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Critical Social Justice Issues for School Practitioners

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for

School Practitioners

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preparation and practice of school administration.

National Council of
Professors of Educational Administration

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From Ice Raids to Equity: Hispanic Students' Progress through High School in an Immigrant Responsive City

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Navigating a new land is made more complex for undocumented immigrants by the challenges of poverty, the inability to secure work for a living wage, and the daily dissonance experienced by living in a culture that rejects their very presence, but is welcoming of the labor of their hands, compensated for at a below market rate (Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson, & Passel, 2005; Trueba, 2004). Passel (2006) reported estimations of the population of undocumented immigrants in the United States at over eleven million, with fully 60% of all Mexican immigrants being undocumented. Parents tend to bring their children when they immigrate to a new country. Recent estimates indicate there are approximately 1.8 million children residing in the United States without documentation. Approximately, 3.1 million babies are born every year to parents without documentation (Passel, 2006). Research by Hook (2006) suggests growing up in an immigrant household increases the risk factor of poverty by more than 50% compared to children growing up in native-born households.

The current wave of immigration to the United States is a mixed demographic. Rumbaut (2008) noted many of the new immigrants to the United States from Latin America have little formal schooling. They can be described as unskilled or semi-skilled workers who frequently enter the United States without proper documentation. Approximately 22% of all new immigrants have less than a ninth-grade education (Rumbaut, 2008). Research by Crosnoe and Lopez Turley (2011) and Rumbaut (2008) suggested many new immigrants live in areas of high poverty, racial segregation, and limited meaningful work opportunities. Furthermore, they are more likely to work for minimum wages, and in jobs without the benefit of insurance or other labor protections and safeguards. Unlike the opportunities for past waves of immigrants, the changing economic

structure in the United States offers today's low-skilled immigrants little opportunity for upward mobility through factory or industrial work (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Rumbaut, 2008). The constant fear of possible deportation is a real challenge for many immigrant families.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss Hispanic students' progress through high school in an immigrant responsive city. The chapter begins with a literature review of immigrant issues. Then the authors report an immigrant event that occurred in 2006. The third section of the paper presents a description of programs implemented by an immigrant responsive high school. The last part of this paper reports findings of investigating several questions that focused on immigrant high school students with no English language skills and some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the city where the event occurred.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bearing the stigma of having undocumented status brings with it additional racism, and discrimination (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). When immigrants encounter racism, and ethnic discrimination it has a significant negative effect on their social, and emotional well-being, physical health, sense of efficacy, and sense of self; which in turn may diminish their motivation to succeed, and academic achievement (Borjas, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). This may account for an apparent diminishing in the levels of motivation, and positive attitudes of many immigrant youth towards school, and their future life chances. The longer many immigrant children stay in school the lower their levels of academic achievement, and the lower their grade point average (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Perreira, Mullan Harris, & Lee, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

Parental Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of immigrant parents is a significant factor in the academic achievement of their children. Immigrants who arrive in the United States with a history of educational attainment in their country of origin tend to have children who achieve a higher level of academic success than children of immigrant parents who have low levels of educational attainment (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011). The greater the educational level of the parent is related to an increase in the number, and quality of resources the parent has to help their child achieve academic success, and access to academic opportunities. The level of parental education has a direct correlation to student outcomes on achievement tests, grades, and school completion (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Children of immigrant parents who have higher levels of education are in a better position to receive help from their parents to navigate the road to college, enter school with greater and more sophisticated vocabularies, experience a literacy rich home environment, have easy access to technology such as computers and the internet, and are more likely to be able to receive help on home work (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

Immigrant Paradox

Many students, immigrants or native born, experience a decline in their motivation, grade point average, and engagement the longer they are within the educational system - an overall decline in performance which crosses all racial and ethnic divides but is significantly more noticeable in minority populations (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). However, an interesting phenomenon in the research suggests new immigrants have better outcomes than second-generation immigrants in several areas. This has been referred to as the immigrant paradox (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Educational achievement may also be negatively correlated to perceptions of discrimination. The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) data indicate many immigrant youth feel a pervasive sense of discrimination in school and community settings. The source of their feelings of discrimination comes from interactions with peers, teachers, and neighbors. Interestingly, a majority of immigrant youths who report discrimination also feel that they would experience less discrimination if they obtained a high level of education (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

Too often, immigrant parents do not experience efficacy in their interactions with the educational system. Limited access to English is a significant barrier to effective parental involvement--it also is a determinant of individual identity and authority. Access to interpreters can bridge some of these barriers, but this alone does not eliminate the problem (Trueba, 2004). Frequently, immigrant parents must rely on their children to act as interpreters. When this happens, the social dynamics of family are weakened, and become unbalanced. When the familial hierarchy is altered, the parent-child bond can be negatively affected (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

EVENT

KETV (2006) reported that early in the morning of December 12, 2006, the Chief of Police of Grand Island, NE, Chief Lamkin, met with federal agents and communicated that his department would not participate in the raid. Lamkin wanted to avoid the chilling effect that could descend between the local police and the Hispanic community if the people had reason to fear the police. However, Lamkin did inform governmental institutions, including the public schools that something was going to happen (KETV, 2006). Chaudry et al. (2010) note that Dr. Steve Joel, superintendent of Grand Island Public Schools, acted immediately to mobilize a coordinated, district wide plan to ensure the safety of all immigrant students, and to designate all public schools as safe havens. Lamkin publically denounced the raid, and the local health department and DHHS provided access to needed services for families.

Chaudry et al (2010) note that the Urban Institute reported on the effects of large-scale raids on children, using the 2006 raid in Grand Island, Nebraska, as one of their examples. They pointed out that fear was palpable among the Hispanic community, and in the days immediately following the raid over 275 Hispanic public school students were absent from class. In a united effort, school staff and faith-based organizations went door to door throughout neighborhoods delivering food to families and trying to communicate that

school was a safe place for their children. Despite their best efforts, many doors remained closed due to fear of detention and possible deportation by authorities. However, the safe havens provided by the schools allowed for trust to be rebuilt and for learning to continue.

Overstreet (2006) describes the devastating and far reaching consequences of tearing parents from children, ripping asunder the fabric of family and destabilizing entire communities in the name of immigration enforcement felt in this quiet Nebraska town that Tuesday morning, December 12, 2006, when the Swift meat packing plant in Grand Island, Nebraska, was raided by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, in an effort to serve 170 arrest warrants for identity theft. The ensuing mass arrests affected hundreds of Hispanic workers with and without documentation in an unprecedented demonstration of inequity in power and privilege.

Fathers and mothers kissed their children good-bye and sent them off to school on a chilly December morning with no inkling that it was to be years before they would see them again. Overstreet (2006) notes workers who were detained in the initial raid included single parents, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and guardians of hundreds of students attending the Grand Island Public Schools. A single father employed at Swift dropped off his young baby at the sitter before he left for work on Tuesday morning, December 12. Over one week later the infant was still in the custody of the sitter.

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (2006) told the story of one worker, referred to as Juan, as indicative of the experience of many. Juan suffered the fall-out of leaving his green card at home on Tuesday morning when he went into work. He was one of hundreds of Hispanic employees who were detained and transported six hours away to Camp Dodge, Iowa. Despite his pleadings, he was not allowed to have a significant other bring his green card to the plant. When his legal status was finally established he was released, but not offered any compensation or transportation back to Grand Island. Juan spent $140 to get back to his family (UFCW, 2006).

Pore (2006) reported in the *Grand Island Independent* how Rev Jay Vetter, of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island articulated the mounting tragedy of the raid and its devastating impact on families asserting, "There is kind of a resurgence of mistrust in the community as a result of the raid that has created more polarization. Everyone affected are our family, our friends, and our neighbors" (Pore, 2006, para. 30). Of the 273 workers arrested in Grand Island, only nine are known to have been released in a timely manner to care for their children (Chaudry et al., 2010).

LaFee (2007) noted while children are frequently the forgotten causalities in the immigration debate, the Grand Island community was determined at the outset to make them the center point of policy and practice. In response to the raid over 60 teachers and volunteers were mobilized by the school district to take parentless children home for the night. Through a coordinated citywide effort, by 9:00 pm the evening of the raid the last child left at a school had been sent home with relatives (LaFee, 2007).

The raid of 2006 can be viewed through the theoretical framework of social stratification and inequality of opportunity and condition that may have a direct impact on an individual's life chances (Breen & Jonsson, 2005). The work of Breen and Johnson (2005) suggests inequality of opportunity is grounded in the belief that an individual's ascribed status should not impact their ability to secure employment or gain an education. Regardless of an individual's race, sex or socioeconomic status, the playing field of life

should be level. Inequality of condition is directly related to the distribution of resources in relation to individual time, effort, citizenship or employment status.

The workers subject to the raid in 2006 were struggling to overcome the negative effects of social stratification. They were targeted initially because of their race and place of employment. Illegal citizenship status was assumed and the onus of proof was placed directly upon the worker--thus, standing American jurisprudence on its head as individuals were arbitrarily judged to be guilty until proven innocent. Rumbaut (2008) discusses the effects of low social capital and socioeconomic status to perpetuate stratification and disadvantage among immigrants. The 2006 raid highlighted these effects (Rumbaut, 2008). While the scholarly research on stratification and immigration is robust, the scholarship on the long term implications for the children of immigrants is limited (Suarez-Orozco, 2000).

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) discuss the modes of incorporation for immigrants and how these determinants embedded in the context of reception by government, society and community, greatly impact the socioeconomic and social capital status and prospects for immigrants. The long term implications for immigrant children and their families, as well as their general adaptation to their new land, are discussed through the conceptual framework of segmented assimilation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Hirschman, 2001). The ICE raid of 2006 in Grand Island, Nebraska served as a catalyst for community members, motivating them to rally around their new families in an example of how immigration is both the history and the destiny of an immigrant responsive community (Suarez-Orozco, 2000).

AN IMMIGRANT RESPONSIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOL EFFORTS

The journey towards becoming an immigrant responsive community is neither linear nor clearly defined. However, there is a body of research that explores how communities can support the integration of immigrants and newcomers into their midst. McGrath (2009) suggests that when a community develops a symbiotic relationship of shared responsibility among immigrants and established residents, integration occurs. He cites Fort Morgan, Colorado as an example of a city has developed bridging social capital between different community members.

This process requires the full participation of both groups, and can be affected by the human and social capital of the immigrants as well as the commitment level of the receiving community. Ultimately, success can be measured by the participation and inclusion of every group into the social, civic, educational, governmental, health and faith fabric of the community (McGarth, 2009).

From 2000 to 2010 the Hispanic population in Grand Island grew by over 82%, while the Hispanic school age population experienced an 89% growth rate. As of the 2010 census data, the Hispanic population comprised 26.7% of the population of Grand Island and accounted for 44% of the Grand Island Public School's student body (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). Today, at Grand Island Senior High School, the Hispanic population represents over 50% of the student body.

The work of Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) clearly illustrate how the raid of December 12, 2006 is an example of the unilinear process of acculturation and how stratification and the inequalities of opportunity and condition can have a significant impact on the social and economic ascent of immigrant families and their children. Climbing up the socioeconomic ladder for immigrant children is predicated on their human and social

capital and that of their parents, the context or reception within the community, and familial composition.

Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller (2005) earlier suggest intact two parent households, with the presence of an extended family and community support network are protective factors for the upward assimilation of immigrant children. Furthermore, a family that is undocumented with the father, mother, or both facing deportation, marginal participation within the economic structure of the community and a limited social support network has the potential for downward assimilation and a decrease in socioeconomic status and human capital (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2005).

In their 2008 research, Portes and Fernandez-Kelly found when there is positive support from the school district and other governmental agencies, a willingness from much of the native population to stand behind immigrants, and the existence of social networks and an established co-ethnic community to help immigrants find their way in a new land, the potential for successful integration and upward mobility is increased. Governmental, community and faith based organizations were mobilized into action in response to the raid. The familial devastation and loss the raid engendered was felt across a wide range of socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural statuses. Few were left untouched during this experience. Existing educational and community supports and institutional structures were important to maintain a sense of continuity and consistency when the lives of many immigrant families were being torn apart.

The following section presents a description of three programs implemented by the school district in this community to become a more responsive community to immigrant parents. These programs are: Parent University, The Welcome Center, and the English Language Acquisition Program.

Parent University

Parents and students at Grand Island Senior High school were given opportunities to attend a Parent University, a program designed to bridge the gaps students and their families have to the educational process, high school completion and post-secondary opportunities. Louie (2005) suggests by engaging students and parents with the school, students are more likely to succeed academically and continue on to graduate.

In a few short years, approximately 30% of the nation's K-12 students in public schools will be the children of immigrants, and over 25% of these children will be from low income families. The research of Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggest high levels of parental optimism regarding the opportunities available in the U.S. for immigrants and their children. However, many students experience a decline in their motivation, grade point average, and engagement the longer time they spend within the educational system.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) describe this as the immigrant paradox. Its intensity is negatively correlated to how immigrants have been incorporated into their new land in terms of access to employment, legal status, and their context of reception. Many of the immigrant students attending Parent University with their families were the first to not only have the possibility of graduating from high school, but also of post secondary educational opportunities. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) note this is not an easy or smooth road immigrants travel as the social stresses inherent to immigration and movement across social

classes, acquisition of a second language, and the loss of cultural markers and status can directly impact the kind and quantity of their educational and economic opportunities.

The Grand Island Public Schools Welcome Center

Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) research on segmented assimilation theory suggests families and children from low socioeconomic status with limited social and human capital face formidable educational challenges. Louie (2005) further notes school districts are institutionally positioned to either enhance access to educational equality or hinder it. While Nebraska is not considered a destination state for immigrants, or a traditional entry point, the significant increase in the immigrant population of the state and Grand Island in particular called for a dynamic response and flexibility of the educational infrastructure. The Grand Island Public Schools' response was to launch the Welcome Center in July, 2007 as the first destination for students and families coming into the district that speak something other than English as a home language.

The Welcome Center is a part of the ELA Department and is staffed with a Coordinator and a Parent Liaison. Each year, over 630 students and their families arrive at the Welcome Center to register and begin their educational journey. These students come primarily from Mexico, South, and Central America. Each student is given an English language proficiency assessment, parents are given an initial orientation to the school district and the community, and helped to complete the registration process for their student(s).

Welcome Center faculty and staff support is given with the understanding that many individuals registering their children for school, during this first introduction to a U.S. school system, have themselves had often limited, discontinuous educational experiences or success in their countries of origin. Furthermore, many parents may not have completed schooling in their country of origin, or they may not be literate in their native language. This is a critical time to develop bridging social capital between parent, child, family, and school district, to understand the many challenges and strengths the student and family posses, and to begin the process of connecting the family to needed resources within the school district and larger community.

After the student has been assessed and the family completes registration and orientation, a summary is prepared of the assessment results including a placement recommendation and compellation of the assessment data, a short history of student immunizations and any existing medical concerns, and the student and family's socio-emotional, and socioeconomic needs and strengths. All of these factors are communicated to the receiving school and to community organizations to facilitate access to services that may be able to help the family adjust to a new life in a new town.

Confidentiality of the student and family is closely guarded, and any information shared with the receiving school and teacher is done so only with the permission of the parent. Upon receipt of the summary, the receiving school and teacher, as well as social workers and other student support services personnel, prepare for the arrival of the student. This support also helps the student academically by optimizing instructional time allowing for immediate student placement within a service level that is most appropriate to their academic and language needs.

The English Language Acquisition Program

Of the over 9,000 students in the Grand Island public school system, 28% are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and receive supplemental services through the district English Language Acquisition (ELA) Program. The ELA program is staffed by 52 teachers certified in English as a Second Language (ESL), who are also trained in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) method. Furthermore, there are 29 translators, bi-lingual Para-educators and two multi-cultural at-risk coordinators to support the teachers, in addition to a Migrant Programs Director, a Teaching and Learning Coordinator, an ELA and Migrant Coordinator, a Migrant Recruiter, a Migrant Para Educator, and a department secretary.

The district offers a variety of different service delivery models to address the academic and linguistic needs of students that scaffold language development through extensive content study. Every school, except one elementary site, offers ELA services to students who qualify for the support. Because academic English literacy skills are imperative for LEP students' success in regular education classes' substantial instructional support is provided.

INVESTIGATION OF QUESTIONS

The purpose of this part of the study was to determine the English language development, graduation credit accrual requirements, and school attendance frequency progress of new to the country Hispanic students who entered ninth-grade with no English language skills and some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the same high school in an immigrant responsive city. Research questions included the following:

1. Do immigrant high school students with no English language skills and some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the same high school in an immigrant responsive city lose, maintain, or improve their entering ninth-grade pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to the ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores?

2. Do immigrant high school students with no English language skills compared to immigrant high school students with some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the same high school in an immigrant responsive city have congruent or different posttest graduation credit accrual requirements?

3. Do immigrant high school students with no English language skills and some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the same high school in an immigrant responsive city have congruent or different posttest school attendance frequency progress?

Study Participants

Individuals who participated in this study were identified upon entering the research high school in their ninth-grade school year with no English language skills ($n = 13$) and some English language skills ($n = 11$). Identification of the study participants was based upon

their entering Las Links assessment scores and their placement into the English Language Acquisition program within the research study high school. Individuals who participated in this study attended the same high school from entry in ninth-grade until 12th-grade high school completion. See Table 1 for student demographics.

Group one study participants consisted of students with no English language skills (n = 13) who entered the research high school in their ninth-grade school year, attended the same high school until completion of high school, scored at a level one on their initial Las Links assessment of English language proficiency skills given prior to the students entering the research high school, and were placed into the English Language Acquisition program at the research high school.

Group two students with some English language skills (n = 11) who entered the research high school in their ninth-grade school year, attended the same high school until completion of high school, scored at a level two or above on their initial Las Links assessment of English language proficiency skills given prior to the students entering the research high school, and were placed into the English Language Acquisition program at the research high school.

Table 1

Student Demographics

Students		No English	Some English
Gender:			
	Females	$n = 5$ (39%)	$n = 3$ (27%)
	Males	$n = 8$ (61%)	$n = 8$ (73%)
	Totals	$N = 13$ (100%)	$N = 11$ (100%)
Entering Ninth Grade			
Las Links Level:[a]		Level = 1	Level = 2
Entering Ninth Grade			
Mean Age:		15.5 years	15 years
Ethnicity:		Hispanic	Hispanic
Country of Origin:		Mexico	Mexico

[a]*Note.* Students entered the United States at the beginning of the ninth-grade. The Las Links Assessment was used to place students with no English language skills (Level 1) and students with some English language skills (Level 2) into the appropriate English Language Acquisition program at the research high school.

Variables

Independent variable, English language skills, condition #1 was a naturally formed group of immigrant high school students with no English language skills who enrolled in the research high school in the ninth-grade. Independent variable, English language skills, condition #2 was a naturally formed group of immigrant high school students with some English

language skills who enrolled in the research high school in the ninth-grade. Las Links assessment and English language proficiency level at ninth-grade enrollment determined the placement of students into the English Language Acquisition program at the research high school.

The study's dependent measures were (a) English language development as measured by the research high schools individual student scores for the English Language Development Assessment Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Comprehension, and Composite measures, (b) achievement as measured by the research high schools individual student credit accrual towards fulfilling graduation requirements, and (c) student engagement as measured by students school absence frequencies.

Research Question Number One Findings

Entering ninth-grade pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores of immigrant high school students with no English language skills enrolled in the research high school's English Language Acquisition program displayed in Table 2 significantly improved over time. Null hypotheses for test score improvement over time were rejected for all six entering ninth-grade students pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to their ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores for Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Comprehension, and Composite.

Furthermore, entering ninth-grade pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores of immigrant high school students with some English language skills enrolled in the research high school's English Language Acquisition program found in Table 2 also significantly improved over time. Null hypotheses for test score improvement over time were rejected for five of the six entering ninth-grade students pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to their ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores for Speaking, Listening, Reading, Comprehension, and Composite and not rejected for test score improvement over time for the entering ninth-grade pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment score for Writing.

These results represent a pattern of improvement that reflects the impact of participation in the research high school's English Language Acquisition program and participation in required high school academic coursework over time for these students who entered ninth-grade with no measured English language skills and for these students who entered ninth-grade with some measured English language skills.

Table 2

Entering Ninth-Grade Pretest and Ending 12th-Grade Posttest English Language Development Assessment Levels of Immigrant High School Students With No English Language Skills and Immigrant High School Students With Some English Language Skills Enrolled in the Research High School's English Language Acquisition Program

Immigrant High School Students	Ninth-Grade Pretest	12th-Grade Posttest	Statistical Findings	Effect Size
Students with No Measured English Language Skills:				
Speaking	Level 1	Level 4	Significant Improvement	0.866
Listening	Level 1	Level 3	Significant Improvement	2.196
Reading	Level 1	Level 3	Significant Improvement	2.124
Writing	Level 1	Level 3	Significant Improvement	1.979
Comprehension	Level 1	Level 3	Significant Improvement	2.231
Composite	Level 1	Level 3	Significant Improvement	2.325
Students with Some Measured English Language Skills:				
Speaking	Level 2	Level 4	Significant Improvement	0.783
Listening	Level 2	Level 3	Significant Improvement	0.811
Reading	Level 2	Level 3	Significant Improvement	0.952
Writing	Level 2	Level 3	Non-Sig. Improvement[†]	0.469
Comprehension	Level 2	Level 3	Significant Improvement	0.751
Composite	Level 2	Level 3	Significant Improvement	0.697

Note. English Language Development Assessment Level 1 = No English Language Skills; Level 2 = Some English Language Skills; Level 3 = Intermediate English Language Skills; Level 4 = Advanced English Language Skills.
[†]*ns.*

Research Question Number Two Findings

Results of chi-square ending twelfth-grade credit accrual towards fulfilling graduation requirements of immigrant high school students with no English Language skills compared to immigrant high school students with some English Language skills enrolled in the research high school's English language acquisition program as measured by credit accrual towards fulfilling graduation requirements by school year found in Table 3 were statistically different. Thus the null hypothesis of no difference or congruence for the posttest compared to posttest ending high school core credit accrual towards fulfilling graduation requirements by school year cumulative frequencies comparison was rejected. It should be noted that the overall grades leading to credit accrual for the students passing course work ranged from a

low of "D" to a high of "C" falling into the "passing but needs improvement" category on the grading scale used for all high school students.

In viewing Table 3 the variance in core credit accrual is evident. Overall, data variance was observed for the students who entered ninth-grade with no English skills whose core credit accrual frequencies start low during their ninth-grade and 10th-grade school years, improve sharply during their 11th-grade school year becoming normative during their 12th-grade year. However, students who entered ninth-grade with some English skills maintained steady and consistent core credit accrual frequencies throughout their four years of high school. Again this pattern of positive credit accrual improvement reflects the impact of participation in the research high school's English Language Acquisition program and participation in required high school academic coursework over time for these students who entered ninth-grade with some English language skills but most particularly those students who entered ninth-grade with no English language skills.

Table 3

Ending Twelfth-Grade Graduation Requirements as Measured by Core Credit Accrual Towards Fulfilling Graduation Requirements

Core Credit Accrual by School Year	Core Credit Accrual of Students Who Entered Ninth-Grade with No Measured English Language Skills	Core Credit Accrual of Students Who Entered Ninth-Grade with Some Measured English Language Skills
Ninth-Grade 2006-2007	12	22
10th-Grade 2007-2008	11	25
11th-Grade 2008-2009	53	35
12th-Grade 2009-2010	32	33
Totals*	108	115

Note. $X^2 = 11.90$, $p = .008$ for observed verses expected cell frequencies comparison used for calculation with $df = 3$. Chi-square result indicates that core credit accrual progress over the four years of high school was significantly greater for students who entered ninth-grade with some measured English Language skills.

Research Question Number Three Findings

As displayed in Table 4 the null hypothesis was rejected for observed absence frequencies across all four years of high school attendance. Students who entered ninth-grade with no English Language Skills had significantly greater recorded school absence frequencies compared to students who entered ninth-grade with some English Language skills recorded absence frequencies. However, this pattern of absence frequencies represents a serious concern for both groups of students' neither of whom could afford to miss any days of school if they were to succeed academically. The finding suggests the need for further study of the competing demands placed on these students by their families and their need to work to generate income to be used at home.

Data variance is observed for the students who entered ninth-grade with no English skills whose absence frequencies increased every school year, as illustrated in Table 4. Students who

entered ninth-grade with some English skills had lower absence frequencies observed during the ninth-grade and 12th-grade school years with absence frequencies that were congruent with their peers who began high school with no English skills during their 10th-grade and 11th-grade school years. This pattern of absence frequencies represents a concern for students' who cannot afford to miss days of school if they are to succeed academically but who may have competing demands elsewhere at home and work.

Table 4

Ending Twelfth-Grade Engagement as Measured by Average Absence Frequencies by School Year

Absence Frequencies by School Year	Absence Frequencies of Students Who Entered Ninth-Grade with No Measured English Language Skills	Absence Frequencies of Students Who Entered Ninth-Grade with Some Measured English Language Skills
Ninth-Grade 2006-2007	14	6
10th-Grade 2007-2008	16	14
11th-Grade 2008-2009	18	18
12th-Grade 2009-2010	30	8
Totals*	78	46

*Note. $X^2 = 8.37$, $p = .039$ for observed verses expected cell frequencies comparison used for calculation with $df = 3$. Chi-square result indicates that absence frequencies obtained over the four years of high school was significantly greater for students who entered ninth-grade with no measured English Language skills.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The demographic profile of the research school district's community is rapidly changing. Population growth, the life-blood of any community, is being realized through an influx of first generation immigrants and their descendants from Mexico. Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) suggest the socio-economic and civic vitality of our communities is inexorably tied to the wellbeing of the fastest growing segment of our population, our immigrant and minority youth. Furthermore, the context of reception embedded within our communities, state, and governmental organizations, and institutions will have a positive, neutral, or negative impact on the outcomes for immigrants, and their ease of transition to a new life in a new country.

The findings from this study suggest that when given rigorous content, high academic and educational expectations, and a community that is responsive and supportive, immigrant students coming into high school with no English language skills can be functionally equivalent in grade point average and graduation outcome with students coming into high school with some English language skills. These findings support the need for both educational institutions and communities to be responsive, flexible and dynamic in their approach to educating immigrant students.

Public schools' enjoy a unique and privileged position in the life of immigrants. It is frequently within the schoolhouse doors that immigrant families have their first exposure to life in their new land (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, &

Todorova, 2008). It is no longer sufficient to assume current educational pedagogy will reach the new population of students in our classrooms. Every school and school district must rethink their priorities and embrace a new educational framework reflective of a new reality, a new dimension, and a new level of cultural competence. Schools must adopt a philosophy of doing whatever it takes to forever relegate the theoretical paradigm of the rainbow underclass to the dusty corners of a seldom-donned reference book (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

Students entering our public schools with no English language skills and some English language skills are already starting their educational journey at a linguistic disadvantage. Schools must aggressively pursue every opportunity to educate both students and families on the importance of daily attendance, the opportunities available to high school graduates, and the efficacy of education to improve the life chances and future outcomes for all children.

Academic success and English language acquisition are two of the measures of successful adaptation by immigrant students, and both are strongly correlated with future social stability and economic ascent (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). The interaction between school and student will determine much of what is the future. Immigrant children experience an increased risk factor of poverty, interrupted school history, and the societal and institutional stressors inherent with racism and discrimination that have a significant negative impact on their motivation and academic achievement (Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes & Milburn, 2009).

This study suggests that when the public schools develop a symbiotic relationship with the community and family, the negative aspects of stratification can be ameliorated and the modes of incorporation within segmented assimilation can be positively harnessed to effect upward mobility in socioeconomic status by increasing academic achievement and graduation rates among immigrants.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study support the efficacy of the English Language Acquisition program and the academic high school course work completed by students entering the research high school with no English language skills and some English language skills. Of greatest significance is the progress made by students entering with no English language skills. Despite beginning high school at a significant linguistic disadvantage, their posttest English Language Development Scores were functionally equivalent with students entering the research high school with some English language skills.

This is a significant achievement and should be recognized as such. This study supports the teaching and learning foci and strategies utilized by the English Language Acquisition department, the research high school, and the school district in teaching students enrolled in the research high school and served through the English Language Acquisition program. However, questions and areas of concern remain regarding how to improve on the current level of student achievement.

This research study identified excessive absences as a disturbing trend in students entering the research high school with no English language skills (Louie, 2005; Portes & Kelly, 2008; Ready, 2010). Each year of attendance for this group was marked by an increased number of student absences. Students entering the research high school with

some English language skills reflected absence frequencies congruent with their peers entering the research high school with no English language skills in the 10th and 11th grades. It is very difficult to increase academic achievement when students are not present.

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006) suggest that children living in socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances are 25 percent more likely to miss school than their socioeconomically advantaged peers. In addition, De la Torre and Gwynne's research (2009) suggest that the mobility rate of children from low socioeconomic statuses is significantly greater and is positively correlated with lower rates of attendance. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have also found that the student connections to school, familial structure and the competing stressor common among immigrants, such as the need to work versus the need to get an education, can negatively impact student attendance rates.

It is critical when seeking to overcome inequality, socioeconomic and ethnic stratification that the student is fully engaged in their education and is fully supported in their efforts, academic engagement, and educational investment by their family. There is a robust body of research on the importance of family engagement and support to the academic success of students (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly & Haller, 2005; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Rumbaut, 2008, Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008), and effective engagement is beginning to be linked with research, data, school improvement processes, and educational outcomes (Marzano & McNulty, 2005).

Missing from the research are definitive studies that look expressly at how to connect with immigrant families coming to this country with a very limited educational background. In this regard, a question needing further study remains: how can school districts and other institutions reach immigrant families and parents to build new or maintain existing effective minority/majority equal privilege and power partnerships to increase student achievement? Anecdotally, this appears to be a simple question, with a simple answer. School districts reach out to parents through a multiplicity of avenues including: school conferences, back to school nights, connect-ed messages, curriculum-focused events, and newsletters. These methods have had success and served schools, families, and students well.

However, today there are new questions for a new time. How can we effectively engage parents who, through an interrupted and discontinued educational history, linguistic and cultural barriers, may have a limited connection with education? How can we bridge the chasm created by the stigma of illegal status and the majority culture power imbalance that creates this status? How can we seek to communicate with families about the transformative power of education when their focus is on day-to-day survival? How can we eliminate the barriers or fear and distrust that discrimination and racism engender?

Exploring these questions is not an aimless task. Educators stand at the brink of a chasm that is wide and deep, filled with squandered human capital, lost motivation, and failed potential. Many families forsake the long-term benefits of education for the immediate needs of food, shelter, and family preservation. The very real possibility of creating a permanent rainbow underclass is not a theoretical whimsy. It is a distinct possibility if educators and communities do not address current reality. Research is desperately needed to learn what we do not know; how can we fully engage the immigrant population to positively impact academic achievement and future life chances?

Specific further research conducted in immigrant communities exploring the efficacy of a home visit program with families and teachers, parental leadership initiative, and grass roots leadership development within targeted immigrant communities is a good beginning. Pretest and posttest parental attitudes and student achievement outcomes in innovative programs should be closely measured. Additional longitudinal research on teacher attitudes and student achievement is valuable to track the long-term benefits derived from the various programs.

Education has the power to change lives and educators are in the unique and privileged position of holding the golden key to the American dream for many who are new to this land. Learning is relational and education is best taught from a relationship of trust and mutual understanding. Even one student who does not reach their full potential is a human tragedy. The continued saga of unmet dreams and unfulfilled aspirations must find an ending place and can only end in the schoolhouse. We have a moral and professional obligation to determine through research and careful analysis how to bring ourselves and our immigrant students and families into a quid pro quo relationship within the world of schooling--the world through which all of our hopes, aspirations, dreams, and talents may be nurtured and realized.

Immigrant students who entered Grand Island Public Schools programs with no English language skills and some English language skills clearly benefitted from participation in the research high school's English Language Acquisition program and content courses--however, there is much more to be accomplished. The academic achievement of immigrant students is a unilinear process that includes not only access to high quality education resources, but includes the various modes of incorporation for immigrants embedded in their access to and interaction with government, society and community. This is a process and product of segmented assimilation and is inexorably linked to the socioeconomic and social capital status and prospects for immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Hirschman, 2001).

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Chapter 7

Focusing School Leadership on Poverty and Ethnicity for K-12 Student Success

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To be successful, school leaders promote change, innovation, and creativity in the development of school structures and climates to educate the most diverse group of students ever seen in U.S. schools (CCSSO, 2008). School administrators are responsible for improving teaching, learning, and student achievement at all levels of public and private education; therefore, aspects of social justice that provide opportunities for all students should be at the core of research by school leaders. The impact of poverty and ethnicity on student success, including specific efforts to improve literacy, advising, technology, student placement and scheduling are all areas of focus. This chapter explores doctoral studies through the lens of social justice to determine how dissertations support preparing candidates for the diverse environments where they work.

Horace Mann saw education as an absolute right when he said*, "*Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery" (Mann, 1846). Mann credits the American education system as leading the United States to become an economic, cultural and social world leader (Herrick, 2010). Obstacles to success of children in school are prevalent

and include both poverty and ethnicity. However, university programs do not typically address teaching social justice in their leadership programs. While they address and emphasize diversity and equity, they stop short of emphasizing the mechanisms that promote social justice (Hafner, 2006).

DEVELOPING SOCIOCULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS

While American educators today are serving an increasingly diverse community, educators themselves are predominately, middle class and White, European American, English –only speakers (Banks et al., 2005; Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006; Swartz, 2003). Dispositions are the "values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities" (NCATE, 2008, p. 53). An educator's knowledge of diversity dispositions is founded in self-awareness which includes the skills, beliefs, and connections to be successful within the community (Schulte, Edwards, & Edick, 2008). Sociocultural consciousness is "the awareness that a person's world view is not universal, but is profoundly influenced by life experiences" (Villegas & Lucas, 2007, p.31) An educator who does not possess this awareness relies upon and overuses their own experiences, and often misinterprets the communication and behaviors of students and other adults (Dantas, 2007). Awareness of positive dispositions and the ability to put them into action is critical for school leaders. Within Educational Leadership programs we must provide opportunities for leaders to examine and reflect on the meaning of their cultural background, their skin color, and their belief systems as well as the relationship between these attributes and their personal and professional practice (Parker & Shapiro, 1992).

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

How do future school leaders transform understanding into action? Theoretical knowledge is clearly not sufficient to change teachers' sociocultural assumptions (Dantas, 2007). Through service learning, students gain experience to use the foundation of learning (Butin, 2003; Fall, 2006). Service learning can foster respect for diversity, awareness of social concerns, and a sense of ethics and civic engagement (Coles, 1993). Because of the emotional component of the community service, students perceive this active learning as being long lasting and significant (Wittmer, 2004).

ALIGNING BELIEFS WITH ACTIONS

A disconnect between beliefs and actions can be described as the *The Knowing-Doing Gap* (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). This gap can occur when individuals or organizations substitute talking for action, fall back on what is comfortable, fear change and focus intensely on short term measurements, like adequate yearly progress, or rely on internal competition. Not surprisingly, many of these play out in our public school systems. Individuals and organizations maintain their current beliefs and practices even when strong efforts are made to change them. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) suggest that when uncovering a knowing-doing gap, it was "clear that knowing what to do was not enough. It was clear that being smart was not enough to turn knowledge in to practice. It was evident that reading, listening to, thinking, and writing smart things were not enough" (p. ix). Therefore, it

becomes the role of the university instructor to help create opportunities for leadership candidates to face these challenges, perhaps appeal an emotional connection and help the student actively confront them. Elements used to create an intentional sociocultural environment for active learning include:

1. Balance the emotional and cognitive components of the learning process.
2. Acknowledge and support the personal—in this case the student's experience—while illuminating the systemic.
3. Attend to social relations within the classroom.
4. Utilize reflection and experience as tools for student-centered learning.
5. Value awareness, personal growth, and change as outcomes of the learning process.
6. Most significantly, change is more likely to occur because of a truth that influences feelings than an analysis that shifts their thinking. (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Being culturally proficient enables future school leaders to address issues of diverse school cultures. We believe that those who are culturally proficient "welcome and create opportunities to better understand who they are as individuals, while learning how to interact positively with people who differ from themselves" (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2006, p 4-5). The core values of cultural proficiency are: cultural is a predominant force----you cannot NOT be influenced by culture; people are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture; people have group identities that they want to have acknowledged; cultures are not homogeneous—there is diversity within groups; the unique needs of every culture must be respected. (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2006)

Future school leaders must be given opportunities to engage in conversations with others about social justice in order to solidify their own beliefs. Furthermore, they need an opportunity to engage in authentic practice within culturally diverse settings (Barnes, 2006; Guerra & Nelson, 2007; Hafner, 2006; Howard & Del Rosairo, 2000). A doctorate includes completion of a dissertation that demonstrates the students' ability to write, and conduct and defend research. Writing a dissertation is personal transformative experience and can be a peak experience (Roberts, 2004). Abraham Maslow (1968) refers to life-fulfilling moments as, "moments of highest happiness and fulfillment" (p.73) and adds, "a peak experience is felt as a self-validating, self-justifying moment which carries its own intrinsic value with it" (p.79). Therefore the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore ways in which the dissertation journey can lessen the knowing-doing gap of social justice for school leaders.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a general qualitative methodology for this study. Data were drawn from dissertations written by students who have recently graduated. In essence, researchers reviewed dissertations from school leaders that explored social justice for overarching themes, Examples that articulated or illustrated students overcoming this knowing-doing gap were then shared.

This study took place at a university located in the Midwest where the demographics in the public schools are changing dramatically, and often very rapidly. As a result, faculty in the Educational Leadership department are compelled to address sociocultural consciousness, cultural proficiency, and community connections with students in an authentic, intentional and developmental manner in order to promote measurable growth in knowledge, skills and dispositions of diversity. Leadership students are required to complete nine or more hours of community service in a wide variety of settings from homeless shelters to disaster relief fundraisers. Leadership students write reflection papers that specifically target how the project has enhanced their skills and dispositions as a leader and how their work was important for the community they were serving.

Educational Leadership at our institution addresses this through a semester of School Community Relations class, where students develop cultural proficiency through reading, lecture and guest speakers, and being involved in group and individual activities, as well as, discussion and reflection. Doctoral students are deeply engaged in developing cultural proficiency in their field work as well as during two significant courses within the doctoral program: The Culture and Context of School and Paradigms and Practices in Schools. Both of these courses include field work and significant study in cultural proficiency. Along with the guiding principles, future leaders build cultural proficiency through experiencing the tools to develop cultural competence, the continuum for seeing and responding to difference, and the essential elements as well as barriers to creating a foundation of positive behaviors and practices within themselves, their schools and the diverse community (Keiser, 2008).

Because of the keen focus on Social Justice in our mission our dissertations all have a strong element of social justice. For this study, we chose dissertations that examined work in a variety of settings in order to help the reader understand the impact of this effort. In the pages that follow, you will see a presentation of social justice through the eyes of our doctoral students in a variety of settings in urban, rural and suburban places. The students' topics specifically address poverty and ethnicity in these settings. The work that they display in their dissertations is a reflection of what has become ingrained in their leadership through a targeted effort to increase their cultural proficiency.

FINDINGS: SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE
EYES OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS

How does social justice manifest itself within doctoral work and especially within the dissertation? As we examined student work, there were two major themes that emerged: (1) poverty and (2) ethnicity. Within these themes we discovered that our students clearly

displayed the core values of cultural proficiency and culture is a predominant force and was emphasized in their dissertation work. We also found that the students very clearly understood that cultures were not homogenous. Uniqueness was apparent and discoverable whether the writing was about rural poverty or urban gifted African American males. Our students not only acknowledged the theoretical frameworks that they have been taught about sociocultural consciousness but, they also put action behind their knowledge. In the section that follows, we have provided a brief review of the literature on poverty and then share from three student dissertations that focused on poverty. We then provide a brief review of the literature on ethnicity, and share from two selected student dissertations that focused on ethnicity.

Poverty – Literature Review

Many students in public school systems have varied backgrounds and diverse experiences in their young lives. Educators are often from middle class backgrounds and are unfamiliar with the conditions of students' lives (Herrick, 2010). Further, many teachers do not have a full understanding of the values, routines, and daily interactions of many students who live in poverty (Payne, 2005). Some families seem to have it all, including the tools and how to be successful in school, yet some seem to have nothing at all.

For children living in poverty, the capacity to help children be successful in school simply is not possible for some families (Books, 2004; Payne, 2008). In some families, both parents are working, sometimes uneven shifts and making ends meet is a continuous struggle. Children leave an empty house in the morning and come home to an empty house in the evening with no adult supervision and little or no accountability for school work. Most significantly, how a child performs in school is secondary to the daily routine of life, which is about dealing with poverty and the month to month finding and providing shelter, transportation, food and clothing (Books, 2004). In other families, alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence and other traumatic situations cause additional suffering for families and children. In these situations, all of the things educators expect of successful students take a back to seat to the trauma that children deal with on a daily basis (Payne, 2005). Living in poverty is universally difficult but, in both rural and urban areas poverty is exacerbated by the very context of the place where people live.

Many minority children of poverty are not prepared for the expectations of school (Smith, 2004). No child can suddenly become responsible, clean, courteous, respectful, attentive, caring, and cooperative without being exposed to these types of behaviors during the first years of life. Many grow up in a world of drugs, pimps, lies, and fights (Upchurch, 1996). No one is checking their spelling, reading stories to them, or teaching them how to count. Often children of poverty will go to school without breakfast, clean clothes, or proper grooming. A child who is shunned (Upchurch, 1996) for being smelly, poor, and dirty is often fully aware of his predicament, but still has the same desire to be liked and accepted as any child. These students are not lacking in intelligence. They soon figure out the student with the freshly laundered clothes, neat hair, and charming smile, upon which the teacher lavishes attention, is white. Because they are not treated the same, they quickly associate white means good, and black means bad. Due to the experiences and perceptions, black males will stumble, fall, struggle, and get up. This is what it means to be an African

American male (Fletcher, 2007). Likewise, many suburban areas have become transitional and contain pockets of poverty.

Rural Poverty

Brown and Swanson (2003) argued that **r**ural communities are no longer the romanticized pastoral, cohesive, friendly and unhurried places they were in the past. Rural communities are often very diverse and the similarities between rural and urban communities are multifaceted and complex. According to the United States Census, in comparison to Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA's), rural families have lower median income, a lower median family-household and per-capita incomes, higher poverty rates for families and individuals, and higher unemployment rates. Rural families are more often comprised single or divorced parents. Rural poverty more than likely involves the "working poor" and two-parent families. These families are typically less likely to receive public assistance or welfare and poverty is more likely to be of longer duration. The traditional support systems of rural children that included extended family and community members, are unfortunately, no longer available to support children as they were in the past. Grandparents are often working outside of the community, just as parents are, and have to commute back and forth to work (Brown & Swanson, 2003).

Dr. Christopher J. Herrick, a recent graduate of our doctoral program, has 25 years' experience in K-12 education with 17 years as a school administrator. Chris is currently the Superintendent of Schools of the Fremont-Mills Community School District in Tabor, Iowa, and received his Doctorate in Education Administration from the University of Nebraska Omaha. Chris has a passion for at-risk students who are living in poverty. In his district, he is leading an advisory program with his faculty to help these students succeed. Chris, a rural superintendent, beautifully illustrated his understanding of rural poverty as he articulated the following interaction with a student:

> In December 2002, I was in my second year as the superintendent of a small
> Midwestern rural school district. On this cold winter morning, just after the start
> of the school day, the elementary secretary called my office. Robert had missed
> the bus again, his grandmother could not get him out of bed and she didn't know
> what to do with him. Robert was in the sixth grade and lived with his
> grandmother in a small house several miles from the school. Robert earned below
> average and failing grades and had a history of behavior problems in elementary
> school. From the educators' perspective who worked with Robert, it appeared his
> grandmother didn't know how to help Robert become successful with school. It
> appeared she did not know how to help him with academic work, and on many
> days, even how to get him to school. Robert struggled with school most of his
> young educational career, and now as a sixth grader was beginning to exert his
> stubbornness with his grandmother in getting out of bed and coming to school.
>
> I told the secretary I would go get him and asked her to let his teacher
> know it would be a half hour or so before I could get back to the school with
> Robert. I drove the eight miles to the small village where Robert lived. The
> village has less than 200 residents most living in poverty, most of the homes in
> need of repair. When I arrived at Robert's house, I got out of the car and walked

to the door. There were no sidewalks, only the dying grass of December and the mud from recent rains. There was no covered porch, no grand entry, and certainly no curb appeal. There were only the worn steps of cinder blocks leading up to the door of the run down home in which Robert and his grandmother lived.

This was poverty, not like urban poverty, but the kind of poverty found in rural farming communities. I was met at the door by Robert's grandmother, cigarette in hand, the disheveled look of morning on her face. "I cannot get him up for school," she said. I stepped inside and glanced around. There was some dog food strewn on the floor, an open bag of chips on the counter, overflowing ash trays among the clutter of dirty dishes in the kitchen, and a scattering of dirty clothes in the living room of this tiny, two bedroom home in need of significant repair. It was cold. In fact, it must have been less than 50 degrees in the house as I could see my breath when I spoke. I asked if they had heat. "No, it went out yesterday," grandmother mumbled, "Someone is on the way to fix it today."

On the living room floor was a torn stained mattress, Robert was under blankets among the clutter. Apparently grandmother managed to get him awake before I arrived. "Robert, you have to come to school," I told him. He looked at me with no expression and with little emotion in his eyes. His grandmother yelled at him out of frustration to get up, he just stared up from under his blankets. I settled into an arm chair and told Robert I was not leaving until he got up, got dressed, and came to school with me. Finally he got up and went to a room in the back of the house. He returned wearing a basketball jersey and sweats. His hair was uncombed and obviously none of, what we consider to be, regular morning hygiene rituals were going to take place with Robert. But he was up and ready to come with me to school. We drove back to the school and on the way I asked him if he was hungry, assuming he had not eaten anything for breakfast. The small for his age boy nodded yes, he was hungry. It was perhaps the fact that at school, he would for sure get lunch and possibly get something for breakfast that actually motivated Robert to get up and come to school with me.

As we entered the school, we went to the kitchen and the cooks gladly gave Robert a breakfast bar and carton of milk. I checked him in with the secretary at the office, and Robert went to his sixth grade classroom for the day. As I walked back to my office, I thought to myself tomorrow may bring another morning trip to Robert's house. Robert needed to be in school, I should be prepared to make the trip. Similarly, urban poverty is very difficult and like rural poverty, the context exacerbates the challenge of living in poverty.

Metropolitan Poverty

Most problematic of urban poverty is the impact on children and how the vicious cycle recreates itself overtime. The patterns of segregation and poverty emerge early in the life of a child and persist throughout the life-cycle and recreate themselves in subsequent generations. The location of our University is Omaha, Nebraska. Here the poverty rate of Black children is the 12th highest in the country with a rate of 44.6% in Omaha living in poverty. Amy, a doctoral candidate and urban principal observes an urban student in the school that she serves. Ms. Amy Welch has been a Dean of Students at Omaha Central

High School since 2006 and has served in the roles of Assistant Principal, mathematics teacher and network administrator in her previous experiences. She holds a Bachelor's degree in secondary mathematics, a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and is finishing her doctoral degree at the University of Nebraska Omaha in Educational Leadership. She is a fierce advocate for at risk students at Omaha Central. She wrote:

A student strolls into the building with his hood up, rap music blasting through his ear buds, texting on his phone. He ignores the security guard and teacher directing him to remove his hood and turn off the electronic devices. Undaunted he continues leisurely down the hall to his locker, removes his hoodie and hangs it up. He grabs his English book and saunters off toward the classroom. He enters the class ten minutes late. Unconcerned he meanders through the desks to his assigned seat and plops down. He does not open his book nor does he have pencil or paper. He is disconnected from class yet his face is tense almost daring the teacher to comment. She has learned to leave Brandon alone and continues with the lesson. He does not partake in the discussion because he has not read the book. He simply sits, counting off the minutes until the class is over. Motivated by anger and a profound sense of worthlessness, his behavior will become self-destructive and he will disengage from class and school (Upchurch, 1996; McMillian, 2004).

After months of working with Brandon and building trust, he finally opened up to what he faces. Not only is he dealing with the day-to-day of school and peers, but he is on a rollercoaster of emotions trying to fit into two culturally different worlds: school and community. It does not matter how messed up the members of his family are, they are still blood and that bond will transcend all good and bad. His mother is employed, but, off to the bars with her boyfriend as soon as work is done. His sister is busy with two young children and trying to finish high school. His brother is in jail for murder awaiting trial. Brandon is left in a house alone to fend from himself, no one around to ask about school or any other events in his life. There is no one there to make sure he is up in the morning and off to school on time or home at night and in bed at a decent time. Yet Brandon will defend each one of them because it is his family.

He has seen more in his short life than many see in their entire life. He knows how to navigate the streets, where to find drugs, the art of shoplifting, where to buy a gun and how to negotiate the courts. He knows about police profiling, and being interrogated about a friend involved in a crime. He knows about the local gangs and is tagged as a gang member even though he does not belong to a gang. He has been robbed of his childhood and innocence, forced to grow up years before his suburban peers. He has learned to survive the urban projects which are a battle zone like Vietnam, except he doesn't get to leave after a tour of duty (Jones, Newman, Isay, 1997). Life in the hood can eat him up with its depressing and hopeless atmosphere. This ain't no Wally and the Beaver! He survives and comes to school each day.

During those months, Brandon shared another side which many educators do not take the time to explore about their students. Inside his tough "bad boy" exterior is a normal adolescent with the same dreams as most majority students.

He desires to attend college and play football. He does not believe it is a possibility for him as no one in his family has gone to college. He quietly accepts the fact he will be working a minimum wage job instead of enrolling in college. Seeing his desire, I help him register for the ACT test, complete an entrance application for college, and apply for financial aid and scholarships.

A remarkable transformation starts to take hold when Brandon realizes someone cares enough to see his potential and help him reach for his dreams. He beams with pride when he shows me his acceptance letter. Two days later deflated, his pride is replaced with anger and frustration by police placing him in custody for questioning. In Brandon's mind the events were like one of his favorite rap songs by Bone Thugs-N-Harmony "I try so hard . . . tried to get away but trouble follows me . . . . I'm taking five steps forward and ten steps back" (2007).I did not know the impact this one student was about to have on my perspective as I continued to help Brandon to strive to be successful in a white world. I learned first-hand some of the obstacles Brandon faced and began to understand why many of the hurdles continued to exist when, in my privileged mind, they seem so easy to avoid.

Many of America's children live a harsh reality especially our African American males living in urban poverty. Each classroom in America's urban public schools contains multiple stories, with any one story being enough to drop us to our knees. Her dad is strung out on dope. His brother was just sentenced to life in prison. Her uncle just died from AIDS. His cousin was shot last night in a drive by shooting. She was just beat by her mother's drunken boyfriend. He has not eaten since he left school yesterday. He is living with his Aunt because his mother is in prison. She is leaving in a car down the street because the apartment complex she lived in has been condemned. For each face in the classroom there is a story. Educators need to build a relationship with their students and get to know the stories so they are able to understand that some days, like Brandon, just showing up is all these students are capable of handling. Like Brandon, many students show up seeking a place that is safe. Some will simply not be engaged.

Transitional Suburban Poverty

Dr. Anthony Weers has served as Assistant Principal of Westside High School in Omaha, Nebraska since 2007. He holds a Bachelors of Arts in K-12 Physical Education from Dana College, a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Doane College and a Doctoral Degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in Educational Administration and Supervision. Tony is passionate about high school students and advocacy for their success. He has facilitated numerous Apple Computer and modular scheduling events where educators from across the world, Apple staff, and Westside schools staff collaborate and discuss the 1:1 Lap top program, educational technology and modular scheduling.

Tony, a principal in one of our diverse but more suburban settings studied instructional technology, and used his knowledge of the theoretical to uncover an important clue to understanding and serving families in poverty. Tony examined the impact of socioeconomic status of high school students participating in a one to one laptop computer program. He indicates that one of the potential solutions for mitigating the needs of

students struggling with poverty is through the use of instructional technology. Students participating in one-to-one laptop computer programs showed an increase in attendance, were more likely to engage in higher level thinking skills, reported working with academic content longer, and enjoying the learning process more, when they were given a chance to use instructional technology (Carter, 2001) In another study, Grandgenett (2008) found a correlation between the amount of time a student uses a computer and achievement.

To effectively improve the education and performance of students in poverty, educators must know which families are struggling with poverty. While he found no statistically significant difference between low socioeconomic status students and non-low socioeconomic status student achievement on the national percentile ranks, there was a consistent pattern of lower mean national percentile rank scores in all tests for the low socioeconomic status students. The best results for increasing the achievement of students in poverty comes from early identification and intervention from educators, community professional and caring families (Campbell & Ramey, 1994; Conger, Long, & Latarola, 2009). At last, he indicates that every educator wants to see their students experience success, learn new things, and challenge themselves to do a better than they are currently doing. Educators must have a clear picture of what some of our poor and minority students are facing in their home environment. When a caring educator has a clear picture of the challenges faced by a student, and then has the privilege to provide resources and opportunities meet those challenges, great learning can take place. As more families struggle with poverty every day, educators must find a way to reach the students and families that need us the most (Weers, 2011)!

Ethnicity – Literature Review

Racial composition of neighborhoods is at the heart of creation and destruction of communities. 'Race' is a defining characteristic of the opportunity structure of metropolitan areas. Squires and Kubrin (2005) noted "the linkages among place, race and privilege are shaped by three dominate social forces--- sprawl, concentrated poverty and segregation--- all of which play out in large part in response to public policy decisions and practices of powerful private institutional actors" (p. 48). The concentration of poverty shapes opportunities and lifestyles for example: health disparities may constitute the most concrete disadvantages associated with the spatial and racial divide in urban areas. Access to clean air and water, exposure to lead paint, stress, obesity, smoking habits, diet, social isolation, proximity to hospitals and availability of health insurance contributed to long-established disparities in health and wellness (Bullard, 1996; Dreier et al. 2001 pp. 66-82; Kingston & Nickens, 2001; Klinenberg, 2002).

While education has long been considered the great equalizer, property taxes are explicitly tied to place, and using property taxes to fund education are at the heart of the ongoing inequality in our nation's schools (Squires & Kubrin, 2005). Furthermore, the demographics of metropolitan areas, spatial inequalities are readily translated into racial disparities (Anyon, 1997). After two decades of desegregating the nation's schools, progress came to a halt in 1990's and may have been reversed. Urban schools are typically "separate but unequal" (Logan, 2004) including fewer educational resources, less qualified teachers and highest teacher turnover and, ultimately, lower educational achievement in low-income and minority communities (Frankenberg et al., p. 67). Black-white housing

segregation is another factor that contributes to poverty in urban areas. Racial minorities tend to search for jobs in slower growing areas in central cities. Even worse, a job applicant's address often has an independent effect that makes it more difficult for racial minorities from urban areas to seek employment. (Tilly et al, 2001; Wilson, 1996).

Crime remains concentrated in central cities and selected inner-ring suburbs. Race also has an impact here with black residents in urban areas experiencing a higher rate of violent crime than urban Whites in a majority of the cities (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999) Social problems long associated with older urban communities including acts of crime may be the result of segregation as it tends to concentrate poverty (Massay, 1995; Peterson & Krivo, 1993).

Ethnicity and Reading Achievement

Deficits in the reading achievement of urban poor students have been addressed through prescriptive and diagnostic measures institutionalized in research and pedagogy. Urban poor student learn differently and bring assets to the learning setting (Cox, Sproles, & Sproles, 1988). These assets include a collective consciousness, spirituality, communalism, cooperation, ethics, symbolic imagery, and strong interpersonal relationships (Bakari, 1997). School cultures that recognize bias in research and epistemologies embedded in the curricula; recognize cultural mismatch found in urban schools among teacher' attitudes; urban student' ways of learning; and also provide culturally proficiency training for teachers may improve the academic and reading achievement of urban poor students (Wells-Rivers, 2011).

Dr. Diane Wells-Rivers is currently serving as an Assistant Principal in Omaha Public Schools. She is passionate about cultural proficiency, curriculum leadership, lesson design and provides leadership in her district in the area of math and science education. Diane is a recipient of a Fulbright honor, the Jewel Jackson McCabe Scholarship and Honorable Mention Presidential Award for Excellent in Math Science Achievement. Dr. Wells-Rivers holds and B.S. in Elementary Education with a concentration in Black Studies, an M.S. in Elementary Education, a certificate in Urban Instruction and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership.

Diane, an urban principal, studied the effect of teachers' cultural proficiency upon the reading achievement of sixth grade children. Her study concluded that adopting culturally proficient language instruction would likely take more than the two years that she devoted to her study. Students' home language and their cultural linguistic experiences impact their academic vocabulary, learning and ability to conceptualize knowledge. Teachers need to be aware of the complexity of oral acquisition and the power of student's home language in the area of self-identity, family bonds and bonding with peers. Urban teachers who teach a Standard English epistemology must be made aware of this complexity. The academic success of their urban student is dependent upon teachers who make connections between home language and school language acquisition and understand social dialects (Wells- Rivers, 2011).

In addition, Diane discovered that the continued use of culturally proficient staff development aligned with student reading achievement data and teacher quality. In addition to her achievement findings, Diane discovered that there was a reduction in office referrals for this grade level, improved teacher capacity, more student assistance team

meetings to address learning concerns, and an increase of meetings that looked at student growth. Further, she found that the data from successful teachers demonstrated that building on student's strengths, knowing their interests, having highly engaging and culturally proficient lessons and understanding students' developmental and cultural differences certainly leads to improvement. Last, Diane recommends that staff development choices by school officials be aligned with staff and student's needs, school demographics and proven effectiveness based upon research. She also recommends that teacher education programs contain sufficient cultural proficient experiences to prepare students to teach in diverse environments. Knowledge of the social and cultural history is an important foundation for preparing culturally proficient teachers.

Ethnicity and Gifted Young Black Men

Dr. Dwayne Chism has served as Principal at LeMay Elementary School in Bellevue, Nebraska, since 2006. He is passionate about the underachievement of Black Males and other issues involving minority students. Dr. Chism holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education, a Master of Science in Educational Administration and Supervision as well as an endorsement in 7-12 Educational Administration and a Doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Supervision with a Superintendent Endorsement.

Dwayne evaluated the 9-12 grade achievement trajectories of the same school district ethnic minority and ethnic majority high school students formally identified as gifted. He found that despite the legal and ethical agreement, that race and skin color should not matter; they very clearly do when examining the crisis of gifted minority underachievement (Atwater, 2008). There is a widely held opinion that advocated that school districts have a compelling interest in diversity and producing an educational environment that replicates the "pluralistic society" children live in upon graduation (Frey and Wilson, 2009). There are many theories that explain why minority students aren't fully prepared to be immersed into the society upon graduation; theories on the effects of oppositional cultures, social and psychological issues, the effects of oppositional cultures, social and psychological issues, the effects of varying levels of teacher expectations, and issues with testing (Chism, 2011). The ability to conquer this challenge cannot be understated or overlooked. The manner in which the educational system responds to this challenge may very well determine the future of American society (Patton, 1997).

Dwayne's study suggests that minority students who, based upon a standardized test, have shown a high academic performance capability have a readiness for rigorous courses in high school and can sustain high academic achievement over time when compared to non-minority peers. Therefore, the on-going question for many educators needs to be why doesn't this hold true in many of our public schools across our country? Research dating back to 1989 indicated that as many as 50% of African-American students were performing below their promise, and gifted students represented 10 to 20 percent of high school dropouts (Ford, 1990). Consequently, two decades later, these statistics have changed very little. Dwayne's study emphasizes the need for our schools to move into action by examining current practices and issues with the institution that are preventing equal opportunities for diverse learners. We must strive to save an endangered species, our gifted minority students, through the continual collection and analyzing of data, by providing positive role models, infusing multiculturalism into the curriculum, forming

support groups, fair testing assessments, and never to be overlooked…. We must provide them with teachers that instill hope.

DISCUSSSION

Writing a dissertation is a lifetime achievement. It may take a few years and it will require intense focus and commitment. In order to be successful, one must have passion - something about which one cares about enough to completely and deeply focus on for months in order create a successful dissertation. With the skills, passion and dedication, then, an individual can write a quality dissertation. But, there is so much more underneath the surface. These students are all from middle class backgrounds and are dealing with poverty at a level that they have never personally experienced. They have developed an understanding over time to know the right way to help children and families that will matter in these dire circumstances. We believe that these phenomenal dissertations indicate that we are achieving our goal of sociocultural conscience leaders in our program. Their words alone demonstrate they have created a sense of hope and possibility for these students. They are compassionate, caring school leaders and we are proud of what they have become and the lives that they have significantly impacted.

The education community desperately needs more individuals capable of linking theory and practice (Butin, 2010). Applied or transitional research is crucial for improving education practices and policies; and yet it is very difficult to do well. Educators who are able to bridge the divide between academic research and daily practice, those who can bring ideas to life in their school districts are the types of leaders we need in our schools to bridge the gaps that we face with our most vulnerable students.

These students are aligning their actions with what they believe. Undertaking a dissertation is a significant action! Often, students in graduate programs fall back on what is comfortable and easy to express. In these cases the students followed uncomfortable journeys and looked deeply at their previously held assumptions and convictions. At times, students fear change and focus on short term measurement that doesn't really matter. The students embraced change and focused on long term change. In fact, the dissertation served as a spring board to further study. We found that these students came out of the dissertation with many more questions than they came in with. They grew in their commitment and concern for children and sought new ways to impact change within their environments in order to better meet the needs of all children.

The first consideration in improving social justice is to strengthen the relationship between schools and communities. Further, educational leaders need to learn to take active roles that intervene on oppressive power differences that work to create schools that develop everyone's capacity to think, to critique, and to carry out civil discourse about complex debatable issues. Leaders are stewards of the school and community and are engaged in revitalizing both to serve the needs of all children. Those who train future school leaders need to nurture the development of positive diversity dispositions in order to help all students succeed.

A dissertation is simply one view of an educator's work – it is only one study, so how can it make an impact on social justice issues? The dissertation journey raises social awareness and by doing so, bridges the knowing and doing gap. The students' whose dissertation selections that we have shared in this chapter all realize that what they have learned is influencing and impacting their work in both quiet and monumental ways.

Reviewing their dissertation work, gave our faculty members a view of the strength that lies within our program.

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