intersection of disability with other areas of difference" (p. 210). It follows that school leaders are unaware of how to meet the diverse needs of their students and often find themselves in difficult situations because of their lack of knowledge (Burton, 2008; Cooner, Tochterman, & Garrison-Wade, n.d.; Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Militello, Schimmel, & Eberwein, 2009; Strader, 2007). McKenzie, Scheurich, and Skrla (2006) posit the problem lies with leaders who have yet to realize their full equity consciousness. "Equity consciousness" arises when leaders embrace the belief that all children can achieve

academic success, regardless of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, learning difference, culture, language, religion, etc. This idea flows from scholarship proposing not only inclusion in schools but acknowledgment that traditional school practices do not yield equitable results and may even perpetuate inequalities. Literature supporting an equity consciousness lays the responsibility for student success directly at leaders' feet. They must bring people together to share their vision and make their school a place where all children not only learn but also succeed (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McKenzie, Scheurich, & Skrla, 2006; Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012). While the literature regarding equity consciousness is compelling, it still lacks direction as to how it is achieved. It is not clear where this consciousness comes from or how it is developed, nurtured and ultimately, realized into action.

Leadership and School Success

With leadership strongly tied to school practice and improvement, it follows that a review of research connecting leadership to school success is warranted. In general, educational leadership scholarship assumes a connection between the two although actual verification of that connection has been somewhat elusive for researchers.

Strong Associations

Researchers have found strong associations and mediating effects of school leadership on student outcomes (Bruggencate, Luyten, Schreerens, & Sleegers, 2012). The focus on mediating effects rather than direct causal effects is due in part to the difficulties of advancing any one practice as the determining factor of effective leadership for student success. Researchers have called for more complex models that account for

45

the variety of activities and supports that take place in schools to disaggregate what might be driving the positive outcomes for students (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Levin, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Thoonen, Sleegers, Orrt, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011). Still, researchers have drawn strong lines of connection between effective principals and high performing schools. Fullan has written extensively on effective leadership and theorized about the topic (1993, 2001). Models of exemplary leadership are used to further literature regarding school change and implementation of change (Grogan, 2002; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis, 2009).

Noted Contributions

Researchers have independently examined a variety of mediating variables in effective school leadership including (a) vision and goals, (b) staff motivation, (c) teacher classroom practice, and (d) student engagement (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood & Levin, 2005). These studies show the power of school leaders to mobilize and change their school's performance through cultural shifts brought about by strong modeling, collaboration and working relationships.

Successful Models

While numerous action-oriented models have been proposed in the leadership writ large, far fewer exist with respect to social justice and even fewer forwarding an equity-oriented, inclusive approach. Many leadership models look to more general concepts of instructional and transformative leadership. Literature is this area takes its cues from organizational theories of shared or distributed leadership (see Leithwood, Harris, &

46

Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003; Mayrowetz, 2008;

Shalley & Gilson, 2004) but not from broader social justice oriented perspectives. While

theorists do look at leadership in light of mutual responsibility and trust as well as

innovation and risk taking (Moolenaar, Daly, & Sleegers, 2010), their concern with these

concepts is more structural than symbolic or equity-oriented. Nevertheless, these theories

have been somewhat co-opted by social justice scholars (Wasonga, 2009).

Current School Contexts: Educational Reform, Leadership and Social Justice

Literature on school reform merges the notions of leadership and social justice but

emphasis on inclusive social justice is fairly new (Pazey, Heilig, Cole, & Sumbera, in

press). For the most part, the bulk of the writing and the "unprecedented momentum" of

the sector's interest in social justice leadership has occurred in the last ten years

(Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010, p. 49). Social justice in education is, at its heart, about

the structure of schooling and inclusion reaches into the very foundations of our

educational institutions. In the field of educational leadership, research on school leaders

for social justice has attempted to document the contributions made by these leaders in

creating equitable schools for the traditionally marginalized – students living in poverty,

students of color, English language learners and students with disabilities (Bogatch,

2002; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002;

Scheurich, 1998; Scheurich & Skrla; Touchton & Asker-Hocevar, 2001; Vibert &

Portelli, 2000). Any discussion of inequity in education inevitably must move to a call of

action to not just identify but address the injustices played out in classrooms across the

country (Frattura & Capper, 2006).

47

Persistent Injustice

Education reform literature is ripe with content discussing the injustices that have plagued public schools and promoted some students at the exclusion of others (Losen & Orfield, 2010; Nichols & Berliner, 2007, 2008; Ravitch, 2010; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008). The same literature is scathing in its critique of current models that perpetuate inequities in schools. In particular, the accountability approach that remains the dominant paradigm in education reform circles has been the subject of considerable commentary (Vasquez Heilig, Khalifa, & Tillman, 2013).

Failure of Standardized Reform

When accountability reform was first introduced, it was supposed to be the great hope for equalizing our schools. Children would get the education they deserved, schools would be held accountable and everyone would count. Unfortunately, the implementation of accountability has turned even its proponents into critics (Ravitch, 2010). Treating all students as equal failed to recognize the historical inequities that begged to be addressed. Further, the harsh consequences imposed by the legislation that were supposed to prompt improvement have instead spurred rampant gaming of the system and manipulations of policy to such an extent that rather than improve the education of marginalized populations, their achievement gaps have widened (Bejoian & Reid, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Linn, 2000; Ravitch, 2010; Superfine, 2005; Supovitz, 2009; Thurlow, Quenemoen, & Lazarus, 2012).

Institutional Capacity

As the research regarding social justice and inclusion has already highlighted, part of the education sector's inability to move toward more equitable schooling lies in its lack of institutional capacity to bring make it happen. Teachers are not prepared or willing to teach all students (Sands, Adams, & Stout, 1995), leaders do not fully understand diversity (Pazey & Cole, 2013) and the system perpetuates a two tiered structure where some students are winners and the others are losers (Marshall & Oliva, 2006). Some scholars have noted that at the heart of the capacity issue lies a problem of culture: the organization of schools reflects societal values and norms. To move toward a more equitable society, schools must become *the* institutions that provide access to equal opportunities and outcomes (Shepherd & Hasazi, 2008).

Paradigm Shifts

School reform in light of inclusive social justice leadership requires a paradigm shift. Scholars seem to agree: to realize equity and full inclusion, current systems of segregating students must be dismantled and new ways of schooling introduced (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kleinhammer-Tramill, & Sailor, 2103; Pazey & Cole, 2013). As Pazey and Cole conclude in their paper on special education training and leadership,

> It is time for those who educate the educators to ask what kind of schooling they wish to promote. If social justice is to be the driver of our educational policy and is to be turned into meaningful practice, then we need to engage in critical conversations that address the educational and social needs of every student (pp. 263-264).

The Research Gap: Becoming an Inclusive Social Justice Leader

While existing literature creates a robust description of inclusive social justice leaders and their potential to affect change in schools, it provides only a skeleton of powerful change agents. There is still no meat on the bones to actualize the theory with real people. What is missing from the literature is further understanding of how an inclusive social justice leader emerges from the ranks. It is not enough to simply know what they look like or even what they do once they take on the role. What is far from understood is how these leaders can be developed, nurtured and grown from the very educational systems we are relying on them to fix. Research has looked at what can be done to train leaders through leadership programs, but professional development within the current cadre of school leaders appears absent from the discussion altogether. Thus, to reiterate the gap in the literature identified in the Introduction, this study proposes to begin to construct a theory of action for inclusive social justice leaders that explores not only *what* a socially just leader who is committed to inclusion thinks about and his/her experiences but *how* that leader operationalizes his/her beliefs and makes meaning out of his/her life.

Conceptual Framework: Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory maps the process of "effecting change in a frame of reference" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). It is based on the idea that adults have acquired a body of experiences that includes associations, concepts, values, feelings and conditioned responses and these experiences create a frame of reference for their world. Our frames of reference shape how we come to understand our experiences. It is human nature that

we tend to reject ideas that do not conform to our preconceptions. However, there is

opportunity for us to change our frames of reference, to reassess and move toward "more

inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience" ways of thinking

(Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). When this type of thinking takes place, we become

transformative learners. Mezirow's learning theory, while controversial (see Merriam,

2004), has become a popular conceptual framework for studies interested in adult

learning. Given the current study is centered upon the development of inclusive social

justice leaders, it seemed an appropriate framework to ground the study and explore

notions of realization and change for current educational leaders.

Key to Mezirow's (2004) framework is the idea of critical reflection and rational

discourse. This is how we make meaning of experience and, when able to engage in it,

we can challenge previous experiences and assumptions and find new ways of being. To

help explain the context of the theory further, what follows are brief explanations to

substantiate the concepts of critical reflection and rational discourse. Implications for

education are then presented to connect the framework to the study.

Meaning Structures

According to Mezirow (1994), the "process of learning is focused, shaped, and

delimited by our frames of reference" (p. 223). Meaning structures are two-dimensional.

On one side, they include meaning perspectives based on broad predispositions

formulated from psychocultural assumptions that in turn, set our expectations. On the

other side, they include meaning schemes that are more specific and represent the

constellation of concepts, beliefs, judgments or feelings we have that shape particular

51

interpretations. Meaning schemes are particular manifestations of meaning perspectives.

It is common for people to resist anything that does not fit neatly within their meaning

structures but as we all strive to understand our experiences and given the limitations of

our meaning structures, we tend toward viewpoints that are functional, i.e. more

inclusive, discriminating and integrative of our experience.

Transforming Meaning Structures

Meaning structures are transformed through reflection. Mezirow (1994) defines

reflection as attending to the reasons or justification for one's beliefs. We reflect on

unexamined assumptions and when old beliefs cannot be reconciled with new

experiences, they are no longer functional. We must be critical of the origins of our

assumptions and as adults, un-package the origins, nature and consequences of those

assumptions. Reflection for the most part, occurs during problem solving periods.

Mezirow posits we may reflect on the content of the problem, the process of problem

solving or the premise of the problem.

According to Mezirow (1994), the most significant learning occurs over critical

premise reflections, usually regarding one's self. Mezirow (1991) identifies the learning

process during this type of reflection in eleven phases from beginning to end:

> (a) A disorienting dilemma,
>
> (b) Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, sometimes turning to
>
>   religion for support,
>
> (c) A critical assessment of assumptions,

(d) Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are

shared and others have negotiated a similar change,

(e) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions,

(f) Planning a course of action,

(g) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans,

(h) Provisionally trying out new roles,

(i) Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships,

(j) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

and,

(k) A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's

new perspective.

As Mezirow (1994) summarizes, "there are four ways to learn: by refining or elaborating

our meaning schemes, learning new meaning schemes, transforming meaning schemes,

and transforming meaning perspectives" (p. 224). Reflection of content and process go

to all four ways but reflection on premises transforms meaning perspectives only.

Instrumental and Communicative Learning

When we are faced with something new that we do not understand, when we do

not have faith in the source of some confounding information, or when we fundamentally

disagree with someone and want to resolve the difference, there are different approaches

to learning. If the problem can be resolved empirically through tests or some objective

measurement, we engage in instrumental learning. But, if we want to understand

something more amorphous that deals with values, intentions or feelings then we employ

53

communicative learning. Communicative learning does not attempt to determine truth

through empiricism. This type of learning requires discussion (Mezirow, 1994).

Discourse

Discourse is the effort to find meaning through dialogue. It is a discussion that

allows for competing viewpoints. For Mezirow (1994), discourse is a process that

continues as we seek out others and test different ideas. The ideal discourse will have:

> (a) accurate and complete information,
>
> (b) freedom from coercion or distorting self-deception,
>
> (c) the ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively,
>
> (d) openness to alternative points of view and care about the way others think
> and feel,
>
> (e) the ability to become critically reflective of assumptions and their
> consequences;
>
> (f) equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse, and
>
> (g) a willingness to accept an informed, objective and rational consensus as a
> legitimate test of validity until new perspectives, evidence, or arguments
> are encountered, and are subsequently established through discourse as
> yielding better judgments (p. 225).

Implications for Education

As Mezirow (1994) purports, "the ideal conditions for learning are also the ideal

conditions of education" (p. 226). They set the standard for learning in a way that

protects people from "inequalities of power and influence" and sets a stage for "freedom,

54

tolerance, equality, education, and democratic participation" (p. 226). While adult education tends to focus on instrumental learning, what is needed is more communicative learning. This type of human development lends itself to action through reflection and is more indicative of real social change and activism. It also provides opportunity for collective action through the mobilization of like-minded people and challenges the status quo when it does not reflect equitable practice.

Summary

This chapter presented the literature related to inclusive social justice by setting out the competing theories of inclusion, concepts of social justice leadership and then the combined ideas of inclusion and social justice leadership in inclusive social justice leadership. Scholarship in the field concerns itself primarily with equity in schools and addressing the historical marginalization of certain students – poor, minority, English language learners and students with disabilities – in traditional schools. The literature review also took note of scholarship on the importance of leadership in school success. Collectively, research in this area substantiates the purpose of this study, i.e. the exploration of the experiences of inclusive social justice leaders. They only matter if leaders do actually have an impact of their schools and the children they serve. Furthermore, briefly delving into school reform literature in inclusive social justice extends the study to broader impacts. The meaning of leadership is interrogated. School leaders and the institutions for which they are responsible are looked at critically in terms of righting the societal wrongs; institutions are seen as battlefronts for mobilizing social change and furthering equity. The chapter concluded with an overview of Mezirow's

55

(1994) transformative learning theory, laying the groundwork for the conceptual

framework that will be used for analysis of the findings in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used for this study. The study is a qualitative multi-case narrative biography (Denzin, 1989; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006; Wengraf, 2001; Yin, 2009). The reason for this hybrid approach and the data collection and analysis that flow from it are described. The methods reflect a combination of a number of qualitative approaches tied directly to the purpose of the study. To restate, the purpose of this study was to explore the lives of two school leaders currently living and working as inclusive social justice leaders. By chronicling the lives of two principals who are actively engaged in advocating for and promoting students who have been marginalized by race, poverty, language, and disability, greater context and understanding regarding the development of inclusive social justice leaders is advanced. The purpose of this study is to add to the scholarship on inclusive social justice by testing and furthering existing theory and laying the groundwork for a theory of action. The voices of the principals provide insight into the lived experiences of those trying to lead through social justice. Analyzing their stories pushes current theoretical ideas of not only what a social justice leader looks like but how they act and what experiences have informed their actions.

The chapter is organized into ten sections including a summary of its contents as the final section. The chapter begins with a rationale for the research approach by revisiting the research questions and then covering the design of the study. It goes on to describe the research sample and data sources explaining the criteria used for successful

57

principals and inclusive social justice leaders. This is followed by a discussion of the

research setting and context. Data collection and data analysis methods are presented.

These sections provide detail on the narrative interpretive biography method as well as

coding procedures, narrative inquiry, cross comparisons and thematic groupings. A

section on trustworthiness addressing issues of credibility (validity) and dependability

(reliability) is presented followed by sections on the role of the researcher and researcher

assumptions. Finally, before ending with the summary of the chapter, a section is

devoted to the limitations and delimitations of the study.

<div align="center">**Rationale for Research Approach**</div>

Research Questions Revisited

To achieve its desired purpose, this study utilized one overarching research

question and three additional questions to explore the process of becoming an inclusive

social justice leader. Restating the research questions, the study sought to answer:

1. How do two former special education teachers and experienced public school

   principals from a conservative southern state who have successfully implemented

   a full inclusion model describe and understand their commitment to and

   implementation of inclusive social justice leadership?

   a. How has this developed over time?

   b. What, if any, events in their lives do they see as significant to their

      evolution as inclusive social justice leaders?

   c. What role does their current leadership position play in their social justice

      journey?

<div align="center">58</div>

A Qualitative Research Design

The research tradition employed for this study is qualitative. The study fits the qualitative paradigm because the study reflects an interest "in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). I was trying to discover what makes a school leader become an inclusive social justice leader or at least appear to be one based on their success with including marginalized students, particularly students with disabilities. How do they get to that point? What carries them on their journey for social justice? I was not trying to define an inclusive social justice leader so much as I was trying to refine and perhaps add to or challenge existing ideas and definitions. Although what I was seeking may be somewhat amorphous, the study nonetheless reflects a "systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature, of a phenomenon in a particular context" (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005, p. 196). This is the essence of qualitative research.

Qualitative designs are not concerned with cause and effect. Rather, they are concerned with uncovering meaning. In the discovery of meaning, the observer or researcher is central to the pursuit. This is because "qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

Merriam (2009) identifies four characteristics as key to understanding the nature of qualitative research. What follows is a brief description of each of these core characteristics as described by Merriam (see pp. 14-16).

59

(a) focus on meaning and understanding – here, the concentration is on trying to make sense of something with depth and sensitivity to the participants. What is important is getting understanding from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's.

(b) researcher as primary instrument with respect to data collection and analysis - this idea offers all the benefits of human interaction, i.e. immediate responsiveness and adaptation to the subjects, but also the potential hazards of subjectivity such as biases. Merriam writes the latter can be dealt with as long as they are identified and monitored over the course of the study.

(c) an inductive process goes to the creation of building of theory - the inductive characteristic of qualitative research is that researchers can build theory through understandings gathered from the field.

(d) rich description refers to the product of qualitative research - the information documented and conveyed can be voluminous and provides a context that has great depth and dimensionality.

Given the characteristics articulated by Merriam (2009), the purpose of the study and its questions fit nicely with the qualitative approach. Searching for greater meaning and understanding was the desire of this study about inclusive social justice leaders. The biographical method employs the researcher as primary instrument and the goal of building upon theory and adding a theory of action to inclusive social justice descriptions

is an inductive process. Finally, the narrations that come from the interviews create revealing, and indeed, rich descriptions of inclusive social justice leaders.

Case Study

While the research design for this study was qualitative, with regards to methodology it was a multi-case study. It was multi-case because two individual cases were studied. Each case was considered "in depth" giving little immediate consideration to the other (Stake, 2006, p. 6). Cross comparisons came after each case was considered on its own merits. This design was chosen to give the level of detail necessary to delve into the essence of living inclusive social justice leaders. Case studies are about particularization more than generalization but they can be used as a step toward the development of theory (Stake 2006).   As is consistent with multi-case studies, this case study was *instrumental* in its purpose (Stake, 2006). The purpose was to go beyond the case and shed light on something else.

Narrative Biography

While this study was structured as a multi-case study, it also serves as a narrative biography. The narrative biography flows from Denzin's (1989) interpretive biography involving the "studied use and collection of personal-life documents, stories, accounts and narrative which describe turning-point moments in individual's lives" (p. 13). While interpretation is part of this methodology, a delicate balancing is required on the part of the researcher. The overarching emphasis is on the narrative itself. Thus, wherever possible, the voices of the subjects are relied upon, allowing their words to speak for themselves without imposing too much interpretation. To understand how school leaders

61

make meaning of their work and daily lives, the selected method had to allow for a dynamic analysis of the narration that would provide an opportunity for the researcher to dissect elements of the narratives without overpowering them with too much interpretive license. Daiute's approach (2014) lent direction to how to undertake this task. Her explanation of significance analysis best fit with the purpose and the context of the research questions. I thought it compelling to interview the subjects by traditional, interpretive biographical methods (i.e. Denzin, 1989) but added on additional hooks to the process by searching the narratives for stories of "challenging situations [to] offer insights into cultural values, practices and problems" (Daiute, 2014, p. 151). Further, when the conceptual framework of transformative learning theory was juxtaposed with the methodology, looking at particular events as described by participants that "transformed" their thinking. This approach resonated with the study's objectives.

Research Sample and Data Sources

As noted, purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to select the two school principals. As Merriam (1998) explains, "purposeful sampling is used when the researcher wants "to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). As stated in Chapter 1, participants for the study were chosen based on 6 criteria:

1. They were former public school special education teachers who had actual experience with providing programs and services to children with disabilities and believed in a full inclusion model.

2. They had spent the majority of their time in traditional public school

62

environments in the southern United States.

3. They had 15 to 20 years of experience as public school administrators.

4. They had a documented record of working with traditionally marginalized student populations and a proven track record of turning around previously low performing schools into high performing schools.

5. The current and previous schools at which they taught and were administrators had diverse populations composed primarily of poor, minority students with large numbers of English language learners with at least ten percent of their overall enrollment being students with disabilities.

6. Their current schools practice full inclusion and have high achievement rates with respect to academic performance, drop-out/graduation rates and college acceptance for all students, including those with disabilities.

Both principals, Brenda Thomas and Mike Todd, are career educators having worked in a state in the southern United States for three decades, first as special education teachers and then as administrators. This was important because I wanted to select participants that came from conservative locales where integration of different student populations was slow and still heavily contested. While the participants are from the same state, they come from different school districts, one urban and one suburban but their student populations are diverse and largely comprised of traditionally marginalized students. They spent a good portion of their careers in traditional school models yet are currently working in more innovative public schools. In addition, both participants have held leadership positions for fifteen years or more. Brenda has been in a leadership role

for two decades and Mike just celebrated his fifteenth year as a principal.

As indicated in Chapter 1, Brenda Thomas, my first case, is the principal at an all girls' middle/high school targeting minority students. Although the school is open enrollment and consists of a student body derived through a non-discriminatory lottery, it attracts mostly low-income Hispanic and African American young women   Similarly, Mike Todd, the second case, is the principal responsible for a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) school following a project-based learning model, also enrolling primarily minority students. His school also operates through an open lottery and was deliberately designed to attract low income, minority students.

Both of the participants' schools practice full inclusion. Their schools also boast low drop out rates and high graduation rates, claiming a 100 percent graduation rate and an equally high college acceptance rate. I wanted to be sure to include principals who led schools with large populations of traditionally marginalized students and who were recognized by others in their work with these students due to successful student outcomes. I used the defined characteristics provided by scholars of inclusive social justice leaders (Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012) to inform my choice of leaders. Specifically, applying the fourth criteria of my six selection criteria entailed finding principals with public recognition of their social justice in action. These principals presented as activists in their communities and had openly engaged in dialogues about social justice and inequity in schools on a local and state level. Brenda and Mike also have national profiles and both schools have hosted visits from educators and politicians from across the U.S., in part, to commend them on the success of their work with

64

marginalized students. When selecting the principals, this outside recognition gave legitimacy to their designation as successful school principals. Additionally, their public commentary, career accomplishments, professional contributions and acknowledgement by peers as well as outside education-related agencies as leaders for change and social justice confirmed them as choice representatives for inclusive social justice leadership.

I did not initially intend to only include principals currently leading at innovative model schools but in meeting the other criteria for selection, this turned out to be the case. The participants still met the criteria because the settings were public, open to all students and both leaders had spent the majority of their careers in traditional model schools, not innovative models. This led to an additional research question for the study to connect the leaders current positions with their inclusive social justice stance. The research setting/context is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Research Setting/Context

The research context for this study is the public school system in a conservative southern state of the United States. As noted, this applied criteria was important because I wanted to select participants that came from conservative locales where integration of different student populations was slow and still heavily contested. The school districts in which the participants have practiced as teachers and administrators are diverse and reflect the variety of student needs and all the problems that plague the educational system on a bigger, national level. I am fortunate to have worked in the educational sector and to have contacts across the country that have an interest in inclusive practice and social justice. Through my contacts I was able to make connections with my two

participants. Although they came from the same southern state, they worked for different

districts and in different school contexts. Their commonality lied in their past

experiences as special educators, their commitment to full inclusion and their recognition

as leaders committed to social justice who had led their schools to from failure to success.

These were leaders working in poor communities with traditionally low performing

schools that had turned things around yet kept the same population of students and

embraced a full inclusion model. In both cases, students with disabilities made up

slightly more than 10 percent of the student population, a percentage consistent with the

representation of people with disabilities in the general public.

The demographics at Brenda's school reflected a diverse student body. Her

school's student population is comprised of 63% Hispanic and nearly 10% African

American young women. Overall, minorities make up almost 80% of the student body

and close to 60% of the students receive free or discounted lunches.   Likewise, Mike's

school was equally diverse. His student body is 53% male and 47% female. In terms of

its racial make up, 71% are minority students: 20% are African American and 46% are

Hispanic. Over half of the students receive free or discounted lunches.

<div align="center">

Data Collection Methods

</div>

Interviews

Each participant was interviewed three times in open-ended one-on-one

interviews. Interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed. The interviews were

carefully designed to allow the participant to tell his/her story as he/she chooses with

minimal interruptions from the interviewee (Wengraf, 2001). Prompts in this

methodology are discouraged. The only question from the researcher is an opening

question designed to induce the participant to tell his/her story. Wengraf refers to these

interview sessions as Single Question Interview Sessions or SQUINs. In these sessions,

which Wengraf proposes for the first and second interviews, the subject is merely asked

an opening question. In this case, "I would like you to tell me your life story. Tell me

about how you came to be the leader you are today. Tell me about the events and

experiences that are important to you." From these brief opening questions, the entire

interview is conducted and the second interview using the same opening question while

allowing for small prompts to position the interviewee back to the point of time at which

he/she stopped previously and to probe in greater detail the sub questions of the primary

research question.

The interviews for session one and two were conducted back to back as much as

the participants' schedules allowed in order to achieve the greatest flow and recall of the

chronology of events they deemed important. The third interview (which Wengraf deems

as optional) allowed for questions of clarification of the other two interviews and was

used as a brief follow up to simply clarify previous narratives that might have been cut

short due to time constraints.

The total interview time for each participant was roughly seven hours with

sessions 1 and 2 considerably longer in duration than session 3. In addition, three

colleagues designated by each participant to help triangulate data collection were

interviewed in short, semi-structured interviews lasting anywhere from 10 to 45 minutes

each. In all, over eight hours of interview material for each participant, totaling 16 hours combined interview time was recorded as data and transcribed for data analysis.

Documents and Other Historical Data

Additional documents were collected from the interviewees and from the Internet to provide information about the participants' personal and professional work and to shed light on their position as inclusive social justice leaders. These included CVs, awards, newspaper articles, journal articles and blog posts. In addition, materials available through Internet sites on the participants' current schools were used in triangulation of the data and for descriptive purposes. With respect to the latter, this included data collected on the demographics of the school and surrounding community, academic progress of students and accountability data.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis Methods

</div>

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry provides the means of analyzing the life stories and significant events that yield information on the process of becoming inclusive social justice leaders. Narrative inquiry provides an avenue through which both the researcher and the practitioner-participants can "tell their stories of how they have taken action to improve their situations by improving their learning" and can "explain how reflecting on their actions can lead to new learning" and "inform future learning and action" (McNiff, 2007, p. 308). The researcher works in concert with the participants and engages in a "shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5). With a modified interpretive biographic method (Denzin, 1989; Wengraf,

2001) and utilizing Daiute's (2014) significance analysis, focus on challenging situations as described by the participants lends meaning to the interview data and aids in the analysis using a transformative learning theory framework. Daiute suggests ways of comparing the data to look for similar incidents across subjects. The evaluative device used depends on the findings. For examples, groupings may be done thematically or focus on frequencies or functions of words and/or stories told. In this study, groupings were based on themes that cut across the two narratives.

Iterative Coding and Other Analysis

Data analysis in this study's type of narrative biography happened throughout the research process and drove the data collection. Transcripts were coded through a process of iterative, open-ended coding (Shank, 2005) to create natural themes in the analysis as the data unfolded. In addition, transcripts were also segmented looking for significant events (Dauite, 2014). These significant events were then analyzed through inductive coding to create categories for this subset of data. Further, the data between the two subjects was analyzed using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to look for indications of transformative learning in the overarching narratives and articulated significant events.

Emic and etic coding forms the basis of the analysis (Emerson et al., 2005). All data was coded several times. First, emic coding brought to the surface themes in the data itself. In the second review, etic coding was used to pull themes reflective of the relevant literature. Then, data was analyzed in relation to the research questions. In a final review, data between and across subjects was compared and contrasted.

69

I created my own narrative profiles of my subjects as a means of contextualizing the material and to help "identify relationships among the different elements of the texts" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 79). This helped place their life stories in the broader context of their development as inclusive social justice leaders.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Maxwell (1996) defines validity as "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 87). I transcribed interview data verbatim and typed the transcriptions myself. To ensure trustworthiness in the analysis, member checks as recommended by Stake (1995) were performed throughout the process as interviews were transcribed and to help ensure accuracy. Further, I shared my coding process with another colleague to ensure validity and seek input on the accuracy and match of the emergent themes with the data. I also provided a draft of the findings and analysis to the participants to seek their input on content. Triangulation across data sources (see Stake, 1995) using field notes, additional interviews with associated school personnel and document review was also part of the data analysis.

Role of the Researcher

I planned this study as an extension of work I had already undertaken with my advisor, Dr. Barbara Pazey. For the past several years, we have been publishing and speaking about issues of inclusion and social justice. For some of the time, we felt very isolated in our pursuit but over the course of the last year, we have both made connections and received a significant amount of support from the field regarding our

work. This drove me to think about how to move the research in new directions. Given comments received from other researchers and colleagues at conferences where our research on inclusive social justice was being discussed, I knew that the field needed new studies that would document inclusive social justice in practice. A criticism of theory is that it is just that, an idea without any real practical elements.

I felt that inclusive social justice was still too early an idea to define by any quantitative standard or method. The field was still in need of more exploratory research. I had been doing quite a bit of reading of ethnographies and it seemed to me that a narrative biography of an inclusive social justice leader would be illuminating in terms of the practical implications of the theory.

Having worked as a disability rights lawyer in my community, I already knew many special educators in the public school system. However, I did not know that many special educators that had become administrators. It was more challenging to find people that could bridge the inclusion aspect of my study with the leadership aspect. I felt this only lent weight to the importance of the work. There was a scarcity of people in the field practicing through an inclusive social justice lens. While I toyed with only interviewing one participant, it seemed like a more robust study could take shape if I had the luxury of comparing leaders. When I found a second participant, I worked somewhat doggedly to get agreement to be a part of my study.

Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory came into play as a conceptual framework when I was researching the narrative inquiry for the biographic methodology. I was drawn to the idea of significant experiences as a means of analysis (Daiute, 2014)

and it just happened that I had done some previous research on transformative learning. The field often talks about transformative leadership in relation to social justice but I wanted to be more literal in my connections to Mezirow's theory. Using it as the conceptual framework for my dissertation would allow me to extrapolate directly from his writings on the process of transformation and I believe, would lend itself to more concrete analysis and ultimately, conclusions for a theory of action. Because I was looking at leaders who had been in the educational sector for years, I wanted to really explore their *becoming* inclusive social justice leaders. I had spoken to my subjects on other occasions and I knew a bit of their histories. I knew they had experienced challenges and that they were not always as successful in their leadership roles as their current positions might suggest. I wondered what it was that made them hang on to their commitment to inclusive social justice? Did being in more innovative, less traditional school models have an impact on where they were now or had they always practiced inclusive social justice leadership? It made me wonder about how they arrived at their current incarnation. What was the journey that brought them to now?

Researcher Assumptions

Perhaps the biggest researcher assumption I make in this study is that all students have the right to a free and appropriate public education. I believe that disability, the color of someone's skin, their gender and the myriad of categories that people use to label others are irrelevant when it comes to this fundamental truth. Education simply comes down to meeting an individual's needs or not. What the precise needs are do not matter; it is the willingness to address them that does. This means that you have to know how to

72

differentiate instruction: how to support all kids in a single classroom so that everyone can learn. I would never argue that difference is to be ignored. As I have often pointed out, equity does not mean treating everyone the same. Supports may be necessary but everyone is entitled to learn in a safe place with respect and dignity. Segregating people under the guise of protection or more overt discrimination is simply exclusion, any way you cut it. I know that not everyone agrees with this but I believe that is what those people who so bravely fought for our civil rights were trying to ensure. I believe this is possible but I also believe that the current educational system makes it tough if not impossible to achieve it. I assume that people who are successful within the current system have found some kind of loophole or have created an alternative space that allows them to realize full inclusion for their students. This is why I am so curious about how people implement inclusive social justice leadership and I assume that others should be as well. As I noted earlier, the world is full of injustice. Why would we not want to know more about people who have managed to realize equity and justice for the young people they serve?

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations to the study were largely dependent upon the participants. Inability to access their time, attention or follow the procedures of the proposed methods could have been potential problems but luckily, both participants gave generously of their time and were a pleasure to work with, showing real interest in the pursuits of this study. Participants were able to adhere to the tight time restrictions of the chosen methodology, allowing the first interviews to be conducted in one case back to back and in another,

73

only several days later. Delimitations may still lie in the small sample size and the lack of greater diversity in participants although I was able to provide difference in gender, race and family socioeconomic level. While this was unintentional and not part of the selection criteria, given the paucity of potential candidates, it was an added benefit. Although generalizability is not a goal of qualitative studies, transferability is and that have been enhanced given that the findings did reveal additional considerations and potentially new categories of characterization with the respect to the realization of inclusive social justice leadership.

Summary

This chapter summarizes the methods used for the study. The qualitative approach is reflective of the study's search for meaning and understanding of the development of inclusive social justice leaders. The methodology used is a combination of case study and narrative biography and offers a unique was to view two individual's lives in detail and gain insight by reflecting upon their life stories. Choosing a research setting that is reflective of the inequities in schools described in chapters 1 and 2 goes hand in hand with the choice of school leaders representative of student success and the practice of inclusive social justice leadership. As the study tries to build upon existing theory, it is imperative that the sources of data be reflective of the elements of the theory. The chapter describes the data analysis methods, explaining how narrative inquiry was used to breathe life into the voices of the leaders and how utilizing significant event analysis highlights those incidents that facilitated change in both thinking and action and were influential to the becoming of the inclusive social justice leaders. Coding strategies

74

were also discussed to support the most thorough analysis of data. Issues of

trustworthiness were covered and included the use of member checks by participants as

well as an education colleague and triangulation of the data to speak to concerns about

reliability. To add to the transparency of the qualitative research design, the role of the

researcher and researcher assumptions were also presented. Finally, potential limitations

and delimitations were offered.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AS PRESENTED THROUGH

THE LIFE & EDUCATIONAL HISTORY OF BRENDA THOMAS

Introduction

In keeping with the methodology employed by the study, the findings in this

chapter are presented through biographical narrative. In direct response to the research

questions, the voice of Brenda Thomas is documented in a chronological accounting of

her life story as she explained it in relationship to her current reality as a school leader

committed to inclusive social justice. Thick description and verbatim quotes bring her

story to life. To assist, the evolving account of her personal experiences from childhood

through adulthood is told through captured themes, deliberately chosen to guide the

reader not only through time but with attention to significant events as articulated by

Brenda throughout her telling of her life story. These significant events were coded in

the analysis of the data and dissected for their impact with respect to transformative

learning both in opportunity and in realized change as exhibited by the participant's

biography. In the later analysis presented in Chapter 7, these significant events form the

basis of both testing and building upon the theory of inclusive social justice leadership.

Getting to Know Brenda Thomas

As luck would have it, I actually met Brenda Thomas years before she agreed to

participate in this study. I was working on my Master's degree in education nearly a

decade earlier. I was taking a course on instructional leadership and her name came up as

a person to interview on a project I was doing on inner city schools and community

collaboration. At that time, she was a principal of a school in a very poor neighborhood

76

that had traditionally been low performing. In fact, before she took over it was slated for school closure but in the few years she had been there, she had turned it around and it had just received an exemplary rating from the state education agency. She was a local and state hero and people were talking about how great this little school had become, the same one that people wanted to close and forget about just a few years earlier. I remember what struck me most about the last time I saw Brenda was not her as much as her school, the physical space she had created.

This exemplary school that was a model of urban success was still housed in a tired old building, set all on one floor with classrooms opening into an outdoor courtyard. The air conditioning did not really work. It was hot. The facilities were over forty years old and they looked it. You could hear toilets flushing in the classrooms: the walls were paper-thin. But, the school exterior and interior walls were painted with murals done by the children, parents and other community members. The place hummed with life. Despite tired architecture, the school felt vibrant and well loved.

On the first day I went to interview Brenda for this study, the skies were dark and it was raining. I met her in another school with facilities not much different than the last school where we first met. Her office is located in a tiny corner of the building and she had a small space heater turned on to offset the cold room. She looks exactly the same: an attractive, well-dressed woman with a warm smile and large eyes that exudes kindness and comfort. You cannot help but like her immediately. She is unpretentious and welcoming. She pushed her papers and books that were scattered around her tiny office aside and made room for me in a chair across from her. When her cell phone rang, I

immediately asked if she needed to take the call but she quickly apologized and said,

"No, I should have turned that off." She took care of it in one swift action and then

settled back into her chair to tell me her story.

She had no problem with my simple request to tell me how she got to this place in

her life. It was like we were old friends and she had nothing to hide. She told her story

with ease and with reflection, sometimes pausing to smile, sometimes to look up and lose

herself to a place in time thoughtfully recalled and sometimes, she just gently shook her

head and let out a soft laugh, recalling with humor something that would make the rest of

us terribly uncomfortable, mad or even a bit sad.

What follows is Brenda's story as she told it to me. I have tried to represent her

own voice wherever possible. My narrative is purely to help her story along and fill in

the gaps with context so as not to simply present a duplicate of the transcript of her

interviews. As noted, I have added the themes to guide the reader through her history and

mark the significant events and experiences in her life. The story of Brenda's life was

told to me largely in chronological order as biographical narratives often are and without

any real prompting from me. Brenda's story is engaging on its own, without the added

analysis of inclusive social justice theory and a transformative learning framework.

However, as will be apparent in Chapter 7, it aligns well with both. Brenda has lived a

life I could never imagine. What she has done with her experiences and how she has

used them to help others is truly inspiring.

Growing Up and Going to School: Unfairness, Segregation and Low Expectations

Brenda grew up in the 1960s in southeast Arkansas. Her parents were sharecroppers. Her grandparents had been slaves. Her family was poor. She was one of 13 kids and her family was close. From the time she can remember, they always took care of one another. But, she also knew things were not the same for everyone. She knew the color of her skin made a difference. She started school in a segregated school and did not experience being educated with her White peers, or any peers other than black children until she was eleven.

> I went to school when integration didn't happen until I was in sixth grade. Up until then, I was in a segregated school. From the time I went to school, I kept hearing, "They are going to be integrating us soon. They are going to be mixing us together." We had been segregated for so long. I remember going to the integrated school and there were salt and pepper shakers on the table. We never had salt and pepper shakers in school. I remember getting real angry about that. Every kid should have salt and pepper shakers. So now, because we are integrated, we can have salt and pepper shakers.

Brenda recalled how much work the Black teachers put into getting the children ready to attend the integrated school. She talked about it in words she heard from her teachers, women she had known all her life.

> You all have to be ready. We don't want you going into the schools and they think you are dumb, that you don't have manners, that you can't read. This was all said to me from Kindergarten on by my teachers. These were all Black teachers. They [the Black teachers] were all educated. They couldn't go to the University of Arkansas because it was segregated. They all went to HBUs [Historically Black Universities]. They all went away to school but they all came back to teach us. They came back to their communities. So we all knew them.

She recalled that a big part of the concern about integration was not just about the students but also the teachers. She understood that things were not as they should be, "I was old enough to understand what it all meant. I new things weren't fair." She talked

79

about the pressure on the community and the way people were worried and afraid. To be sure that the children would be able to handle entry into White schools, the teachers worked long days to get them ready for the transition, not just from an educational perspective but from a broader social one as well.

> Those teachers had prepared us. It wasn't that anyone was better than me or smarter. Our teachers, you know they were worried that people would think we were dumb. That would be a reflection on them, on the Black teachers. So, they had us more than ready. They said it out loud to us. They told us we had to be ready. They told us that people might think we were dumb. We had to be ready to take that on.

Growing up with segregation, Brenda was keenly aware that life did not afford the same opportunity to everyone. Despite the discrimination she was feeling, her parents pushed her to think about others and to use her voice for a greater good.

> And of course, my parents always spoke up about what wasn't right. My dad, you know, he always said you need to speak up but you have to do it the right way and you need to be safe. You need to think about what others didn't have and what wasn't fair. Equity was never used but that is what I know this as today. I didn't know it then.

As Brenda struggled with a newly integrated school, she began to get her first real taste of discrimination.

Scared and Afraid: Experiencing Exclusion

When Brenda arrived at her new school, she felt an increased foreboding about what was to be. She recalled it as a time in her life when she felt truly scared, down to her bones. She had no idea what to expect or how she was going to be treated. She said it didn't take long before she found out about the detrimental assumptions people, White people, would make.

80

I remember they tried to track us into reading groups. I was okay but I remember some of my friends weren't. It is like the teachers were overwhelmed. You know, there were too many of us so they tried to divide us. I spoke up. I was like, "You know, we all know how to read." I remember speaking up and the teacher looking at me as if, "Who does she think she is?"

For Brenda, her early experiences made her question her teachers. For her, the teachers

perpetuated the unfairness she had to grapple with now as she struggled to find her own

voice to speak up against discrimination.

I had some disrespect for some teachers early on. For those who thought we were unworthy, who thought you were this or that so you don't deserve to be in this group. I spoke up even then. I remember my dad saying to me that it was okay to speak up but I needed to do it in a respectful way. I remember thinking, 'Well that is okay but sometimes people don't hear you when you do it like that.'"

She spoke about another time when a young male student in her class was teasing her and

she asked the teacher to step in and help.

I remember telling one of the teachers when I was first integrated that another student was "messing" with me. She just got mad at me. She did not know what that meant and she didn't try to understand. She just ignored me. That stuck with me. I was a ten year old asking for help and she didn't bother to find out what I needed. That wasn't right. I didn't want anyone else to ever be in that position.

Her determination to succeed at school despite low expectations and lack of support by

her teachers was the knowledge that education was important. As she explained, "I

always knew that the education piece, especially for kids that were poor, you just had to

have it." She recalled on numerous occasions how her parents stressed the importance of

education and from an early age told all of their children they had to attend and finish

school.

If you wanted to make it out of that crazy cycle, whatever life was for you, you had to have an education. Education would have a role. I always believed that. I know my parents believed that. They pushed that for us. My mom would have been 82 this year, my dad 88. They were not educated. They were from a time

when education was really important. They were sharecroppers. My mom went to fourth grade, my dad to eighth. They pushed all 13 of us to go to school. We had to graduate from high school.

Brenda went on to talk about why her parents felt education was so important. She talked about their experiences, particularly her father's, with a little laugh and a shaking of her head. This was the story of her family's battle with discrimination.

> My dad was the youngest of seven and none of them got educated. The White family that my dad was a sharecropper for, they wanted to send my dad beyond 8th grade. He was a smart man. But, his father, my grandfather, wouldn't allow that to be done for my dad. My dad talked about that a lot. My grandfather was afraid. He was afraid my dad would go off and get educated and get uppity. He would come back and get in trouble. That was the time. My dad was born in 1919. He would go away in the 30s. He was a child of slaves. My dad saw this as a real injustice. This was about discrimination. He said we all had to go to school. We had to get an education and get those things it would provide. What he couldn't get.

As Brenda recalled her family's experiences with racism she was quick to emphasize that she did not believe equity was only about race.

> I am a product of segregation but because of that, not in spite of it, I see diversity as broader. I have transcended just race. I know what it feels like to be excluded. That can happen for any reason. I felt discrimination because I was smart, because I was Black, because I was poor. There were lots of reasons.

Driven by a Calling: Leaving Home in Search of Something Better

Throughout Brenda's life, her family was a constant support. They "took care of each other. We have always had the other's back." Growing up the 11th of 13 children, Brenda often looked to her siblings for help. She talked about her sister helping her at school when her mother could not.

> If you were part of the federal food plan, you had to have milk in the afternoon. They gave us milk in the afternoon and we had to drink it. We were all lactose intolerant. We drank goat's milk at home. I remember my sister in sixth grade had to write a letter to tell the teacher why I couldn't drink the milk. My mom

82

couldn't write. She was illiterate, well, after the first grade she couldn't read to me. I would read to her. To this day, I am an avid reader. My dad could read and write but not my mom.

She spoke about another sister who would send care packages to her. All of her old siblings went "north to attend school and then were working."

My older sister would send books back for us to read. She sent boxes of books. She did that because we couldn't go to the public library. We were Black. I don't think I went to the library until 6th or 7th grade.

Brenda knew her parents couldn't support all their kids on their own, especially in their small town.

My older sister sent me clothes for a long time, until I was a junior in college. She sent clothes to four of the younger female siblings. My brother sent clothes to the younger male siblings. My parents made sure they got away from our little town where they could do better.

Before Brenda started elementary school, her father moved her family from the two-room sharecropping shack they lived in to a small house in the town. It had three rooms with an indoor bathroom but no bathtub. She explained her father's reasoning had to do with education.

We were sharecroppers. The expectation was that you went to school but then you took off to go work in the fields. My older siblings lived that way. When I was young, he [my dad] moved us from the country to the city so we could avoid that.

When Brenda was in seventh grade, she and her family moved into a public housing project. Their house had four bedrooms and two bathrooms. To the family, it felt like a mansion. Yet despite improved living conditions, her parents never encouraged her or her siblings to stay home.

Of the thirteen of us, seven of us have college degrees and all of us have a high school diploma. The others may not have graduated from college but they had to

83

try it. And, we all had to leave Arkansas. There was nothing good for us in that state. That was how they saw it.

Her parents managed to send all of their kids away to school. Brenda looks back on that now in amazement but it also fuels her determination that being poor does not mean that children cannot achieve success. She recalled her first realization that her family was living below the poverty line.

> I remember reading in the history book about the poverty level. I read about what it was for a family of four. Around this time, I was also helping my dad do his taxes. I don't know why I did this…probably just to be close to my dad. Anyway, I remember saying to my sister, "Look at this, for a family of four it is $9000 and we are a family of 8. We are poor." I remember that. I must have been in the 8th grade. Me and my little sister we had a hard time with that. We laugh about that now. We never had a car. I remember that time. People didn't see us as poor. There were a lot of people like us in the community. We always had nice clothes. And we had nice shoes.

Despite living in poverty, it never occurred to Brenda she would not go to college. For her family, "That was just expected. You had no choice." And, Brenda knew from an early age exactly what she wanted to do. She wanted to teach.

Bitter Disappointment and the Sweet Taste of Success: The College Years

Before Brenda had even graduated from high school, she had been accepted into a teacher's college. As she explains, "I think there was a teaching part in me always. I saw the value. I had some really good teachers and I had some really bad ones but they had an impact. I saw the importance in education." But despite having such a clear path for her future, her road to college began with heartbreak.

> I remember getting ready for college and taking my ACT. I had already gotten accepted to college. I did not do well on the exam and I remember the report said I was not expected to do well in college. That really bothered me, that label. I knew that wasn't me but now everyone would see that exam report.

84

The score on her college entrance exam did not stop her but that feeling of being told she was not good enough, that some arbitrary decision had been made of her ability would stay with her throughout her life. It had a direct impact on the college she chose to attend. She did the unexpected by not choosing a historically Black university. She liked to challenge what people expected. As she recalled that decision, "I didn't go away to an HBU. I specifically didn't want to go to one. That was all Blacks were told they could do. That was where they were supposed to go."

When she finally got to college, she faced more obstacles from her own professors. The discrimination she felt throughout her time in a newly integrated school system followed her into higher education.

> I remember one of my professors, she called on me once the first day and then never called on me again. I got good grades. She would even read my papers aloud but she would never recognize me. She would recognize others. She just refused to say my name. I remember thinking, "This is a crazy woman". This is in college in 1978. She only called on my on that first day for roll call. After that, she never called on me and I raised my hand every class. I was sure that she wasn't going to count participation against me. She may not call on me but I made sure I raised my hand.

For Brenda, the discrimination she faced from White teachers as a child continued into adulthood. She talked about having to confront those teachers as the thing that scared her most in her life. She was afraid. It was not walking into a White elementary school or onto a college campus for the first time that worried her; it was facing those teachers and not knowing how they would treat her. "I worried about the White teachers," she told me as she shook her head and sighed.

As had been the case in public school, Brenda was a success despite the uphill battle she faced. She was bright and she worked hard. Even with disappointment over her treatment by some professors, she found support in others.

> In college, there were mostly White professors. There were maybe three or four Black professors. They were so proud when I did well. Whenever I made the Dean's list, they would be standing behind me for the ceremony. They came from a place like me. Their parents had been sharecroppers. They were so proud. I remember one year I couldn't come back for the Dean's list ceremony but my sister was there. I was student teaching. One of the professors went up to my sister and asked where I was. When he found out, he said I should have told them because they would have sent for me to come back. I still see that professor sometimes and he still calls me Miss Four Point!

Brenda channeled the support she got from the Black professors into helping other students that were struggling. Her experience did not isolate her but instead, got her more involved. She spent many hours tutoring her classmates.

> In college, I saw some of my friends give up. I saw them just not know how to make it. I would go to the library and help them. I wanted them to do well. I just thought I had to help. I have always been that way.

Schools Can Be Really Bad Places: The First Teaching Experience

When Brenda graduated from teacher's college, she got her first job in a rural parish of Louisiana. She had high hopes for what she could accomplish. As a recent graduate of a special education program, she was excited about teaching a variety of kids with various needs. But, when she arrived at her new school, it was not at all what she expected.

> All the kids in special ed were Black. You couldn't even refer a kid that was White. It was the weirdest thing. I knew there were kids that needed support. I was in a campus serving kids in 7th through 12th grades. I remember looking at all these kids. We had a very integrated schools but the teachers kept telling me, "Oh no, you don't refer White kids to special ed." So I remember working with kids, even though they weren't labeled in special ed so they could get the help

86

they needed. I would tutor them. They were still kids. This was something the system had done to them. It was not the kids. It was this place.

She was so distraught at what was going on at the school that she could not continue.

I only stayed there one year. I had to get out of there. It took me back to a place, where I experienced segregation almost. We have to be sure we teach kids and we can't be afraid to do it.

After her first teaching experience, Brenda was determined to find someplace where she could help all children.

Schools Can Be Really Good Places: Teaching Her Way

Brenda did not have to look long before she found another teaching position. Sunnydale (a pseudonym), where she would spend the next three decades of her career, was looking for Black teachers. Sunnydale had been slow to desegregate. They were now under a court order to integrate their schools. Brenda found her new home.

It was the early 80s. They were recruiting Black teachers. There were about 120 of us. We were in a group together. They provided us with the education we needed to teach state subjects. We were all from out of state. The other teachers, they were leaving. They had to bring us in. The Black teachers in the state were not coming to the Sunnydale. It didn't have a large Black population. They all went to cities that already had large, pre-established Black communities.

As was typical of the time, and still persists today, all the Black teachers were sent to the worst performing schools. Brenda remembers people warning her about the awful school where she was assigned to teach but for her, it was a breath of fresh air.

The school I came to, they said it was one of the worst. To me, I didn't think that. It was a school that was automatically integrated. It was a third Black, a third Hispanic and a third White. It was a neat school. It was a mix of everybody. I had a little girl whose dad was head of surgery at a local hospital and then a little boy whose dad was our janitor. It was a real neat mix but it had a terrible stigma.

87

Brenda's memories of her first school in Sunnydale had a lasting impact. Although the school did not practice full inclusion, Brenda recalls that they were willing to try integrating students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. It was her first experience with successful inclusion and she saw the benefits.

> I think that school is what made me the teacher I became. I had a great group of kids who told me what to do. They taught me. I learned so much. I was a special education teacher there. We did not have full inclusion there but we did fully integrate in reading and math. That changed things for me. Nobody knew who the special ed kids were. Everything was seamless. It was not a fruit bowl. We just treated the kids like all kids could do this. We taught the kids altogether. They were not singled out. They rose to the occasion.

When Brenda talked about that time, she remembered how the other children reacted to having peers with disabilities in their regular education classrooms.

> The other kids knew but they quickly changed their minds about what they thought. When they were in the classroom, they saw them as other kids. They all were struggling with reading and math. I knew we had special education students but I taught them all the same. We just worked with those that need help. We provide the accommodations where needed but just met the needs of all the kids.

For Brenda, this was a pivotal moment. "This was the first time I really saw inclusion work. We didn't learn about full inclusion back then. We segregated kids. As teachers, we could separate kids. You could just go off and do whatever you wanted." Seeing how well the students responding to being educated together, when the teachers did not impose separation based on difference, was eye-opening. She finally felt like she had found her purpose in teaching. Knowing that she could embrace an inclusive rather than exclusionary approach to education made all the difference.

> I loved special education. That is what I loved and I wanted to do. I continued in that for about fifteen years, being a special education teacher. I kept doing that because that is what I wanted to do. I loved advocating for my students; really, any students that I thought needed that extra support.

Brenda loved inclusive teaching but not everyone was as prepared to throw away years of

separating students for their differences. As Brenda continued to teach her students with

a commitment to inclusion, her skills grew both as a teacher and advocate.

The Teacher as Advocate

While actually practicing inclusion was a real turning point for Brenda, the first

time students with disabilities were allowed into her school made the greatest impression.

As she explains it, that is when she realized that she both wanted to be a teacher and that

she wanted to be an advocate for people that could not always speak for themselves.

> When I started school in the mid 60s, special education kids were not even on
> campus. They were in my community. When I started school, I remember a little
> neighborhood kid, we called him retarded then but he was Down's. We all
> started school and he would stay home. I remember about 3rd or 4th grade, he
> came to school. We had a special education teacher who came to school for
> him and other kids. I went back and did my student teaching with her for special
> education. For regular ed, I went back to student teach with my fifth grade
> teacher. I went back home. But that special ed teacher was a big advocate. Think
> about that. No one wanted those kids in the schools. She was a regular ed teacher
> and went back to school to be a special education teacher. She brought those kids
> in. She was there a long time. She advocated.

Inclusion resonated with Brenda because of her own experiences with discrimination.

She did not see any reason why kids should be separated. She thought school should

mirror the community. Where she grew up, kids with disabilities played with her and her

siblings.

> I knew all these kids. I wanted them to have an opportunity to be at school. Why
> shouldn't they enjoy it too? They were so happy. We grew up in the same
> community, it should be no different at school.

Brenda kept her memories of home with her as she continued her teaching career.

After her first teaching post with part-time inclusion, she moved to a middle school that

practiced full inclusion. Part of the challenge was getting other teachers to believe in

integration. Advocating for her students helped her advocate with the teachers. As she

told me, "We needed regular ed teachers to believe in it. There were many who didn't

believe, or want any kid in their class that struggled."

Brenda continued to push preconceived notions within her schools. She

challenged students, teachers and even parents to think about students with disabilities

differently. As she embraced full inclusion, so did those around her.

> I remember I was the cheerleader and pep squad leader. My special education
> kids were in the pep squad. It didn't matter what you looked like. I had kids tell
> me they wanted to be in my class not knowing that I was a special education
> teacher.   That is how it should be. You shouldn't be able to tell. You should be
> able to walk by a class and not be able to tell. For some kids the disability is
> physically obvious but for most special ed kids, it is not. Kids should be friends.
> They should be integrated.

When she summed up her focus on advocacy in schools, she reflected on both past and
present.

> Special education is what pushed me to advocate. Growing up in segregated
> schools pushed me to be an advocate but being a special education teacher really
> triggered for me the change to do something about it. When I was told my kids
> couldn't participate, say, they couldn't get a bus for them to go on a field trip, I
> would just say, "Okay, then we need to find one." I would just stand up. I had to
> speak up. We are all in this together. Teachers have to speak up. We are not
> going to leave kids behind. I just wouldn't listen to excuses.

> Being an advocate has always been important. I am in a group right now working
> on cultural competency and social justice. I see education as social justice. It is
> an equalizer. It brings us to a place where we can all do what we want to do.
> Having an education lets us do what we want, whatever that may be. It opens you
> up and allows you the chance to pursue your dreams. I have had to be an
> advocate for all kids. We have to help all kids. This [segregating kids] is still
> going on.

While Brenda felt strongly about her ability to help her students as a special

education teacher, she was also keenly aware that many students were not benefitting

from inclusive practice. After fifteen years of teaching, she was going to find out how to have an impact on even more young people.

The Power of Leading: Becoming an Administrator

As Brenda tells it, she was reticent of becoming an administrator, let alone someone who could be called a social justice leader. Her becoming an administrator was a slow process with her "fighting all the way." She was concerned that she might not be able to advocate for children the way she could as a teacher. But over time, she changed her mind.

> My goal was never to become a social justice leader. I knew I was going to be a teacher, a special education teacher. When I got out of high school, I went to college to be a teacher….my degree was to be a special education teacher, elementary special education. That was always my intent. My goal was never to become an administrator. After teaching about four or five years, I decided to do my Master's. I didn't do what my colleagues were doing. They were all going for administration. There was about seven or eight of us who started our Master's together. They all went to get their degrees in administration but I got mine in special education because that is what I wanted to do.
>
> Then around fifteen years into my teaching career, I was approached by my administrator. They were looking for a group of teachers to place into administration. They wanted teachers who already had their master's degree. They were looking to put them through certification for administration. There were actually two groups. Another was doing the masters' degrees and certification but since I already had my master's degree, I was in the first group.
>
> So my principal asked me if I wanted to be part of this group and I told him that really wasn't something I was interested in but he said, "You know what, I am going to put your name in anyway" and so, he did. There were a lot of people that applied and I didn't think I would get chosen. He was my boss and I respected him so I let him continue with the application. They kept narrowing down the numbers and each time, I would make the cut. After three or four times, I kept moving forward and then I realized that I just might make this. My principal told me, "You know, you make a difference in your classroom" and that really meant something to me. I loved my students. I could control my classroom and make a difference. I got to know my parents really well and was well known in the special education community, in the district, and was known as a big

91

advocate. That was my strongest push. When people said your special ed kids can't participate, they can't go on a field trip, I'd say, "That is not going to happen." Things were going on then that would never happen today. My principal kept saying to me, "When you are principal of a school, you can make a difference for so many kids, not just those 25 in your class." I respected him. I do to this day. He saw something in me, something I started to see.

Brenda's first post as an administrator was as a vice principal. She went to a low performing school. Once again, a place no one wanted to be. It was on the wrong side of the city and attended almost entirely by poor children of color, Black and Hispanic. It took only a short while before Brenda knew she could help even more kids as an administrator. That was always her goal.

So, I left to be a vice principal. I went with another woman who was to be principal. She became sick and had to take a lot of time off, she had surgery. The next year, she left. She decided she didn't want to be at that campus anymore. I did see pretty quickly that you can make a difference. Change can happen quickly. As an administrator, the change was so much greater than just in my classroom. As a vice principal, I got to be the chair of all the special education meetings. I was not the teacher any more. I was the administrator but I think I always approached it as a teacher. I was there to help the kids.

As she talks about these early days as a school leader, she paused occasionally to smile and look off in the distance remembering the time before those days, when she was just a teacher.

I still miss the classroom but I realize I was only making policy for the kids in my classroom. I needed to do more. It was not easy for me to break out of that. I had control there but as a campus leader, you don't always have that same kind of control but you are making decisions for so many more kids. Here, I have [to] make decisions for over 300 plus kids. You make decisions for the whole campus, not just those in your classroom.

As soon as she finished telling me about missing the classroom, she juxtaposed it with another memory she had of the first time she realized she could change the treatment of children in her entire school, not just her classroom.

92

I had free lunch. I remember being embarrassed because I had to give a number to get free lunch. That stuck with me. When I went to my first elementary school as an administrator, I remember that the lunchroom administrator had cards for the kids on free lunch with their names on it. I had a flashback. No one should know who is on free lunch. I got rid of that. That is just not socially acceptable. That is not fair to children.

She smiled with a satisfied look as she told me about the policy change. She took action and she was proud of that moment.

Taking the Fight to the Community: Empowerment Against the Odds

For Brenda, it always made sense to go to the schools that other people wanted to avoid, the schools where the children all looked different. These were the schools in the poor ends of the city that were often not achieving the academic outcomes of the wealthier and Whiter ends of town. These were the schools that needed Brenda's help. She knew these kids. She was one of these kids. She came from a similar community and she knew that these children could succeed with the right support. For Brenda, being a leader at these schools was the embodiment of being a social justice leader.

When I think about a social justice leader, I think about someone who can actually talk about what social justice means as well as do it. I mean, you have to take action that leads to all children being educated. They need to use education to bring about change, positive change. You have to do this so everyone can access it. They (kids) may not use it the way you want but it is available to them. Here, we tell kids that education is so important and that they will graduate high school and graduate from college. They all have to apply. They may not graduate from college but there won't be anything that stops them from getting there. They make that decision….not because they aren't prepared or ready. There may be other reasons they can't go….other social justice reasons like money or family responsibilities. They may not be able to go for that reason but it won't be because they don't have the skills. They will be prepared not only to go to college but to graduate from college.

Brenda envisioned her work as leveling the playing field. It was work that required follow through and more than just pep talk. She wanted the same thing for the

93

children she led as her Black teachers wanted for her that first day she went to the White

school. They had to be prepared so they could not just survive but thrive.

> This is a big thing for me. We get kids into college. They may look ready but
> they have to be prepared. They have to be able to go and be successful. This to
> me is the social justice piece. You have to do this for all your students. You
> don't just pick and choose. You don't pick kids on what they have. You break
> away the barriers. You make it open to all kids.

Sometimes, making sure that children were ready to be successful in school meant

educating the parents. It was important to Brenda that children and their parents felt

empowered, so they could wage their own fight for what they needed in school.

> I remember when I was working with a bunch of kids from a housing project.
> Those kids were mostly Hispanic and Black. People thought all sorts of things
> about those kids. It just blew my mind. Those were great kids. They had to be
> bussed in to this new school that was not their community. They were scared to
> death. A number of these kids were in special ed. The kids in the school already
> were from White neighborhoods. Their parents were great advocates. They
> would hire lawyers to write their letters. The kids from the projects, they didn't
> have this. They did not know how to be advocates. I went to those parents and
> told them what to ask for…I told them they needed to speak up. They had to be
> advocates for themselves. There were kids there that should never have been
> labeled for special education. These kids were not getting served.

Brenda always felt that people were quick to label students simply by what they

saw on the outside or some prejudice they carried that had no basis in reality. Her own

history told her how easily this happened. She felt responsible to save others from this

fate. She knew these quick assumptions were arbitrary but the detrimental effects were

real.

> You know, the labels bothered me. I didn't like that we [Black children] would
> be labeled dumb in the White school. You know, we use a dialect at home and
> with each other but at school, we did not. I used academic language. I always
> think about what I am saying and the language I have to use so people would not
> make assumptions about me. I did it to be successful.

94

I talk to kids a lot about saying things a certain way. Take the roughness out of it.
Don't talk like you are not intelligent. You are. We all use a dialect but I remind
them of different ways of speaking.

Giving people the tools to succeed was part of what Brenda's mantra of "paying it

forward." She knew she had been lucky in her own life.

I have been aware of making things work in this system. Giving people the tools
to get what they want. When kids in special education prepare to transition to
higher education, I tell them what to ask for and how to get what they want. I
give them the exact language. I don't want them to miss out.

I am really pushed to look out for those who have been in a similar place as me. I
know without the support things could have turned out a lot different. I think of
what people don't have and all the good things I want for them. I think about my
parents. You know, people think I was poor but it was nothing like what I saw in
my schools. It was so much worse. There was not the support I had.

In the schools where Brenda has always worked, many students are living lives

much harsher than anything even she experienced. While seeing her students struggle

has been tough, Brenda does not believe in making excuses. She is adamant that

educators are not saviors. They should always be supportive but kids have to believe in

themselves, in their own ability and embrace their education for their own sakes.

I remember taking kids home and they would tell me that the places they lived
scared them. They would not even let me into the project. They would not let me
inside. They tell me to come pick them up down the street.

It all makes me want to get them to good places, to get an education so they can
get out of there. I didn't realize what the poor end of town really looked like.
There were houses that had no floors. My kids came to school every day. I had
high attendance because I created a safe place for them. Even when our school
was low performing academically, they came because they felt safe. They had
people who cared about them.

At my elementary, I made sure we had teachers that believed in them. I got rid of
those teachers that made excuses that they were poor, their dad was a drunk or
their mother a junkie. There were a lot of drug problems but that is not an excuse.
Kids would come to school when their houses were raided for drugs the night

before. We just told them to come to school and we were going to support them. We were going to make it work. If they were coming to school every day, we were going to be sure we gave them what they needed. We would give them an education and hope they wouldn't repeat the cycle. They are not what they grew up in. My parents were poor but we didn't repeat that poverty cycle. You have to be better. That is what I said to my own son. I wanted more for him, for life to be better. And, that is what I have done for my kids.

We knew our kids were poor but that can't be an excuse. They are coming to school every day. Yeah, the police raided their house last night or their mom left them but they are still at school everyday. We asked ourselves, "What can we do to help them? They are here."

There were times that Brenda felt her community might be losing the fight. While a principal at an elementary school, she saw kids who were once failing turn into high achievers. However, after they left her, many ended up in other failing schools and their downward trajectory restarted. Brenda was committed to what she was doing but she was disheartened by a system that seemed to be working against her.

These boys and girls were so strong. All those fifth graders were so wonderful, they had it and then something happens. Between sixth and twelfth grade….just something goes wrong. I remember one of my boys, I testified at his trial. He had shot someone. I just remember him as a little fifth grader and he was so good. He shot someone in a gang. You know he was fifteen and being tried as an adult. You know, there were so many things like that. I just kept thinking, we can do so much….We did do so much and then they went to middle school and something went wrong. I knew we could do more.

Doing Something for Her Girls: Making a Change Through a New School Design

When an opportunity came up to be the new principal at an all-girls school designed to address the needs of poor, minority young women at the greatest risk of dropping out of school, she jumped at the chance. The school would be open enrollment through a non-discriminatory lottery. Anyone could attend but she wanted to be sure "her girls," the ones she had taught and mentored through elementary school would

apply. This was the first all-girls school in the district and many people thought it would

not be a success. Brenda, however, had a different perspective.

> I came because I liked the idea of a single gender school. A big thing for my girls
> at the elementary school, I would see them and they were so great, you know,
> they just had it. And then a few years later I would see them and they would be
> pregnant! These strong, wonderful little ten and eleven year olds were now
> pregnant. And other little girls would tell me about them, they'd say, "Oh, guess
> who is pregnant." I just thought, "Wouldn't it be great if my girls had somewhere
> to go?" My black girls and my Latina girls….not just the ones from my old
> campus, but from the community. I knew that if I went to this school, my girls
> would follow. Because I was here, they would apply. They would come. When I
> left, I made sure all my fifth grade girls would apply. I helped them. I knew they
> wouldn't all get in but we helped them with the applications. These are the kids
> that would not otherwise have help. We just wanted to be sure they got in all the
> material. Someone helped them proof their essays and just get everything ready.
> You know, principals from these schools (with traditionally disadvantaged
> students) continue to do that. They make sure their students have help so they can
> apply. People score these essays and we want them to have a fair chance. My
> secretary even took the applications over to the school.
>
> I pushed the girls to go. I have some girls who I have been their administrator
> since Pre-K. I have watched them grow. I wanted to come here because I was
> hopeful, this was something different. I just wanted to do something to help those
> little fifth grade girls to make sure they graduated. I didn't want to lose them to
> three of four middle schools. In my first year as an administrator at that
> elementary school, I had about eighteen girls that I have kept track of. At least
> eight of them got pregnant and I only know of three that graduated (from high
> school). I wanted to do something and that is why I came here.

Brenda's faith in what her new school could accomplish was well placed. By all

accounts, the school is a tremendous success. With a perfect graduation rate and enviable

college acceptance rates, it has earned state and national attention and is a model for its

innovative approach to single sex schooling in the inner city. As Brenda has done in

other schools, she continues to work to empower her students and she is a fierce advocate

for full inclusion--which the school practices. Young women with disabilities perform as

well as their peers, another enviable result that is not the norm in most public schools. As

far as Brenda is concerned, this is simply inclusion working well.

> I want to include everyone. We have a lot of kids here that have gone on to
> college. More kids here with disabilities have gone onto college. We support kids
> here. Often, parents don't know what to do. They don't know how to get the
> supports. We work with them so they know what to ask. They can get the support
> they need. We teach them to advocate for themselves. We talk to the college to
> ensure they get the accommodations. We work with them and their families so
> they can ask for what they need and be ready to go to college. These kids know
> how to work with what they have. Nothing should stop you. I don't want special
> education to stop you, just like I don't want being poor to stop you or being
> undocumented to stop you. For me, it is same for all kids. The needs continue
> and we have to be sure they can do whatever they want. You can't include kids in
> some things and then exclude them in others. We can't leave kids out.

> If a student has made it through school, they should not be stopped. If they have
> made [it] through our campus, made it through our tests, you can't stop them. You
> can't stop them because they have a disability. We've pushed them. They know
> how to advocate for themselves and they should go on to higher ed.

Still Struggling: Realizing Social Justice is a Process

As Brenda and I completed the final interview, she talked to me quite a bit about

persistent inequality in the educational system. She knows that equity has not been

realized. She gavs me a number of examples, talking at length about the first generation

immigrant children she sees so often in her current school.

> I see great injustices. My kids that are not citizens. We treat them like they are.
> We give them an education and prepare them to go to college but when the time
> comes, they can't go because they can't get any support. That is an injustice.
> These kids….we really push in this state to educate all children and I am proud of
> that but what I am not proud of is that once they graduate they can't get any
> federal funding. They have been citizens of our school system from the time they
> were four. Now, they want to go to college and they are no longer supported.
> They cannot get what is offered to everyone else. This is not right.

98

Just after she finished telling me about that "injustice" she started to laugh and said, "Oh, I have to tell you about this experience. You won't believe it." This time the story was not about her students but rather, about a colleague.

> I was in a meeting about creating a Principal Certification program and a guy in the meeting asked about social justice. We are trying to use this as the lens in the program. We were also arguing about the achievement gap. I said I wanted to get rid of language about "working to close the gap" and just say "closing the gap". I don't want to let people off the hook. Working to do it has not helped. There are so many varying degrees to this. It has to be closed, period. Anyway, when we were talking about social justice, one of the guys on team asked, "What is social justice and why should it be part of the program?" This is a public school educator who wants to be a principal! This guy is also a member of a minority. My jaw dropped. I think somebody explained it to him but I just was shocked. How could he be at this point and not know what social justice is…or even anything about the concept? Then we went back about arguing about closing the achievement gap. Everybody was arguing against it because they thought it couldn't be achieved so they would never be successful and get the highest rating. That is all they cared about, not really doing anything. We argued about this at both the district and state level. I had an unexpected ally on the state level. It was where I least expected it. It was a blond, White guy. He understood. I had to address my own biases because I assumed he would be the last to get it but he pushed it. He understood that this was something that had to be addressed. He said that prejudices lie everywhere. People make assumptions not just about race but also based on class, on economics and just assume that kids will never be equal. He said we have to challenge this. Working toward equality is not good enough. We have to envision it. We have to demand it. He got it. And you know, it made me think about my own assumptions. I didn't expect the support to come from him, but it did.

She told me this story for a couple of reasons. She wanted me to know how far we still have to come but also that even she, is not immune to making assumptions. She has her own prejudices and she makes mistakes. As she offered this piece of self-deprecating honesty, she reflected further on the importance of owning up to your mistakes. She does not think she has a market on this understanding but she believes that

her background in special education has made her more in tune with the perils of quick

assumptions and rash judgments.

> I don't think you have to come from special education to be in tune with social
> justice but I think it helps. It really is about a willingness to learn something
> about yourself. To challenge ways of doing things.

> In our final interview, Brenda often commented on the process of social justice.

She does not see it as an end. We still have so far to go but we need time. She explained

it in the same way she talked about her students needing time to improve, to be

successful.

> We believe our families deserve the best. At that elementary school where I
> started as an administrator, we turned things around because we believed we
> could. We wanted to be there and we wanted our kids to succeed. We mentored
> each other. We said this place is going to be different. You can't fix all the
> problems quickly. We needed kids to learn no matter what. We held to that. We
> needed things in place that would be different for all those different people. We
> couldn't leave anyone out.

As she talked about the time it takes to truly effect change, she acknowledged that things
don't always go as planned.

> I have learned that it is ok to fail. I knew the kids would improve. I knew their
> families and what they wished for them. We might be failing on the test but we
> were improving their learning. We knew we would get there. We had to get our
> kids to read and all our kids could read. Our kids would be reading. We knew it
> was a process.

Then, she made her story even more personal. She told me about her own mistakes as a

teacher.

> I remember even as a teacher, I messed up. If I wronged a kid, I would go to
> them the next day and apologize. I would tell them I would make it up to them in
> front of the whole class. If they needed me to tell them I was sorry in front of the
> whole class, I would. I told them personally and publicly if they wanted me to. I
> did this with teachers as well. I have always admitted my mistakes. You should
> never embarrass kids.

We need safe spaces to fail. A place where it is ok to fail so we can learn. It should not be failure for the sake of shaming. There is no place for that. That is the worst.

In Brenda's eyes, moving beyond discrimination to realizing social justice is a team effort. It cannot be done alone. Just as people need safe spaces to fail, they need people to support them. They need people to pick them up and push them forward. For her, there is bravery in facing what is wrong with our society together and holding it accountable.

We need to be part of a team. I think that is where you take risks. We get there together. We lose people when we try to get them to address social justice head on. Failure is considered not an option but it needs to be. That is how we take risks. We have been doing that principal evaluation program and I go back to that idea that the achievement gap needs to be closed. It has to be eliminated. It is not ok to have a gap. We just have to admit to it and then finally, do something about it.

Just as Brenda stresses the importance of being a team member, she also emphasizes the need not to perpetuate problems. She thinks it is necessary to let people know when they have not done a good job or when they need help. She has never passed a bad teacher onto a colleague. She says if a teacher cannot work with kids, then they should not be teaching. Problems don't develop overnight and there is no reason to protect a teacher at the expense of children. She sees her job always as support, attending to other's needs. She sees this as a piece of equity, something that underpins social justice leadership.

When I reach back and help someone, I don't wait to be asked. I just think about how I can help someone. Maybe it doesn't benefit me but I know someone else that can benefit. It is about helping good people. Helping our kids. You want to bring in good things.

Truth and Responsibility

In our last conversation, Brenda drove home for me the innate sense of

responsibility she has toward her students and the people she calls colleagues. Part of the

responsibility she feels is to always be fair, to commit to social justice and in so doing,

stand up when she witnesses a wrong. This is about speaking the truth and she is

uncompromising in this pursuit.

> I am really honest. I just say it. You don't have to be mean. You don't have to
> degrade. You just be honest and kind. Like with teachers, sometimes it is just not
> a good fit. We are all human beings. Sometimes it is not the right place and
> sometimes it is just not the right calling. I have to protect my kids. I don't want
> people to leave wondering what I think. I tell them the truth. You just have to tell
> the truth.
>
> You have to have courage to call people out, to challenge. You have to take risks.
> I have done it for a long time. I think advocating so much for special ed students
> as a teacher, it started there. You have to speak up for your kids. You are
> responsible for alerting people when things aren't right. You are kind of an
> outsider with the other teachers. I learned to stand up, to do it for my kids.

Brenda also told me that truth and responsibility go hand in hand. When she

believes she is on the right path, she will dig in her heels and stand by what she thinks is

going to work for the students.

> When I became an administrator, I didn't like all the directives on this is how we
> had to teach and everything was tied to the test. I knew what my kids needed and
> that was not the way it would work. The first time through, I remember we didn't
> score well on the tests. The district sent people and they were told they had to
> check on us because we were not doing things the way they wanted us to do them.
> And I remember, I told the district, we aren't doing things the way you
> want….just give us time, we are going to get there. We have plans in place. We
> knew who wasn't going to pass but we knew we could get them there. We had a
> plan. We knew we could get there with our new ways of making it work for our
> kids. The district was good enough to let us try. You know, we could have done
> it their way and maybe 5 of the kids who failed would have passed but instead, we
> got 40 kids not only passing but we got a commendable rating. We knew the kids
> passed. They knew exactly what they didn't know and they could help us.

When she tried new things with her schools, she always made sure the teachers were on

board. They had to believe in what they were doing and in turn, she would back them up.

> Teachers would worry about the district coming in and telling them to do it
> different. I told them, "Don't worry, I'm the boss." The teachers liked that I
> backed them up. This was a campus where all the kids were on free or reduced
> lunch. Teachers who stayed with me wanted to be there. We were all in it
> together.

> Brenda does not sugarcoat anything. To do so would be a disservice. Brenda

sees telling the truth as a means of empowering people to know what they are up against

so they can take control of their own destinies. She gave a particularly poignant account

of combatting low expectations when she was at her first failing elementary school

(which she turned around into an exemplary-rated school).

> I told the kids, "They expect us not to do well." I told little third graders. I told
> third graders their life story: "You are poor, you look like us but we know you can
> do it. We know what can be done and we will get you there." You have to be
> honest. I think being committed to social justice, you have to say the truth. I
> never said this is what you are, or that they had to be compared to other kids with
> more. I just told them what people expected. I wanted to empower them.

> I even told my teachers when the district was worried about us failing. I told them
> we were all in it together. I told them to tell me what they needed so we could
> succeed. I knew we could do it but I couldn't do it alone. We had to work as a
> team.

> We built great trust. We respected each other. We needed to have a place where
> we all worked together.

> As we concluded our interview, Brenda gave me some final thoughts on why she

always felt action was the best policy, even when doing something was the unpopular

choice.

> Over the years, people have told me they liked that I called them on issues, that I
> made them face their own prejudices. I have never thought about why I speak up.

103

I just did it because that it what I do. That is right. We are told to shut up and put up. As a social justice leader, you need to speak up.

Summary

This chapter has provided in narrative form the data to answer the study's research questions. Through Brenda's voice, the reader is given insight into how inclusive social justice is realized and practiced over a remarkable career. Driven by a number of significant events in her life, Brenda was able to take direction and develop an unwavering commitment to provide quality education for all children. She made schools safe places, demanded dignity and respect for her students and in turn, empowered a community of children, parents and teachers to think beyond what they thought was possible. She found success for kids that others had forgotten and she continues to do so despite setbacks, mistakes and a system that is exceedingly slow to change. She is a transformative learner, taking her lessons in stride and using them to learn, finding new ways to challenge and transcend any discrimination she encounters. She is inclusive to the end and her story substantiates many of the characteristics of current theoretical musings on inclusive social justice while also adding some potential new elements for more action-oriented theory development.

In the next chapter, Mike Todd's story is documented in detail to be followed in Chapter 7 with an analysis that compares and contrasts it with Brenda's story, further testing and expanding upon inclusive social justice leadership theory.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AS PRESENTED THROUGH

THE LIFE & EDUCATIONAL HISTORY OF MIKE TODD

Introduction

Similar to the presentation of data in Chapter 4, this chapter uses biographical

narrative to document the life and educational history of Mike Todd. His story also

unfolds chronologically. The themes utilized to guide the reader through Mike's story

are reflective of Mike's significant experiences and the new ways of thinking that came

out of those experiences. In keeping with the research questions to be answered and

relying on the transformative learning conceptual framework employed, the impact of

those significant events on his personal evolution and commitment to inclusive social

justice is highlighted. Coding procedures for Brenda and Mike's data were the same

although the themes are particular to each participant. As indicated, in Chapter 7, Brenda

and Mike's stories are compared and contrasted to further illuminate their realizations of

inclusive social justice leadership, building upon and expanding the theory through their

accounting of their own unique, lived experiences.

Getting to Know Mike Todd

Mike Todd is a busy man. The first day I went out to meet him, I spent two hours

waiting to see him. He was in crisis mode. Something had happened at the school and a

stream of central office people came and went through the main office doors. I sat in the

waiting area, across from the school's secretary. The space is small and sparse. Mike's

school looks much like Brenda's. It is old, a one story, uninspired brick edifice with an

open courtyard. In general, the facilities are far from new but the place was buzzing. I

could see the classrooms inside. Teachers and students were moving around, meeting in groups, giving presentations, and feverishly working on computers. The place looked more like a low budget, high tech start up than a school.

I watched the influx of administrators come and go but I was most taken by the students that walked in and out of the office in an equally steady stream. In my school memories, the office was a place for kids waiting to be disciplined. It was somber. People did not smile. It was a place to be avoided. Here, it was different. A young, Hispanic male came in to read the morning announcements. The secretary rattled off some new information he must announce and he took it in like a seasoned professional. When he talked into the microphone, he sounded like a DJ from the local radio station. His voice was smooth and confident and he rattled off the barrage of morning necessities. A number of students came in to talk to the principal. They wanted to start some new campus internship program. The secretary said she will pass the information onto Mr. Todd. More students came in, some just seemingly to chat with the secretary or talk to the other school administrators who were free and not wrapped up with the morning crisis.

Mike came out several times to tell me he would be with me as soon as he could. He did not look harried at all. In fact, he was jovial despite the looks I saw on the head office staff. He is a middle-aged White male. He is of average height with a bit of a stocky build. He was dressed smartly but in casual attire. He exuded an easy confidence. I got the immediate sense this is someone with everything under control. He is not going to get flustered. You can tell he can handle just about anything but he doesn't look bored

106

or jaded. In fact, it is just the opposite which is what makes him the most fascinating to me. From my initial observations, I saw an odd juxtaposition of almost childish enthusiasm with a composed exterior. His voice boomed with a bubbling excitement and there was a tiny bit of frenetic energy just under the surface. He is a guy you immediately like. You can tell he loves what he does no matter what the circumstance. He greeted every student he saw and the staff as well. He also told anyone that could hear him about the breakfast tacos in the back: everyone should help themselves.

When he was finally able to pull himself away from the demands of his bosses, he came out and warmly welcomed me back to his office. Most people would reschedule but he just took it all in stride as he sauntered back to his tiny space, packed with an oversized desk and bookshelves. There are no windows. His desk is piled with paper. There are awards on the wall and his degrees.   I make out a couple of family photos but I get the impression he is not someone to spend a lot of time in here. Mike likes to get out and do. He likes to be in his school, with his people.

I know he is used to talking with researchers about his school. He asked me to remind him about what my particular project entailed. When I told him it was a personal biography, he looked puzzled. It is clear he is not as comfortable talking about himself. He is all about his current school. He is a promoter of new technology and innovative project-based learning. Right now, that is his passion. That, and making it work in a place no one expected. President Obama has personally visited his school. He is reaching kids that no one expected to succeed, let alone excel. He is doing it with full inclusion. He is committed to reaching every student. I tried to say very little as we

began the interview but I did have to interrupt him once to tell him to tell me more about *his* story. The school is part of that but I wanted him to situate himself in the center. How did he come to be the leader he is today? It took another start but Mike told his story pretty easily from that point. He told it differently than Brenda. They are different people with different tales but they have both landed in the same place; they are committed to being inclusive social justice leaders. What follows is how Mike described his journey.

Not So Privileged: Childhood and School Failure

Mike recalled his childhood as typical, suburban middle class. He grew up in a mostly White area of a large, southern coastal city. His parents divorced when he was in elementary school and he was raised by his mother along with one sister. His dad was still a large part of his life but he moved to another state. When he was in high school, his mother remarried. He gained a new baby half brother in his late teens. Mike's life at home with family and friends was a good one. But, school was another story. There was nothing appealing about it and while everything else in Mike's life came relatively easy, school was a struggle.

> As far as I can remember I went to summer school. I remember it as good because I could go barefoot and go into the teachers' lounge and get a bottle of Coke. I don't think I went because I failed but I did have low grades. I know I was just bored. I didn't want to go home, read this chapter, answer questions at the end of the chapter, turn it in and get it back with or without red marks. Gaaaah (sic), that was just boring. I was bored out of my mind. So, I think more than anything for me, I needed to be hands on. I am a visual person. There is a place for auditory but if that is all you get, you are not differentiating for learners.

108

For Mike, the teachers never reached him. He felt alienated at school and really wanted

to be any place else but sitting in a classroom and listening to a lecture. He shook his

head remembering that time and wondered how he ever got through it.

> I had a graduating class of 800. I skipped school all the time to go to the beach
> and go surfing. I was just bored. I remember every year the teachers would say,
> "You know he is really smart". I would do well on the tests but just not apply
> myself at school. I would talk all the time. I would sit there and get bored.

> Mike thinks had the time been different, he likely would have been designated for

special education. But in his experience, no one cared enough and it was acceptable just

to avoid school altogether.

> They didn't have ADD or ADHD back then but I may have been diagnosed as
> that. To sit there at the desk and all I had to do is listen, I'd get restless. I would
> just get bored. High school at that time was a bit different. I had the freedom. I
> could drive and I could take off. I remember one time in a portable, the teacher
> was just droning on and she turned around and I jumped out the window. Nobody
> cared. No one would come looking for you. I'd take off and skip school. Things
> were different back then.

He remembers this period in his life as a time when education failed him and it has stuck

with him. He says his early experiences with school changed the way he thought about

the rules and imposed expectations. It informs the way he deals with his own students

now and the types of success he wants for them in school.

> So, the things that happened with me, there was nothing that a kid could do that I
> hadn't done. I'd been there, lived that, done that. It helped me relate to students
> and helped to figure out how to change things.

Looking for Belonging: The Impact of School Failure

After Mike graduated from high school, he felt a bit lost. He was bright but he graduated in the bottom half of his class. He really didn't know what he wanted to do. He blames his disengagement in public school for his early years of "wandering."

> I left home when I graduated. I went to Colorado and spent some time there and worked and went to school. Then, I joined the navy and was with the navy for 6 years. Then, I got accepted into a state university and graduated from there. My degree was in Radio, Television and Film. I started in engineering but I was bored with the lectures just like high school.

Eventually, Mike found new ways of learning. From the navy, Mike made his way back to school. College led him to a new major that was much more hands on, where he could mostly avoid lectures and learn the way he felt most engaged. As he explained, "Finally, at college, I found out I could decide how I learned. Moving to communications, there was a lot of hands on. I was able to do that and it worked for me." As noted, Mike ended up with a degree in Radio, Television and Film. At this point, he wasn't sure what to do. He had attended several community colleges before he finally got his degree at a state university. It had taken him a while to complete his education. Mike is sure that his difficulties in school growing up were to blame.

> I had to take a longer route. If I had the kind of education where I was engaged, I would have been done earlier. The education that I got did not work for me. It was just boring, boring, boring. I don't think I learned anything. I had to spend a lot of time just catching up and figuring things out.

Fresh out of college and not as young as many of his counterparts, Mike needed to find a job. He took the first one that was offered to him not knowing that his decision would change the rest of his life.

Job of Chance, Change for Life

The first job Mike could land was as an investigator for Child Protective Services

(CPS). His decision was based solely on the need to find employment. "I went to CPS

because it was a job." But his time at CPS proved to be far more meaningful than he ever

anticipated.

> At CPS, I learned more than I did anywhere else. I learned about family
> dynamics, individual situations, how different people live. Things I had never
> seen, I saw there. I learned so much about people. I learned about interpersonal
> skills, I learned about me. I learned a whole lot. I just learned about life in
> general.
>
> There were so many cases. When you go out to somebody's trailer and you've
> never been there before and you are knocking on their door and saying, "Hey, I
> got a referral and I am here to check on your child" or "I saw your child at
> school" and people are just freaking out. You go into their trailer and it could be
> anything from spick and span clean to you can't even imagine, there is just stuff
> everywhere. Dishes may be piled in the sink that have been there for weeks. You
> walk on the carpet and it squishes. Kids are pulling clothes out of a pile that
> haven't been washed for weeks. Or, you get into a place where there is nothing.
> There is no food. Or, you get into a house where they have everything but you
> start digging and find out there are family things that are happening that affect the
> kid. It could be anything.

For Mike, the job was a complete unknown. He had no idea what he could be

walking into and it could be terrifying. He did it entirely on his own. He was the only

investigator for a large country that included urban, suburban and rural communities.

> I've seen everything from murder to just neglect. I had a case where [a] woman
> had a baby and no one even knew she was pregnant and they found the baby in a
> dumpster. I've seen it all. Things you don't want to remember. Then, you have to
> go to court and testify in court. This was something I had never done before.
> You are dealing with law enforcement, advocacy groups, families, social
> workers…you know. I was not a social worker and I had to work through some
> of those serious emotions you go through. I'd get called out twice a week in the
> early morning to drive out 200 miles to another county to investigate. I'd have to
> go to jails. It was one unique experience.

Despite constantly being in a place of uncertainty, sometimes fear and always

trauma, Mike kept his job for 4 years. In that line of work, he was considered a senior

employee.

> Four years is a long time. It is a lifetime at CPS. But would I do it again? It wore
> me out but it was a lifetime of learning. It changed me and my ideas about
> people.

> For Mike, the experience awakened a calling. He knew he "wanted to affect kids

more than one at a time or a family at a time. That is why I got into education…why I

became a teacher. It is why I became a special ed teacher." He realized that nothing was

ever as it appeared to be. He wanted to work with the kids that others had written off,

that the school was failing and give them the education they deserved. His time at CPS

was a turning point in his life and affected the way he viewed the world from that point

forward.

> Because of it, I have a better perspective. It taught me that not everyone comes
> from the same kind of background that I came from. Often times as educators, we
> don't see that. A lot of educators, until they see it and experience it, they just
> don't get it. For me, it just opened my eyes, broadened my view about where
> students come from, where kids come from. Sometimes we assume certain things
> and they can be completely wrong. That can be detrimental to the student. If a
> student had a really rough night, maybe they got in and there was nobody there.
> Maybe they live in a trailer like I had experienced with complete disarray and
> where they can't find something to eat and maybe they are up all night and maybe
> parent comes in late and is drunk or doesn't come home at all. Then they come to
> school and we assume, "Hey, he had homework last night and he didn't get it
> done and why not?" A kid is not going to tell you everything. We have to open
> eyes and not just blame. Being at CPS really helped me that way.

Putting Life Experience to Work: A Different Route to Teaching

When Mike talked about his decision to become a teacher, he reflected on all the

experiences that got him to that point. He thought they mattered because he did not

arrive at a teaching career by chance or because of some early decision or expectation of

others of a predetermined career path.

> I didn't take the traditional route to becoming a teacher. I had a lot of life
> experience before I decided to teach. Those life experiences came first and then
> deciding I wanted to go on to teach was a conscious decision. I just didn't go
> straight to teachers' college from high school. I found out I was a helper. Finding
> that out from CPS and then thinking about how I can affect kids, and affect them
> more is what led me to teaching. I wanted to affect a lot more kids than just a
> handful or family.

> I have had a lot more life experiences than a lot of educators. A lot go straight
> from high school and then college. They know they are going to be teachers.
> They go to education programs and they know they are going to be teachers.
> There is a lot to be said for having some life experiences and then coming to this.
> You are kind of seasoned. You have lived a different, another life. You have a
> sense of what the real world is like.

> For Mike, being a teacher grew out of the way he saw the world and how he felt

he was equipped to make a difference for children. The direction was about a new sense

of social responsibility and empowerment.

> So for me, it is about perspective. Having lived other lives really added to my
> toolbox and let me have skills for dealing with teachers, parents and students.
> Really, it just gave me a different way of looking at things that might not be
> typical.

> I mean when I started out parents would always say to me, "Do you have any
> kids?" They were already working from that idea that you are different and can't
> relate. But I have spent time in the navy, working with CPS. My life is different.
> I bring other things to the table, to my toolbox.

> In the navy, I became a leader. I matured and when I did, I became in charge of
> my area and other workers. Having the responsibility as an investigator at CPS
> was huge. I was the only investigator for a big county for CPS. I had that
> responsibility. It taught me about buy-in and ownership. With that responsibility
> I learned so much. My life experience really helps. I have done a lot of things but
> in all of them I have had a sense of making a difference.

Advocating for the Kids

Mike's background at CPS made him a natural fit for special education. So many

of the kids he had worked with had special needs. He also felt an affinity with the

students because of his own experience in school.

> When I taught special ed, I could really relate to seeing students achieve. I had
> students that had not learned. I taught them to cook, to clean, real life skills. I
> also had kids that were getting pulled out for life skills that should not be there.
> They were bored. They turned into discipline problems. With my kids, we
> learned. We did writing and reading. We had centers so we could get hands on
> time. I wanted more for the students.

This is a time Mike recalls when he really saw the value in inclusion. He did not

like the segregation imposed on his students. He was always looking for ways to

integrate, to allow his students the same benefits as the rest of the student body.

> My students got out and engaged with other students. I had my own hall. We
> decorated that hall and people would see it. My kids went to work; we went into
> town. People saw us. They were learning, achieving and they weren't getting
> into trouble. They got the life skills they needed to live.

Mike also saw himself as an advocate for his students and he was determined to

help them achieve their fullest potential. It was important to him that they felt a

connection with school and their time was not wasted.

> For me, particularly, finding ways to reach all learners was important. You have
> to change it up to keep kids engaged. For me, that was what inclusion was about.
> In school, kids have to come. They get what they get in public school. I want
> them to get good things. What happens here is going to be transferred back into
> the community. Kids spend more time here at school then they do at home.

> I really think about that. It shouldn't just be about nothing. Like homework, why
> are you doing it? Why do you bring it home? You can't just do things to do
> them. There needs to be a sense of purpose. You know, I would hear about kids
> who were getting straight As in class but didn't do their homework. So, they
> would fail. If homework is supposed to reinforce what you are learning, and they
> have clearly learned it, what is the point of the homework?

Mike told me his time as a special education teacher was personally rewarding and meaningful. He still runs into students that he taught and he knows he made a difference. "They are not just at home, being cared for by their parents." These kids are now adults. They are working. They are part of the community.

Helping on a Larger Scale: Becoming an Administrator

After being in the classroom for several years, Mike felt he was ready to move on to administration. He wanted to reach more students than those in his classroom. Like Brenda, his first leadership post was as a vice principal. He told me he had an excellent mentor in the principal of the school who gave him a lot of responsibility and made him use his classroom background to think about leadership from all sides; not just management but also teaching and learning.

> I was at a very diverse school. I dealt with discipline but I was also charged with curriculum development. That really allowed me to grow as a teacher, an instructional leader. I was in charge of everything: special education, ELLs.

> I was really growing then, just trying to figure out what type of leader I was going to be. I learned about temperament, how to work with teachers and how to look at their teaching. I came to know how to tell them when I saw things that were really good but also when I did not. When I saw students putting their heads down and the teacher not doing anything, not asking why they were putting their heads down, I got involved.

From his first posting, he transferred quickly into a principal position of his own. It was in a small town with a diverse student population. Everything was about football. Academics were almost forgotten and the school was low performing. Mike went to work to get better outcomes for his students. Mike knew students could do better and he was determined to bring about change.

115

I wanted better academics. I created a nine period day. The football coach was not happy. Even some of the parents were concerned but I had the support of the superintendent. When we hit the exemplary mark and the football team still did well, the parents were happy. There was a real sense of pride. They were so happy to say they were an exemplary school. The teachers and the students bought in. We even had students taking classes at the local college. We upped the game. We did some unique things and there was a new energy, a sense of what we could do as a team.

Mike knew he had to move people delicately along a new path. While he was willing to be outspoken with respect to his expectations of students, he also knew that real change had to occur with the staff in order to get results with the students.

I learned as a leader that you don't just come in and start changing things. You watch and you learn and you enhance things. Every place I have gone, I have seen there is some good teaching going on but we are not hitting all the students. I want teachers to think about what we can do to change that. Give them time to think and create. They change their set up, how they are teaching, even the way things are scheduled. A big thing at schools is everything is about scheduling….by athletics, bands or bussing but none of those things are about academics. If you can talk to teachers about academics, you will engage them. I have always had that focus that it is about academics….learning. This resonates with teachers.

With each new position, Mike learned more about teamwork and buy-in. He continued to fight for greater inclusion in his schools and moved from one low performing school to another. Each time, he was successful turning them around for all students. Schools became high performing and Mike earned a reputation as a leader that could facilitate change. Everyone wanted to know his secret.

Building Ownership: Getting Skin in the Game

When Mike talked about his career as an educational leader, he constantly referred to the need to empower, to get people to take ownership of their destinies. He

believes the way to do that is to make people feel supported and then show them what

they can accomplish. He reiterated the goal is always about kids and their success.

> It was always about creating a sense of ownership. About letting everyone know we are in this together. We were a team. If one failed, we all failed. If we succeed, we all succeed. It wasn't just about grades or exams but it was about the kids. Are we reaching the kids? Are we getting them excited about coming to school? Are we seeing discipline go down because kids are engaged? Are we hearing from the parents? Are they excited about their kids coming home? What are they hearing? It wasn't really about raising test scores. The pressure was there but not from me. I felt if we take care of the kids, the academics will take care of themselves.

> Mike emphasized that ownership is personal responsibility but it does not negate

the importance of teamwork. No one can do it all alone.

> My experience growing up and playing sports, being in the navy, seeing the individual….if you are out there doing your own thing, you could be detrimental to the team. I remember we had a social studies teacher. He was really into the Civil War. On the state testing, there were only a couple of questions related to the Civil War. He would spend four weeks on teaching it. We decided as a team we weren't going to do that, we were going to do this. Well, he just went in and shut his door and did his own thing. What he did was a disservice to those kids because he spent four weeks on something when other time could be spent. He wasn't helping the team. Everyone decided to change and he agreed but then did his own thing.

Mike further explained that ownership is about passion. Bringing people together with a

shared passion gets things accomplished.

> If you are passionate about something, you'll get up in the middle of night to do it. It is like a hobby. If you are not passionate about it, you won't do it. I have tried to create ownership and passion with a team, as a unit. We are all part of students' success. My feeling has always been that more heads are better than one. As a leader, I knew that I needed to create ownership. I couldn't just give something, some direction and expect people to fall in line. I needed them to internalize it, to get people to make things their own. I knew what that felt like. I got there from experience. It taught me about the importance of skin in the game.

The concept of "skin in the game" was a favorite of Mike's and he referred to it many times in our interviews. The idea seemed to be about creating spaces where everyone's ideas are valued and considered. People see a little bit of themselves in what is being developed and so, they have a stake in the outcome. When you are fighting for social justice and you want to make systemic changes, this really matters.

> Everyone has different ideas. When you can bring things together, you come up with something pretty terrific. If you think your way is the only way to go, which too often, that is the way it is in education or at least has been, then you are missing a lot of students. It really is about developing that passion. It has never been about me. It has always been if the school is successful and the teachers are successful, then the students will be successful and that in turn, will make me successful.

> Mike makes a point of stressing that care and respect are integral parts of the

success he has experienced. This means taking time to consider others' needs.

> You have to take care of the teachers as well as the kids. You have to have their backs. If you show you are going to work with them, treat them as professionals and work on the same level, they will work with you. Now you get buy in, they have skin in the game. They want to make it work because they are a part of it.

As he talked to me about consideration for teachers, students and their parents, he recalled an early experience he had as a kid.

> I know this will sound corny. I was working at this fruit stand. My early job was selling Christmas trees. Nobody told me what to do but people started asking me about the trees, you know "What do you think about this tree?" People would want to know what I thought and afterwards, I would help load the tree into their car and they would thank me and give me a little tip. You know, it got me thinking. I could either just stand around and wait until somebody was ready to go and load their tree or I could walk around with the customers and answer their questions as best I could. I could make it more personal. I could have a relationship of value in 15 or 20 minutes. I could see people really appreciate my help. I had ownership in it and it meant something. I had a sense of accomplishment and that followed me. I look for that connection. I think it is valuable.

118

Mike's idea of skin in the game has fueled his passion for inclusion and commitment to success for all students. He believes strongly that you can't separate kids; you can't exclude. These systems destroy the team. They patronize rather than engage students.

> You need to treat kids the same way, in the sense that you give them equal respect. They need ownership in their school. This isn't just school pride. This is their house. How do you want to be treated in your home? I had kids help me with administrative procedures. Student voice was important. They needed ownership and autonomy. They don't have hall passes here. They don't have hall passes at home. This is their house. If they are going to go out and do things, they have to be responsible enough that they are not going to violate that trust. When you give them autonomy and ownership, they don't want to lose it. They adopt the idea of this place as their house. They have skin in the game and they want to be successful. We all do.

Risk Taking, Failure and Trust

As Mike talked about his experiences as an administrator in four schools over the last fifteen years, he made a point of emphasizing that none of the schools were without problems when he arrived. They all had poor academic track records and were not functioning as coordinated teams. It was clear he took on a considerable risk with each move because he left a place where he had brought success. He had to start over but as he explained, "I knew I could do it. I had done it before."

He was, however, quick to point out that he has made mistakes and he has experienced failure. "We don't learn from our successes, we learn from our failures." Before he came to his current school, he did a brief stint as a superintendent. He thought this was the natural progression for his career and that he could take his social justice agenda to a whole other level. But, he was wrong.

119

My life was consumed with pleasing seven members of the board, not the kids. For me, it just was not the right fit. It was an issue of other things, the political things, the day-to-day things that got to me. It just interfered with me and running the schools because I just wasn't engaged with running the schools. I did not have time to do it. I never got to engage with the principals, with the teachers, kids and schools.

Looking back, maybe it was over my head. I just didn't enjoy it. The school board and I came to a mutual agreement. It was time for me to leave. I only lasted a year. This was a failure for me but I learned a lot. I learned what made me happy and that I preferred to be in the schools, where I could make a real difference.

Part of what he learned from his failed attempt at being a superintendent was the importance of trust. He did not have that with the school board and it forced him to leave. He told me trust is fundamental to creating schools of opportunity and equity. He is the product of trust. People believed in him and gave him a chance to learn, to take risks and to grow as a leader.

I would not be here without the help of a lot of people. That first principal when I was an assistant principal got me involved in curriculum. She was a mentor. That really got me going. People believed in me and I kept moving and being successful. I have tried to do that for others. I trust my teachers. That is for sure. Here, the teachers are incredible. The work they do is insane. We have the data to prove everything. We look at our own data. I have always made my teachers disaggregate the data. I have made them use it, not leave it to central office. I want them to know what they are doing; where things are working and where they are not. I trust them to make the best decisions for students. I am not the driver. There are others up front doing the heavy work. I am like the caboose on the train.

Trust is something people need in schools but he sees it as a rare occurrence.

It is human nature to want to be trusted, to have ownership, to feel you are a part of something. Otherwise, it is meaningless. For some students, it is hard to get them there, to take ownership and see that it is there for them….do they want it or not? They are not used to having this in schools. They expect people to tell them what to do. It is so different to be encouraged, to take responsibility for your own education and to be trusted to make decisions.

120

Trust is another form of empowerment. He feels strongly that it is behind his ability to turn around schools, to make a success of places that have not experienced it. Trust is unconditional support.

> It works with teachers and students. If you are not part of the team, you will be noticed. You are the outlier. For some, they are only used to bad recognition. That is all they have ever had but when they can be recognized for their contribution and they know, it is ok to fail, they are part of a larger group, they have the support and won't be judged, it turns things around. We help each other.

> The end result is that people are pleased with the progress. "In my schools, the parents are happy. They trust the teachers and they trust what is going on at the school."

Always pushing himself to do more and make a difference in people's lives kept Mike moving. When an opportunity came to build a school from scratch, Mike faced an entirely different challenge. This time, he would be responsible not just for turning a school around but a whole community.

Thinking Outside the Box

When Mike came to the position he now holds as principal of an innovative STEM school, he was at a large urban school in a small city. Things were going well and the school was making the gains in academic performance that Mike hoped to see. He was fully implementing his team oriented leadership style. He was not sure he was ready to move but the offer was too good to refuse.

> Before I came here, it was great. I was happy but I got this great opportunity to do something different. I got handed a piece of paper and told, "Here, make this happen." I got to be a part of everything: the curriculum, the design, the technology, everything. This is really unique. Most of the time principals move into something that has already been built. Here, I got to do everything. I got to design the pedagogy around how we were going to deliver instruction….everything. I couldn't pass that opportunity up.

121

Mike was used to a challenge but this one was huge, even with his history. The

new high school would be one of two in the district. The other was a failing school. The

district's student population was made up primarily of minority students and they were

having a hard time raising the academic performance. People could not believe the

district would propose an innovative STEM school as the solution. Most thought more

remedial programming was needed. A new technology approach was unheard of and

there were plenty of skeptics. Mike had many obstacles but he had a plan.

> We started out as a STEM school to serve underrepresented students. When we
> started nine years ago, nobody knew what STEM was. Most people just thought
> it was more math and science. I had this challenge of creating a STEM school
> and reach underrepresented students. How was I going to get students already at
> a low performing high school to come over here and take more math and science?
> It was just not going to happen. So I really got my wheels turning and thinking
> about redesign and how to attract students. The catalyst was project-based
> instruction. We weren't going to reach students in today's world teaching the
> same way. We'd stick to state standards but we wouldn't use textbooks.
> Teachers were going to design projects, students would design projects in small
> groups and they would work collaboratively. We would test and assess 21st
> century skills in every project. This was not going to be set and get. And, that was
> the first step.

> The second step….we weren't going to set up the school system in the same way.
> We weren't going to teach in silos. We were going to integrate content so we
> could create real world situations. So we could have engagement.

> Third and finally, those 21st century skills were going to be a part. So, we had
> project-based learning, integrated content and 21st century skills. Thinking about
> today's students, we needed seamless integration of technology. That was the
> design. Then, it came down to the students.

When Mike thought about the students, a light bulb went off. He would finally

get to implement a full inclusion model that he had been working toward his entire

career. The school would be open to everyone and he would prove that all students could

learn in the right environment and with the right kind of support. This is realized full

inclusion.

> We had no AP classes. If I did that, I would only get certain students and that
> would be considered a brain drain. And, those were not our target students. So,
> we had no requirements at all. We don't look at grades, references, resource
> letters….this was just a blind lottery. Yes, it is a school choice but in a district
> with only two high schools and at the beginning, low performing, kids came. We
> have a very diverse student body. Some come in high achieving and some very
> low achieving. What is different is the collaboration of the students. There is no
> sage on the stage. Students work together to pull information from the projects
> and the teachers to work within the projects to create their products. It is not
> about the end product but the learning that takes place, that scaffolding within the
> project.

> You will have a lot of teachers that will say "We do projects, we have done them
> forever" but there is a big difference between doing a project and project-based
> learning. When I think of the students that have come over and not been typically
> successful at school, I know from experience because they have had to just sit
> there and listen to the teacher. They are bored out of their minds. There is very
> little hands on. While here, it is more hands on with little lecture. The lecture
> that takes place is typically in workshops. So, it is really about not designing the
> school for your high achievers, it was designing the school for low to middle
> achievers and to raise them up. Everything is done within projects. You have to
> work collaboratively. You are evaluated and graded by your peers as well as your
> teachers on your ability to work collaboratively. So, for students that haven't
> typically been successful, it is a paradigm shift on how they get instruction.

Mike's school quickly became a model for student success. The federal

Department of Education has recognized Mike for his ability to reach traditionally

marginalized students and for his full inclusion design. But for Mike, the recognition is

not what matters. It is always about the students and tackling a system that needs to be

changed.

> Our students are not leaving. We are expanding to nearly double our original
> size. Kids want to come here. They know about project-based learning and we
> train people to do it here. They all learn here.

123

Right now, I am the outlier. We have a school of greater opportunity, of equity where kids that don't usually succeed do. We just can't expect everyone to do exactly the same thing. We need to work with students to see where they learn and account for their differences. It goes back to that ownership and autonomy. It is true of all the successful schools around the country. Where that exists with the teachers and the students, it works.

Mike tells anyone that will listen that we need to deliver education differently.

He has taken to the national stage to spread his message and in our interviews, when he

was talking about system-wide change, he was most animated. He leaned across his desk

toward me, his hands in the air and excitement in his voice,

What happens when kids are excited and engaged in school? Your attendance goes up, your discipline goes down, your academics, just by osmosis alone go up because they are engaged. If you look at all those factors, attendance, discipline, teacher retention, teacher absences, parent involvement….schools with engagement, autonomy and ownership…all those things go up. If you look at schools that are failing, you have disengaged parents, teachers who are unhappy and bored. I think teachers get into this for the right reasons; they care about kids. But, I think schools and systems ruin teachers. They make them do menial tasks.

Mike sat back when his point was made. He finished preaching change but you

could tell he had more to say. While Mike may be doing things differently at his school,

there was a hint of exasperation in his voice. There is still much work to do.

Where to Go From Here: Social Justice Unrealized

In our final interview, Mike told me about what he sees as the systemic problems

of education.

I think about how boring my education has been. We haven't reached that stage where superintendents and principals are from a new age. Eighty percent of superintendents are former coaches and there are still a good portion of them as principals. We still are doing things old school. We are not closing the gap. The students are not the same as 10, 15 years ago. Technology is forcing us to change education. It is not education simply adopting technology. We have to change. We teach the same way. We are not looking at what schools should look like for today's learner and for today's job market.

He believes there is no quick solution for reforming education. An overhaul is indeed needed but is will take time.

> It is a multi-step thing. We need to start with higher ed and change the way we train teachers and administrators. We are starting to see some higher ed schools training teachers with project-based learning. I am not saying that is the be all and end all but it is teaching teachers new ways to deliver instruction. It is moving away from that traditional lecture style.

> Mike also feels that inclusion has to be discussed. People have to be bold about educating all students. There can be no more segregation. We have to be responsible for a diverse array of students; each of them entitled to a good education. Too many students are failed by the system.

> I think we need courageous conversations from leaders in school. We need to say we can reach student in new ways. Why do we keep doing the same thing over and over and over and over and over and over again and yet continue to have failure? And yet, we do that in education so many times. We need leadership in education that has a vision big enough to change, to do things differently and if it doesn't work, at least we have tried. Why do we keep doing things the same way that we know don't work?

> For Mike, education can only change when people can experience new ways of doing things. Talking about it and simply challenging ways of thinking are not enough.

> People need to go out and see schools that are successful. They need to visit and see different ways of doing things. There are other ways of setting up schools. People need to see it. They need to see schools with diverse populations. Get them to see schools that are not like what they grew up with and look at something new.

Mike is adamant that the time is ripe to rethink education. For him, technology is driving us to that point. It is fortuitous because he has sensed a need for change long before technology was ever an issue. For too long, schools have left some students behind. He was one of those students and it is his life mission to see that change.

Summary

As was done in the previous chapter, this chapter followed the life of the other participant in the study, Mike Todd. The unfolding personal narrative represents his voice and the emphasis he placed on certain moments in time and lessons arising out of those moments. Each highlighted period entails new understanding from childhood, to college years, early work experience and eventual entry into a career in education. The way Mike told his story, just as Brenda did, reveals what he views as pivotal learning points in his life that took him on his journey to be the inclusive social justice leader of today. Their lives took very different paths but there are many similarities in the lessons learned, the perspectives gained and the resulting actions they took. In the next chapter, those will be discussed in detail taking into account the current theory of inclusive social justice leadership. Analysis and synthesis of the findings will substantiate the relevant literature surrounding the theory as well as address issues not previously considered. Implications for a theory of action based on the findings will also be presented. In the final chapter, conclusions about inclusive social justice leadership theory and research as well as recommendations for training and professional development of school leaders are offered.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter synthesizes and discusses the results of the study in light of the research question and sub-questions, literature review and conceptual framework. The emergent patterns and themes arising from a cross comparative analysis of the two narratives chronicled in Chapters 4 and 5 are presented. The areas of overlap are identified through the conceptual lens of transformative learning theory, relying on the significant events highlighted in the previous chapters. From there, current theory on inclusive social justice and more generally, literature on school reform, inclusion and social justice are set against the findings and analysis to test and expand upon current theory. New issues arising from the findings are articulated along with identification of the precedence of race as a social justice issue that was not fully anticipated in the research design. The chapter concludes by briefly revisited issues of trustworthiness, limitations and transferability.

Discussion

Emergent Patterns and Themes: Cross Comparative Analysis

Using Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991, 1994, 1997), this study follows the personal journeys of two educational leaders as they navigated and made sense of their earliest schooling experiences, their choices in college and early careers and their subsequent challenges as teachers and finally, as principals. Both of their biographies lend themselves to interpretations of transformative events in their lives that marked new understandings, challenged their preconceptions and forced them to

critically reflect on not just their personal experience but also the impact it would have on their lives moving forward. The participants truly engaged in transformative learning and were able to channel their experiences into critical awakenings about disparities and inequities in our society. These awakenings had implications beyond just their own lives but were transcendent, initiating broader awareness of social injustice and sparking personal action and resolve to make things different for others. Further, they used this new knowledge as a source of empowerment, sharing what they had learned, being open to different viewpoints and dedicating themselves to mobilizing collaborators for the greater good.

The participants in this study are exemplars in many ways but perhaps first and foremost, they are exemplars of transformative learners. When faced with irreconcilable contradictions and blatant inequity, neither accepted nor avoided the challenge.   Their stories of becoming inclusive social justice leaders strengthen current related theory and provide a blueprint for a theory of action. What follows are the overlapping themes of the patterns of these two lives. They are revealing in how closely they mirror one another despite the two individuals' obvious differences with respect to gender, race and class. What is clear is that experiences do not need to match for the outcomes to be the same. For instance, with respect to the first theme of school failure, there is more than one way to experience school failure. But, using the personal to reflect on the larger failure of schools for students designated as different, beyond what each individual experienced as a form of discrimination, is the transformative piece that binds them together. This connection provides insight and useful information for other educators who may follow

their lead. What follows is an articulation of eleven emergent and parallel themes arising out of the findings. To assist the reader, where appropriate page numbers referencing examples of the themes in the individual narratives are provided after each theme is presented.

School failure. Brenda and Mike experienced school failure but in very different ways. For Brenda, the failure came through the White teachers whose prejudice she had to confront and the low expectations they placed upon her and the other students like her. The failure was not within Brenda. She was a good student but the school system failed to recognize her. This was also the case for Mike. Though White and privileged, he felt disconnected from school. Teachers ignored him but not because of the color of his skin. They never tried to reach him, to teach in ways that made him feel supported.

Brenda and Mike realized there were other students like them. That realization had a deeper impact than just a personal connection to students who looked or acted like them. They instead questioned the system of schooling and saw that certain children were experiencing failure due to no fault of their own. This realization also cemented for them the importance of education even though neither of them believed they were well served. Rather than outright rejection, it sparked their desire to succeed in spite of the shortcomings of many of their school experiences. For examples, see pages 79-86 and 108-110.

Alienation. Brenda and Mike experienced personal alienation in their early years. Brenda faced it in college when she could never garner the attention of her White professors despite her impressive achievement. Mike felt it when he "wandered" from

129

community college, to the navy and then back again to school trying to make up for previous poor performance and facing the difficulty of figuring out what he was meant to do with the rest of his life. Both felt the impact of their childhood educational experiences that once again, drove them to reflect on ways things could be different. For Brenda, feelings of alienation and isolation rose up again after she left college and took her first teaching job. She experienced segregation all over again when she came to a school with only Black students in special education. Distraught with this overt discrimination, Brenda took action to find a new teaching post with more equitable practices but not before addressing what was going on as best she could as a first year teacher. She bucked the system and used her free time to provide services to students in need, regardless of the color of their skin. For examples, see pages 84-87 and 110.

Experiencing fear. An emergent theme that is discussed later as a new issue is the shared experiences of fear that dramatically affected both Brenda and Mike in their decisions to teach. Brenda's recollections of being afraid concerned White teachers and her severe anxiety in not knowing what kind of treatment she would experience at their hand. For a young girl, this fear was exponential and amplified by Black teachers who themselves seemed extremely apprehensive of what awaited their students in integrated schools. That fear stayed with Brenda and informed her interactions with children for the rest of her life.

For Mike, fear came in his first job. As an investigator for CPS, Mike found out what it was like to walk into a situation and have no idea how dangerous it might be. He faced the unknown for four years and was often confronted with situations he could never

130

have imagined. That experience, like Brenda's, changed the trajectory of his life and became the basis for his commitment to inclusive social justice. For examples, see pages 80-82 and 111-112.

Teaching to help others. Even with very different paths to teaching, Brenda and Mike's reason for choosing to teach was explicit, deeply rooted in a desire to help others. They shared a common bond forged by experiences that made them more socially aware and awoke a desire for public good. Both viewed teaching as a vehicle for outreach. For them, it was the profession of choice when it came to making a difference in children's lives. This is a significant realization given that both individuals could have chosen different career paths. They were intelligent and indicated no other outside pressures that contributed to their decision-making. Both took as a given that teaching was *the way* to help. For examples, see pages 82-84 and 112-113.

Choosing unwanted schools. Just as they decided upon teaching as their career, Brenda and Mike determined to be placed in low performing schools. While their first postings might have left them little choice, future placements were at their sole discretion and they chose to go to schools others did not want to attend. Both took pride in the diversity of their students and made a point of noting that in their interviews. Neither chose to practice social justice on the fringes, they jumped in with both feet. For examples, see pages 91-96 and 115-116

Being an advocate. Brenda and Mike indicated it was their time as special education teachers that taught them to be advocates for children. They saw this as an essential role for educators. Speaking up for children that could not always speak for

131

themselves was something they deemed important. They did not mind confronting people's misconceptions or exclusionary biases about the children in their classrooms. Brenda and Mike referred to times as special education teachers when they had to take public stands to ensure their students would be included in school and community activities. For examples, see pages 89-91 and 114-115.

Dedicated teachers turned committed administrators. Brenda and Mike shared a common history of success in the classroom before moving to administration. They valued teaching and the experiences they shared as teachers shaped the way they approached their new roles as administrators. Being inclusion oriented, they understood differentiating instruction for various students was non-negotiable and they used that knowledge to supervise teachers and ensure students at their schools were receiving the benefit of education. Both were respectful toward their former teacher colleagues but they demanded much from them, having come from classrooms themselves. For examples, see pages 91-93, 101-104 and 115-119.

Sharing power. Brenda and Mike emphasized the importance of sharing power, the necessity and their dependence upon teamwork and were quick to acknowledge the contributions made by others in regard to whey had achieved successful careers. They talked about the responsibility to empower others and the importance of trust. Schools were viewed as communities and Brenda and Mike saw themselves in supporting roles. In both narratives there were remarks about "we are all in this together" and how they "had their backs" in relation to teachers and students. For examples, see page 101 and 116.

Relinquishing control, growing ownership and responsibility. Similar to the theme of sharing power, Brenda and Mike pushed the concept a bit further by reflecting on not just the sharing of power but also the outright relinquishing of control so to empower others to take ownership and responsibility for their own destinies. For Brenda, this meant supplying parents and students with the tools and language they needed to advocate for themselves. For Mike, this is what he called "skin in the game." He wants people to contribute and actively engage so they will push for success because they have a stake in the outcome, they have something to lose. For examples, see pages 93-96 and 116-119.

Taking risks, telling the truth and accepting failure. Brenda and Mike's lived experiences were all about taking risks. Both boldly spoke the truth even when their ideas might not be embraced with enthusiasm. They also noted the importance of being able to fail and lamenting what they saw as education's rejection of that possibility, let alone the importance it played in learning and growth. This last point is also discussed further under the heading of New Issues. For examples, see pages 102-104 and 119-121.

Constant reflection by embracing the process and hoping for a better end. Evident throughout the two narratives is a constant state of reflection and consideration about the impact of their actions and the desire to create a more just society. From Brenda and Mike's perspective, society and the education system in particular are a work in process with a long way to go before equity will be a reality. Nevertheless, they are committed and willing to persevere. Both gave recent examples of having to check their assumptions and rethink their way of doing things. This ability to maintain critical self-

133

reflection is an essential element in transformative learning theory. For examples, see pages 99-100 and 119-120.

Testing Theory and the Literature Review

        Systemic problems confirmed. The personal narratives of Brenda Thomas and Mike Todd read like textbook cases of the failures of public school systems. Brenda and Mike personally experienced segregation and disengagement. As a system, education failed to meet their needs and they saw the system ignoring the needs of other children as well. Brenda's story is particularly powerful with respect to the separation she experienced due to erroneous assumptions about children of color living in poverty. The problem this study seeks to address--persistent inequality and inequitable treatment of students with disabilities in public schools--is by all accounts alive and well. Both Brenda and Mike spoke about the inability of public schools to close the achievement gap and how they use their years of experience to argue for dramatic change in the way we provide public education, particularly for students in need of additional supports. Indeed, realizing full inclusion within schools as they are currently structured requires turning the education system and schools on their heads (Ryan, 2006). For narrative examples, see pages 79-82, 99, 108-109 and 124.

        Complexity of description and intersectionality. Analyzing the biographies of Brenda and Mike lends credence to researchers' difficulty in defining social justice leadership (Bogatch, 2002; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). It is complex and although there are similarities in beliefs and patterns of behavior, there is great diversity in how people develop their commitment to social justice. Embracing social justice can

134

be driven from different vantage points, for example, race, gender, class and of course, disability (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). Brenda's story makes these intersections abundantly clear. See for example Brenda's discussion of her early life on pages 79-86.

Commitment to inclusion. In theory, inclusive social justice leaders elevate the importance of educational attainment for all students. Brenda and Mike's unwavering determination to improve academic outcomes for their students, to work in low performing schools and to change the trajectory of failing students, whether they be diagnosed with a disability or not, is the realization of this concept in practice. Further, their leadership of schools practicing full inclusion where all students are educated together and enjoy improved outcomes substantiates the reasoning behind inclusion as a mechanism for greater equity. For examples, see pages 88-89 and 119.

Giving voice to the marginalized. Within this study's literature review, research on social justice is divided into 3 categories: (1) research on characteristics of social justice leaders, (2) research on successful models, and (3) research on social justice leadership. The focus of this study is to fill in a gap in the second area by adding to the first. Doing this arguably entails testing the validity of the characteristics proposed. Central to any designation of social justice leadership is a commitment to addressing inequity in schools by confronting structures and practices that marginalize (Bogatch, 2002; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Otunga). Brenda and Mike's decades of advocating for and ensuring the voices of the marginalized are heard supports

this claim and furthers the theory that social justice leaders are committed to systemic change.

Instructional leaders. Scholars have argued that creating inclusive environments where all students can learn means understanding how to deliver instruction to a diverse array of students (Pazey, Cole, & Garcia, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). Brenda and Mike's experience with differentiating instruction and their continued involvement as instructional leaders in their schools in their administrative capacity supports this idea as fundamental to the furtherance of realized inclusive social justice. For examples, see pages 91-93 and 121-124.

Action oriented leaders. Furman (2012) designates social justice leaders as action oriented and furthers his definition by charging the leaders with identifying, addressing and creating new solutions to bring about more equitable outcomes for marginalized students. Brenda and Mike have made careers of not just facing inequity but challenging its causes, fixing practices that perpetuate it and seeking new ways to deliver education to meet the needs of more students.

Thoughtful collaborators. In theory, social justice leaders must be willing to share power and collaborate with others (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Wasonga, 2009). Brenda and Mike shared an affinity with empowering others and as leaders, see themselves in supporting roles to assist their students and staff. Brenda talked about her job "to create safe spaces so others could achieve" and Mike likened his practice to being a caboose on a train. Everyone else was driving; he just made sure it stayed on the track. For examples, see pages 100-101 and 120.

136

Risk takers. Taking risks is considered a fundamental part of being a social justice leader (Jansen, 2006). Being prepared to face inevitable conflict when it arises and being brave enough to speak the truth despite its unpopularity is another key characteristic of social justice leaders (Theoharis, 2007). Brenda and Mike exemplify this risk-taking attitude and have both paid the price for being outspoken and doing what they believed was right. For examples, see pages 102-103 and 121-124.

Change agents. McKenzie, Skrla, and Scheurich (2006) argue that social justice leaders are change agents because they are actively involved in fighting inequity, acting as advocates for the marginalized. Brenda and Mike viewed themselves as advocates and had the reputations to prove themselves worthy of the title. They actively engaged in combatting deficit thinking, were courageous in addressing inequities, were patient and persistent and despite everything, maintained a commitment to effect change for the better. For examples, see pages 98-104 and 124-125.

Social justice awareness and equity consciousness. Researchers have posited that educators often cannot meet the needs of all students because they are unaware of how to do so; they lack the toolkit to understand equity (Burton, 2008; Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Strader, 2007). McKenzie, Scheurich, & Skrla (2006) argue such leaders have an undeveloped equity consciousness that keeps them from embracing the notion that all children can learn regardless of differences. Brenda's story of administrator colleagues who did not know what social justice was or any reason to include it as a goal of reform demonstrates that in practice, awareness and consciousness of social justice are not a given (see page 99). Vigilance is still needed.

137

New Issues

In analyzing the lived experiences of committed inclusive social justice leaders, two action oriented concepts not discussed in the literature presented. In addition, the dominance of racism in Brenda's narrative and its role in her development as a leader of inclusive social justice demands acknowledgment. All three of these issues are discussed below.

Impact of fear. Significant for Brenda and Mike was the experience of fear in awakening a social consciousness and a desire to tackle inequity. Fear of going to school and being mistreated by White teachers was the start of Brenda's lifetime commitment to combatting injustice. Mike's traumatic tenure as a CPS investigator changed his entire perspective on life and made him reassess his direction and commit himself to teaching and education. Feeling uncomfortable and experiencing a terrifying moment of the complete unknown, with no safety net and no sense of what might happen to you, is potentially a new way of inciting self reflection and perhaps even awakening that equity consciousness that forces people to embrace social justice ideals. Fear is the equalizer. It places a person in another's shoes. There can be no casual observation. This is authentic learning taken to the extreme. Creating spaces for fear to be experienced as a teaching and learning opportunity may have potential in the realization of more inclusive social justice leaders.

Failure as an asset. Brenda and Mike both pointed to moments of failure in their lives as turning points. Being able to fail and learn from their mistakes was an unmatched growth opportunity. Both lamented the educational system does not value

138

failure (see pages 100 and 119-121). Much like experiencing fear, failure allows and almost demands self-reflection. As an integral component of transformative learning, incorporating greater opportunities to challenge ways of thinking, doing, and problematic assumptions of people and their capabilities may also lead to the realization of more inclusive social justice leaders.

Priority of race and the application of Critical Theory. In analyzing Brenda's story, it became abundantly clear that race and issues of racism were central to her emergence as a social justice leader. This study's aim was to look at inclusive social justice, focusing on issues and experiences that addressed disability. This did not preclude race. In fact, the Polat's (2011) definition of inclusion was deliberately chosen to broaden the parameters of this study so that inclusion could be applied to all markers of difference, not just disability. Nevertheless, the overwhelming dominance of racial issues in Brenda's narrative requires an acknowledgement that racism may require a different lens to be adequately addressed. Relying on work by Gooden and Dantley (2012), adequately addressing issues of racial discrimination may require a very specific approach. Critical theory may be better suited as a framework of analysis than transformative learning theory. It is, however, beyond the scope of this study. Given that Brenda's data still yielded enough rich text for analysis within this study's scope, no alternate interpretations are offered. It is mentioned here for reference and will be returned to in Chapter 7 in light of future research.

Trustworthiness

Trying to ensure people's personal stories are captured and analyzed with accuracy is a humbling task. As noted in Chapter 3, the trustworthiness of this study is bolstered by employing several techniques (Stake, 1995). All interview data were transcribed verbatim. Member checks were also used. Brenda and Mike were sent their transcripts along with the findings and analysis sections. They had opportunity to make comments and to provide corrections to any of the documents. Any concerns on their part were immediately addressed to their satisfaction. Coding notes and a draft of the coding for emergent themes in the findings and data analysis were shared with an academic colleague to check for consistency and validity of application. Triangulation across data sources in the form of field notes, document review and additional interviews with the participants' professional colleagues was relied upon as a means to further check for accuracy and to test the categorization of the participants as inclusive social justice leaders.

Limitations and Transferability

As previously noted, the relative ease of accessing the participants resulted in no real limitations to the study. The transferability of the study rests with the expansion of inclusive social justice leadership theory and the potential of the two new findings to influence a theory of action for the realization of inclusive social justice leadership. As these new findings address issues of experience, there may be ways to incorporate them into other related theories, particularly social justice leadership preparation and development. This is discussed further in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While this study cannot be generalized to all inclusive social justice leaders, its purpose was to add to the scholarship in terms of building and testing theory with empirical research. It was also intended to spark a theory of action for such leadership by uncovering ways of learning, living and practicing inclusive social justice even in the face of significant barriers. The study succeeded in substantiating many of the theoretical propositions put forth in social justice research. Documenting the stories of two leaders who have spent much of their lives seeking justice for others and believing in educational opportunity for all illuminates certain truths, empirically supporting the theory with tales from the frontlines. It also provides a chance to reflect on what these stories make evident about our too often inequitable education system and the things that could be done to change the system for the better.

The contribution of this study is that it lays the groundwork for taking social justice theory in an entirely new direction. It sows the seeds of an early theory of action that goes beyond simply restating ideas and moves the field toward actual implementation and realization of inclusive social justice. The new findings concerning the impact of fear and failure as an asset speak directly the impact of significant events and their ability to transform leaders' ways of being and thinking about their roles and purpose as educators. These action-oriented additions to current theoretical understandings provide a potential new path for research as well as leadership training and professional development. What follows are the conclusions that arise out of the

141

study and recommendations for future action. The chapter concludes with some final thoughts.

<div align="center">

Conclusions
</div>

Schools Are Broken

Recalling Brenda and Mike's stories and their experiences in schools over the last three decades amounts to a treatise on the failure of America's public schools. They continue to be plagued by deficit thinking, teachers and administrators who lack knowledge and ambition to reach all students and a sad complacency that accepts failure without trying to understand or stop it from continuing. Discriminatory practices are rampant in our educational system. Brenda and Mike are leaders who have been willing to stand up and do something about this dismal state of affairs. That they have continued to wage this battle for so many years is evidence that schools are broken and still need to be fixed.

Teaching Matters

This study brings to the forefront the importance of good teaching and the changes it can have on students susceptible to failure and marginalization. Brenda and Mike exemplify the dramatic impact of good teaching. The enviable results they achieved with their students as teachers and continue to have as instructional leaders, are real-life success stories for students and combat notions that failure is a pathology located within the child. When failing students and schools can turn around as quickly as they have in Brenda and Mike's stories and the schools they lead, it seems undeniable that the problems are more systemic. Their approaches to teaching made the differences when

everything else remained constant.   For this study, I deliberately chose participants who had long histories not just as administrators but also as teachers and specifically, special education teachers. Special education teachers must differentiate their instruction and be familiar with addressing a diverse array of student needs. Brenda and Mike show that having that special knowledge and knowing how to train others it what in part, makes inclusion possible. Teaching does matter.

Leadership and School Success Are Intimately Connected

As with teaching, the trajectory of every school in which Brenda and Mike were a part improved during their tenure. Having worked at more than 10 schools between them, the link between strong leadership and school success is not just a coincidence.

Inclusion is More Than A Belief

Social justice theory stresses the importance of action, *doing* rather than just espousing a belief. Relying on the lived experiences of Brenda and Mike for empirical evidence, inclusive social justice realized provides numerous data points revealing the actual implementation of inclusive practice is dependent on continual advocacy, oversight and creative ways of thinking about how to engage students, teachers and parents to support and acknowledge its benefits.

Change is a Shared Responsibility

While the study presents data on the lives of only two individuals, there is evidence throughout their stories of the support of others and of the teamwork necessary to bring about change. Both Brenda and Mike talked about many people along the way who contributed to their realization of inclusive social justice leadership. Further, their

143

stories stress the need of bringing other people into the fold to create more equitable environments and make schools more inviting and conducive to the success of all students.

Fear Can Transform

Besides substantiating many of the theoretical underpinnings of social justice, a specific contribution of this study is a new finding that adds to theory by bringing an element of transformative action to current descriptive understandings of social justice leaders. This new addition concerns the impact of fear in transforming individuals into social justice advocates. Fear is a powerful tool that can push a person in ways that can help to change ideas and assumptions about others. This study found it a to be behind the most significant events in both participants' lives. For Brenda, it was the fear associated with integration that was forever a part of her life and for Mike, it was facing the unknown with every knock he made on the door of a family under investigation by CPS. These experiences changed the trajectories of their lives and awakened a desire to address injustice. Having a chance to walk in another's shoes, or at least, come to real terms with what it means to feel scared and alone, with no real support, can serve as the kind of change that contributes to the development of social justice leaders.

Failure is Better Than Doing Nothing

Much like the finding regarding fear, this study adds another new element to a theory of action regarding the power of failure. Failure is an opportunity to learn. Without it, neither participant would have realized their practice of inclusive social justice leadership. Neither would continue to be actively engaged in the fight to address

144

inequity in schools. In terms of social justice, inaction is the greatest threat. To encourage work to eliminate injustice, failure must not just be tolerated but embraced.

Recommendations

Experience Must Be Part of Learning

This study is about lived experiences and reveals that equity-oriented leadership does not have to arise out of a social justice leadership program. Leaders do not have to be taught about what and how to practice; they can learn through experience and grow within a troubled system. In fact, having to combat systemic discrimination on the job may be one of the best ways to develop inclusive social justice leaders. This is not to argue that there is no place for social justice oriented leadership preparation. However, these programs must also incorporate the practical, hands on experiences that leaders already working within the system can access. In light of the new findings related to fear and failure, a suggestion might be that the experiential component of inclusive leadership training and/or professional development entail a carefully crafted placement servicing a traditionally marginalized population, ideally within education but it could be another social service area, where participants are dropped with little support, in an unfamiliar environment and given the opportunity to fail. This must be done carefully as learning should never be at the expense of others.

It is important that while there is opportunity to fail, the failure is carefully contained so as not to have an adverse impact on the others involved in the training exercise. The population being served in this training could be briefed prior to the placement and told to be openly critical of mistakes of the trainee. This will also allow

145

the supervisor to remedy any immediate issues but provide an opportunity for the trainee to come back to address issues at a later point. Herein lies the real learning component to this exercise. After experiencing challenges and even failure, the participants could take part in a debrief and self-reflection exercise in which they must come to terms and fully articulate the transformative learning components of the experience. After this reflective piece, the participants could then return to their destination of fear and failure to remedy the mistakes of the past and further reflect on how better to accomplish whatever task they were originally assigned.

New Leadership Is Required

This study lends credence to the proposition that new leaders are desperately required in the education system if it is to evolve into a more equitable place for all students. But, it also turns this idea on its head by challenging assumptions that those currently within the system cannot be the ones to bring about change. Brenda and Mike are former special education teachers. These are not the teachers typically recruited to be administrators but it is time to think outside the box and look to teacher leaders that might bring an equitable stance from within. These teachers bring experience and the capacity to ensure that other teachers can be brought along to support a team-driven approach to realized social justice. It will take time to change a system from the outside in but if those already in the system can be oriented to new, more equitable ways of thinking and doing, that change may come much faster.

New Models Need to Be Tested

Because this study sought to develop a theory of action to assist with the implementation of inclusive social justice in schools, it is only a conversation starter. More research is necessary to test other models. More empirical studies need to be conducted that look at current practices of inclusive social justice leadership in order to further develop the theory of action. This is just a small case study and the impact and breadth of its findings are limited by its design.

More Research on Intersectionality in Social Justice Is Needed

Finally, this study revealed that social justice is indeed a complex concept. There are many facets to social justice and many ways of coming at injustice. This study was focused on disability issues in part because they are one of the only areas of discrimination that cut across and incorporate other differences of marginalization, e.g. race, gender and sexual orientation. There is no benefit in elevating one aspect of marginalization over another. They are all problematic and the results are detrimental to students. Still, a focus on any one aspect does necessarily exclude others so it is important that more research be undertaken on the intersectionality of discriminatory practice.

<div align="center">

Final Thoughts

</div>

In the end, discrimination in whatever form it takes hurts students, hurts education and perpetuates inequity in our society. We must find ways to continue to address these issues in our schools so we can *end* the achievement gap. As a disabilities scholar, a part of me believes that those who delve into areas of discrimination as a daily practice, who

are forced to be advocates in order to simply access the education their students deserve, have a special role to play in this fight for equity and for justice. I maintain that training in special education is vital and all school leaders should avail themselves of it. In fact, I would like to see more special educators in leadership roles. People who know what it means to be cheated, silenced and marginalized bring a perspective that is vital to change for the better.

As I finished writing this dissertation, the country was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement. I watched the television specials and was struck by the personal accounts of the elderly men and women recounting their days as Freedom Riders. They took to buses to protest the injustice of segregation, deliberately placing themselves in harms' way to fight for what they believed to be right. Every time they stepped on a bus they were afraid. They were terrified at the marches when they were confronted by hoards of police, armed with guns, fists and plenty of anger. Yet, they did not stop. They pushed forward and we have their courage to thank for the equality we now enjoy. To be sure, there is still a long way to go. Nevertheless, their stories struck a chord with me and the fear they recalled resonated with the narratives I had chronicled.

The biographies that are the basis of this study are both humbling and inspiring. They are the stories of committed and courageous leaders. We need more stories like theirs and perhaps one day, they will just be history. It is my sincere hope that one day, we will finally realize equity in our schools. Until that day, we must keep up the fight. We must be brave and we must encourage and support *all* our students to succeed.

APPENDIX A: TRIANGULATION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How long have you known X?

2. Please describe X's leadership style?

3. Would you consider X a social justice leader? Please explain.

4. Please describe X's relationship with students? What about students with disabilities?

5. In what ways do you believe X exhibits social justice leadership?

**These interviews were semi-structured. The interviews often included additional questions and probes depending upon the participant's responses to these general questions.

APPENDIX B: CODES

The following is a list of etic codes, taken directly from the theory underpinning this study and emic codes that arose in the course of analyzing the personal narratives. The lists are not exhaustive. A number of initial codes were subsumed in subsequent coding exercises and others grouped into broader thematic codes. The following is provided to assist the reader with understanding the coding process and to provide greater transparency to the process.

Emic codes: overlapping issues, intersectionality, understanding special education, rejection of status quo, experiencing exclusion, embracing difference, impact on students, acknowledging failure, meeting needs, inherent rights of students/parents, connecting community to school, community advocate, confronting inequity, personal ownership, creating responsibility, pay it forward, experiencing the unknown, skin in the game, helping others understand, willingness to stand up, personal accountability, experiencing fear, understanding the journey, championing school success, challenge comfort, importance of truth, trying something new, still battling

Etic codes: historical inequity, low performing schools, low performing students, accountability, teaching for social justice, leadership for social justice, inclusive social justice, unaddressed needs, pathology in students, transformative learning, embracing difference, deficit thinking, celebrating success, inclusion with support, differentiation, action oriented, risk taking, collaboration, distributed leadership, full inclusion, success

for all, change agents, eliminate marginalization, advocacy, promote inclusion, equity consciousness, leadership and school success, school community, innovation

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200 (512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873

FWA # 00002030

Date: 11/05/2014 PI: Heather Cole Dept: Department of Special Education Title: Realizing Inclusive Social Justice Leadership: Three Principals Narrate Their Transformative Journeys

RE: Non-Human Subjects Research Determination

Dear Heather Cole,

The Office of Research Support (ORS) reviewed the above protocol submission request and determined it did not meet the criteria for human subjects research as defined in the Common Rule (45 CFR 46) or FDA Regulations (21 CFR 56). IRB review and oversight is not required because the activities involve:

No human interactions Classroom activities used to teach methodology and technique Program evaluation where results are not generalized to other services or programs Secondary use of de-identified data set (no direct or links to identifiers) Obtaining information that is not about living individuals Obtaining information from publicly available sets Biographical research that is not generalizable beyond the individual Archival research using existing literature Other (Explain):

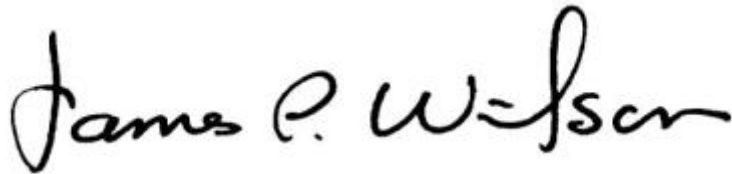At this time you are free to begin your research as IRB approval is not

necessary. You should retain this letter with the respective research documents as evidence that IRB review and oversight is not required.

If you have any questions contact the ORS by phone at (512) 471-8871 or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,

James Wilson, Ph.D. Institutional Review Board Chair

☐☐☐☐☐☐☒☐☐

References

Adams, M., Bell, L. A., & Griffin, P. (1997). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Ainscow, M., Booth, T., Dyson, A., Farrell, P., Frankham, J., Gallannaugh, F., Howes, A., & Smith, R. (2006). *Improving schools, developing inclusion*. London, UK: Routledge.

Angelle, P., & Bilton, L. M. (2009). Confronting the unknown: Principal preparation training in issues related to special education. *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice, 5*(4), 5-9.

Argyris, C. (1997). Learning and teaching: A theory of action perspective. *Journal of Management Education, 21*(1), 9-26.

Argyris, C., & Schon, D. A. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Argyris, C., & Schon, D. A. (1996). *Organizational learning II.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Argyris,C., & Schon, D. A. (1982). *Theory in practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astuto, T. A., Clark, D. L., Read, A. M., McGree, K., & Fernandez, L. P. (1993). *Challenges to dominant assumptions controlling educational reform* (Final Report). Andover, MA: Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast Islands.

Ayers, W., Hunt, J. A., & Quinn, T. (Eds.). (1998). *Teaching for social justice*. New York, NY: The New Press and Teachers College Press.

Bateman, D., & Bateman, C. F. (2006). *A principal's guide to special education* (2nd

ed.). Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Bejoian, L. M., & Reid, D. K. (2007). A disability studies perspective on the Bush

agenda: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. *Equity & Excellence, 38*(3). 220-

231.

Benjamin, R. (2008). The Case for Comparative Institutional Assessment of Higher-

Order Thinking Skills. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 40*(6), 50-55.

Bishop, K. D., Foster, W., & Jubala, K. A. (1993). The social construction of disability in

education: Organizational considerations. In C. Capper (Ed.), *Educational

administration in a pluralistic society* (pp. 173-202). New York: State University

of New York Press.

Bogatch, I. E. (2002). Educational leadership and social justice: Practice into theory.

Journal of School Leadership, 12, 138-156.

Bomer, R., Dworin, J. E., May, L., & Semingson, P. (2008). Miseducating teachers about

the poor: A critical analysis of Ruby Payne's claims about poverty. *Teachers

College Record, 110*(12), 2497-2531.

Brantlinger, E. A. (2005). *Who benefits from special education: Remediating (fixing)

other people's children*. LEA. Retrieved from Ebook Library.

Brayboy, B. M. J., Castagno, A. E., Maughan, E. (2007). Equality and all? Examining

race in education scholarship. *Review of Research in Education, 31*, 159-194.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Brown, K. M. (2004). Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative

framework and pedagogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*(1), 77-108.

Bruggencate, G.T., Luyten, H., Scheerens, J., & Sleegers, P. (2012). Modeling the

influence of school leaders on students achievement: How can school leaders

make a difference? *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(4), 699-732.

Burrello, L. C., Sailor, W., & Kleinhammer-Tramill, J., Eds. (2013). *Unifying*

educational systems: Leadership and policy perspectives. New York, NY:

Routeldge.

Burton, J. C. (2008). *Principals' assessment and perceptions of their preparation,*

knowledge and skills in special education in southeastern Pennsylvania (Ed.D.

Dissertation, Widener University, United States-Pennsylvania). Retrieved from

Dissertation & Theses: Full Text (Publication No. AAT3383834).

Capper, C.A., Theoharis, G., & Sebastian, J. (2006). Toward a framework for preparing

leaders for social justice. *Journal of Educational Administration, 44*(3), 209-224.

Carpenter, L. B., & Dyal, A. (2001). Retaining quality special educators: A prescription

for school principals in the 21st century. *Catalyst for Change, 30*(3), 5-8.

Clandinin, D. J., & Rosick, J. (2007). Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry:

Borderland spaces and tensions. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative*

inquiry: Mapping a methodology (pp. 35-75). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice:

Teacher learning in communities. *Review of Research in Education, 24*, 249-305.

Conchas, G. (2006). *The color of success: Race and high achieving urban youth*. New

York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2-14.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (2000). *Narrative inquiry.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cooner, D., Tochterman, S., & Garrison-Wade, D. (n.d.). *Preparing principals for leadership in special education: Applying ISSLC Standards*. Retrieved from http://www.principals/org/tabid/3767/default.aspx

Cooper, C. W. (2009). Performing cultural work in demographically changing schools: Implications for expanding transformative leadership frameworks. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 45*, 694-724.

Courtney, B. C., Merriam, S. B., & Reeves, P. M. (1998). The centrality of meaning-making in transformational learning: How HIV-positive adults make sense of their lives. *Adult Education Quarterly, 48*(2), 65-84.

Creswell, J. W. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crockett, J. B. (2011). Conceptual models for leading and administrating special education. In J.M. Kauffman & D.P. Hallahan, (Eds.), *Handbook of special education* (pp. 351-362). New York, NY: Routledge.

Crockett J. B., Becker, M. K., & Quinn, D. (2009). Reviewing the knowledge base of special education leadership and administration. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 22*(2), 55-67.

Cusson, M. M. (2010). *Empirically based components related to students with disabilities in tier 1 research institution's educational administration preparation programs* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Texas at Austin: Austin, TX.

Daiute, C. (2014). *Narrative inquiry: A dynamic approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dantley, M. E., & Tillman, L. C. (2006). Social justice and moral transformative leadership. In C. Marshall & M. Oliva (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (pp. 16-30). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Dantley, M. E., & Tillman, L. C. (2010). Social justice and moral transformative leadership. In C. Marshall & M. Oliva (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (2nd ed., pp. 19-34). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2007). Race, inequality, and educational accountability: The irony of 'No Child Left Behind.' *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 10*(3), 245-260.

Darling-Hammond, L., French, J., & Garcia-Lopez, S. P. (2002). *Learning to teach for social justice.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Youngs, P. (2002). Defining "highly qualified teachers": What does the "scientifically-based research" actually tell us? *Educational Researcher, 31*(9), 13-25.

Davidson, D., & Algozzine, R. (2002). Administrators' perceptions of special education law. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 15*(2), 43-48.

Deisinger, J. A. (2007). Administrating discipline, grading, and 504 plans for students

    with special needs. In F. E. Obiakor, A. F. Rotatori, & S. Burkhardt (Eds.),

    Current perspectives in special education administration (pp. 109-124). Oxford,

    UK: Elsevier.

DeMatthews, D. (2014). Deconstructing system of segregation: Leadership challenges in

    an urban school. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 17*(1), 17-31.

DeMatthews, D., & Mawhinney, H. (2014). Social justice leadership and inclusion:

    Exploring the challenges in an urban district struggling to address inequities.

    Educational Administration Quarterly, 50(5), 844-881.

Dentith, A., & Frattura, E. (2004). Barriers and supports to integrated services for all

    students: Examining roles, structures and processes in one urban district.

    Retrieved from

    http://ucealee.squarespace.com/storage/convention/convention2004/proceedings/0

    4ucea17.pdf

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive biography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

DiPaola, M., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2003). *Principals and special education: The

    critical role of school leaders*. Gainsville, FL: Center on Personnel Studies in

    Special Education, The University of Florida.

Doyle, L. (2004). Inclusion: The unifying thread for fragmented metaphors. *Journal of

    School Leadership, 14*(4), 352-377.

Doyle, M. B. (2002). *The paraprofessional's guide to the inclusive classroom: Working as a team* (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Fleischer, D. Z., & Zames, F. (2001). *The disability rights movement: From charity to confrontation*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University.

Franklin, M. E. (1992). Culturally sensitive instructional practices for African-American learners with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 59*, 115-122.

Frattura, E. M., & Capper, C. A. (2007). *Leading for social justice: Transforming schools for all learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Frattura, E. M., & Topinka, C. (2006). Theoretical underpinnings of separate educational programs: The social justice challenge continues. *Education and Urban Society, 38*(3), 327-344.

French. J. (2002). Idealism meets reality. In L. Darling-Hammond, J. French, & S.P. Garcia-Lopez (Eds.), *Learning to teach for social justice* (pp. 59-65). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. (2006). *Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. (1994). Inclusive schools movement and the radicalization of special education reform. *Exceptional Children, 60*(4), 294-309.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces.* London, UK: Falmer.

Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Furman, G. (2012). Social justice leadership as praxis: Developing capacities through

    preparation programs. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*, 191-229.

Garcia, S. B., & Ortiz, A. A. (2008). A framework for culturally and linguistically

    responsive design of response-to-intervention models. *Multiple Voices for*

    Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 11(1), 24-41.

Gaudelli, W. (2001). Reflection on multicultural education: A teacher's experience.

    Multicultural Education, 8(4), 35-37.

Gershon, W. S. (2012). Teacher leadership: Leading for social justice in teacher

    education. In C. Boske & S. Diem (Eds.), *Global leadership for social justice:*

    Taking it from the field to practice (pp. 139-157). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group

    Publishing Ltd.

Gersten, R., & Woodward, J. (1994). The language-minority student and special

    education: Issues, trends, and paradoxes. *Exceptional Children, 60*, 310- 322.

Gerwitz, S. (1998). Conceptualizing social justice in education: Mapping the territory.

    Journal of Educational Policy, 13(4), 469-484.

Giles, C., Johnson, L., Brooks, S., & Jacobson, S. L. (2005). Building bridges, building

    community: Transformational leadership in a challenging urban context. *Journal of*

    School Leadership, 15, 519-545.

Gilhool, T. K. (1989). The right to an effective education: From Brown to PL 94-142 and

    beyond. In D. Lipsky & A. Gartner (Eds.), *Beyond separate education: Quality*

    education for all (pp. 243-253). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing.

Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Goldfarb, K. P., & Grinberg, J. (2002). Leadership for social justice: Authentic participation in the case of a community center in Caracas, Venezuela. *Journal of School Leadership, 12*, 157-173.

Gooden, M. A. (2012). What does racism have to do with leadership? Countering the idea of color-blind leadership: A reflection on race and the growing pressures of the urban principalship. *Educational Foundations*, Winter-Spring, 67-84.

Gooden, M. A., & Dantley, M. (2012). Centering race in a framework for leadership preparation. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 7*(2), 237-253.

Grogan, M. (2002). Influences of the discourse of globalization on mentoring for gender equity and social justice in educational leadership. *Leading & Managing, 8*(2), 123-134.

Guzman, N. (1997). Leadership for successful inclusive schools: A study of principal behaviours. *Journal of Educational Administration, 35*(5), 439-450.

Hafner, M. M. (2006). Teaching strategies for developing leaders for social justice. In C. Marshall & M. Oliva (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (pp. 167-193). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Haines, S. J., & Turnbull, R. (2013). Busting barriers to fully integrating systems of education. In L. C. Burrello, W. Sailor, & J. Kleinhammer-Tramill (Eds.),

Unifying educational systems: Leadership and policy perspectives (pp. 67-89).

New York, NY: Routledge.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 9*, 167-191.

Harry, B., & Klingner, J. K. (2006). *Why are so many minority students in special education?* New York: Teachers College Press.

Hasazi, S. B., Johnston, A. P., Liggett, A. M., & Schattman, R. A. (1994). A qualitative policy study of the least restrictive environment provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. *Exceptional Children, 60*(6), 491-507.

Hehir, T., & Katzman, L. I. (2012). *Effective inclusive schools: Designing successful schoolwide programs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Henderson, B. (1994). Inclusion: Educating students with and without disabilities. *New England Journal of Public Policy, 10*, 99-105.

Hirth, M. A., & Valesky, T. C. (1990). Survey of universities: Special education knowledge requirements in school administrator preparation programs. *Planning and Changing, 21*(3), 165-172.

Janesick, V. J. (2004). *"Stretching" exercises for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jansen, J. D. (2006). Leading against the grain: The politics and emotions of leading for social justice in South Africa. *Leadership and Policy in School, 5*, 37-51,

Jean-Marie, G. (2008). Leadership for social justice: An agenda for 21st century schools.

    The Educational Forum, 72, 340-354.

Jean-Marie, G., Normore, A. H., & Brooks, J. S. (2009). Leadership for social justice:

    Preparing 21st century school leaders for a new social order. *Journal of Research*

    on Leadership Education, 4(1), 1-31.

Johnson, J. A. (2009). Special education: Whose responsibility is it? *International*

    Journal of Special Education, 24(2), 11-18.

Karen, D. (2005). No child left behind? Sociology ignored! *Sociology of Education, 78*,

    165-182.

Kauffman, J. (1994). Places of change: Special education's power and identity in an era

    of educational reform. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 27*(10), 610-618.

Kleinhammer-Tramill, J., Burrello, L. C., & Sailor, W. (2013). Special education: A

    critical perspective on reframing public policy for students with disabilities. In L.

    C. Burrello, W. Sailor, & J. Kleinhammer-Tramill (Eds.), *Unifying educational*

    systems: Leadership and policy perspectives (pp. 3-20). New York, NY:

    Routledge.

Kunc, N. (1992). The need to belong: Rediscovering Maslow's hierarchy of

    needs. In R. A. Villa, J. S. Thousand, W. Stainback, & S. Stainback (Eds.),

    Restructuring for caring and effective education: An administrative guide to

    creating heterogeneous schools (pp. 25-39). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in*

    diverse classrooms. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Larson, C. L., & Murtadha, K. (2002). Leadership for social justice. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 101*(1), 134-161.

Lashley, C. (2007). Principal leadership for special education: An ethical framework. *Exceptionality, 15*(3), 177-187.

Leithwood, K., & Levin, B. (2005). *Assessing school leader and leadership programme effects in pupil learning* (Research Report 662). London, UK: Department for Education.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership and Management, 28*(1), 27-42.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 17*, 201-227.

Linehan, P. (2002). *Expecting success: An analysis of education policies in Texas*. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED468011.pdf

Linn, R. L. (2000). Assessment and accountability. *Educational Researcher, 29*(2), 4-16.

Lipsky, D., & Gartner, A. (1996). Inclusion, school restructuring, and the remaking of American society. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(4), 762-796.

Lopez, G. R. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review, 71*(3), 416-437.

Lopez, G. R., Gonzalez, M. L., & Fierro, E. (2005). Educational leadership along the U.S.-Mexico border: Crossing borders/embracing hybridity/building bridges. In

C. Marshall and M. Oliva (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (pp. 64-84). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Losen, D. J., & Orfield, G. (Eds.). (2002). *Racial inequity in special education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lyman, L., & Villani, C. (2002). The complexity of poverty: A missing component of educational leadership programs. *Journal of School Leadership, 12* (May), 246-280.

Malen, B., Croninger, R., Muncey, D., & Redmond-Jones, D. (2002). Reconstituting schools: "Testing" the "Theory of Action". *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(2), 113-132.

Marks, H. M., & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: An integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 39*(3), 370-397.

Marshall, C. (2004). Social justice challenges to educational administration: Introduction to a special issue. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*(1), 3-13.

Marshall, C., & Oliva, M. (Eds.). (2006). *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Marshall, C., & Oliva, M. (Eds.). (2010). *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Maxwell, G. M., Locke, L. A., & Scheurich, J. J. (2013). Case study of three rural Texas superintendents as equity oriented change agents. *The Qualitative Report, 18*(22), 1-23.

166

Maynes, B., & Sarbit, B. (2000). Schooling children living in poverty: Perspectives on

    social justice. *Exceptionality Education Canada, 10*(1-2), 37-61.

Mayrowetz, D. (2008). Making sense of distributed leadership: Exploring the multiple

    usages of the concept in the field. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44*,

    424-435.

McCarthy, M. M., & Forsyth, P. B. (2009). An historical review of research and

    development activities pertaining to the preparation of school leaders. In M. D.

    Young, G. M. Crow, J. Murphy, & R. T. Ogawa (Eds.), *Handbook of research on*

    the education of school leaders (pp. 86-128). New York, NY: Routledge.

McDermott, R. P. (1989). Discussant's comments: Making dropouts. In H. T. Trueba, G.

    and L. Spindler (Eds.), *What do anthropologists have to say about dropouts? The*

    first centennial conference on children at risk (pp. 16-26). New York, NY:

    Falmer Press.

McDermott, R., Goldman, S., & Varenne, H. (2006). The cultural work of learning

    disabilities. *Educational Researcher, 35*(6), 12-17.

McDermott, R. & Varenne, H. (1995). Culture as disability. *Anthropology and Education*

    Quarterly, 26, 324-348.

McKenzie, K. B., & Hernandez, F. (2010). Resisting social justice in leadership

    preparation programs: Mechanisms that subvert. *Journal of Research on*

    Leadership Education, 5(3.2), 48-72.

McKenzie, K. B., Skrla, L., & Scheurich, J. J. (2006). Preparing instructional leaders for

    social justice. *Journal of School Leadership, 16*(2), 158-170.

McLaughlin, B. (1992). *Myths and misconceptions about second language learning: What every teacher needs to learn*. Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.

McLaughlin, M. (2009). *What every principal needs to know about special education* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

McLaughlin, M. J., Krezmien, M. P., & Zablocki, M. (2009). Special education in the new millennium: Achieving educational equity for students with learning and behavioral disabilities. *Policy and Practice Advances in Learning and Behavioral Disabilities, 22*, 1-31.

McLaughlin, M., Malmgren, K., Nolet, V. (2006). *Accountability for students with disabilities who receive special education: Characteristics of the subgroup of students with disabilities. A summary of quantitative findings from the Educational Policy Reform Research Institute (EPRRI).* Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED509859.pdf

McNiff, J. (2007). My story is my living educational theory. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 308-329). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mehan, H. (1992). Understanding inequality in schools: The contribution of interpretive studies. *Sociology of Education, 65*(1), 1-20.

Mehan, H., Hertweck, A., & Meihls, J. L. (1986). *Handicapping the handicapped: Decision making in students' educational careers.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Meier, D., & Wood, G. (Eds.). (2004). *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francsico, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2004). Forum comment on Sharan Merriam's "The Role of Cognitive Development in Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory". *Adult Education Quarterly, 55*(1), 69-70.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 74*, 5-12.

Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(4), 222-232.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Militello, M., Schimmel, D., & Eberwein, H. J. (2009). If they knew, they would change: How legal knowledge impacts principals' practice. *NASSP Bulletin, 93*(1), 27-52.

Moolenaar, N. M., Daly, A., & Sleegers, P. J. C. (2010). Occupying the principal position: Examining the relationships between transformational leadership,

social network position, and schools' innovative climate. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(5), 623-670.

Nagle, K. M., McLaughlin, M. J., Nolet, V. & Malmgren, K. (2007). *Students with disabilities and accountability reform: Findings from the Texas case study.* Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED509867.pdf

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2008). *Professional standards for the accreditation of teacher preparation institutions.* Washington, DC: Author.

National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2011a). *Educational leadership program standards: 2011 ELCC building level.* Washington, DC: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2011b). *Educational leadership program standards: 2011 ELCC district level.* Washington, DC: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2007). *Collateral damage: How high-stakes testing corrupts America's schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2008). . Testing the joy out of learning. *Educational Leadership, 65*(6), 14-18.

Nieto, S. (2000). Plaing equity front and center: Some thoughts on transforming teacher education for a new century. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(3), 180-188.

Nussbaum, M. (2006). *Frontiers for justice: Disability, nationality, species membership.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Osgood, R. L. (2005). *The history of inclusion in the United States*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Osterman, K. F., & Hafner, M. M. (2009). Curriculum in leadership preparation: Understanding where we have been in order to know where we might go. In M D. Young, G. M. Crow, J. Murphy, & R. T. Ogawa (Eds.), *Handbook of research on the education of school leaders* (pp. 269-317). New York, NY: Routledge.

Otunga, R. (2010). A response to leadership for social justice: A transnational dialogue. *Journal of Research on Educational Leadership, 1*(4), 1-5.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pazey, B. (1995). An essential link for the administration of special education: The ethic of care. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 1*(3), 296-310.

Pazey, B., & Cole, H. A. (2013). The role of special education training in the development of socially just leaders: Building an equity consciousness in educational leadership programs. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 49*(2), 243-271.

Pazey, B., Cole, H., & Garcia, S. (2012). Toward a framework for an inclusive model of social justice leadership preparation: Equity-oriented leadership for students with disabilities. In C. Boske and S. Diem (Eds.), *Global leadership for social justice: Taking it from the field to practice* (pp. 193-216). Bingley, UK: Emerald.

171

Pazey, B., Vasquez Heilig, J., Cole, H. A., & Sumbera, M. (in press). The more things change, the more they stay the same: Comparing special education students' experiences of accountability reform across two decades. *The Urban Review*.

Peterson, J. M., & Hittie, M. M. (2003). *Inclusive teaching: Creating effective schools for all children.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Polat, F. (2011). Inclusion in education: A step towards social justice. *International Journal of Educational Development, 31*(1), 50-58.

Pounder, D., Reitzug, U., & Young, M. D. (2002). Preparing school leaders for school improvement, social justice, and community. In J. Murphy (Ed.), *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century* (pp. 261-288). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Powell, P.R. (2010). *An exploratory study of the presentation of special education law in administrative preparation programs for aspiring administrators* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertation Abstracts International (Order No. AAI3390580).

Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Rawls, J. (1972). *A theory of justice.* Oxford, UK: University Press.

Rea, P. J., McLaughlin, V. L., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2002). Outcomes for students with learning disabilities in inclusive and pullout programs. *Exceptional Children, 68*, 203-223.

Reyes, P. & Valencia, R. (1993). Educational policy and the growing Latino student

    population: Problems and prospects. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 15*

    (2), 258-283.

Riehl, C. (2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: A

    review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of

    educational administration. *Review of Educational Research, 70*(1), 55-82.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Qualitative research methods series: Narrative analysis*.

    Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Riester, A. F., Pursch, V., & Skrla, L. (2002). Principals for social justice: Leaders of

    school success for children from low-income homes. *Journal of School*

    Leadership, 12, 281-304.

Rios, F., Bath, D., Foster, A., Maaka, M., Michelli, N., & Urban, E. (2009). *Inequities in*

    public education. Retrieved from

    http://www.ieiseattle.org/AEDScholars_Inequities.pdf

Robicheau, J., Haar, J., & Palladino, J. (2008). *Preparation and leadership in special*

    education. Retrieved from http://cnx.org/content/m18123/1.1/

Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student

    outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership type. *Educational*

    Administration Quarterly, 44, 635-674.

Rolstad, K., Mahoney, K., & Glass, G. V. (2005). The big picture: A meta-analysis of

    program effectiveness research on English language learners. *Educational Policy,*

    19(4), 572-594.

Rueda, R., Klingner, J., Sager, N., & Velasco, A. (2008). Reducing disproportionate

    representation in special education. In T.C. Jiménez & V.L. Graf (Eds.),

    Education for all: Critical issues in the education of children and youth with

    disabilities (pp. 131-166). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ryan, J. (2006). Inclusive leadership and social justice for schools. *Leadership and*

    Policy in Schools, 5, 3-17.

Sands, D. J., Adams, L., & Stout, D. M. (1995). A statewide exploration of the nature and

    use of curriculum in special education. *Exceptional Children, 62*(1), 68-83.

Sapon-Shevin, M. (2003). Inclusion: A matter of social justice. *Educational Leadership,*

    61(2), 25-28.

Scheurich, J. J. (1998). Highly successful and loving, public elementary schools

    populated mainly by low-SES children of color: Core beliefs and cultural

    characteristics. *Urban Education, 33*(4), 451-491.

Scheurich, J. J., & Skrla, L. (2003). *Leadership for equity and excellence: Creating high-*

    achievement classrooms, schools, and districts. Thousand Oaks, CA:

    Corwin/Sage.

Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1996). Teacher perceptions of

    mainstreaming/inclusion, 1958-1995: A research synthesis. *Exceptional Children,*

    63(1), 59-74.

Shalley, C. E., & Gilson, L. L. (2004). What leaders need to know: A review of social

    and contextual factors that can foster or hinder creativity. *Leadership Quarterly,*

    15(1), 33-53.

Shank, G. D. (2005). *Qualitative research: A personal skills approach* (2nd ed.). Saddle

    River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Shepherd, K., & Hasazi, S.B. (2008). Leadership for social justice and inclusion. In L.

    Florian (Ed.), *The sage handbook of special education*, (pp. 475-485). Los

    Angeles: Sage.

Skrla, L., McKenzie, K., & Scheurich, J. (2009). *Using equity audits to create equitable*

    and excellent schools. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Skrtic, T. M. (1991). *Behind special education: A critical analysis of professional culture*

    and school organization. Denver, CO: Love.

Skrtic, T. M. (Ed.). (1995a). *Disability and democracy: Reconstructing (special)*

    education for postmodernity. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Skrtic, T. M. (1995b). The functionalist view of special education and disability:

    Deconstructing the conventional knowledge tradition. In T. M. Skrtic (Ed.),

    Disability and democracy: Reconstructing (special) education for postmodernity,

    (pp. 65-103). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Slavin, R. E. (2002). The intentional school: Effective elementary education for all

    S. Stringfield & D. Land (Eds.), *Educating at-risk students* (Vol. 101, pp. 111-

    127). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Slee, R. (2009). Inclusive school as a means and end of education. In L. Florian (Ed.),

    The Sage handbook of special education (pp. 160-170). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Smart, J. (2009). *Disability, society, and the individual* (2nd ed.). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Spillane, J. P., & Orlina, E. C. (2005). Investigating leadership practice: Exploring the

entailments of taking a distributed perspective. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 4*(4), 157-176.

Stainback, S. & Stainback, W. (1992). *Curriculum considerations and inclusive classrooms: Facilitating learning for all students*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Strader, D. L. (2007). *Law and ethics in educational leadership*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Superfine, B. M. (2005). The politics of accountability: The rise and fall of Goals 2000. *American Journal of Education, 112*(1), 10-43.

Supovitz, J. (2009). Can high stakes testing leverage educational improvement? Prospects from the last decade of testing and accountability reform. *Journal of Educational Change, 10*, 211-227.

Theoharis, G. (2007). Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(2), 221-258.

Theoharis, G. (2009). *The school leaders our children deserve: Keys to equity, social justice, and school reform.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Thoonen, E. E. J., Sleegers, P. J. C., Oort, F. J., Peetsma, T. T. P., & Giejsel, F. P. (2011). How to improve teaching practices: The role of teacher motivation, organizational factors and leadership practices. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 47*(3), 496-536.

Thurlow, M. L. (2004). In S. H. Fuhrman & R. F. Elmore, R. F. (Eds.), *Redesigning accountability systems for education* (pp. 115-137). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Thurlow, M. L., Quenemoen, R. F., & Lazarus, S. S. (2012). Leadership for student performance in an era of accountability. In J. Crockett, B. Billingsley, M.L. Boscardin, (Eds.), *Handbook of leadership in special education* (pp. 3-16). London, UK: Routledge.

Tillman, L., Brown, K., Campbell-Jones, F., & Gonzalez, M. L. (2006). Transformative teaching for social justice in educational leadership [Special Issues]. *Journal of School Leadership, 16*(2), 207-209.

Tomlinson, C. A., & Reis, S. (2004). Differentiation for gifted and talented students. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Touchton, D., & Acker-Hocevar, M. (2001). *Using a lens of social justice to reframe principals' interviews from high poverty, low performing schools*. Paper presented at the University Council for Educational Administration.

Traudt, K. (2002). Survey says: Can a white teacher effectively teach students of color? In L. Darling-Hammond, J. French, & S. P. Garcia-Lopez (Eds.), *Learning to teach for social justice* (pp. 43-51). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Valencia, R. R. (1997). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge Falmer.

Valesky, T.C., & Hirth, M.A. (1992). Survey of the states: Special education knowledge requirements for school administrators. *Exceptional Children, 58*(5), 399-406.

Vannest, K .J., Mahadevan, L., Mason, B. A., Temple-Harvey, K. K. (2009). Educator
and administrator perceptions of the impact of No Child Left Behind on special
populations. *Remedial and Special Education, 30*(3), 148-159.

Varenne, H., & McDermott, R. (1998). *Successful failure: The school America builds.*
Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Vasquez Heilig, J., Cole, H. A., & Springel, M. (2011). Alternative certification and
Teach for America: The search for high quality teachers. *Kansas Journal of Law
and Public Policy, 20*(3), 388-412.

Vasquez Heilig, J. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2008). Accountability Texas-style: The
progress and learning of urban minority students in a high-stakes testing
context. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis. 30*(2), 75-110.

Vasquez Heilig, J., Khalifa, M., & Tillman, L. (2013). Why have NCLB and high-stakes
reforms failed?: Reframing the discourse with a post-colonial lens. In K. Lomotey
and R. Milner (Eds.), *Handbook of Urban Education.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Vasquez Heilig, J., Young, M. & Williams, A. (2012). At-risk student averse: Risk
management and accountability. *Journal of Educational Administration, 50*(5),
562-585.

Vibert, A., & Portelli, J. (2000). School leadership and the critical practice in an
elementary school. *Exceptionally Education Canada, 10*(1-2), 23-36.

Wang, M. C. & Zollers, N. J. (1990). Adaptive instruction: An alternative service

delivery approach. *Remedial and Special Education, 11*, 7-21.

Wasburn-Moses, L., & Frager, A. M. (2009). Point-counterpoint: Can special education and general education get along? *Educational Forum, (*3), 215-228.

Wasik, B., Bond, M. A., & Hindman, A. (2002). Educating at-risk preschool children and kindergarten children. In S. Stringfield & D. Land (Eds.), *Educating at-risk students* (Vol. 101, pp. 111-127). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Wasonga, T. A. (2009). Leadership practices for social justice, democratic community, and learning: School principals' perspectives. *Journal of School Leadership, 19*, 200-224.

Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yell, M. (2012). *Legal issues in special education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Zigmond, N., Kloo, A., & Volonino, V.(2009). What, where and how? Special education in the climate of full inclusion. *Exceptionality, 17*(4), 189-204.

Zollers, N. J., Ramanathan, A. K., & Yu, M. (1999). The relationship between school culture and inclusion: How an inclusive culture supports inclusive education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 12*(2), 157-174.